

ACF

ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION

IRELAND BULLETIN

April 1990

ACF DAYSCHOOL

COMRADES!

THE A.C.F. DAYSCHOOL ON IRELAND WILL BE HELD AT STOKE GREEN COMMUNITY CENTRE, BINLEY ROAD, COVENTRY, ON SATURDAY, APRIL 21st, 1990. THE DAYSCHOOL WILL BEGIN AT 11.30a.m. THIS IS AN INTERNAL EDUCATIONAL EVENT AND IS OPEN TO A.C.F. MEMBERS AND GUESTS ONLY. THE VENUE IS WELL SITUATED FOR TAKE-AWAY FOOD. TEA AND COFFEE WILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE CENTRE. COMRADES REQUIRING ACCOMODATION PLEASE CONTACT COVENTRY A.C.F.

HOW TO GET TO THE VENUE

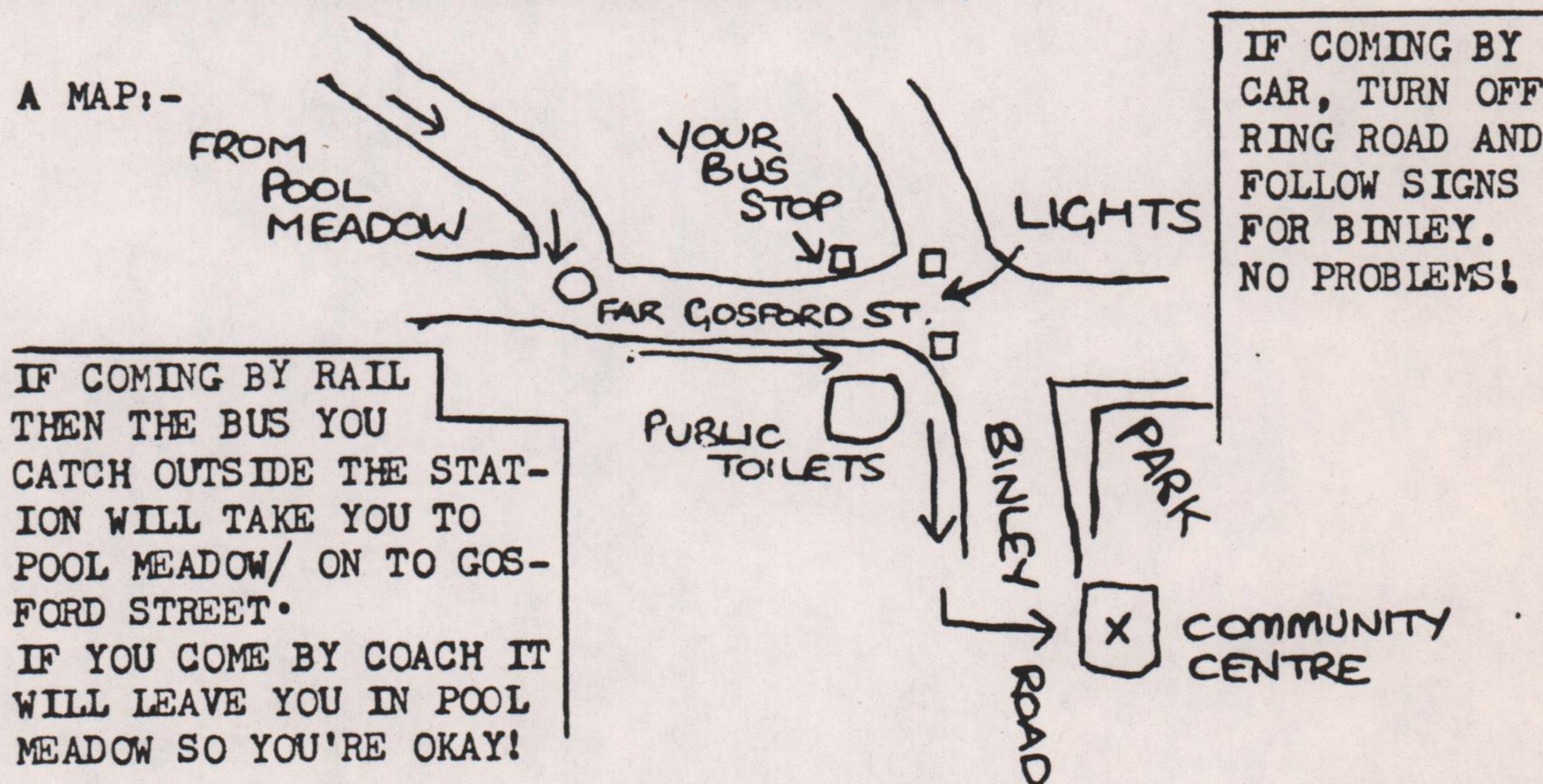
STOKE GREEN COMMUNITY CENTRE IS WITHIN EASY WALKING DISTANCE OF THE CITY CENTRE BUT COMRADES UNFAMILIAR WITH COVENTRY ARE ADVISED TO CATCH ONE OF THE FOLLOWING BUSES FROM POOL MEADOW BUS DEPOT:-

- No. 32 POTTERS GREEN
- No. 33 BELL GREEN
- No. 17 WYKEN/HOSPITAL

ALL FROM THE SAME STAND

GET OFF AT THE SECOND STOP ON FAR GOSFORD STREET (JUST BEFORE THE LIGHTS AT THE CROSSROADS) AND WALK PAST THE PARK ON YOUR LEFT. THE VENUE IS THE FIRST BUILDING ON YOUR LEFT.

A MAP:-



FINALLY COMRADES, THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT ISSUE AND WE HOPE TO SEE A GOOD TURN OUT AND SOME FRUITFUL DISCUSSION AND DEBATE. SEE YOU THERE!

A.C.F. IRELAND COMMISSION

Welcome comrades to the A.C.F.'s first Ireland Bulletin. There are articles reproduced from various sources which are sure to provoke some discussion. The Bulletin should be read with an eye towards our Ireland Dayschool on April 21st.

THE ARTICLES

IRELAND FOR BEGINNERS:- Reproduced from Xtra!, legendary anarchist paper which much influenced Class War.

REVOLUTION NEXT YEAR?:- Reproduced from Attack, anarchist paper.

BRITS OUT! PROVOS OUT!:- Reproduced from Workers Voice, left communist paper. (Communist Workers Organisation).

TROOPS OUT NOW! :- Reproduction of a recent Anarchist Workers Group leaflet.

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH SINN FEINS SOCIALISM:- Reproduced from Workers Solidarity, Irish Anarchist Magazine. (Workers Solidarity Movement).

HOW SOCIALIST ARE THE PROVOS:- Reproduced from Workers Solidarity.

LESSONS OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT:- Reproduced from Workers Solidarity.

IRELAND:AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH:- Reproduced from Anarchist Worker, paper of the long dead Anarchist Workers Association.

IRELAND:- ABSTENTION IS NO ANSWER:- Reproduced from Anarchist Worker, A.W.A. paper.

Well, thats what they said, what have you got to say?
Looking forward to seeing you at the dayschool.

IRELAND BULLETIN EDITOR

Ireland For Beginners

A lot of articles about Ireland start off by telling us that 'there is a war going on' - as if this was something peculiar in our society. Surely, there's a war everywhere: war between the rulers and the ruled the whole world over.

In some places it's obvious - bullets and gas from the State, getting petrol bombs in reply; in other places it's more covert - 40 hours of exploitation each week in the factories, with widespread absenteeism and sabotage in response.

A 34-year-old woman killed in an industrial accident, or a kid maimed by a plastic bullet - it's the same war: exploited and the exploiters.

The trouble is that regarding Ireland, a lot of people say it's a specific type of war, ie a national liberation struggle waged by the Republicans against 'British Imperialism'. And victory will mean that the Irish people will at last be happy, having gained their right to 'national self-determination'. Indeed? Well, I reckon I know who'll be happy - the people who get to rule over this cosy little national republic.

A war to free people from authority? Oh no, it's to free 'the nation' from the Brits. Remember that archaic concept 'the nation' - you know, people like Hitler and Churchill ranted on about it (as does Tony Benn's 'Manifesto', and 'An Phoblacht').

Well, redrawing frontiers isn't my idea of freedom, nor is aiding a bunch of reactionaries in their bid to seize power.

Some people still think that the IRA is 'progressive' while fighting the British State; by the same logic the latter was progressive while fighting the Third Reich, and we all know what use the British made of their victory - over 50 counter-insurgency campaigns since 1945 (including Ireland!).

Meanwhile, on Ulster's streets, the Provisionals carry out such routinely progressive activities as knee-capping 'anti-socials' (recognise the same terminology employed by people like Castro, Hitler and most governments). Recent victims include a 14-year old boy for TDA (Taking and Driving Away a car without permission) and another for stealing. There's Law 'n Order for you, without even the

bother of a Diplock Court - Whiteclaw must be impressed!

The IRA is no more than an alternative police force. They wander round the Catholic ghettos, armed, stopping and searching people, demanding to know where they're going, setting up road blocks and intimidating people.

On humanitarian grounds there must be much sympathy for the hunger-strikers, but what of the demands for political status? Previous to the withdrawal of POW status the IRA and also the Loyalist groups such as the UDA and UVF used to parade in full military uniform, even to the extent of carving guns from wood and drilling with them. Talk about consciousness-raising eh?

Prisoners' demands for better conditions must be supported, but not on a specialist basis, applicable to only a few people - sectarianism is a weapon in the State's arsenal, not ours. Certainly the H-blocks are disgusting manifestations of oppression, but no worse than the notorious military-run prison of Curragh in the 'Free State', or somewhere like Wandsworth in England.

Support for Republican prisoners is a necessity, but only as harshly-treated prisoners - not as Republicans.

So where are we in this war?

The answer, of course, is where we have always been - right in the thick of it, on the streets fighting all the bastards who want to control us. Chucking bricks at the police and army, or inciting them to disaffection, but never taking orders from some 'revolutionary' grouping who just wants to be the new government.

The 'Republic' stinks just as much as the 'Orange State', Catholicism is as putrid as Protestantism, and the IRA and its leftist apologists are just so much revolutionary garbage that must be dumped. 'Armed, working class and politically aware' - huh! So are the British Movement!



YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES



POLICE FIVE

AT THE end of January, a man appeared in the Havering Magistrates Court in Essex. He pleaded guilty to several burglaries. Pleas of mitigation by his solicitor were greeted with some mirth by those in attendance - but with no real sympathy from the Bench.

It seems that this unlucky thief was greatly assisted in the commission of crime by diagrams he found in a book by Dep. Assistant Commissioner for Crime "Crazy Horse" David Powis.

Powis had the unenviable reputation of being completely irrational and has been known to scream for no apparent reason, hence the nickname. His other great vice is to appear at the scene of arrest with great public interest and charge in front of cameras.

Powis indicated in this particular book how easy it was for a villain to make lock-picking equipment and happily provided a diagram, to scale, to assist the curious reader. Our burglar, not slow on the uptake, faithfully copied these tools and sold them to his friends at about £50 a set.

When asked by magistrates if there was anything useful to be said in mitigation, his brief laid the blame squarely on the shoulders of Powis and suggested he had led this poor lad astray. As mentioned earlier, the Court was not impressed and sent the villain down!

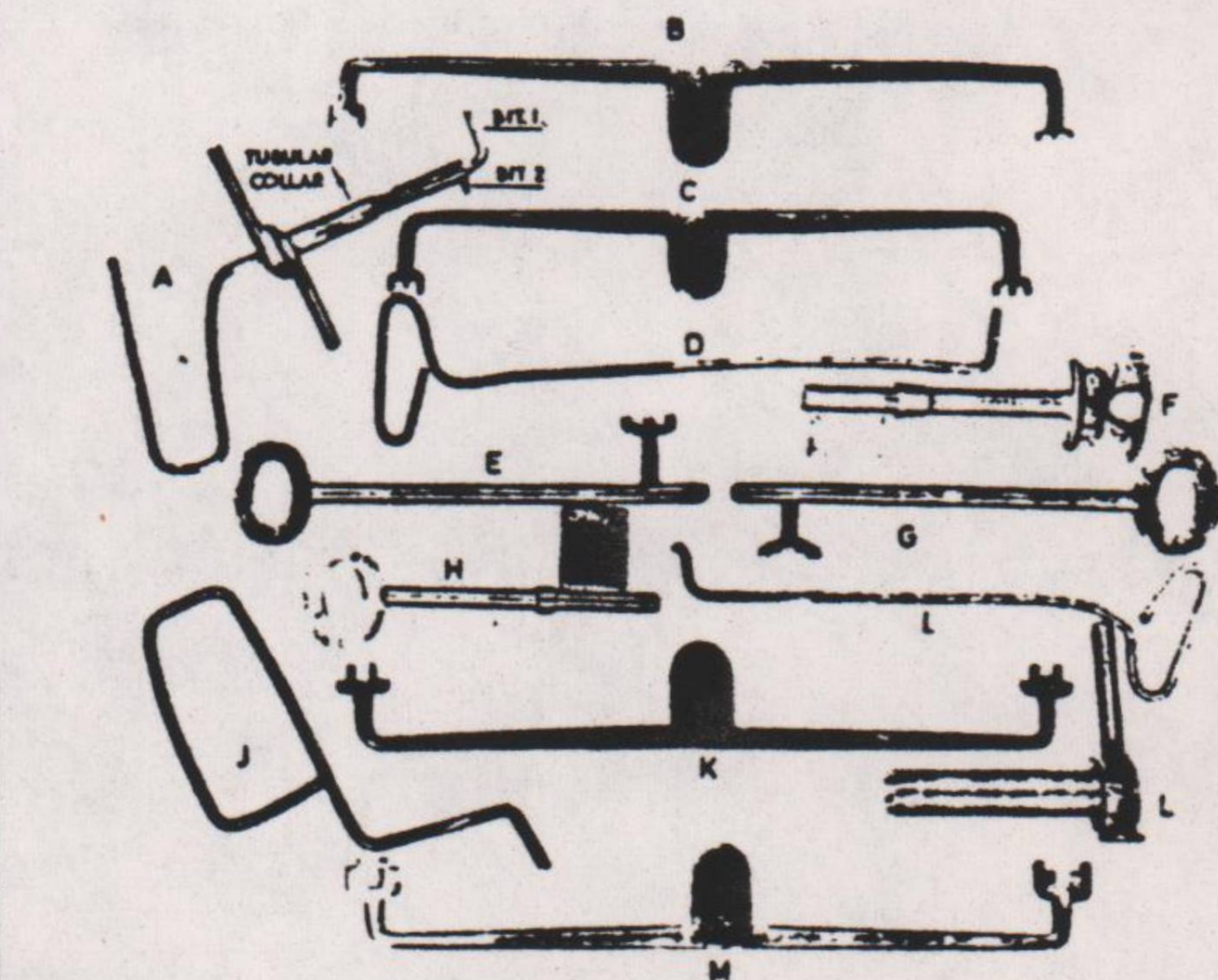
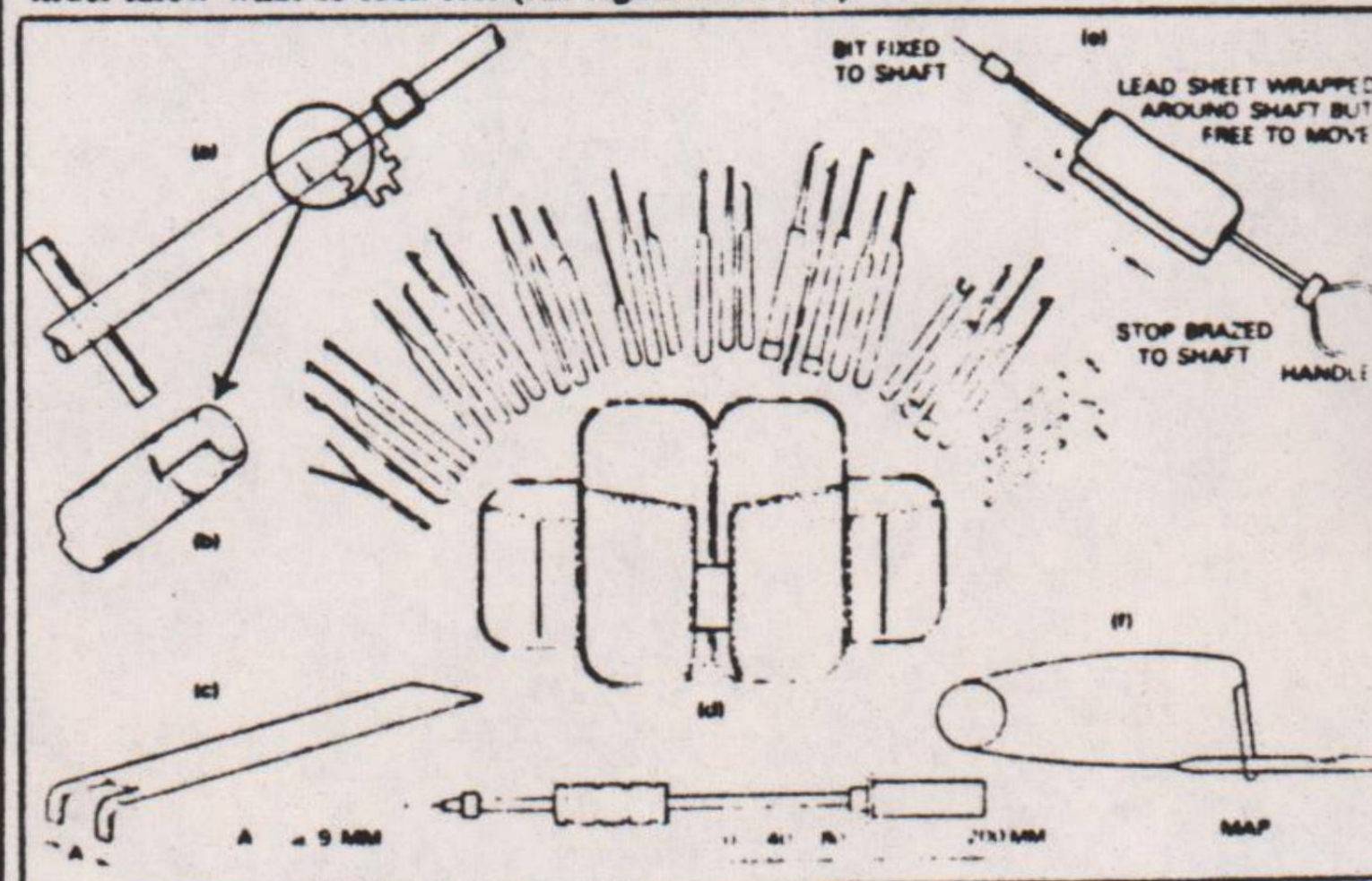


Fig. 13.2(a). Learn to recognise the general appearance of the various picks used in lever locks. A is a rudimentary but very efficient, independently acting, double-bitted skeleton key. Triple and quadruple examples (not shown) have also been made. B, C, K and M are blacksmith-made double-ended skeleton keys of Victorian vintage, but still found in the possession of thieves (rarely made nowadays). E and G are modern skeleton keys commercially available or easily made from blanks. D, I and J are suitable only for the simplest locks. H and F are blanks purchased for filing. L is a parking-meter key made from mild steel tubing. These implements may be found mixed with ordinary keys or generally with similar honest tools. You must know what to look for. (All rights reserved.)

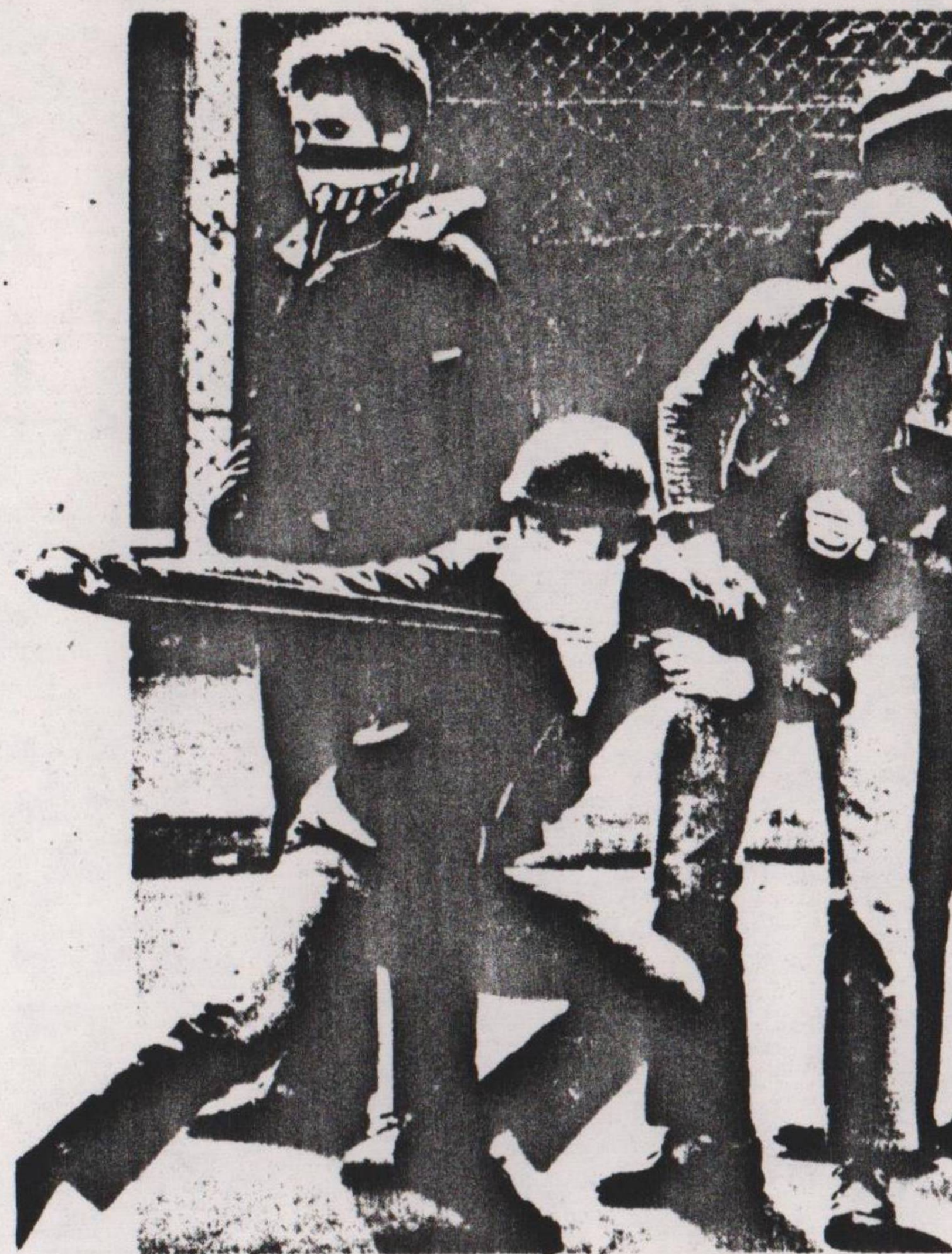


REVOLUTION NEXT YEAR?

Unlike any other armed group in Western Europe (except perhaps ETA in Spain), the IRA and the INLA are mass based armies, drawing their support from a large section of the Irish working class. They defend their community against loyalist attacks and fight a war of national liberation against British troops and Irish cops. Every day they turn our fantasies into reality: we still chant slogans about Harry Roberts (who killed a couple of cops 20 years ago), while three coppers get assassinated in the space of five days and it's just part of everyday life...It's a struggle that has gone on for over 800 years and today shows no signs of going away.

But we are not in the business of blind worship. We are in the business of revolution. Even while we support the struggle in Ireland, there are things that need to be challenged. Obviously only real freedom can only ever be on the cards once the British have been forced out. But Republicans have often reduced everything to the struggle against the British presence. As if capitalism, sexism, racism, homophobia and all the rest would somehow vanish as the last troops were pulled out. The truth is that, just as in the international class war, the Irish working class can only win this struggle by making the revolution total. So when they finally get our ruling class off their backs, they'll have to go on to chuck all the rest of the shit into the Irish sea...including large chunks of the Republican movement. In 1975 the Provisional IRA negotiated a ceasefire with the British army, on condition that British troops were removed from Catholic ghettos. But the minute the Brits pulled out, the IRA moved in: a different uniform maybe, but the same old police force. It might have been a temporary victory for the IRA, but how much of a real victory was it for the nationalist working class?

To be fair, some Republicans have tried to challenge these traditions. They are the new 'radical' leadership of Sinn Fein - men like Adams, Morrison and McGuinness. But despite all the talk of 'community politics', they're still talking in the same old language of our rulers: winning votes and winning power. At the end of the day Sinn Fein is just another organisation above people's heads, and as a political party, it's just one more tool to keep us all in place as passive spectators. On the day when Gerry Adams was re-elected as West Belfast MP in 1987, he summed it all up. Standing in the Falls Road, the heartland of Irish Republicanism, he declared: 'This is a special message for young people - no hijackings, no joy-riding, no stone-throwing at the Brits. If you want to do these things, there are organisations to do this for you'.



Our criticisms go even deeper. As a political party, Sinn Fein isn't at all radical. It's still trapped in the tradition of making a British withdrawal so much of a top priority that it's prepared to sell all its other principles in the hope of doing a deal. As if a Sinn Fein victory at the polls would bring the British state to its knees...In the past Sinn Fein has stood candidates for elections, but it has refused to recognise any Parliament (ie have elected candidates take their seats), since it sees that Westminster, Stormont (in the 6 Counties) and Leinster House (in the 26 Counties) are all instruments of the British state. But now the Sinn Fein leadership has fooled itself into thinking that there can be short cuts to real change, and at the last conference in November 1986, delegates voted to allow SF candidates to take their seats at Leinster House. When they could be busy helping to build a

movement, Sinn Fein leaders are busy building a party - one that is now looking for the quickest route to power.

In fact, before the vote on taking seats in Leinster House, the 'radical' leadership of Sinn Fein were worried that they might not get the support of die-hard Republicans (not so long ago, the IRA had been at war with the State in the South). So the Sinn Fein leaders skilfully bought them off by scrapping their commitment to the idea of abortion on demand. One step forward, two steps back. The declaration that 'we recognise that women have the right to choose' is now no longer part of Sinn Fein policy, much to the relief of the Catholic Establishment. And just in case the ruling class in Dublin were still worried, the IRA quickly moved to reassure them - by re-stating its ban on any direct action against the state in the 26 Counties. As if the Catholic Gardia in the South are any different from the Protestant RUC in the North-East...

The logic of all this is obvious: 'Lets have some popular policies so that people start to listen to us. If we support the Church, the cops, the Army and all the other shit in the 26 Counties, maybe people will start to support our demands for a British withdrawal from the 6 Counties of the North-East...' But who is the new anti-abortion policy 'popular' with? Working class women? (One of the few groups to oppose the new policy on Leinster House was Cumann na mBan, the womens section of the IRA). And who will thank the IRA for not gunning down coppers? The Irish working class? In the 26 Counties, Sinn Fein has already started to demand more 'child assessment units' (ie prisons for kids) for those it calls 'maladjusted' and 'disturbed'. They'll probably be the same sort of kids who are busy bricking coppers in the 6 Counties...

The only resistance that Sinn Fein wants is the sort that it can contain and control. But once the Irish working class really let rip, why should they stop short of a total revolution? Why swap a Loyalist government for a Republican government when they can have no government at all? It's happened in Ireland before: in 1921 and 1922 the newly-formed IRA was in the middle of a bitter war against the British all over Ireland. Hundreds of workers took the IRA at its word when it called for revolution, and so they seized control of their workplaces and set about producing for need and not for profit. In some areas it was the IRA who stamped it out, demanding an end to all 'illegal seizures'. This time that might not be so lucky in holding us back from what we want.....

WORKERS VOICE

BRITS OUT! PROVOS OUT!

It seems that hardly a week goes by without the celebration of some anniversary or other. In the capitalist media nostalgia appears to be a national obsession at present, and political factions of every shade have become adept at manipulating the past in their attempts to con us. In Ulster we have been subjected to a whole wave of twentieth anniversaries commemorating those events at the start of the 'troubles' which are now distant enough to be 'historic'. The latest of these has been the twentieth anniversary of the arrival of British troops in August 1969. The press and airwaves have been full of the lies of everyone from the British state itself to the IRA, all drawing their contrasting but equally false conclusions on the significance of the intervening period, and their role in it. Once again revolutionaries must correct these fairy stories, which are nothing less than ideological attacks on the working class.

WHY IS THE ARMY HERE?

The presence of the army on the streets signifies the failure of normal capitalist institutions in Northern Ireland. They were originally sent in to Derry and Belfast to contain the social revolt of the Catholic working class; a revolt based on their resistance to the attacks of neanderthal sections of the local state - namely the B Specials and other, unofficial, loyalist paramilitaries. Behind this Orange rabble stood the right-wing of the ruling Unionist Party.

At first the British state portrayed itself as neutral in this apparently sectarian conflict, claiming it had only intervened to save the Catholic ghettos from loyalist pogroms. Capitalism's left-wing, as represented by the Labour Party and various Trotskyite and Stalinist groupings, all welcomed the move, and spread the illusion that this was their notion of reforming capitalism for the good of the workers in practice.

This myth was reinforced in successive years with a series of reforms imposed from London

culminating in the disbandment of the Stormont regime and introduction of direct rule in March 1972.

In reality these reforms were less to do with an attempt to do away with certain 'bad' elements of the state than with the strategy of the British government to pacify the Catholic working class by persuading them that sectarian Unionist practice was being restructured away. This was not for the benefit of the Catholic workers, but an attempt to isolate and defeat the IRA, and cheapen at least the military burden of the unwanted province.

This however was easier said than done. Ulster has not been isolated from the generalised crisis of world capitalism - in fact its effects have been particularly catastrophic, with the virtual decimation of all locally based staple industries, leading to Europe's highest unemployment rates and lowest standard of living. This has led directly to increased political fragmentation and the threat of further social conflict. To deal with this the state has been forced to use its army for open repression and terror. Internment, Bloody Sunday, Operation Motorman and the deployment of the SAS are only the most brutal examples of the breakdown of "normal" capitalist dictatorship, though more recently the army's role has been refined, and economic, legal and ideological attacks have become more prominent.

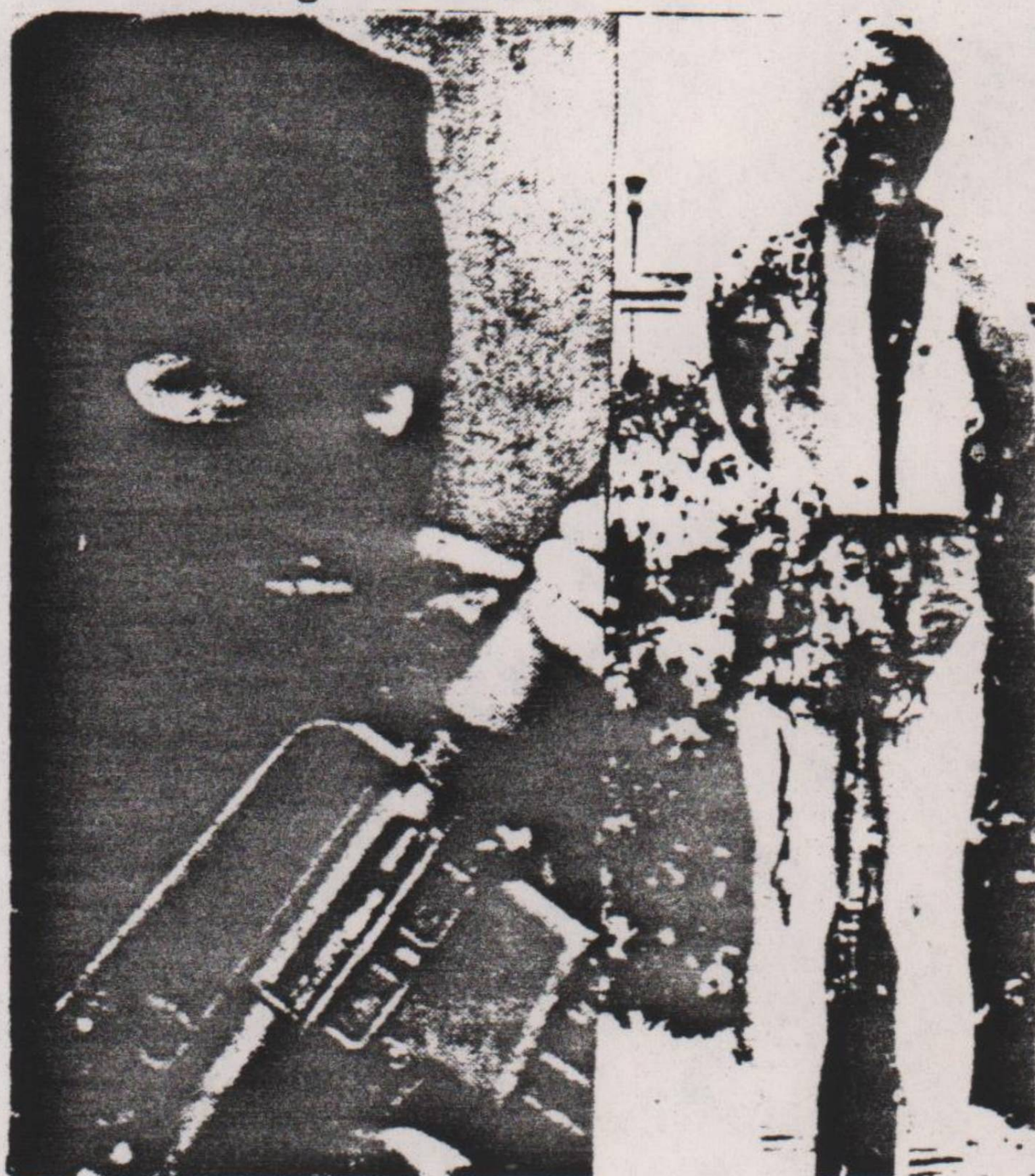
One of the main ideological attacks comes from the more 'liberal' sections of the ruling class, who attempt to present the army repression that does go on in Northern Ireland as an 'aberration', an offence against some abstract ideal of 'democracy' or 'human rights'. We can see this in the new Time To Go movement, whose star-studded cast was wheeled before us in August.

Communists on the other hand say that repression is not just the policy of this or that political faction, but an absolute necessity for British capitalism. No matter who it is aimed at (even if it is the IRA), it is a powerful weapon against the whole working class. The export to Britain of riot control and surveillance techniques first perfected in Ulster has been well documented, and to an increasing degree "anti-terrorist" legislation is becoming cemented into the statute book for the whole country. And this is as true in Eire as it is in the UK. Leftist campaigns based on anti-repressive reforms (such as troops out) will change nothing, and in fact only disguise the generalised terror of the British state. The only way to end this systematic terror is to confront and destroy the capitalist state itself.

PROVO TERROR

The Provisional IRA seek the destruction of the Northern Ireland state, but they are no enemies of repression in itself or indeed any other aspect of capitalism. In fact they have zealously taken on capitalism's policing role in the Catholic ghettos, their knee-cappings and alleyway murders giving a graphic illustration of the sort of 'justice' any worker can expect if he or she steps out of line in the 32-county capitalist Ireland the Provos

seek. But then even in their main campaign the IRA have never been too unhappy about spilling working class blood, whether it be in no warning pub-bombs in the 70's or massive recent lists of so-called 'legitimate targets' - including Telecom, removal and building workers.



How the Provos police their 'national liberation' struggle.

All this, not to mention their vast network of gangsterism, is justified by the Provos in terms of their self-styled 'national liberation struggle' against British imperialism. In pseudo-Marxist language they speak of the right of the Irish people to self-determination, and in doing so demonstrate their ignorance not only of Marxism but of reality. Today the notion that a united Ireland, no matter how radical, could escape domination by the US imperialist bloc is crass and utopian. Such has been the development of the imperialist system since 1945 that it devalues the term to speak of 'British imperialism'. Both Britain and Eire have become integrated into the Western economic and political bloc as a whole, where US capital exercises hegemony. The reason that British troops remain in Ulster is not out of malice or to defend the Unionist bourgeoisie (who don't exist anymore), but because the bloc as a whole deems it necessary to have a policeman ensuring social stability. The IRA in fact supplement this role with their knee-cappings.

The only force capable of smashing not only the boundaries created by partition, but all national boundaries, is the world revolution of the working class. The CWO is alone in calling not for "troops out of Ireland", but for the destruction of capitalist armies in both Britain and Ireland, north and south. Orange and green paramilitaries are objectively equally anti-working class in programme and practice. If the workers in Ulster are to take their place in the struggle for socialism one of their fundamental tasks will be the fight against both the army and the capitalist gangsters of every shade, whom they must first expel from working class areas*

For contact with the CWO in Ireland, write as follows:

P.O. Box 117, Head Post Office, Tomb St., BELFAST BT1 1AA Northern Ireland.

C.W.O.

I would like to find out more about the CWO ☐

I would like to help with the activity of the CWO ☐

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Send to: B.M. CWO
LONDON
WC1 3XX

Troops Out Now!

ANTI-IMPERIALISM FROM BELOW.

1990, start of a new decade that has seen stalinist states toppling throughout the eastern "bloc" but heralds yet another year of repression in Ireland. Bloody Sunday 1972 to the Falls Road 1990 the Irish war goes on. From the hunger strikes to shoot to kill nothing has changed. Surely this, the 21st year of British occupation should see the coming of age of an effective anti-imperialist movement, sadly it has not.

Time to go further

Today the Irish war is no nearer a conclusion. the concentrated might of the British army and the forces of sectarianism have proved themselves incapable of defeating the IRA and the communities that sustain them. The "power sharing" of the Anglo-Irish deal stands revealed as no more than a facade to shroud active Free State collusion in the policing of partition. As yet the British state has been able to wage its war in Ireland without any serious opposition from the British working class. The left's response has been inadequate, as evidenced by the unsuccessful Time To Go campaign, based, as it was, on myth and illusion.

Time to ditch delusions

The Time To Go (TTG) campaign made much of "wasted resources" and unwinnable strategies ("even the generals admit" it). Apart from the logic that if the British states strategy were both economical and successful then TTG would support it, these arguments maintain the myth that it is not in Britain's economic interest to remain in Ireland. The "bring our boys back home" chauvinism aside, it is an argument that entirely misses the point. The British states first concern is the maintenance of stable conditions throughout the UK to enable the smooth accumulation of capital. In Ireland this means shoring up partition and the forces of sectarianism to ensure stable capitalist relations. Occupation and subsidy is the price Britain is prepared to pay for this stability.

Despite the Labour Party's avowed loyalty and their appalling record on Ireland many continue to hold illusions in it as potential progressive force. Labour and the Tories have always shared a "bi-partisan" policy on Ireland and there is no evidence to suggest that it could be otherwise. It is unaccountable and unelected army chiefs and top civil servants who determine the states Irish policy in practice. It is they, not the loyalists, who have a "veto".

However the most enduring myth of all is that the British state has any progressive role to play at all. Northern Ireland is not simply "another colony", Britain is not a "peacekeeper" nor is it in "our (sic) best interests to leave". Unlike India or Cyprus the 6

counties are an integral part of the UK. Historically integration and partition were the only ways the British ruling class could preserve vital economic interests and quell the rebellious Irish. Our rulers are well aware that the destruction of the 1801 Act of Union and break up of the UK would challenge the existence of the British state itself. The callousness of their protracted war and a 30,000 strong occupation force should leave us in no doubt of this fact. To believe that withdrawal can be accomplished through the agency of the state instead of against it is fantasy. That many on the left should hold such illusions at all is tragedy, after 2 decades of war it is farce.

Anti-Imperialism from below

The Anarchist Workers Group knows which side it is on in the Irish war. We side with those fighting the British state. We support the right of the Irish people as a whole to determine their own future free of British interference. Britain has always ruled Ireland in its own interests and has no role to play either as a peacekeeper policing a phased withdrawal or a negotiated settlement. The briefest examination of Irish history shows us that Britain has only one solution, WAR. The Irish war could not be sustained in the face of British working class opposition. Anarchist workers argue that British workers do not and can not benefit from the continued occupation of the 6 counties and that a mass working class movement needs to be built on a principled anti-imperialist basis.

What We Say

- AN END TO PARTITION.
- TROOPS OUT NOW, BRITAIN OUT OF IRELAND.
- BRITISH JUSTICE IS NO JUSTICE, FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS.
- UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE RIGHT OF IRISH ANTI-UNIONISTS TO FIGHT BRITISH IMPERIALISM.
- POLITICAL AND PRACTICAL SUPPORT FOR IRISH SOCIALISTS FIGHTING FOR AN ANTI-IMPERIALIST WORKERS UNITY AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM.



Anarchist Workers Group.
AWG
PO BOX B20
HUDDERSFIELD HD1 1XS

workers councils. Moreover, a Party that takes control of the State during the Revolution, believing itself to be "infallible" and having a more advanced view than workers about what socialism is about is a recipe for a dictatorship. This is precisely what happened in Russia in 1917. Rather than encouraging the workers councils in Russia at the time, the Bolsheviks steadily undermined them.

The first economic commission in Russia had no workers delegates on it at all, only appointees of the Party. Similarly, the Bolsheviks sought to control the ideas workers could hear. They didn't trust workers to support Bolshevik ideas because they best represented their interests but instead banned all other political groups including the anarchists from being able to make their views known. Thus the revolution was stifled and crushed by a Party that claimed to be doing it "all for the workers"

Anarchists argue that the means used to build socialism and ends achieved are connected. Thus a Party which achieves power believing itself to be "above" the working-class cannot but end up creating a rigid hierarchical society all over again. In Russia today, 70 years on from when Lenin came to power, a State Capitalism exists in which the profits and privileges go to the senior Party members — the new Bosses. Far from "guiding" the workers to socialism, only tyranny and capitalism has resulted.



Finally then anarchism is the idea of a free socialist society and how it can be achieved by the direct action and strength of the working class. Its conception of socialism is based on the collective ability of the working class and an absolute belief in free-

dom. Anarchism is different from all other types of socialism. It advocates revolutionary change by the working class, but not so that the anarchist are enshrined in power. Rather its ideas are about the working-class alone creating and running society through new means of economic and political administration.

Anarchists then stand uncompromisingly for a new world. It will be organised from the bottom up and production will be to meet peoples' needs, not for the private profit of a few. Anarchist society will make real the old call "from each according to ability, to each according to need". Every individual will enjoy complete control of her/his life with no limit on their freedom as long as they do not encroach on the freedom of anyone else. That is what the Workers Solidarity Movement is fighting for.

Kevin Doyle

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH SINN FEIN'S SOCIALISM

IS SINN FEIN swinging to the left? It is as clear as day that there have been huge changes in the Republican Movement since the 1981 Hunger strike. What do these changes add up to, what sort of party is Sinn Fein today, what are its politics, what is its goal?

With the departure of many of the 'old guard' around Ruairi O'Bradaigh and their regroupment as Republican Sinn Fein, some in Sinn Fein argue there is now nothing to stop a continual shift leftwards. It is true that republicans are a lot more visible in community politics, opposing the cut-backs, fighting the heroin pushers. But that hardly adds up to a socialist programme.

THE WAY FORWARD?

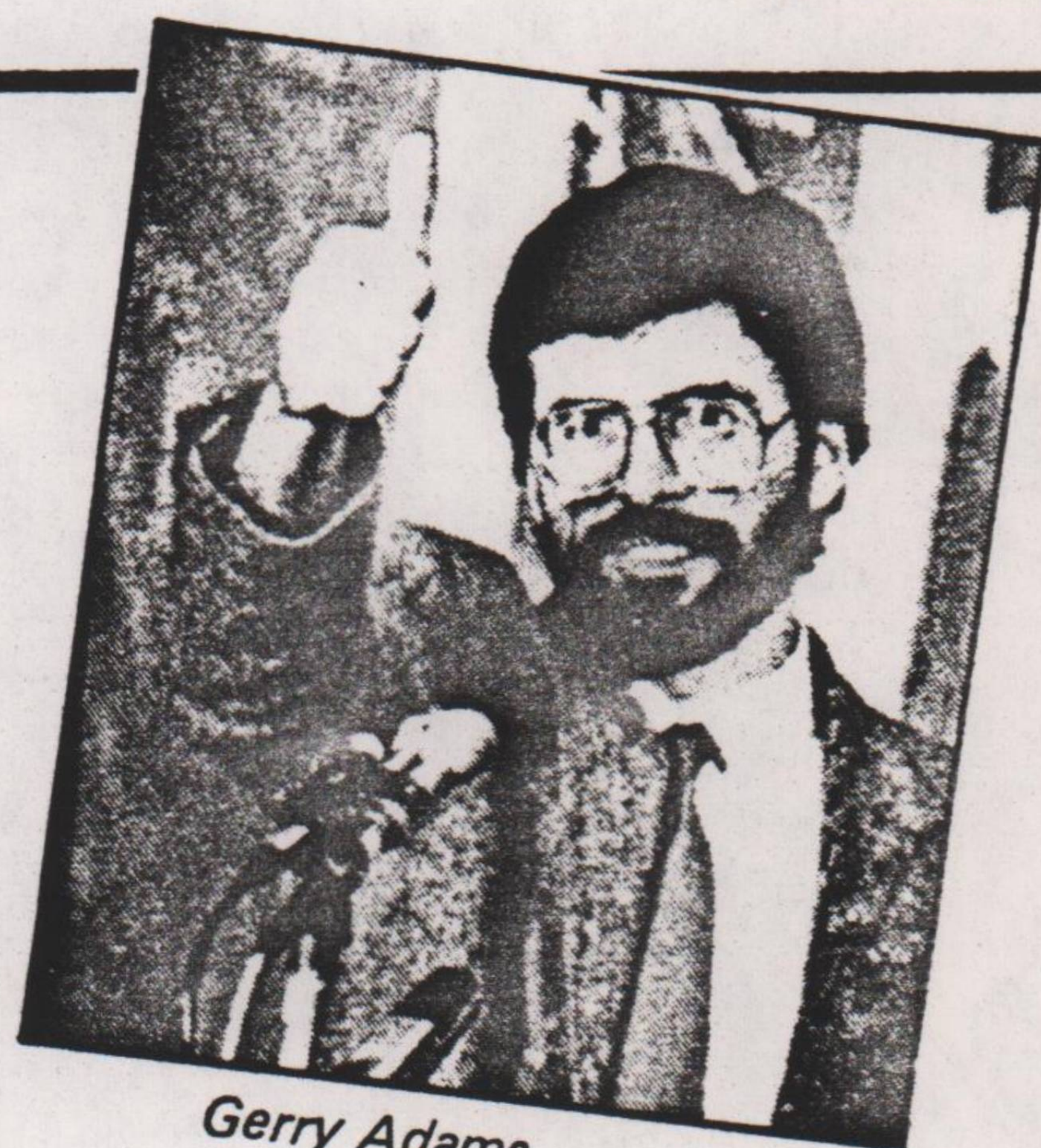
Gerry Adams is not just the President of Sinn Fein, he is also the main spokesperson for their new radical ideas. Rather than putting words into his mouth we will be content to report what he has said is the way forward. *"What is needed in Ireland, especially in the 26 counties, is the*

development of an anti-imperialist movement... The programme of such a movement would appeal to all those capable of taking a national stand and would require a multi-sided campaign of national regeneration — an Irish Ireland movement to offset, especially in the 26 counties, the neo-colonial and anti-national mentality that exists there". (Politics of Irish Freedom p. 135.)

So there we have it. He does not call for the sort of anti-imperialist movement that will try to mobilise working class people because it is in their own class interest to uproot both rotten states in Ireland. And it is in our own interest to get rid of partition because it is part and parcel of the system that sets worker against worker while the bosses laugh all the way to the bank.

MYSTICAL NONSENSE

Instead we are asked to "regenerate" the nation, to build an "Irish Ireland" movement. Perhaps we fortify ourselves for this task by regular singing of the national anthem, waving the



Gerry Adams

tricolour and listening to Wolfe Tones ballads. At the bottom of all this lies the idea that we all have something very important in common, something that can unite all of us regardless of class, and that something is our "Irishness". Yet almost none of the Northern protestants and increasingly large numbers of people in the 26 counties, are no longer attracted to such vague, mystical, nonsensical notions of nationalism. An over-riding sense of national identity is not much help when trying to stop further job cuts, it is not much consolation when you are failing to make ends meet on social welfare.

But maybe we are being unfair. Gerry Adams is quite open in describing himself as a socialist. So he must see some role for socialists

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in his type of anti-imperialist movement. Once again we use his own words. *"The true socialist will be an active supporter of the republican character of a national independence movement. He or she will realise that unless this character is maintained and unless the most radical social forces are in the leadership of the independence struggle, then inevitably it must fail or compromise. This classical view of the matter contrasts with the ultra-left view which counterposes republicanism and socialism, which breaks up the unity of the national independence movement by putting all its socialist demands, that have no possibility of being achieved until real independence has been won."* (ibid, p. 135).

LABOUR MUST WAIT..... AGAIN

Much of the bitterness between the Workers Party and Sinn Fein is due to the stages theory. This is the idea that there are certain fixed steps that must be taken and completed before we can raise the question of a socialist society. The republicans have always scorned the stages theory. However the true picture is that the WP have set out three stages and Sinn Fein only two. The WP say we must first democratise the six counties and win full civil rights, then we go on to unite the country, and only then do we take up the fight for socialism. Anything else is ultra-left. Sinn Fein reject the idea that the six county state can be transformed into a real

democracy (and history has proven them right) so they say step one is a united Ireland, and after that has been won we can go on to struggle for socialism. Anything else is ultra-left.

CAN FIANNA FAIL END PARTITION?

Adams believes that a significant section of the "nationalist" ruling class can be drawn into the fight for a united Ireland. Without going into the arguments at this point about the desirability or the costs of a united capitalist Ireland, can it be done? The forces he has his eye upon are large parts of Fianna Fail, the SDLP, Neil Blaney's followers and the Catholic Church hierarchy. They certainly can be relied on to pay lip service to the "national aspiration" when it suits them. Will they go further? The answer has to be no. The vast majority of them will not.

The Southern bosses have their own state. While they are none too happy at having to settle for just 26 counties after the War of Independence, most of them were quickly resigned to the situation and eager to get down to the business of screwing as much profit as possible from "their" workers. That is why they did not flock to the anti-Treaty side in the Civil War. That is why Fianna Fail republicans had few qualms about executing IRA volunteers in the '40s and interning them in the '50s. While they undoubtedly had strong emotional attachments to militant nationalism, the political stability that is necessary for extracting the greatest possible amount of profits came first.

NEO-COLONY?

But is the 26 county state a "neo-colony"? If the British ruling class are still exercising such control over it that it impedes the native bosses in their quest for profits, can't they be brought into a national independence movement (albeit for their own selfish ends)? Maybe they could if the South was really totally under the thumb of London. But it is not. The Tories studied insults on issues like the Birmingham Six and the Stalker report into RUC murders does not change this. The Southern ruling class are junior partners in the western capitalist system. They negotiate on their own terms within the EEC, they conduct their own foreign trade and their economy is not directly tied to that of Britain (which is why the current crisis hit us a few years later than Britain). They have no fundamental argument with their fellow bosses across the Irish sea.

CLASS STRUGGLE

So not only is it naive to look for an alliance with them but it would give an effective veto to whatever tiny section might be dragged into a temporary coalition with Sinn Fein. If you believe they are necessary then you won't do things that would scare them off. And nothing would scare them more than taking up the class struggle. Any alliance with bosses is one dominated politically by bosses.

In the North such a strategy does nothing to take our class out of the dead end of communal politics. The Sinn Fein statement after the Adams/Hume talks in January described



Photo: Derek Spiers

the meeting as "part of a quest for common interests between nationalist parties". To hell with any idea of workers unity and socialism if some sort of pan-Catholic unity can be forged with the representatives of disgruntled Catholic professionals and gombeen shopkeepers.

Of course many in Sinn Fein don't see it that way. They want to put the SDLP to the test, to show that they won't live up to their promises. Has that not been done on many occasions over the years, most notably during the Hunger Strike? And anyway it means having to argue on the SDLP's terms, which are neither working class nor socialist.

PROTESTANTS

Quite amazingly the one million Protestants in the six counties hardly figure in Sinn Fein's policies or literature. There is no attempt to split them away from their loyalist ideas and leaders. In republican eyes there can be no common interest between Catholic and Protestant workers until the border has been got rid of. In their words: "*partition makes normal class struggle impossible*".

This means they have to down-play the importance of, or completely ignore, events like the 1907 Belfast dock strike which saw tens of thousands of Catholic and Protestant workers fighting together for trade union rights. This strike had such a deep impact on workers of both religions that even the police came out on strike. In 1919 when the mainly Protestant shipbuilding and engineering workers struck for a reduction in hours they elected a strike committee with a Catholic majority. In 1932 the unemployed of the Falls and Shankill fought side by side against the police. In 1984 the health workers strike over wages and cuts involved workers of both religions in a very united struggle. Only two years ago we saw mainly Protestant DHSS staff strike when their Catholic co-workers were subjected to loyalist death threats.

POGROMS

To recognise the importance of these momentous events does not mean that we blind ourselves to the reality of sectarianism. Each time the workers unity was shattered and sometimes followed by Orange pogroms. But it does demonstrate very clearly that there is no "iron law" stopping workers unity on class issues in the here and now.

It is wrong to dismiss Protestant



Photo: Derek Spiers

workers as some sort of "labour aristocracy". The facts just don't bear out this idea. They do suffer proportionally less unemployment, they have better access to skilled work. The bosses have always thrown them a few extra crumbs in order to make them believe that they have more in common with Protestant bosses than with Catholic fellow workers. But the privileges they have are only marginal, Protestant workers are also in badly paid jobs and also end up on the dole. The reality of Orange bigotry is one of 2½p looking down on 2p.

REDIVIDING POVERTY?

One problem with the republicans' stages theory is that it can not appeal to the Protestant working class. If the next step is a fight for a united Capitalist Ireland there can be no concerted challenge to the existing economic set-up in the 26 counties. Instead it is to be extended to all 32 counties. So all that would be on offer is a fairer distribution of unemployment and low paid jobs. Hardly the sort of thing that will appeal to them, no matter how many times the memory of Wolfe Tone is invoked!

There is an alternative. An appeal to Protestant workers on the basis of their class interests, a fight for more of the good things of life instead of one to redivide the few crumbs thrown from the bosses' table. It is not easy and it would be extremely

irresponsible to pretend it won't be a hard uphill struggle. But there is no good reason why it can't be done. The starting point is where workers can be united *in action* around "bread and butter" issues. This means paying great attention to the struggles of rank and file trade unionists. We don't have to sacrifice our anti-imperialism but we do have to reject "Irish Ireland nationalism". Our anti-imperialism has to be rooted in the class struggle, we are against partition because it divides workers and helps to sustain the rule of the bosses.

Sinn Fein don't even consider such a possibility. In Gerry Adams book he gives a mere 14 lines to an analysis of the unions. The republicans' alternative is a combination of armed struggle, community campaigns and getting their politicians into the parliamentary and council chambers.

SOUTH OF THE BORDER

The Provos have no strategy for breaking the Protestant working class away from loyalty to Orange and British bosses. And, if we are honest about it, this has proved to be the



Continued from previous page

major obstacle in the way of uniting the country. The consequences of forcing them into a green nationalist Ireland are a far higher price than we are prepared to pay.

The biggest incentive for Protestant workers' attitudes to change would be an active socialist movement in the South. A movement that is against the border because we want to replace both states with a workers republic, a movement taking on the loyalist bigotry and taking on the power of the Catholic church. A movement that shows by its actions that it is committed to a better life for all working class people. This cannot be built within the confines of nationalism, the struggle for workers liberty and socialism cannot be put on the long finger.

THE MEANING OF SOCIALISM

So is the task to try to convince republicans to adopt new and better tactics? That would not be facing up to a greater and more vital question. That question is "what sort of Ireland do we want?". Most, if not all members of Sinn Fein regard themselves as socialists. They make no bones about it. The problem is that their vision of 'socialism' is based on the Cuban/Russian model, which has shown itself time after time to be just as repressive as Western style capitalism. They draw inspiration from third world 'National Liberation Movements', which once they have won power have shown no mercy in oppressing their own workers.

Gerry Adams, in his book, describes his concept of socialism as "a definite form of society in which the main means of production, distribution and exchange are socially owned and controlled and in which production is based on human need rather than private profit". He does not say what these "main means" are. He does not say who will "socially own and control", whether it will be the state with new rulers in charge or whether it will be workers councils.

We do get some indication of his thinking when he explains how it will happen "You must have your own national government with the power to institute the political and economic changes which constitute socialism". So he is talking about us being governed, though with the governing party having the best mot-

ives. He is not talking about the working class taking control of its own destiny, of workers councils, of grassroots democracy, of the greatest possible amount of personal freedom. Instead the Sinn Fein popular government will have the final say about what we can have and how society will be organised, and they will grant the reforms and make the rules from above. The reforms granted would probably add up to little more than nationalisation plus some progressive social legislation.

SINN FEIN POLICY

Last year's Ard Fheis was described as "a milestone in the development of Sinn Fein as a progressive revolutionary party". A resolution from the Letterkenny cumann called for a rank and file movement of trade unionists and unemployed people "committed to united action and co-ordination of all forms of resistance to the plight faced by workers at the present time". It was decisively rejected. Rank and filism is independant of the union full-time officials, it is about control of struggles by the union members involved in them. Most in Sinn Fein, while being opposed to many individual union bureaucrats, want to uphold the authority of the positions. Some day they hope their party will get hold of these positions and use them to "lead the workers". The concept of workers self-activity does not sit well with their view of "socialism".

Much more revealing in terms of what they think socialism is about was the debate on Polish Solidarnosc. The party leadership backed the move to throw out their previous support for the free trade union. The motion was carried by a massive majority and it was very open about changing their position from supporting Solidarnosc to supporting "the

struggle of the Polish people to defend national independence and socialism against the attacks of internal anti-socialist and external counter-revolutionary elements". Anarchists have many criticisms of Solidarnosc's ideas and views but we know what side we are on in any fight between ten million trade unionists and a boss class. Sinn Fein now regard the rulers of the Russian client state as "socialist" and the working class as "anti-socialist". If state capitalism, and that is the true nature of the system in Poland, can be thought of as socialism it says a lot about the limited vision of the republicans.

BACK TO BASICS

It is correct to see Sinn Fein as part of the "left" in so far as we are describing that broad movement of genuine anti-capitalists. It is quite wrong to think that differences within the left are only about tactics. Before we even talk about tactics we should first make sure that we are fighting for the same thing. The word "socialism" is not enough, we have to say what it means. We have to clarify what we are talking about; who will run society, how will it be run, how important is the freedom of the individual, how do we see those countries that claim to be socialist?

Even with the best will in the world, Sinn Fein's politics will lead them down the road to authoritarian state capitalism. We will continue to do what we can in defence of republicans against the State, we will continue to work alongside them on particular issues where we are in broad agreement. But we also want to re-open a debate that has been ignored for far too long, the debate about the meaning of socialism.

Alan MacSimóin.



Photo: Derek Spiers

HOW SOCIALIST ARE

THE DEBATE on abstentionism at the Sinn Fein Ard-Fheis coincided with the First anniversary of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. An agreement whose sole purpose was to isolate Sinn Fein and smash the IRA. The only 'progress' that has been made as a result of the agreement is on security cooperation. The abstentionism debate focused attention on the Sinn Fein response to this and thus on their general political perspective. Below we look at the anarchist attitude to the politics of Sinn Fein.

The debate on abstentionism is not a particularly new one. Ever since the Treaty was signed and a 'free state' parliament established the issue has caused division in the IRA and Sinn Fein. The first split came when Dev entered the Dail in 1927. Another occurred when Sean McBride and others set up Clann na Phoblachta in 1946 and again when Sinn Fein split into Officials and Provisionals in 1970.

For many in the Republican Movement the debate centred on the primacy of the armed struggle over politics and that means politics of any sort. Putting the armed struggle first these people opposed not only what were essentially right wing splits such as Fianna Fail and Clann na Phoblachta (both accepted the idea that you could gradually whittle away at the Treaty and partition) but also left wing initiatives such as the formation of Saor Eire in the 1920's and the Republican Congress in the 30's.

POLITICS

The people behind these left wing initiatives argued that you could not come to terms with partition but that to defeat it you had to mobilise workers and small farmers not only against British Imperialism but also against the native Irish bosses. They argued that

armed struggle was not enough. What was needed was to build a mass movement based on the aspirations of the mass of Irish people. But because this would involve getting involved in politics it was rejected and the founders of the Republican Congress idea, such as Peadar O'Donnell, were expelled from the IRA. A recent editorial in An Phoblacht, on the death of O'Donnell, argued that the IRA was right at the time because Ireland was not ready for socialism.

This in some way sums up Sinn Fein's attitude to socialism and the demands of workers. If they can be used tactically to gain support for the armed struggle well then it is okay to take them up and push them forward.

REALISM

Essentially that is what is happening now in Sinn Fein. There is a new realism that knows you cannot win support for the war based on mystical notions of nationhood and the god given right of the Irish people to take up arms. They no longer reject politics but still see politics as a way of winning support for the armed struggle. They realise that after fifteen years arms alone are not enough. They also realised during the H-Block and Armagh campaign the potential support that exists in the South. Sinn Fein also know that their support in the North has reached a peak and to bring the struggle further they must begin to relate to what is happening in the 'free state'.

ANARCHISTS

Anarchists defend the right of the IRA to wage armed struggle against the repressive machinery of the Northern State. We also accept that there is a need to defend Nationalist areas from sectarian murderers whether they be called RUC, UDR or UFF. We stand shoulder

to shoulder with the Provos in opposing the states' attempts to smash them. We do not believe that you can remain neutral and just hope that the violence will go away. The cause of the violence is the institutional sectarianism which has led to Catholics being denied basic democratic rights. When they stood up to demand them they were clubbed into the ground.

The Northern State is based on sectarianism and only when it is destroyed will we see an end to the violence. We do not believe that armed struggle in itself can win. The war of attrition could go on forever. The British and Irish states have more arms and can always win in a straight military conflict. This is why we agree with Sinn Fein that the key is in the South. But our perspective is fundamentally different because our sole aim is to mobilise workers *as workers* against both states and for the creation of a genuine socialist society. A society based on the needs of workers run democratically through a system of workers' councils.

CLASS

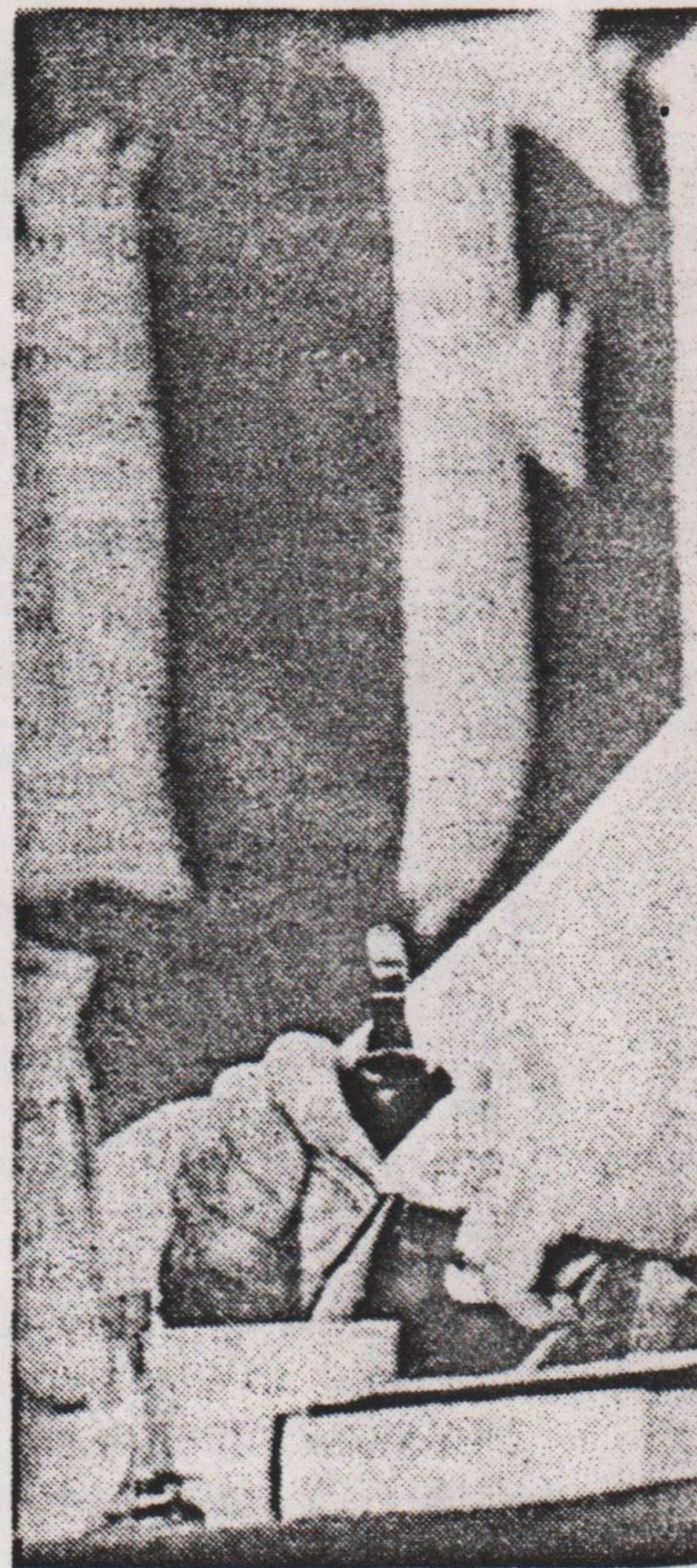
We oppose partition because it has divided our class not because we owe some allegiance to the green, white and orange. Sinn Fein on the other hand are absolutely clear that their major concern is the uniting of the country. Although they now claim to be socialists they still argue a stages theory that says before we can even start talking about socialism we must first get rid of the border. Gerry Adams has said that Sinn Fein is not a Marxist organisation and that only after the Border goes can real left versus right politics start in Ireland.

Therefore they seek to mobilise workers solely for uniting the country. The argument goes that people in Ballymun or elsewhere are no longer shocked by

the Brits kicking in doors in Ballymurphy. It is therefore necessary to relate to issues which affect working class people in the South such as unemployment, housing and social welfare. By showing that Sinn Fein is concerned about these issues they can then win support for the campaign in the North.

The new leadership have argued that to be relevant in the South and to be seen as capable of doing something about these issues Sinn Fein members must be able to enter the Dail. They have gone lock, stock and barrell for the electoral road and this more than anything else exposes the lack of a real socialist perspective.

Socialists want to change society. Fundamentally, we understand that the present system with its exploitation and oppression exists because most people accept it. We also understand that to really change society we must break people from the ideas that hold it together. We seek



THE PROVOS?

to change peoples' consciousness. We therefore are prepared to take up unpopular issues such as abortion and put forward the arguments as to why workers should support 'the right to choose'.

UNIFICATION

Sinn Fein on the other hand do not want to radically alter the social relationships in society. Their main priority is still national unification. Fundamentally they remain nationalists. They make no bones about this. They situate themselves clearly in a tradition that goes all the way back to Tone, who was far from a socialist. They run election campaigns on the slogan 'One Nation, One People'. They seek electoral alliances with the SDLP who clearly are not socialists (they recently refused to commit themselves to defending the Nicaraguan Government in the face of threats from the White House) but can still be counted as part of the nationalist block.

Sinn Fein do not analyse society in terms of class. They do not talk about workers but rather about people. They do not recognise as central the fact that there is not one people in Ireland but workers, unemployed and bosses. There is a ruling class and a working class and they share nothing in common, regardless of nationality. Irish workers have more common interests with workers in Britain, Europe and the rest of the world than they have with their own bosses.

RUSSIA

This is not to say that there are not socialists in Sinn Fein. Many of their members do genuinely want a better society. Their vision of 'socialism' though is clearly based on the Russian/Cuban model which has been shown time and time again to be as oppressive as Western style capitalism. They look to National Liberation Movements in the 'third world' for inspiration. Movements which once in

power, have shown no mercy in oppressing their own workers.

Because they lack a real class analysis the Provos have no strategy for breaking Protestant workers away from their loyalty to their Orange masters and Britain. This after all has proved to be the major block to uniting the country. It is also the major reason why we say that the armed struggle cannot be victorious. The consequences of forcing the Protestant workers into a green Ireland are far too high a price to pay.

UNITY

We believe as socialists that Protestants can be broken from their backward ideas. It certainly will not be easy but there are historical examples where unity has been built. The recent strikes against intimidation also pointed to what is possible.

The major incentive for Protestant workers to change would be a gen-

uine socialist movement in the South committed not only to getting rid of the border but to building a genuine socialist society. A movement not only committed to taking on Loyalist bigotry but also the power of the Catholic Church. A movement that seeks a better life for all workers.

This movement cannot be built within the confines of nationalism. The struggle for socialism can not be postponed. The only perspective worth fighting for is one that links the struggle against the border with the struggle for socialism.

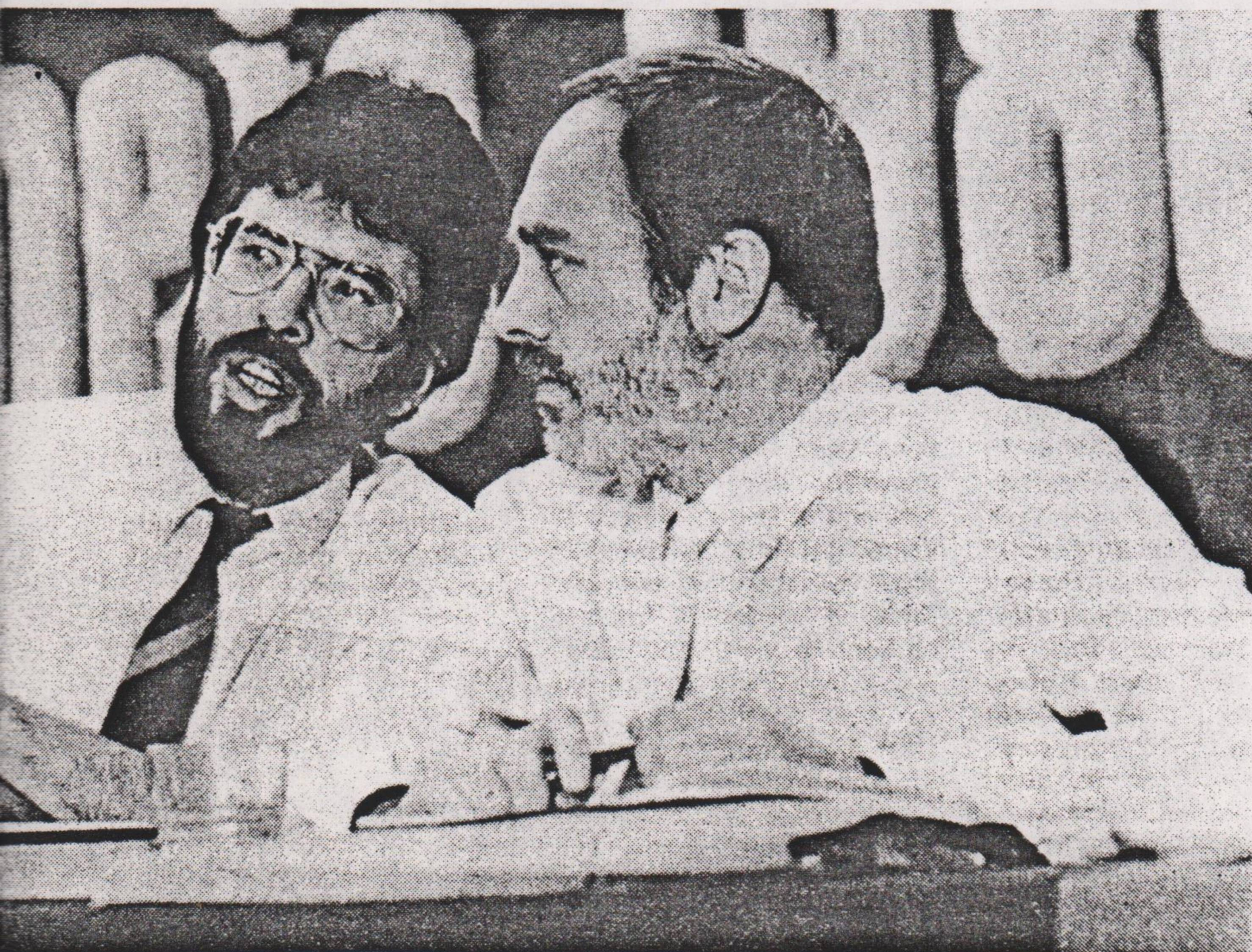
ELECTORALISM

Nor can such a movement be based on electoralism. Unpopular issues often have to be taken up and pushed to the front. The recent Ard Fheis changed the Sinn Fein policy on abortion because they found their pro-abortion position was unpopular in the local elections. They also refused to support the anti-Self Aid campaign organised by socialist and anarchists because they felt it was an unpopular thing to do. As said already this is not the perspective of socialists but rather that of people willing to go for the lowest common denominator and hope for a large vote.

Voting is essentially a passive activity. It does not involve workers in self-activity to change their own lives. It does not involve masses and masses of people in trying to make a better world. Like the armed struggle it leaves the fighting to a few and reduces the rest of us to spectators.

The WSM is committed to building an anti-imperialist workers movement. A movement that opposes the British presence and Orange bigotry. A movement committed to defending all those fighting imperialism. A movement though that goes way beyond demanding national unification but sees as central the idea that a united Ireland must be socialist and based on the needs of workers.

Eddie Conlon



New shirts, new ties, new direction?

BIRMINGHAM 6

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ence — they always have been. But of course they continue to keep me locked up.

It's very difficult for me to describe the pain and anguish of being an innocent person locked up in prison for life — the agony and fear of growing older in this place, of watching and feeling my life pass away when I know deep in my heart that I committed no crime. After 14 years in prison that

agony is becoming progressively worse. Prison is a killer — everything about it is designed to kill and destroy the human being; and if it wasn't for the love and support of my family, which itself encourages a continuing sense of hope, I'm not sure that I could have survived the last 14 years of this hell. The support of other prisoners also has been an important factor in my survival here.

I often reflect on that now infamous statement by Lord Denning in which he said, in relation to our

case, that it was better that innocent people should remain in prison rather than the integrity of the establishment be called into question, and I start to fear that maybe I'll be here in prison for eternity. That's why it is so vitally important that we receive the help and support of ordinary people as well as sympathetic governments. Without that support the truth about our case will forever be ignored or denied by the British government, and we shall remain and probably die in prison.

LESSONS OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

IF THERE IS A growth industry in Ireland at the moment it must be the rewriting of history. According to the people involved, who include the Labour and Workers Parties, it was the Peoples Democracy (PD) march from Belfast to Derry that stirred up sectarianism and the Provisional IRA which turned a peaceful protest movement into

a violent and bloody one. The logic that flows from this is that the IRA are the primary problem and until the London and Dublin governments are able to totally smash them there will be little or no progress in the North.

This is why the Labour Party, both inside and outside coalition governments, has supported special non-jury courts, broadcasting censor-

ship, 'emergency' laws and the extradition of political prisoners. This is why the Workers Party calls for support for the RUC, calling them "the best community police force in the world". Though quick to condemn violence whether it comes from republican or loyalist paramilitaries they never seem to have anything to say about the violence of the British army, police or UDR. They go so far as to describe Sinn Fein as "fascist". Their attitude is a lot closer to a moderate Unionist party than one which calls itself socialist. And that explains the praise they have received from people like former UDR major and Official Unionist MP Ken Magennis and ex-Northern Ireland Tory Secretary of State James Prior.

BLAMING THE IRA

After twenty years of seemingly endless death, injury and destruction the 'blame the IRA' school of thought has a certain attraction for many people who find it difficult to understand why the fighting started and why it is still going on. But it offers absolutely no solution, instead it serves as an additional prop to imperialism and the rotten six county statelet it set up. Regardless of its intentions it helps to perpetuate the problem.

In 1968...

Hello! I'm Captain Terence O'Neill, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland. Here in the North

- Unemployment is 4 times the British average.
- Wages are 78% of Britain's.
- 22% of houses have no flush toilet.
- 19.3% of houses have no piped water!



If a problem exists it is necessary to look for its cause before one can set about solving it. The cause in the North is the state itself. While *all* states represent rule over the majority (the working class) by a minority (the bosses) there is something special about the Northern one. When it was created in 1921 it was done so on the basis of religious discrimination. Governments and bosses have consistently and deliberately secured the loyalty of Protestants by giving them marginal privileges over Catholics.

BORDER CAMPAIGN

By the 1960s the IRA had almost disappeared, its 1956 to 1962 border campaign having been an abject failure. It retained only a handful of active members and was regarded by most working class Catholics as a thing of the past. But something else was stirring. The Catholic middle class had given up waiting for a united Ireland and instead began to look for equality of opportunity within the six county set-up. The increased access to university education raised their aspirations and made them less willing to passively accept a second class citizenship. The Catholic working class, equally, was more concerned with concrete improvements in their day to day lives than with dreams of unity with the South.

Discrimination within the North was the issue. Of 319 administrative positions at Stormont only 23 were held by Catholics while in the technical and professional grades there were 196 Protestants but only 13 Catholics. In Fermanagh, a county with a Catholic majority, the County Council employed 338 Protestants and just 32 Catholics. This pattern was repeated across the North in both the public sector and in private industry. A striking example of what this meant hit the headlines in 1968 when a council house in Caledon, County Tyrone was occupied by civil rights protesters. It had been allocated to a single 18 year old Protestant over the heads of a long waiting list of Catholics some of whom had as many as 12 children and were forced to live in overcrowded conditions with relatives or in damp and cramped caravans.

CIVIL RIGHTS

To combat these myriad inequalities the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Assoc. (NICRA) was formed in 1967. Many of its early members were drawn from the Dungannon-based Campaign for Social Justice, a middle class grouping

who had been collecting data on discrimination since 1964, along with some members of the Republican Movement and the Communist Party of Northern Ireland. Its demands were: one man — one vote; allocation of housing on a points system; redrawing of gerrymandered electoral boundaries; repeal of the Special Powers Act;



abolition of the B Specials; and laws against discrimination in local government.

An understanding of these demands shows the sort of society that had been in existence since 1921. "One man — one vote" was counterposed to the situation where businesspeople were allowed multiple votes and people who were not rate payers (tenants in private accommodation, lodgers, etc.) had no vote. Gerrymandering was commonplace. Derry had a population of 36,000 Catholics and 17,000 Protestants. Elections to the Corporation always returned a safe Protestant/Unionist majority. This was achieved by splitting the city into three wards and only allocating houses to Catholics in one of them.

JOB AND HOUSES

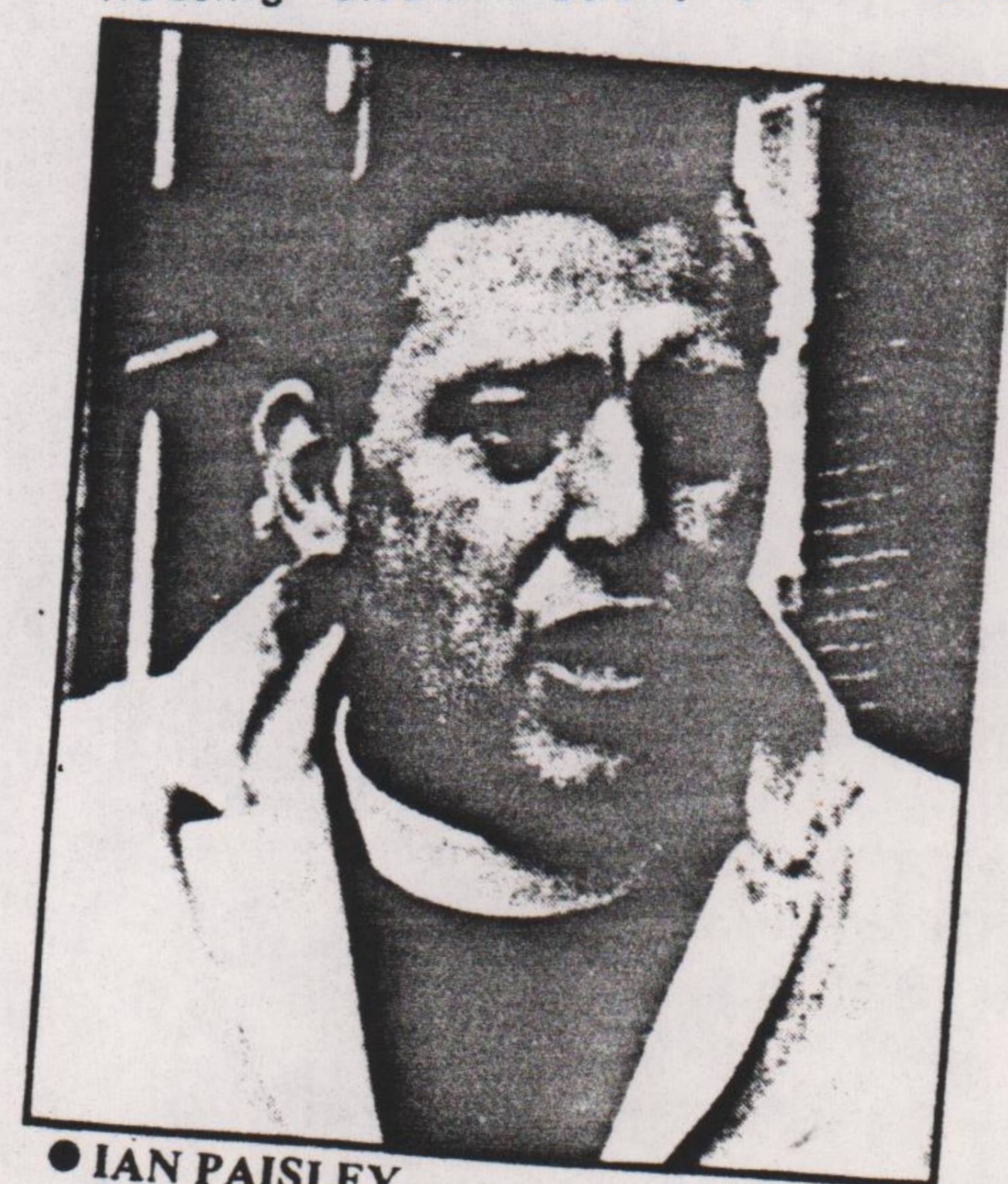
Laws against discrimination in local government speak for themselves, especially when Catholics were finding it a lot harder to get local authority jobs and Catholic areas were granted fewer services. In some cases they received almost none. The call for a housing points system was to replace the set-up where local councillors decided among themselves who got housed and did not have to take into account anything other than their own prejudices.

The Special Powers Act gave the Stormont Minister for Home Affairs absolute power to arrest people on "suspicion" of endangering the state and to imprison them without trial. It also empowered him to send police raiding parties into homes without warrants, impound any property without giving a reason, suspend Habeas Corpus and even abolish inquests. It contained an additional clause giving him the authority to do anything he wished even if it was not specifically mentioned in the Act. The B Specials were effectively the state-paid part time armed militia of the Unionist Party and were notorious for their bigotry and brutality.

HARDLY RADICAL

The NICRA demands were hardly radical. They were the minimum required for any country that even pretends to be democratic. The association did not raise the border issue or adopt any republican policies. The original members had mostly been middle class Catholics who were willing to work within the existing system. Throughout their lives they had been told that, like it or not, they were British subjects. All right, they reasoned, if we are supposed to be British we should enjoy the same conditions and protections as all the other residents of the United Kingdom. The nationalist/republican arguments were not important to them at that time, they were not too impressed by the clerically influenced gombeen society they saw on the other side of the border.

In August 1968 NICRA took to the streets for the first time with a 2,500 strong march from Coalisland to Dungannon to protest against local housing discrimination. Since 1945



● IAN PAISLEY

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71% of local authority houses had gone to Protestants in an area with a 53% Catholic population. The demonstration was a friendly and almost carefree one despite threats from Ian Paisley's Ulster Protestant Volunteers who had occupied the market square in Dungannon to deny access to the 'taigs'. The loyalist presence that day was a warning of what would come if the Catholics didn't quietly go home and accept their inferior status.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT!

Loyalist bigots did all they could to incite sectarian hatred. Typical was the claim by Paisley that the Civil Rights campaign was a Sinn Fein front whose intention was to drive the Protestants 'into the sea'. In his paper, the *Protestant Telegraph*, he printed what purported to be the Sinn Fein 'oath'. It was claimed republicans swore that: *These Protestant robbers and brutes, these unbelievers in our faith, will be driven like the swine that they are into the sea by force, the knife or by poison cup until we of the Catholic faith and avowed supporters of all Sinn Fein actions and principles clear these heretics from our land . . . At any cost, we must work and seek, using any method of deception to gain our ends, towards the destruction of all Protestants and the advancement of the priesthood and the Catholic faith until the Pope is the complete ruler of the whole world."*

A second civil rights march was announced for October 5th in Derry. Stormont Home Affairs Minister William Craig banned it. After local left wing activists and the Derry Labour Party said they would take to the streets regardless of any ban, the NICRA leadership agreed to go ahead with the march. 2,000 set off. Almost immediately their way was blocked by lines of RUC. A short meeting was held and the NICRA leaders asked the crowd to disperse peacefully. When they tried to do just that they found more RUC blocking the other end of the street. The police charged into the demonstrators batoning, kicking and punching. Eighty eight were injured and another 36 were arrested. Then a water cannon was brought up which sprayed marchers, shoppers and local residents alike.

DANGEROUSLY SUBVERSIVE

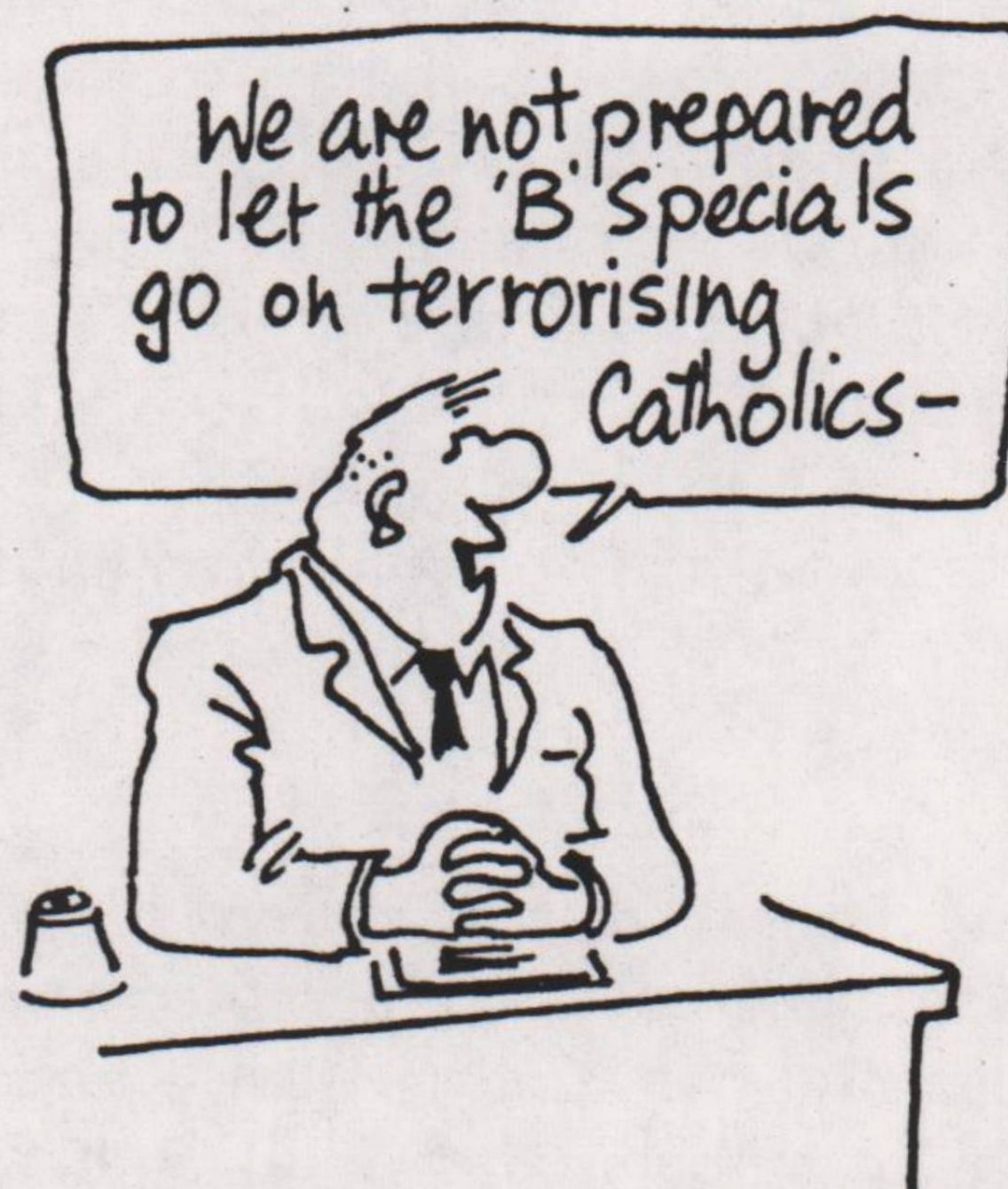
Stormont had given notice that it was not prepared to allow people to peacefully demonstrate for equality. In their

rotten little statelet even the most moderate democratic demands were considered dangerously subversive. However times had changed. Most people had a TV and when they saw pictures of blood spattered marchers whose only 'crime' had been to demand the passage of anti-discrimination legislation they began to ask questions. What sort of place are we living in? And how much longer are we going to put up with it?

In Belfast 800 students from Queens University, Catholic and Protestant, marched in protest and organised themselves into *Peoples Democracy*. It was to be a loose but active group, more radical than NICRA and contemptuous of the nationalist elements whose goal was no more than a few gains for Catholic professionals and politicians. It pointed out that while Protestants might be a little better off than Catholics they also suffered from low pay, bad housing, unemployment and that working class Protestant areas were just as likely to be denied proper amenities. Their aim was to unite the working class through common action on day-to-day issues, and to make this part of the civil rights campaign.

"MEN OF VIOLENCE"

Although the moderate leaders of the Civil Rights movement would have been only too happy to divert the campaign from the streets they knew that to do so would cut them off from most of their supporters who were furious about what had happened in Derry. The Catholic working class of Derry were going to march again



regardless of what John Hume or Ivan Cooper said. Six weeks after the RUC attack 15,000 marched in Derry, an unheard of number for an anti-Unionist protest at that time. Being outnumbered 50:1 by demonstrators who were not in any mood to be told they could not march in their own city the RUC had little choice but to

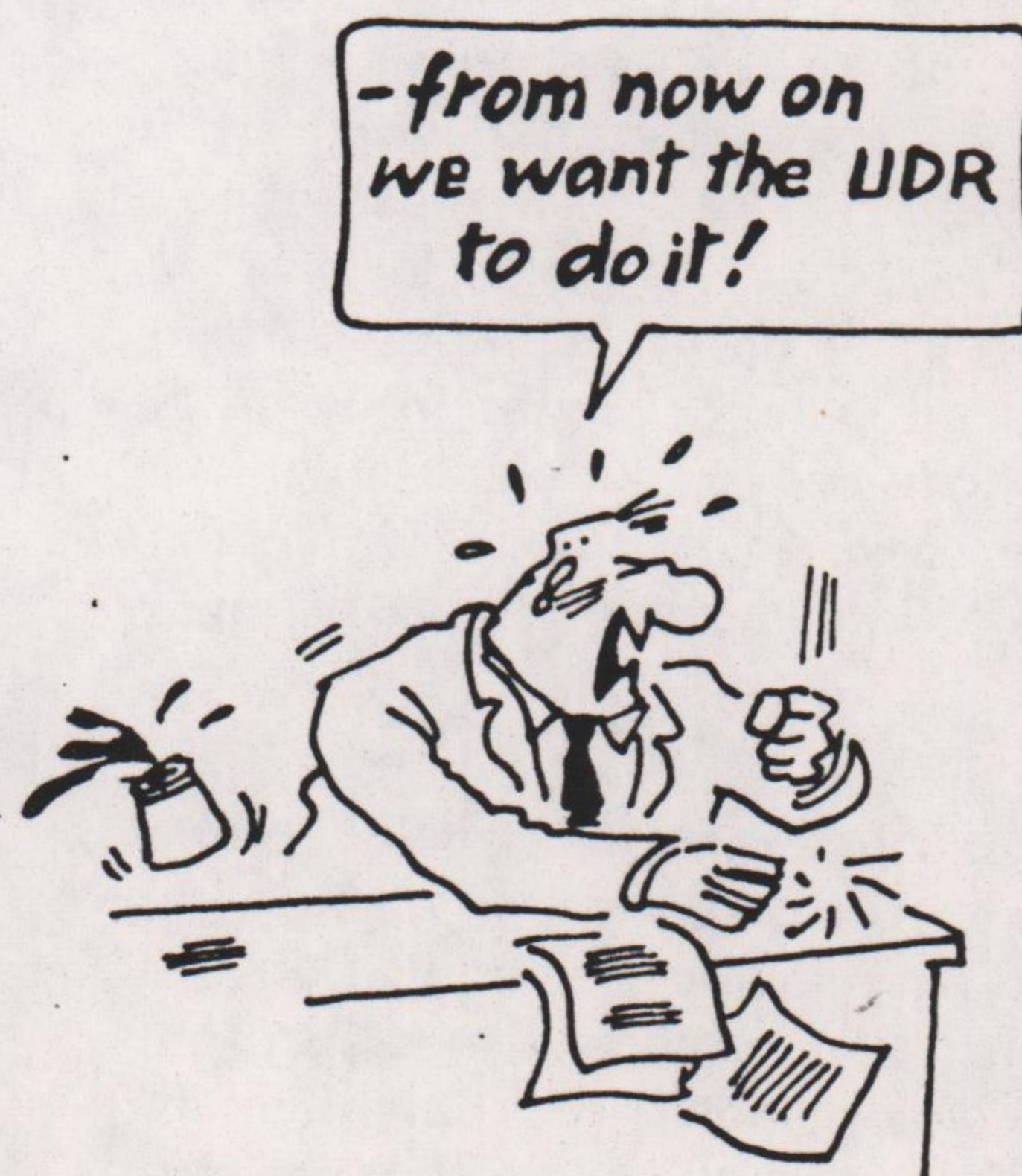
hide away in their police stations. With these 'men of violence' absent there was no trouble.

The Labour government in London, which had previously not even discussed Northern Ireland in parliament, told Unionist Prime Minister Terence O'Neill that it was time for a few reforms to cool things down. On November 22nd 1968 O'Neill unveiled his package of reforms. Council housing would be allocated on a points system, the extra votes of business people would be abolished, a Development Commission would be appointed to replace Derry Corporation, the Special Powers Act would be 'reviewed' and an ombudsman would be employed to hear complaints of discrimination. This was enough to satisfy, at least for a time, the majority of 'respectable' civil rights leaders including most of the NICRA executive.

"UNNECESSARY REFORMS"

Other reactions were not so favourable to O'Neill. Paisley and his loyalist pals in the UVF accused him of giving in to disloyal elements', 'republicanism' and 'Popery'. Within the Unionist Party MPs started an 'O'Neill Must Go' campaign. William Craig ranted about 'unnecessary reforms' and claimed there was absolutely no religious discrimination in Northern Ireland. Only one group of any size was neither satisfied or discredited, the Peoples Democracy. They held there was no guarantee that these few limited reforms would be implemented, let alone enlarged to tackle all the other manifestations of discrimination. The promised scrapping of a handful of

The trigger-happy 'B' Specials are disbanded and replaced by the new 'non-sectarian' Ulster Defence Regiment — which immediately recruits the ex-'B' Specials.



Unionism's worst excesses was hardly a great victory after 47 years of near-dictatorship, pointed out PD. The civil rights marches had shown that direct action can win gains and now was the time to step up the pressure.

BURNTOLLET

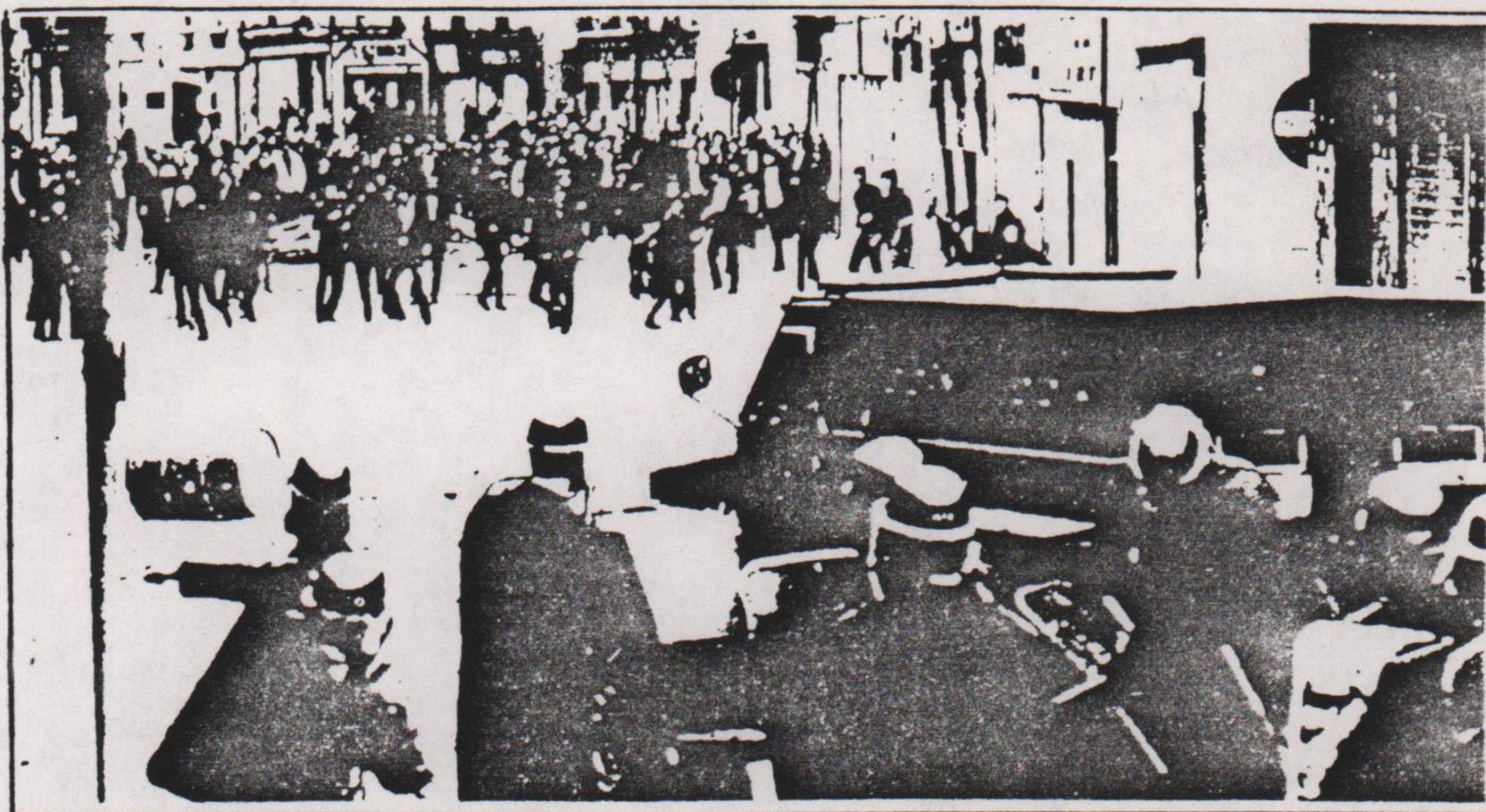
Therefore PD decided to organise a march across the North, from Belfast to Derry, setting out on New Years Day 1969. The 100 or so marchers were met throughout the four day event with RUC barricades and forced to go down country lanes and across fields. When they reached Burntollet Bridge, just eight miles from Derry, they were attacked by about 350 loyalists throwing rocks and using clubs spiked with nails. Several marchers were seriously injured and a couple nearly killed. Many of the attackers were off-duty B Specials. The RUC accompanying the protest refused to give any protection. Not one of the attackers was ever convicted in a court of law. O'Neill who was now being presented as a great reformer, went on TV to blame the victims for the violence and said *"we have heard sufficient for now about civil rights. Let us hear a little about civic responsibility"*.

It was not enough for his opponents in the Unionist Party and on April 28th O'Neill resigned. His replacement, Major James Chichester-Clark lasted less than two years because although he favoured more repression than O'Neill it was still not enough for most in the Unionist Party. Indeed Brian Faulkner who in turn replaced him and was even more repressive was nevertheless judged too moderate and was eventually banished to the political wilderness.

AS CLEAR AS DAY

Something was so clear that only those who stuck their heads in the sand could not see it — the Northern state was unwilling and unable to implement a series of widespread and meaningful reforms. It had been built on the basis of a sectarian division, nurtured by bigotry and defended by thuggery. To talk of real reforms and of equality meant challenging the very basis of the state. It had not been the intention of most of the early civil rights activists but it was the reality they found themselves in.

Things finally boiled over on August 12th. The Apprentice Boys who were parading around Derry's walls demonstrating their contempt for the Catholics below by throwing



Mass mobilisation in defence of Bogside, August '69

pennies down into the Bogside. Some youngsters threw stones at the loyalists. It was unplanned and uncontrollable. The police responded with a vicious attack on the Bogside. Residents had their houses attacked and their heads split open. A riot developed. But the police had no idea of what was to happen this time.

The mainly Catholic working class Bogside and Creggan areas of Derry expelled the RUC, organised their own 500 strong defence force and built barricades. The police unleashed a vicious attack and fired hundreds of canisters of CS gas over the barricades. The area was defended with bricks and petrol bombs. People fought not only because they literally feared for their lives should the RUC get in but also because they had been humiliated and bloodied too often to now give up with a fight. The 'Battle of the Bogside' triggered smaller riots in other towns in an attempt to draw some of the RUC's forces from Derry.

THE ARMY ARRIVES BACK

At 5p.m. on Thursday August 15th 1969 400 soldiers from the Prince of Wales's Own Yorkshire Regiment took up positions around the city. The British Army was again on the streets of Ireland. As later events were to prove they had not been deployed to protect people from the RUC and the B Specials. Harold Wilson's Labour government acted because the RUC were being beaten. No government will stand by while its monopoly of force is being brought into question. The army were sent in to uphold the authority of the state, to stop a counter-power developing.

Now it was Belfast that exploded. Loyalist vigilantes stormed the Falls on August 14th. Within a day and a half over 200 houses, nearly all of

them occupied by Catholics, were burnt-out. RUC Land Rovers sped up and down the Falls Road firing their Browning machine guns. The high velocity bullets from these have a range of 2½ miles and it is only with murderous intent that they would be sanctioned for use in densely populated urban areas. Ten people were killed and about 100 injured. The dead included a 9 year old boy shot as he lay in his bed and the first British soldier to die — a man home on leave who was shot by the RUC! His mistake was to visit his family in a Catholic area. (It is also worth recording that the first policeman to die, Constable Victor Arbuckle, was shot by loyalists.)

BIRTH OF THE PROVOS

It was in this situation that the Provisional IRA was formed. The politics were old-style Catholic repub-



continued over the page

Continued from previous page

licanism, the immediate aim was to provide an armed defense against RUC and loyalist attacks on Catholic ghetto areas. Far from being the cause of violence, they arose as a *response* to the violence of the state. No matter how much we may disagree with their politics and their methods we have to recognise this.

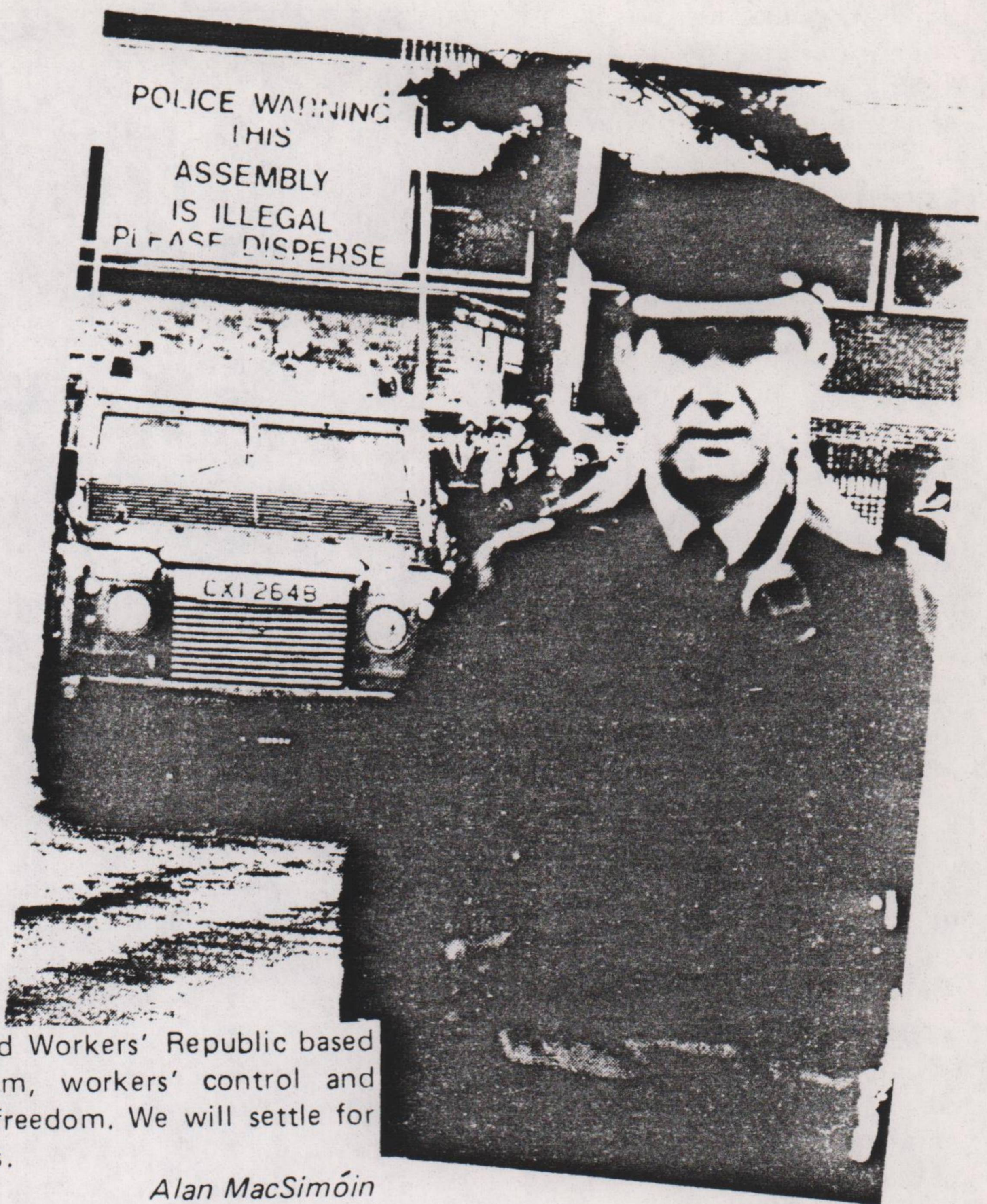
Far from being a handful of gunmen who enjoy little or no support, everyone can see that one third of Northern Catholics, mainly from working class areas, vote for Sinn Fein. Despite all the ruling class's attempts to isolate them their support holds. The fact is that discrimination and repression continue and that is the ongoing source of the conflict. The 'bad old days' are not over.

Despite the Fair Employment Act of 1976 and the state-operated Fair Employment Agency, the FEA had to admit in 1987 that after twelve years in existence a Catholic man is still two and a half times as likely to be unemployed as his Protestant counterpart. In the aircraft and shipbuilding industries less than 5% of the workers are Catholics. The Sirocco Works, which is located in the Catholic Short Strand area of Belfast, has only 4 Catholic employees (0.4% of the workforce). This pattern is repeated throughout private industry. There has been some improvement in Catholic representation in the public sector — but only in the low pay jobs. Skilled work and promotion is largely denied to them.

BREEDING THE ANGER

It is this discrimination combined with repression and brutality, that breeds the anger which is seen in support for the IRA. It is the violence of the Northern state and its masters in the British ruling class which have made certain that twenty years after the Civil Rights marches the death and destruction continues.

The task of anarchists is to build a movement that can unite the Catholic and Protestant working class *on class issues*, a movement that can challenge the Northern and Southern states. Our goal is not a nationalist united Ireland. But that does not mean we are prepared to equate nationalism with imperialism, we will defend the Provos against the state and oppose the attempts to scapegoat them for the problems created by the boss class. However we are in no sense in political alliance with republicanism for our goal is very different. We stand



for a united Workers' Republic based on socialism, workers' control and individual freedom. We will settle for nothing less.

Alan MacSimóin

letters

AT LAST some good news. Tito (Luis Tricot) was released from jail in Santiago, Chile on Thursday, 17th November, after having being confined there since September 1987, on false charges.

As you are aware, the Ireland-Chile Support Group have been campaigning for his release since his arrest, and have been highlighting in particular the severe beatings and torture suffered by him during his imprisonment. We have received much support and assistance from many people all over Ireland, and we are convinced that without this solidarity and goodwill Tito would still be locked up, if not in a worse predicament. So, to anyone who, in any small or large way gave assistance to the campaign for his release, much gratitude and thanks is due.

Declan Turnbull,
Ireland-Chile Support Group,
c/o St. Francis Xavier's Church,
Upper Gardiner Street,
Dublin 1.

YOU WERE quite right to mention in a recent edition about the £10 hospital services charge. Most people are under the illusion that this has to be paid to the hospital to obtain treatment. But this isn't so. I was recently injured in a fall and was taken to hospital for treatment. I was immediately asked for said money, but told the person in question that I neither had the money nor would I pay if I had it. I was treated in any case and given a bill by the hospital for a tenner. I have received two further bills since asking for the money but I have ignored them and intend to ignore any others. As far as I am concerned I got away with paying this £10 tax and others can, in the same way. I am not opposed to paying taxes or anything like that but we are being squeezed through the nose by the Government and from what I can see only the rich are benefiting.

J.M.
Waterford

**We welcome
letters from
readers**

Ireland : An Alternative Approach

AT OUR National Conference in February, the AWA agreed on the policy on the Northern Ireland situation shown below.

This policy represents a complete break with the policies put forward by most left wing groups.

It was the subject of much discussion at our conference, and a substantial section of AWA members voted against it, preferring a 'Troops Out Now' approach, stemming from the 'British imperialism' analysis.

Many of the ideas in the new policy are radically different from all previous analyses of the situation; so it was thought useful to explain in detail the reasoning behind the policy.

It is by no means the last word on the subject; it is more an attempt to come to terms with the situation in Northern Ireland and from that to see what steps are needed to resolve the situation in a libertarian communist direction.

Imperialism ?

The first two paragraphs deal with the problem of British imperialism. It is a fact that, whatever the history of Ireland, it is now the subject of much wider exploitation than just Britain.

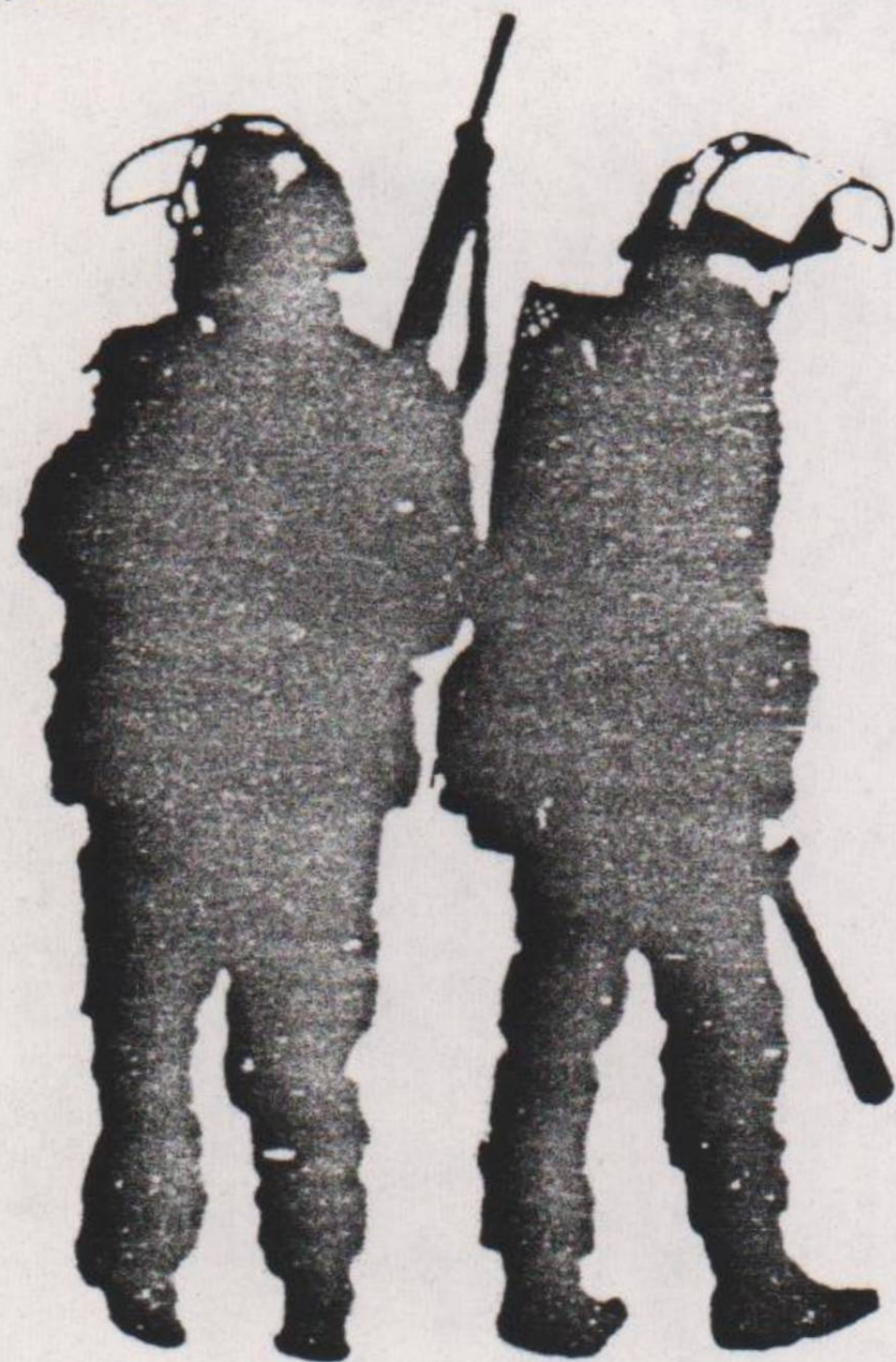
Throughout Ireland we find American, West German and Japanese capital, as well as native Southern and Northern Irish capital. Economic exploitation is being carried out just as vigorously by the 'native' bourgeoisie as it is by 'foreign bourgeoisies'.

This is because the nature of capitalism has changed: it is now an international finance system, no longer recognising the boundaries of nations.

Thus, we have subsidiary companies of British Leyland in Italy, Spain, Israel and Northern Ireland. We have American and Japanese companies in Britain and Northern Ireland. This international club has even grown to include the USSR and China.

Bosses in all countries freely co-operate to exploit the workers in all countries.

Of course, this does not apply to countries where there is no native bourgeoisie, in other words where industrialised countries are simply removing the raw materials of a non-industrialised country. That is the classic case of imperialism.



But it is not the case in Northern Ireland. The Northern Irish bourgeoisie are willing members of the club. It was not the English bourgeoisie which, at the turn of the century, first violently opposed Irish Home Rule — it was the Ulster ruling class, rallying behind Lord Carson.

In the end it made no difference. The independence of Southern Ireland is only formal: Eire is now as strongly linked, economically, to Britain, and now Europe, as it ever was.

Britain has never pulled out of Southern Ireland; it will never pull out of Northern Ireland either because the links of international capitalism are too strong.

Put another way, Northern Ireland will never pull out of Britain, or Europe. They are part of an international economic system.

Nor would a formal withdrawal of political control make any difference.

Political control derives from economic control. Because of the integrated nature of capitalism, the political control is, in any case, only formally exercised from

Westminster.

Changing the formal holders of power in Northern Ireland would not change the nature of that control. Therefore, we do not recognise Northern Ireland as an imperialist situation.

You cannot have a socialist Ireland without a socialist Europe, because the economic structures of all the countries are too closely linked.

Para-military

The third paragraph deals with the way in which the people of Northern Ireland have concretely attempted to deal with their problems.

The para-military groups arose in response to conditions in the Six Counties, but they have also gone on to shape new conditions.

They are essentially elitist organisations, in that they have no internal democracy. Whatever their popular support at any

life of slightly increased privileges in the Union.

Neither side offers a socialist solution.

The most immediate element in the Northern Irish crisis, one that can be dealt with in the short term, is the role of the troops in Northern Ireland.

It is important to grasp what function the troops serve for capitalism. The troops act as an instrument of the bosses because they help to keep Catholic and Protestant workers from uniting.

They were sent in 1969 to keep the warring factions apart. Since then, they have been used primarily to oppress the Catholic for two main reasons.

Keeping the Catholic population in an inferior position with regard to job and housing facilities is part of the economic structure of Ulster.

The Catholics make up a permanent pool of unemployed, which helps to maintain the profit levels of the bosses. Also, there is a

Protestant workers that the Republic is not for them. Looking at the Constitution of Eire and the welfare facilities there, it is not surprising that Protestant workers feel better off as they are at the moment.

It is true that both wings of the IRA stress the need to change the system in the South, but very few Protestants would trust the IRA.

So if the troops were pulled out tomorrow nothing would really change, because the same basic divisions still exist.

The Protestants, via the UDA and the Ulster Defence Regiment are quite capable of mounting the same sort of repression against Catholics as is now being carried out by the British Army.

The Republic's troops might become involved, but the Protestant working class cannot be bombed into the Republic.

At the moment, pulling the troops out would be meaningless. Therefore, it is a question of working out how withdrawal would be important.

The troops might be forced out by united class action in Northern Ireland: that would be meaningful.

The troops themselves might recognise their role and rebel: they might be forced out of Ireland by the action of workers over here.

Only when that sort of situation was reached would 'Troops Out' have any meaning.

Action

This does not mean that we all sit back and wait for the Irish to sort it out for themselves. Part of our analysis is that British workers, and workers in the Six Counties of whatever religion, have more in common with each other than they have with their bosses.

It is the job of British workers to try and force the troops back to their barracks in Aldershot or wherever for two reasons: first we should not be sitting back and letting the British Government use troops to oppress workers anywhere in the world; second, you can be damned sure that techniques learnt by the British army in Ireland are going to be used eventually against British workers.

So one thing that comes from our policy is that we have to work to get the troops out *not* necessarily because that will be the solution to the Irish problem, but because we should always link our own problems with those of workers all over the world.

As stated at the beginning of this article, it is by no means the last word on the subject. It is more an attempt to arrive at an analysis of Ireland which is not just the mindless repetition of worn out left wing clichés.

It is an attempt to find an approach which does not alienate one set of workers from another, an approach which is based on working class solidarity — British, Irish, Protestant and Catholic.

We will try to publish all comments which are received on this new policy in the next issue of *Anarchist Worker*. Readers are asked to keep their contributions as brief as possible for reason of space.

J.C.

AWA Policy on N.Ireland

The situation in Northern Ireland is that capitalists from all parts of the world are exploiting the Irish working class and that religious, national and cultural traditions are being used to divide and further exploit the working class.

The AWA rejects the concept of an anti-imperialist struggle. We recognise that capitalism is an international system and that the struggle must be against both the international and the domestic ruling class. The struggle in Northern Ireland should be linked with struggles for workers power, throughout the British Isles, Ireland's economy being an integral part of the economy of Britain, Europe and the world.

We reject all para-military groups as nationalistic, elitist and divisive.

The troops presence in Northern Ireland maintains divisions within the working class that ultimately benefit only the capitalists. The only way that the removal of the troops could be meaningful is if they withdraw through united class action, including the self-activity of the troops.

The struggle will only be resolved when the people of Northern Ireland realise that their best interests lie with each other and not with para-military groups, capitalists and religious and other sectarian organisations.

As agreed at the National Conference in London, February 14 & 15, 1976.

time (and it has varied greatly) they take decisions without reference to the people they claim to represent.

They are not under the control of the Northern Irish people in the way that a workers militia would be.

It is also quite clear that they impose their ideology, often unsuccessfully, upon working people.

The Provisional IRA, for example, may have begun life as a Catholic defence force, but it has also done its fair share of intimidating Catholic workers as well.

The abstentionist campaigns run by Sinn Fein have been largely unsuccessful; they have failed to impose their ideology onto Catholic voters.

The ideology of the Provo leadership is fundamentally bourgeois nationalist — Green Tory. It is not the sort of republicanism which is likely to appeal to Protestant workers.

Groups like the UDA perform a similar role: they reinforce the idea that Protestant workers will do best by keeping Ulster in its present form, ie maintaining Protestant privileges.

They do not point out that for a worker, Protestant privileges amount to a better chance of employment. The real privileges are reserved for the businessman.

The para-military groups, by their ideological intervention, keep both sections of workers divided. The Provos hold out a

real potential of a socialist upsurge coming out of the sectarian politics of republicanism.

For both these reasons, it was inevitable that the troops would eventually be used against the Catholics.

However, the troops are not responsible for the divisions within the Ulster working class — those divisions existed long before the British Army went in.

It has been said that British involvement is the 'tie-breaker' in the Northern Ireland crisis. We have seen that British involvement will never *realistically* end until capitalism collapses, but there is still the question of whether pulling the troops out would help to solve matters.

If the troops came out of Northern Ireland tomorrow, what would happen?

To answer this question, it has to be remembered that the working class was divided before the troops went in, and also before the Republic became independent.

There is a tradition of Protestant working class opposition to republicanism, which goes back several hundred years.

Religion was the main tool used to divide the workers. It is still being used, but other arguments are also employed to convince

A large number of AWA members disagree with this article, and recognise the need to work for immediate withdrawal of troops from Northern Ireland. We see the British Army as being the main obstacle to working class unity and political activity. There will be an article in the next *Anarchist Worker* to put this position.

The scent of profit

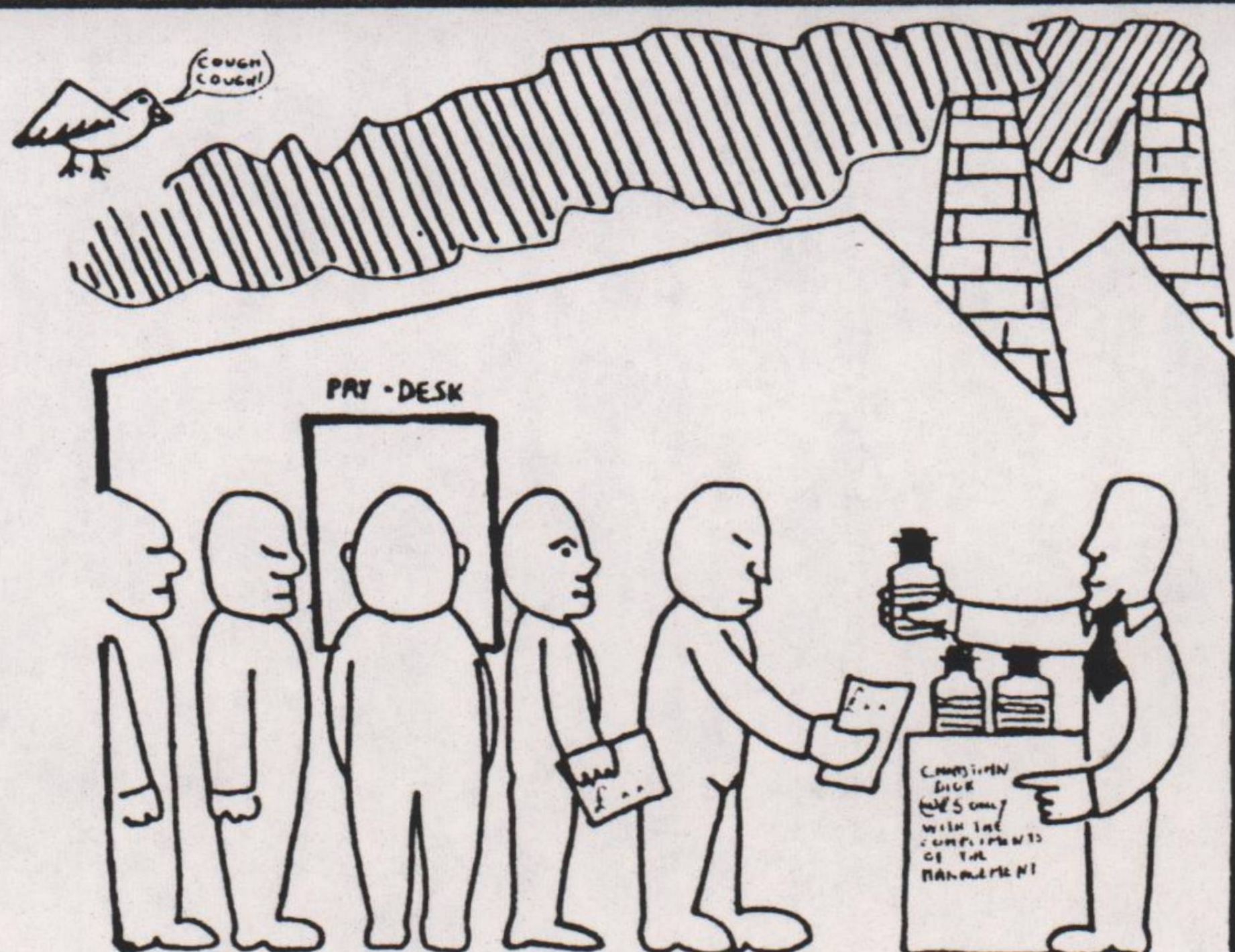
WHEN workers at a foundry in Ipswich complained of the fumes coming off a new resin sand moulding process, management got to grips with the problem immediately.

They put a scent in the sand to make the fumes smell sweeter.

Needless to say the ungrateful workers weren't satisfied by this lavish gesture and the employer may be driven to the expense of installing local exhaust ventilation.

Rumours that the Engineering Employers Federation is experimenting with joss sticks to defeat the problem of welding fumes are, of course entirely unfounded.

Hazards Bulletin



IRELAND - Abstention IS NO

OPPOSITION WITHIN AWA to the majority position on Ireland (which was presented in the May 'Anarchist Worker') has for its foundation two principles of revolutionary intervention.

The first of these is the realisation that substantial commitment to social revolution within the working class will not emerge in a blinding flash of mass enlightenment, or as the result simply of explanation and exhortation, but rather as part of an uneven and often painfully slow total social development.

The second is that our participation within this development should not be one of abstaining upon immediate suffering and oppression, by doing little else but comment about the need for international anarchist revolution, but that it should, on the contrary, begin from attempting to understand all the present contingencies, in order to contribute to the growth of anti-capitalist feelings through forwarding realistic solutions to contemporary injustice, and courses of action for relevant sections of the working class.

Within these guidelines, elements of the Irish situation which the majority approach appears to dismiss begin to occupy more significant positions.

This approach suggests that there is no direct way that workers in Britain can act in order to assist the growth of freedom in Ireland.

This shows a lack of clarity about just what the specifically British connection involves.

Thus at one point, the majority article stated: "Britain has never pulled out of Southern Ireland: it will never pull out of Northern Ireland either because the links of international capitalism are too strong."

But is the British army to be seen on the streets of Dublin? Within the last few years has there been internment in Cork, military house searches

in Limerick?

The point is, of course, that it is necessary to deal not merely with the grand tendencies of the international economic situation, but also with the ways in which specific economic and political components behave within them.

When many of the events we are dealing with occur upon a territory which the British state claims as its own, when the army of that state is blatantly a part of the situation, how can one say "Nor would a formal withdrawal of political control make any difference"?

And if it can be demonstrated that one characteristic of British involvement is its decisive role as the author of sectarianism and disunity within the Irish working class, how can one call upon these workers to unite and yet do nothing about the obstacles placed in their path by the British State?

British Connection

Critics of the majority policy in the AWA consequently believe that before we presume to speak about Ireland we must come to terms with what the British connection means, examining its consequences with regard to partition and to the present situation.

To do this we must begin with the past — a past, it is true, which has often been recalled, but one which we should nevertheless keep before us.

Throughout the entire history of Ireland's subjection by Britain, with its awesome tales of expropriation, eviction, famine, emigration and crushed rebellion, there has been only one instance of sympathy for the British rulers among social groups other than landlords (who were anyway in the main English)

This was the result of the 17th century 'plantation' of English and Lowland Scots in Ulster.

These Protestant colonists did not easily merge with the native population.

In fact, they could generally be relied upon to support London regimes against the latter because their religious and cultural differences were reinforced by distinct economic and social privileges, initially expressed in terms of different land and tax rights, and later through a unique industrial development geared to British Imperial trade.

At all points of their development, the privileged Protestant communities enjoyed a special relationship with Britain.

Within them, the policy of giving Protestants a better economic and social deal was enforced at every level of society.

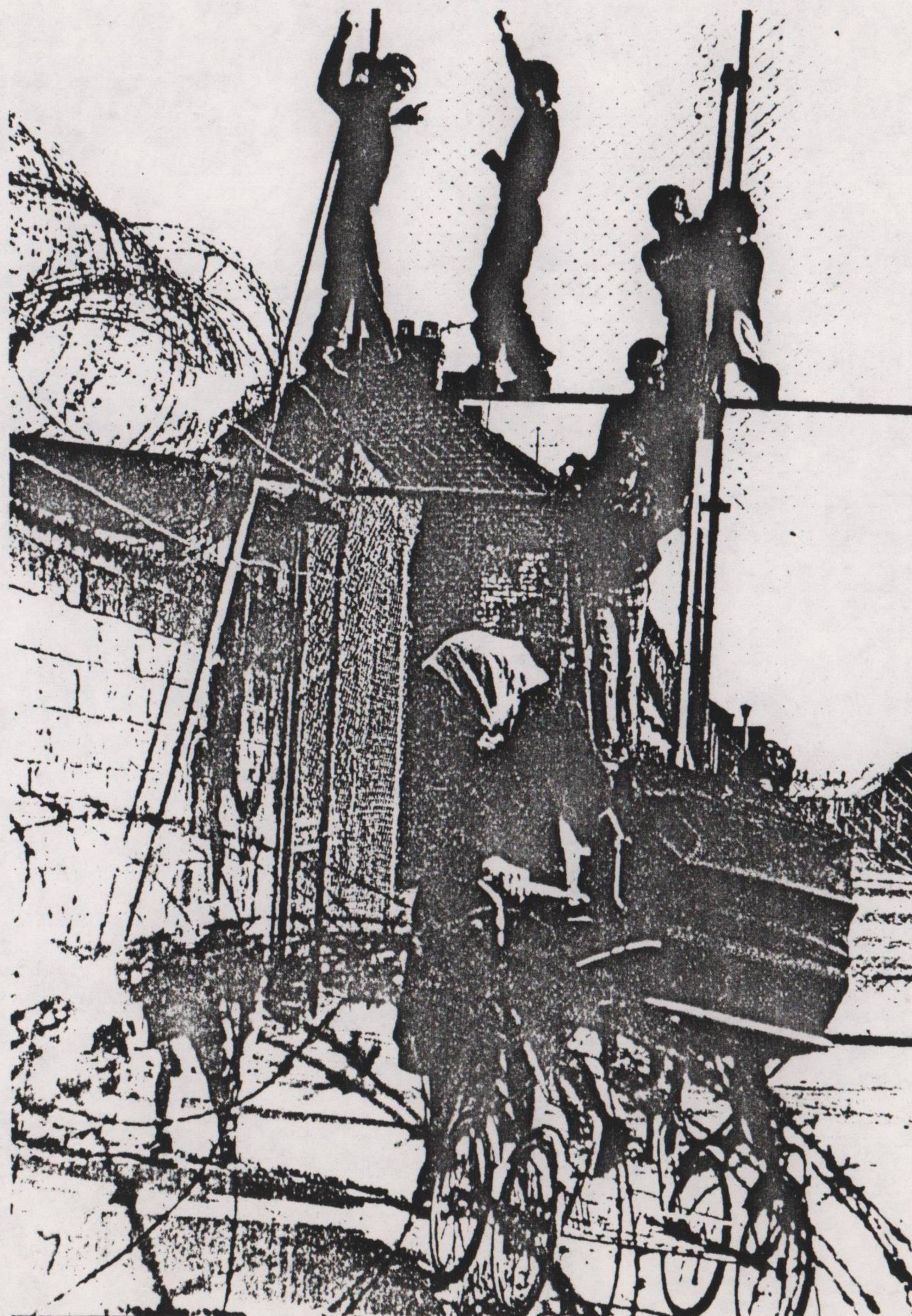
Thus, when the movement for Irish independence climaxed at the beginning of the century it was not merely the bourgeoisie, but all sections of the Protestant communities which felt threatened by the break with Britain, since an all-Irish government could have had no interest in sustaining and tolerating their privileges in the same way that Britain did.

So they stuck out for union for themselves and for the land and people surrounding them.

Such a compromise was moreover not unattractive to Britain — it meant that the plums of Irish industry remained in London's dominion and also that from a military point of view then still credible, the Western flank of England was not totally exposed should a free Ireland ally with hostile forces.

The British connection thus found continued political as well as economic expression through partition.

The 'Northern Ireland' created by this was little more than a blatant



alternative

institutionalisation of the 'Protestant Ascendancy' — sectarianism was built into it, as an integral part of its structure.

Its very territorial rationale was the largest geographical area within which Protestant Unionism could secure some degree of economic security, coupled with a permanent 'democratic' mandate.

This 'democracy' was further assisted by gerrymandering and by the stacking of local government franchise in the Unionists' favour.

Furthermore, Unionist political and economic hegemony entailed control over jobs and housing.

In Derry, for instance, where Catholics have a numerical majority in everything except seats on the Council, the heads of all the City Council departments in 1966 were Protestant: of 177 salaried employees 145 were Protestant and 32 Catholic.

Perhaps the most notorious example is Harland & Wolff's shipyard in Belfast, the city's biggest employer, retaining a workforce of over 10,000 — only 3-4,000 of them Catholic.

Discrimination

Meanwhile, in 1971, male unemployment in the Catholic Falls Road area was 33.8%, as opposed to 7.8% in the Protestant Shankill Road area.

Housing discrimination operated in three main ways. The first was to put Protestants into better homes.

The second was to re-house Protestants rather than Catholics (eg of 1,589 houses built by Fermanagh County Council between the end of the Second World War and 1969, 1,021 went to Protestant families: according to the 1961 Census, 53.2% of Fermanagh's population was Catholic).

The third was to refuse to re-house Catholics except in already overcrowded areas: Derry Council

eg, reduced housing commitments rather than build for Catholics outside South Ward.

Does anyone need to be reminded of the sectarian police apparatus which completes the picture?

Does anyone think any of these things irrelevant?

What we have been presented with over the last seven years — and what has made things even worse for the Six County minority (not to mention everyone else who has suffered) — is a crisis within this divisive apparatus of repression and discrimination.

It had become unstable partly because of the *changing patterns* of British and international capitalist interests in the island as a whole.

But ultimately it proved to be the oppressed minority itself which rose to threaten the system of repression.

This crisis has brought into sharper focus the crucial nature of specifically British involvement.

Most noticeably the British Army — introduced to stabilise the situation — became itself patently enmeshed in sectarianism.

Because the only 'peace' it could produce was a *military* one, and because the Protestant Ascendancy could not be attacked except by the dismantling of the Six County state, a tendency developed for the troops to be used almost wholly against the minority population.

A telling example comes from the early months of 1970.

The army knew by then that there were unregistered arms in some of the Catholic enclaves.

They knew that these were insignificant besides the vast *registered* Protestant armoury, and that they were seen by the inhabitants as a last defence against the real threat of armed attack.

They also knew that to attempt to seize these arms was to throw themselves behind the whole rotten hypocrisy of biased 'legality' which

ret their primary activity in this period became the search for them.

This not only appeared in itself as unwarranted aggression to the minority populations — it also provided the basis for the intimidation of entire communities through mass house searches.

(At the time, incidentally, no British soldier had yet been killed in the Province.)

Sectarianism

Subsequent events, through the Falls Rd curfew, internment (the first internees were all Catholic; later Catholics merely formed the vast majority) and 'Bloody Sunday' to the present day, have repeatedly demonstrated that the Army's only answer to 'sectarianism' has been to bear down on the minority population!

And is this not understandable, insofar as it is operating *within* and to *preserve* an essentially sectarian structure?

The depressing counterpoint to the role of the troops has been the growth of those currents in Unionism itself (eg Paisley and the UUUC) which aggressively reject 'political solutions' harmful to the ascendancy.

Reaching maturity through their *opposition* to Faulkner's 'power-sharing' executive and through the Ulster Workers' Council strike of May 1974, which gave the final blow to this latter, their hegemony in the Unionist camp and their willingness to strain their own independence from British governments to the limit is a frustrating price for the majority of the British ruling class to pay for its own policies.

Nevertheless, the reality which remains at the heart of this Unionist intransigence is the realisation that only one thing can destroy the Protestant Ascendancy — the withdrawal of the British connection which sustains it.

Fear of this may induce a degree of compromise — continued direct rule or ultimately even power-sharing à la Craig.

But such possibilities should not obscure the prime lesson for the

that it is not until the Six Counties are severed from the British state that sectarian rule can be fully broken.

The demand 'self-determination for the Irish People as a whole' is intended to focus upon the crucial position of the British state in its relation to Partition and to sectarianism in Ireland.

Troops Out

Raising it, along with the complementary 'Troops Out Now', is the way in which British workers can most effectively contribute not merely towards a resolution of the present troubles but also towards a situation where the working-class in Ireland will see more clearly the outlines of their mutual class interests.

The withdrawal of troops, within a 'self-determination' context will probably not, it must be admitted, end all immediate prospects of violence.

It is however, the only policy which can produce the long-term conditions for this, and for the ending of present oppressions and working class disunity.

Imperialism ?

An apology must be made, in conclusion, for the failure to reply directly in this article to the extensive comments on para-militarism and imperialism in the majority article.

The reason for this was that given the amount of space available it was thought advisable to concentrate on the main point at issue — the consequences of the British connection.

It is only within the parameters of this that the different implications of the various forces concerned can be fully appreciated, any attempt to merge all 'para-military' groups into an almost undivided 'reactionary bloc playing straight into the hands of the ruling class — especially with regards to the Republican movement.

It is only, moreover, in coming to terms with the political and economic complexities of this connection that any theory of imperialism, for or against, can have any relevance or