Irish Neutrality &
Irish Republicanism

be following article was
written in response to an article
in the 'Troops Out Movement' paper and has appeared
also in their February issue:

'Class Struggle' correspondant.

The October 1986 edition of 'Troops Out' magazine carried an
article by Anthony Coughlan on Irish neutrality. Two serious flaws
occur in this article. One is that the Irish struggle for liberation
cannot become strong enough to eventually rid itself of British rule and the other is the
statement that it is "Only the British people themselves, organised politically through Labour" that can change British policy on partition.

The author carries on saying: "Important though the struggle in Ireland is, it is the struggle in Britain for a change in governmental policy which will be decisive one." The present discussion of the Irish struggle for independence and in the struggle for neutrality. As will be shown, the two are inextricably linked but it is the question of neutrality that is the focus of this article.

Ireland's struggle for national independence and neutrality are inseparably linked and the roots of "neither against the war and the road that the Irish revolution took." The Br tish authorities only fixed bayonets. This echo of Redmond was carried an election campaign on an anti-conscription ticket.

Easter Rising: from March 26th to March 28th at the Camden Centre,
Birstall Heath, LONDON. M11, 11.30 - 5.30
From 24th March to 29th March in venues around London.
Book Fairs and Book Fair events in MANCHESTER: March 18th - March 21st
BRADFORD: April 1st - April 5th
BIRMINGHAM: 1967 WOMEN'S DELEGATION TO IRELAND

All women welcome: booking by registration only.
Details from: Birmingham Women and Ireland Forum
91 Court Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham B12 9LQ.

Irish Republicanism

The importance of this should not be underestimated. The drive of the Irish people for national independence was directly linked to anti-conscription. What undermined this position was the potential for another uprising. Even when, in 1913, it looked like Britain might lose the war and was desperate for more troops, the idea of enforcing conscription on Ireland was received with such skepticism that the Cabinet baulked at the idea. Even the arch-reactor Page Cerson stated "with great regret" that conscription in Ireland would cause such bloodshed as to be worth pursuing.

Continued on p.7.
The Irish people’s willingness to resist by conscription. Their problem was not so much that the British public that this effort was necessary and good, when 1914-1918, the 548,000 of Ireland were not conscripted. Lloyd George had warned that if Ireland was not conscripted, that anger would be felt in Britain and the Free State might be forced to act unilaterally with 45 and upwards to fight the battle of a Catholic nation on the continent without deep sections. The Irish Nationalists were spending their time in increasing the difficulties of this country by drilling and competing us to keep troops in Ireland.

Any uprising would greatly increase the demands on the British Army. The Cabinet agreed that only with 25,000 troops in Ireland, many of these in training, these forces would be insufficient to suppress a rebellion. In addition, it was felt that even with an adequate military support, it would be impossible to enforce conscription without the use of force against the Free State. An ultimatum to the Free State was issued. This ultimatum was to be accepted, or the Irish troops would be forced to fight conscription.

On April 23rd, 1918, a General Strike was held against conscription. The Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Croke, addressed the bishops of Ireland and stated that the strike was a protest against conscription and pledge to read at every pulpit in the Republic a leaflet to be forced on the Irish despite their protests.

"We consider that conscription forced in this way on Ireland is an illegal and unwarranted act, against the law which the Irish have a right to demand, and which are consonant with the laws of God."

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With the occupied six counties still at war with Germany, Ireland could not be said to be truly neutral. By 1914, the British government was clearly supporting an invasion of Ireland to support the German threat. From the beginning, the Free State authorities believed that German threat was very real and that conscription was necessary to support the British in repelling invasion.

NEW ANTI-CONSCRIPTION STRUGGLE

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In 1941, a conference of representatives of the Catholic Church and Nationalist Senators was convened in Dublin. A draft agreement was drawn up by Catholics throughout Ireland, which was signed by the British to enforce conscription. The agreement stated that it was to be carried out "by the most effective means at the disposal of the British and the Irish people and legislation necessary for the purpose." The agreement was signed by the British and the Irish representatives and it was to be carried out "by the most effective means at the disposal of the British and the Irish people to prevent the conscription of their men and women for military service in the forces of the United Kingdom." The agreement was signed by the British and the Irish representatives and it was to be carried out "by the most effective means at the disposal of the British and the Irish people to prevent the conscription of their men and women for military service in the forces of the United Kingdom."