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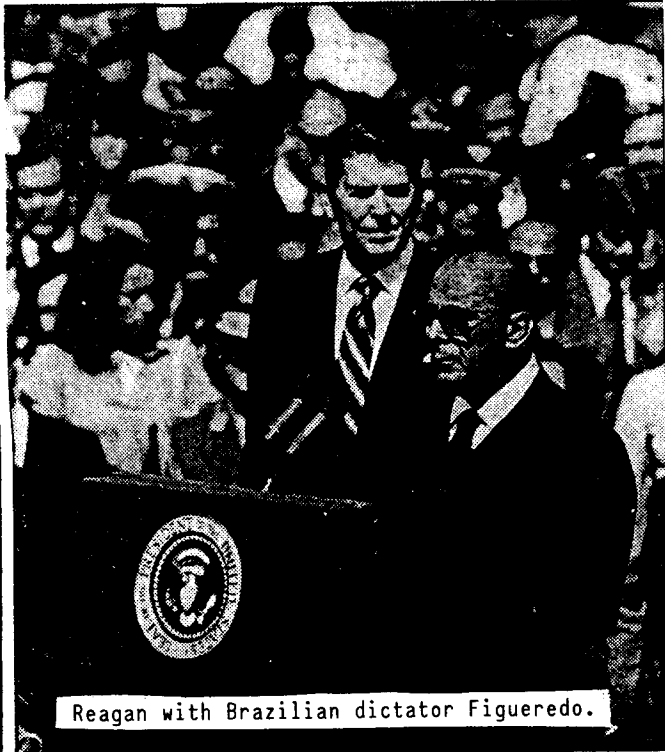
IMPERIALISM ON THE OFFENSIVE

Over the summer the United States has spear-headed the largest imperialist military offensive since it was defeated in Vietnam. The US fleet is stationed off both coasts of Nicaragua whilst US troops "maneuvre" on the border with Honduras and the CIA aids the Somosists in their attempts to overthrow the Sandinista government by force. At the same time, in Lebanon imperialist troops from four nations are backed by the US Navy in bombarding the Lebanese mainland. In Africa, the French government, under pressure from Reagan has sent thousands of troops into Chad whilst the US fleet patrols the Libyan coast and US forces are active in the Sudan.

What lies behind this situation? Whilst this offensive represents a stepping up of the aggressive action that was begun by Thatcher's war in the Malvinas and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, it would be a mistake to view this offensive as stemming from a position of strength on the part of imperialism. Rather, Reagan's recourse to direct military action is needed as a response to a world situation which imperialism is increasingly unable to control, in which new crises multiply and new elements of instability keep breaking through.

WORLD CRISIS

Both the world economic crisis and the threat of revolution by the masses are putting intense pressure on imperialism to act to defend its system and drive it on its present course. The "recession" in the world economy is but a manifestation of a much deeper malaise,- a growing and incurable dislocation of the world market. The advanced stage of decomposition afflicting capitalism is expressed through the massive destruction of productive forces. In the major capitalist countries that means mass unemployment and fierce class struggles. It means further impoverishment and even collapse of those countries which are dominated by imperialism. It translates into enormous armaments budgets and the grotesque accumulation of military hardware. It has also led to an enormous edifice of indebtedness of the major part of the world to the western banks. Brazil owes \$90 billion, Mexico \$85 billion and Argentina \$40 billion.



Reagan with Brazilian dictator Figueredo.

More and more countries are coming close to defaulting on their loan repayments. Indeed Brazil has already defaulted but has been bailed out for a second time by the IMF. In an attempt to avoid the breakdown of the monetary system several large debts have had to be "rescheduled" and imperialism has sought to impose strict conditions on the economies concerned.

There is no way for the ruling classes in the semi-colonial countries to pay their debts or to stand up to the increased economic pressure from imperialism. Every attempt they make to satisfy the rapacious appetite of the imperialists leads to convulsions. This was the case in Brazil recently with a massive strike wave against austerity measures. All these regimes are in crisis as a result and this is true for the states in Latin

America. Imperialism is tending to seek the subordination of these countries in a more directly colonial relationship. What goes together with that is its preparedness to use its own military might to ensure its interests.

At the same time as the USA is leading this offensive, it is being forced to shift the burden of the economic crisis onto western Europe and Japan, through a "strong dollar" and high interest rates. Tensions and trade wars are inevitable and growing US protectionism in the face of a worsening balance of trade is evident. However, the unity of the imperialist powers in their current offensive can be seen in their combined action in the Lebanon and through Thatcher's total support to Reagan in Central America as well as through French and US complicity in West Africa.

LATIN AMERICA

The response of the masses in Latin America to this situation has been an uninterrupted mobilisation, particularly since the Malvinas war. In Chile mass demonstrations and strikes rock Pinochet. The crisis of the dictatorship in Argentina is made worse by the announcement of a series of general strikes in defence of wages. How is imperialism to deal with this?

For Reagan, the starting point has to be the bringing down of the Workers and Peasants' Government in Nicaragua. Nothing short of crushing the revolution in Central America will suffice. Thus the preparation of a full-scale war involving if necessary direct US military force.

But we repeat, this intervention is not done from a position of strength. This is clearly seen in relation to the Lebanon. There is absolutely no hope of any reconstruction of a Lebanese state on any "normal" basis. Imperialism has to react to the collapse of the Lebanese state and the collapse of the whole system of rule which it imposed on the middle-east previously, centred on the use of the artificial Israeli state. The intervention in Chad is also very illustrative of the problem. The world situation is so critical that imperialism cannot even permit the situation to break down in a country which in itself is of little economic importance, whose borders represent nothing more than arbitrary lines drawn on a map by French imperialism.

HESITATIONS

In July, an official of the US State Department was quoted as saying:

We wanted to persuade the bad guys in Nicaragua and Cuba that we are positioned to blockade, invade, interdict, if they cross a particular threshold."

This statement is a declaration that imperialism is quite willing to draw a line of blood in protecting its interests and in the process trample underfoot the rights of nations to self-

determination, backing up murderers and torturers with its direct military might.

Hesitations over this policy expressed not only in the US Congress but also amongst sections of the European ruling classes represents fear that the revolutionary convulsions that this policy may unleash, will rebound on imperialism.

The aggression of imperialism can indeed be beaten back. A defeat for Reagan now would have far greater consequences than did Vietnam.

STALINISM

The role of Stalinism in this situation has to be understood. Despite the rhetoric in the past from Moscow over Central America and the Middle East, it is clear that as the current aggression of imperialism develops, the noises of the Stalinist bureaucracy grow less.

What has characterised the whole policy of the bureaucracy since the Yalta and Potsdam agreements after the second world war, is their collaboration with imperialism in preserving the status quo against revolution.

The real attitude of the Kremlin is revealed remarkably in an interview published in the German magazine *Der Spiegel*. Andropov said:

"We cannot forget that this took place on our common frontier, and what takes place in Afghanistan is not a matter of indifference to us. To give you an example, we may ask ourselves whether the government which may happen to exist in Nicaragua is unimportant to the USA....We are defending our national interest when we help Afghanistan."

In other words, the Kremlin bureaucracy sees that US imperialism has a "national interest" to defend in Central America. This is a direct assertion of the Kremlin's willingness to see the Central American revolution traded off in a sordid deal with Reagan.

The imperialists know that the bureaucracy is an important element in "controlling" the world situation. The pressure that they exert on the bureaucracy, itself an agency of imperialism, is being carefully directed and calculated towards that end.

KOREAN BOEING

In this light we can more clearly understand the South Korean Boeing incident and cut through the maze of claim and counter-claim and all the speculation. The first thing that must be said is that revolutionaries have no truck with the phoney outpourings of Reagan and Thatcher over the supposed "murder" of passengers. The thousands of people murdered in Central America and Lebanon by the imperialists and their agents are witness to the hypocrisy of all that. Some on the left, even calling themselves Trotskyists, have fallen into this trap.

We view the Boeing affair above all as a provocation aimed at strengthening the hand of the imperialists in their current offensive. Whilst in principle we are for the right of the Soviet Union to defend its borders, the whole development of the incident and its aftermath has shown that the Stalinist bureaucracy is incapable of carrying out such a defence.

The incident has given a weapon to imperialism against not only the opposition to Cruise and Pershing but allows it to make propaganda in justification of its own military aggression.

FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

The present developments in the world situation bring out the urgency of fighting to reconstruct the Fourth International through the building of revolutionary parties around the world. The work of all the sections of the Fourth International (ICR), to which the SLG is affiliated is being directed in particular to campaigning in defence of the Nicaraguan revolution and the revolution in Central America generally. Nicaragua is the front line in a world struggle. In Britain, the SLG will be at the forefront in this campaign. We will oppose Thatchers' support to Reagan and also British intervention in the Lebanon with the same energy as we fought Thatcher's war in the Malvinas and the murder of the H-Block hunger strikers.

Above all, the SLG calls for the widest possible campaign involving all those who defend the right of the people of Nicaragua to self-determination and defend the legitimacy of its government. We offer a united front on this basis to all those who want to ensure that the demands of the people and government of Nicaragua and the fighters of El Salvador, are realised.





Scargill and Chapple: both act to block the way forward, even if the methods differ.

BLACKPOOL 1983 TUC PREPARES NEW SELL-OUTS

This month's TUC conference in Blackpool witnessed a decisive move to the right on policy and constitutional issues. The right wing very considerably strengthened their position on the General Council and talks with Tebbit, presaged by a General Council decision on the eve of Conference, received the go-ahead by a two-to-one majority.

The tone of this year's Conference was set by Frank Chapple, outgoing TUC President and one of the most outspoken proponents of collaboration with the Tories. From the chair, in typical cavalier style, he again demanded that the Labour movement seek to establish a partnership with employers and Government and go down the road to complete surrender to the Tebbit legislation. In spite of some muted heckling, this starting note called the tune for the rest of the week's debates.

NOT INEVITABLE

The decision to talk to Tebbit and the virtual clean sweep by the right for the General Council now places a certain responsibility on those

"lefts" who retained their places. But in saying this we have to be aware of the role played by the "lefts" in the Conference itself and the period leading up to it. The victory of the right at Blackpool was not inevitable. The way for it has been paved by the action of the TUC "lefts", most especially the Stalinists by their activity before the Conference. Instead of mobilising a fighting campaign at grass roots level of defence against Thatcher's attacks, the whole orientation of the "lefts" and Stalinists has been concentrated on manoeuvres within the structures of the unions. "Broad Lefts" have been used as electoral vehicles rather than built as fighting regroupments.

SCARGILL'S ROLE

Complementary to this has been Scargill's activity. His posturing over pit closures and massive wage demands seems to have been calculated to produce no effective action in the coalfields.

Scargill's opposition to talks with Tebbit and his talk of political strike action could thus be treated with contempt by the right. Their line was "if you can't get your members to strike for wages and jobs, how can you talk of purely political action with any credibility".

Despite Scargill's oratory from the rostrum, his letter to the Newsline denouncing Solidarnosc lined him up nakedly with Jaruzelski and gave a further weapon to the right in ensuring its domination of Congress.

In fact the issue of Poland illustrates well the division of labour between the right wing of reformism and the Stalinists within the trade union movement. On the one hand Scargill, on the other Chapple with openly pro-imperialist positions, between them they obscure and oppose the interests of the working class; whether it be in relation to the defence of Solidarnosc or in opposition to Tebbit.



Alistair Graham

Certain new figures emerged at Congress onto the General Council. One was Alistair Graham, General Secretary of the CPSA. He played a leading role in the moves to distance the TUC politically from the Labour Party, in complete contradiction to the Conference policy of his own union. This also applies to his advocacy of talks with Tebbit. The new method of election of the General Council now provides a haven for such leaders who choose to ignore not only their own unions policy questions, but politically strengthens the General Councils independence in terms of Congress policy itself.

THE QUESTION OF LABOUR

Both at Conference and in the build-up to it, the question of changing the relationship between the unions and the Labour Party was brought up. Len Murray advocates a "dialogue" with all political parties whereas Chapple is an open exponent of breaking links with Labour, taking further his pro-SDP stand in the general election. Other leaders like Duffy spent the election period denouncing Labour's policies on questions like the EEC and nuclear disarmament.

The importance of the attempts to downplay the unions' traditional links with the Labour Party should not be underestimated, indicating as it does an attempt to stop the working class tackling politically the question of class leadership in opposing the Tories. It is the other side of the coin to Tebbit's attempts to impose "contracting in" rather than "contracting out" of paying the political levy. It is not so much a question of the elements such as Chapple who want to break the links with Labour. The problem is more that the trade union apparatus is seeking to prevent political discussion in the unions feeding onto the crisis of the Labour Party. The ban on canvassing for the Labour leadership elections at TUC is part of this. The bureaucracy wants to keep its hands free to support the strengthening of the right, overturning policy and witch-hunting that is needed by the reformist apparatus.

More than this, the focussing of the class struggle on action outside of parliament must at all costs be divested of a political and governmental perspective as far as the union bosses are concerned.

NEW BATTLES AHEAD

It would be wrong to conclude that the Blackpool outcome will be enough to stifle working class resistance to Thatcher. A new battle looms ahead in the public sector, with the POEU already committed to the fight against privatisation and workers in the NHS and Civil Service being singled out as the testing ground for the Tories new 3% pay policy.

The "economic realism" called for by the Tories and echoed by the TUC leaders, is being answered by the working class with a stubborn determination to resist further cuts and defend living standards. The new wave of attacks on the NHS involving thousands of job cuts is clearly going to meet with determined resistance not only from health workers, but raises the possibility of drawing in wide sections of workers, including those not organised in the traditional structures of the labour movement.

The strike by Vauxhall workers as well as the actions by miners in Yorkshire and Scotland as well as Brighton railway guards are indicators of the way in which the working class is preparing to engage in stubborn defensive action. Each time the battle has to confront the union leaders.

Thatcher knows that an obsequious TUC is not synonymous with the working class being beaten. The Tories have to translate their objectives into the reality of breaking what remains as the enormous strength of the organised working class.

RESISTANCE

The scene has been set in Blackpool for a number of bitter battles. Every section of workers that goes into struggle will come sharply into conflict with the TUC's course of capitulation to Thatcher. With no parliamentary avenue open, workers' demands will increasingly concentrate on their own union leaders. This is therefore a situation where genuine rank and file regroupment will tend to occur, trying to get around the blockage represented by the union leaders.

The construction of real broad lefts in the unions based on mobilising the members and not electoral manoeuvres is the task of the hour, along with linking up the battles in the Public Sector, particularly around the defence of the NHS. On this basis preparation for attack on Thatcher goes together with settling accounts with the TUC leaders.

MARY ARCHER

1912 – 1983

A MEMOIR

Mary Archer, a member of the Socialist Labour Group and a Trotskyist for nearly fifty years, died in July 1983 at the age of 70. The Socialist Labour Group places on record here an outline of her contribution to the struggle to build a revolutionary party, a section of the Fourth International in Britain.

She was born Mary Smith on October 23, 1912 in British Columbia, the daughter of an English emigrant, the accountant in a lumber mill. Her forebears were from Scotland and the industrial North-East of England, where several of her uncles belonged to trade unions of skilled workers in ship-building and engineering. Her mother and aunt were qualified primary school teachers. After the death of her father the family moved back to England, settling in her mother's home town, South Shields.

The decline of British imperialism after world war I expressed itself in widespread unemployment and distress in the coal-mining, ship-building and engineering industries of the North-East. The local employers and their hangers-on, living well and assuming airs of superiority to impoverished working people, filled Mary early on in her life with a disgust that never left her.

The General Strike of 1926 was welcomed in her home. For more than a week, the bus which took Mary and other children to school ran only by permission of the strike committee. She determined to find somehow the means to devote herself to the overthrow of capitalism. Having seen how the General Strike of 1926 and the Labour Government of 1929-31 were betrayed by the reformist leaderships, she became convinced that revolutionary methods were unavoidable.

In 1931 Mary succeeded in overcoming many obstacles and made her way to London to be trained in social work. She went to the London School of Economics for lectures and lived in a settlement in the East end of London.

Her intention at that time was to join the Communist Party as soon as she had financial independence. However, she never did so, being repelled by the ultra-left posturing and demagogic division of the working class which she saw in the "Third Period".

Mary was won to Trotskyism at the age of 21. During 1934 she became convinced of the need to join the struggle for new revolutionary parties and for a new international, following the betrayal of the German workers by Stalinism and Social-Democracy. Her adherence to the revolutionary movement was grounded in assimilating the



lessons of the German defeat and Trotsky's elaboration of the problem of the struggle for the United Front. At this time Mary consciously broke from her former "progressive" religious idealism and began her decisive adoption of the Marxist world-outlook.

In 1934 her profession took her to live and work in the North-East. She had already joined the Labour Party, but left it in 1935 in order to enter the ILP and work with the Marxist Group there. Mary was one of the delegates who voted at the 1936 Conference of the ILP to reject the capitulation of Fenner Brockway to the pacifists and in favour of "workers sanctions" to stop the supply of war materials for Italian imperialist aggression against Abyssinia and to assert the independence of the British working-class from the complicity of its rulers with Mussolini.

She was married to John in June 1936 and they went to live in Leeds, where she followed the advice of Trotsky and the "Geneva" Pre-Conference of the Fourth International and re-joined the Labour Party. There they began to get real experience of the mass movement, in the struggle against the social-patriots and the Stalinist policies of the Popular Front. She found work as a forewoman of the cleaners in a large clothing factory, where she put a stop to the system by which the workers paid the forewomen "backhanders" for their jobs.

Soon afterwards the Leeds District Committee of the Communist Party issued a bulletin defending the positions of Stalinism in relation to the Popular Fronts and to their necessary accompaniment, the Moscow Trials, the destruction of the Bolsheviks who led the October revolution being the price exacted by the Liberal bourgeoisie for joining a "Union of the Left". This bulletin said:

"Every honest worker will welcome the measures of the Soviet Government to safeguard the working-class movement from these Trotskyist terrorists."

It went on to allege that the Trotskyists had assassinated the Leningrad Party boss, S.M.Kirov:

"...working in the closest association with the Nazis."

All this was supported by an "exposure" of the local Trotskyists, in which Mary was "fingered" by name and her job and place of work were identified. Her Jewish employers took very seriously the suggestion that they were employing a collaborator of Nazism. They then realised that there was a Stalinist slander behind the Bulletin, and ingeniously suggested to Mary that she should collect information for them about the CP branch in the factory! She declined, explaining that, considerable as might be her differences from the Stalinists, they were of a very different order from her differences from the capitalist class - and immediately found herself outside the factory gate without a job. She then went to work in another clothing factory. During a dispute she led the canteen workers in providing meals for strikers and refusing to feed the managers or the scabs. When the strike was settled, the Stalinists in the clothing workers' union looked on passively while she was sacked again.

On the outbreak of World War II, Mary unflinchingly supported the internationalist position laid down by the Fourth International in 1938, as a member of the Revolutionary Socialist League, and plunged into building the Labour League of Youth in Yorkshire. During Spring 1940 she was able to win a majority at a conference of the Yorkshire Regional Labour Party opposing Labour's support for the Conservative Chamberlain Government in the war. Soon afterwards, she and John were expelled from the Labour Party. Their "crime" was to appeal to workers to abstain in a local bye-election. In this election the Labour Party was not standing a candidate, under the war-time electoral "truce" between the major parties. This left the choice between a Conservative pro-war candidate and a fascist pro-Hitler candidate!

During the war she worked in the civil service. From 1941-1944 she was secretary of the British section of the Fourth International, maintaining contact with its members in the armed forces and with the International Secretariat in New York and loyally producing and circulating the documents of the three tendencies in the RSL.

Mary took part in the fusion in 1944 from which emerged the Revolutionary Communist Party, a great step forward, in that it brought together all the Trotskyist forces in Britain, amounting to some 400, mostly produced in the struggle against British imperialism in the course of the war. But these comrades were still so inexperienced that they could not always understand what Trotsky had tried to explain in his writings. They were politically unprepared to analyse and respond to the changes in the working class in the later years of the war which led to Labour's electoral victory. Nor could they arrive at a coherent analysis

of the changes in Eastern Europe and China after the war. The RCP failed to understand that the first stage of the radicalisation of the masses unavoidably and necessarily passes through the great organisations. Consequently the RCP collapsed in 1949. Certain leading figures deserted Trotskyism to pursue their careers in Social-Democracy. Mary on the other hand, rallied to the group led by G.Healy, to take up the fight against the liquidators, including those of the "state-capitalist" tendency.

In 1952 the family returned to Leeds. The Labour Party was persuaded - with many misgivings - to re-admit Mary, and she plunged into the political struggle against the Tories, rallying the militants against the right around the paper 'Socialist Outlook', for which many "left" Labour MP's wrote and which enabled her to resume and deepen her contact within the mass workers' organisations.

Mary mobilised resistance to the efforts of the Labour Party bureaucrats to foist Denis Healey on the local Party as a candidate in a safe seat. This episode was recorded many years later in the gentleman's biography.

In 1953 the comrades in Leeds confronted the Pabloite threat to the programmatic basis of the Fourth International. This took the form of the notion that the international apparatus of the Kremlin could "project a revolutionary orientation" in the event of a Third World War. Mary opposed two lines of argument to Pabloism. First, she had learned by bitter experience all about the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism since the latter half of the 1930's and could not conceive of conceding a "progressive" role to it. Second, she knew that a bureaucracy may well feel obliged to make certain concessions to those whom it oppresses, but always so as the better to stabilise its own rule and to protect the privileged interests which it serves.

She therefore rejected any perspective of "progressive self-reform" of the Stalinist bureaucracy, as argued by Deutscher, as disarming the workers' movement in the face of the enemy. She adhered to the perspective of the Transitional Programme, of the political revolution for the overthrow of the bureaucracy and its replacement by the rule of Soviets - which led her to welcome without equivocation the revolt of the East German workers in June 1953.

Thus at a great turning point in the history of the Fourth International - the emergence of a crisis which was to place in question the very existence of the International - Mary was one of those who fought to defend its continuity. She was one of numerous cadres of the British section whose roots in the workers' movement provided firm ground to rally to the defence of the Fourth International. In 1953 the British section rejected Pabloism and took part in the foundation, with the American SWP and French PCI, of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

In 1955 she was elected as delegate from the Leeds City Labour Party to the Annual Conference of the Labour Party. Her main aim at the Conference was to voice the demand of the militants that Aneurin Bevan must take on the responsibility of leading the left. But how does a rank-and-file delegate get past the bureaucracy and speak from the rostrum? She waited until she saw a woman delegate from the TEGWU vacate her seat and leave the hall, then slipped into the empty chair in the area reserved for trade union delegations. She raised her hand to speak and the chair at once called her - to the fury of the bureaucrats on the platform, who recognised, too late, what had happened. Her appeal to Bevan was loudly applauded and was effective; Bevan spoke out powerfully against the efforts of the right to infringe the rights of Labour Party members.

In the same year, her house in Leeds was one of the bases from which the Trotskyists carried on the great fight to break the grip of the bureaucracy of the TEGWU on the dockers in the Northern ports.

In the following year her experience enabled her to establish relations with several important elements in the process of breaking from the Communist Party, some of whom were won to the International Committee. About the same time she was organising the poorest and most oppressed of the cleaning and portering staffs at Leeds University into NUPE.

The Labour bureaucracy witch-hunted all the leading Trotskyists, Mary among them, out of the Party in 1959, one of their specific aims being to isolate the Marxists from the rising movement in the Party against nuclear arms. This movement was expressed in CND; for a time it defeated the right wing leader, Gaitskell, but was to be strangled later by a coalition of Stalinism, the church and the right-wing, all bitter enemies of Trotskyism.

The witch-hunt merely confirmed that in 1959 Trotskyism stood poised in Britain to make a big advance. The Socialist Labour League was founded in that year and was generally recognised to be the only authentic representative of Trotskyism. Mary moved with the family to London in 1960, where, though cut off from the field of mass work which she knew best, she continued her work as a Trotskyist in the trade unions, organising laundry workers. Along with her elder son Peter, she was directed by the leadership of the SLL into intensive paper sales, the political value of which her experience led her to question.

The SLL was making a "turn" towards sectarianism in the early 1960's. In the course of time intervention in the conflicts inside the Labour Party ceased to be one of its major concerns. A "national Trotskyist" orientation was coming to supplant a messianic conception of the SLL for the role of the International and the fight to rebuild it. Consequently it could not take advantage of the opportunities which earlier work had earned.

The precious political capital assembled in the SLL as a result of rich experience in the battles of the 1950's, began to be squandered as a result of a false orientation. However, Mary was not yet in a position to recognise in these developments the wider consequences of the inability of the SLL to probe Pabloism to its roots. She could not, as yet analyse the connection between the failure of the SLL to deepen its roots in the workers' movement and the clique politics within the leadership, hiding behind a "hard" and arbitrary regime.

In the recollections of comrades, we often hear the word "selfless" used about Mary and there is possibly a source of misunderstanding here. She was very far from being a "soft-touch". She knew when her devotion was being disloyally exploited and when there was duplicity in political relations, and in 1963 she drew certain political conclusions about such a political set-up.

At that time, in fact, the SLL leadership achieved what neither Social-Democracy, Stalinism nor the bourgeoisie itself had ever been able to manage: it put Mary politically out of action, though not for ever. If this could be the case with a militant of Mary's calibre, we can understand how hundreds, if not thousands who came towards Trotskyism by way of the SLL were prevented in the same way from finding a place in the organisation and were lost to revolutionary politics. Like many others, she continued to express her loyalty to Trotskyism by supporting the SLL financially. In 1967 she faced the cruel blow of Peter's death in a road accident. In 1969 she made her way back once again into the Labour Party.

She had to wait until 1975, however, to assimilate the theoretical achievements of the old cadre of the OCI in France, who had drawn the lessons of the struggle against Pabloism, in order to feel confident enough to take up again the task begun forty years before, recognising that it could not be avoided by empty proclamations that the SLL was being converted into "the" party. By this time the SLL had been liquidated politically as a Trotskyist organisation and replaced by the WRP. This was no mere change of name. The WRP embodied a definitive break with the Trotskyist past of the SLL, rejecting the lessons of the work for forty years in the mass movement and in its breaking from the fight to rebuild the international through the split of the International Committee in 1971/2.

Mary joined in the work of the Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International. Armed now with political resources, she took up the fight in its British section, seeking to reconstruct an authentic Trotskyist organisation.

The old revolutionary's experience and studies could now bear their full fruit and the most mature and effective period of her political life opened. With minimal resources she set the example

of systematically mobilising militants through intervention directly in the crisis of the Labour Party, patiently helping them to overcome the obstacles which reformism, Stalinism and centrism place in the workers' path.

The basis of her work was the formulation of the **Transitional Programme**:

"The chief accusation which the Fourth International advances against the traditional organisations of the proletariat is the fact that they do not wish to tear themselves away from the political semi-corpse of the bourgeoisie. Under these conditions, the demand, systematically addressed to the old leadership - Break with the bourgeoisie Take the Power! is an extremely important weapon.

These were difficult years. The struggle to develop a theoretical grasp of the roots of the degeneration of the SLL was painful and protracted involving as it did the task of sifting those who genuinely strove to reconstruct the Fourth International and to build its British section from those interested in waving an anti-Healy banner.

Mary became prominent in efforts to defend the Irish national struggle in the British Labour movement. She saw this as a key element in the struggle against British imperialism. At the same time, she engaged in work in defence of militants in Eastern Europe fighting the Stalinist bureaucracy such as Edmund Baluka.

In Summer 1982 Mary developed new openings. The Haringey Labour Movement Strike Support Committee, of which she was the centre, organised united action by many sections of the labour movement in her locality in support of the NHS workers. It went on to mobilise support for DHSS staff, water-workers and post office engineers. She then played a key role in organising the conference from which the Ad Hoc Committee for a Public Sector Workers' Alliance emerged.

She was politically active as a Trotskyist up to the very last weeks of her life. On July 28, 1983, Mary died, quickly and peacefully, from cancer which she knew to be incurable.

Mary was born in the year of the Basle Conference of the Second International, which declared that if war broke out, they would "utilise the economic and political crisis created by the war to rouse the masses and thereby hasten the downfall of capitalism". The Third International of Lenin and Trotsky was founded in her childhood. In her twenties, Hitler was enabled to destroy the German Labour movement, the Fourth International was founded and she struggled to avert imperialist war and war on the Soviet Union. Her mature years were dominated by struggle against the destructive effects of revisionism. Throughout, Mary was highly conscious of her role in contributing to overcoming the crisis of working class leadership and bringing the prolonged death-agony of capitalism to an end.

As a woman and a revolutionary, Mary understood that the emancipation of women is totally dependent on the realisation of the communist future of humanity. She was therefore totally opposed to the petty-bourgeois feminism which sets itself against that great goal.

She emerged politically in the blackest period of the history of the workers movement, which culminated in the victory of Stalinism in the USSR and the betrayal of the masses to fascism in Spain which permitted World War II to take place. Mary accepted that revolutionaries try to struggle under all conditions. Through her we could touch the courageous generation of the Trotskyists who died in Nazi concentration camps and in the Gulag and were freed from prison to give their lives in defence of Stalingrad.

If Mary once said she would do something, it would have taken an earthquake to stop her. If she promised to be at a certain place at a certain time, everyone could rely on not being kept waiting or let down. She took every political task seriously, never promising what she could not perform. In her late sixties, she became an example to comrades less than half her age.

This optimistic, intensely practical character worked throughout her life to deepen her theoretical understanding. For her own reading, she preferred the straightforward, unadorned style of Lenin to the literary artistry of Trotsky, of whose revolutionary genius she had, of course, no doubts. What liberated the powerful sources of energy and character, with which everyone who worked with or against her came to reckon, was theoretical work based on the method of Marxism.

Mary was interested in and aroused by contact with working people, among whom she made many enduring friendships and from whom she drew many nearer to Marxism.

In the charlatans and betrayers of the workers' trust and their acolytes she inspired grudging respect overlying fear and hatred. Therefore, what Mary would wish least are conventional compliments to her devotion with nothing to back them up, especially from people who did their best to silence, frustrate and even slander her when she was alive.

The successes of Mary's recent years pose this question: why was it that in Britain, where we have so many people and groups who refer to themselves as being in some sense or other Trotskyist or revolutionary, that this comrade, rich in experience, came to the Socialist Labour Group, the section in Britain of the Fourth International (ICR)?

She could come into her own only in our International movement because she found in it the effective way to fight for her politics.

THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE
SOCIALIST NEWSLETTER
SEPTEMBER 22, 1983

BOGOTA CONFERENCE

SOLIDARITY WITH CENTRAL AMERICA!

The people of the tiny Central American Republic of Nicaragua are under an immense threat from the mighty military power of the USA. The US fleet has massive naval and air power stationed off both coasts. More than 5,000 US troops are on permanent "exercises" on the Honduran border, whilst right-wing bands armed and trained by the CIA are active on both border regions.

According to Miguel d'Escoto, Nicaraguan Minister of Foreign Affairs, these facts prove "that the Americans are preparing to go to war".

Why?

Above all, because the revolutionary process has deepened in Nicaragua since the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship in 1979. Not only has the Sandinista government taken steps to free the country from the stranglehold of imperialism, but the mobilisation of the masses, the Nicaraguan workers and peasants, to defend the gains of the revolution has been immense.

On the 19th July for example, a meeting was held in the town of Leon, 130,000 people addressed by D.Ortega (one of the FSLN leaders), to mark the 4th anniversary of the overthrow of the dictatorship. The slogans of the assembled crowds were "Peoples' Power" and "they shall not pass". Ortega spoke about a new law which provided for "patriotic military service" which would mean that "all the arms" would be "given for the defence of the country". At the same time he announced the cancellation of massive debts owed by 45,000 peasants.

In fact, the defence of the revolution has clearly been taken in hand by the masses. There is not an "army" in the normal sense. Rather, through the development of militias, involving workers, peasants and students, Nicaragua is a country where there is a "people under arms".

The context of Reagan's attack on Central America is the immense crisis of all the Latin American regimes subordinate to US imperialism.



Sandinista soldiers at Honduran border

Nicaragua is a beacon for the whole of the Latin American revolution. To take charge of the situation Reagan first of all has to act to get rid of the workers and peasants government in Nicaragua and crush the revolution in Central America as a whole.

At the present, the US has concentrated on using the Somocist "contras", backed by the Honduran army. The aim is to try to militarily occupy a part of Nicaragua and set up a "Stooge" government which would then be able to call for support from the other Latin American dictatorships and from imperialism.

This objective has been frustrated by the magnificent defence of the revolution by the Nicaraguan people. The great danger in the situation is that Reagan's next step will be a direct US military invasion.

THE PROPOSALS OF THE "CONTADORA" COUNTRIES.

The escalation of the struggle in Central America is putting the weak national bourgeois regimes of the region under great pressure. On one hand, they know that greater American intervention threatens to provoke the masses of the whole continent and thus threaten their own position. But they are also aware that a complete victory for the US in Nicaragua, Salvador and Guatemala would imply far greater domination of all the Latin American nations by US imperialism.

Mexico, Venezuela, Columbia and Panama formed the "Contadora" Group in January 1983. They have put forward proposals for a negotiated solution to the conflicts in the region. At the same time as they timidly try to pressure the US towards favouring negotiations, they also demand that Nicaragua limit its military defence. Their proposal is for "collective negotiations" of all interested countries.

The Nicaraguan government calls for direct bil-

ateral negotiations with the USA and Honduras. In doing so it strictly defends its own legitimacy and sovereignty as a government and the right of its people to self-determination.

This US imperialism will not do. Reagan is ceaselessly trying to present the Somosist "Contras" as a force which is representative of some section of the Nicaraguan people and thus put them at the Conference table. The danger of the "collective negotiations" approach lies in the possibility of opening the way for this.

THE BOGOTA CONFERENCE

From 24th - 26th July, the "Latin American Conference in commemoration of Simon Bolivar and in Solidarity with the peoples of Central America and the Caribbean" was held in Bogota, Colombia.

This Conference, Convened by all the main working class and anti-imperialist organisations in Colombia, was supported by delegations from all over Latin America and from Europe. Represented were the FSLN Government of Nicaragua, the FMLN and FDR of Salvador and the Guatemalan resistance.

There was also a delegation from the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) a body which includes the state run "unions" in Eastern Europe as well as genuine workers unions such as the French CGT. The FI(ICR) was represented by a delegation from its International Secretariat as well as its Colombian section, Convergencia Socialista.

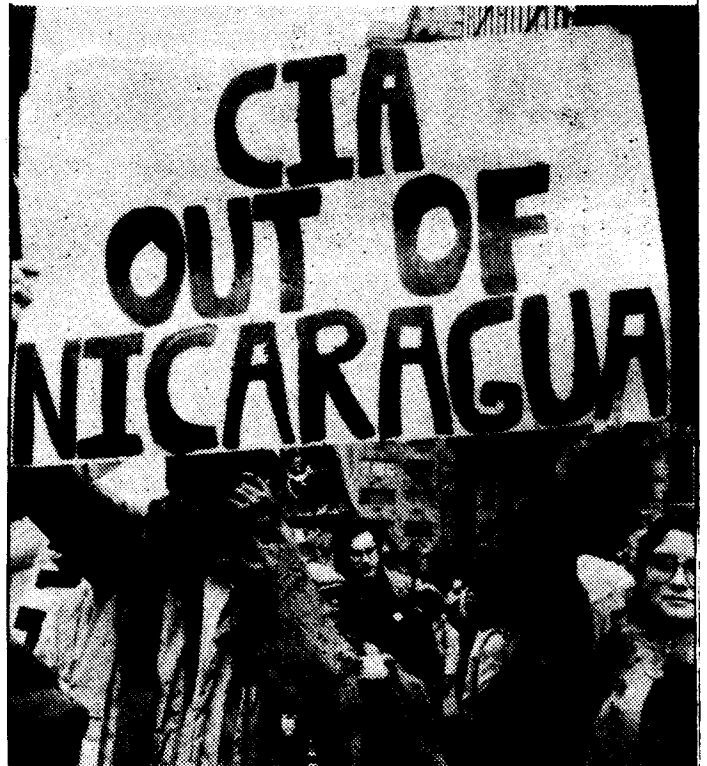
The Conference stood in support of the legitimacy of the Sandinista Government and in particular, it raised support for the demand that Nicaragua be enabled to negotiate bilaterally with Honduras and the USA:

"All negotiations must include, in the internal conflicts in Salvador, the recognition of the FMLN-FDR as a belligerent force and, in the case of Nicaragua, the respect for the undoubted legitimacy of its government. The proposals formulated by the Nicaraguan government would make it possible to advance toward a peaceful solution. We consider worthwhile the plan of the government to demand bilateral solutions. This Conference is in agreement with the proposal to put an end to all belligerence through the immediate signing of a non-aggression agreement between Nicaragua and Honduras. (extract from the Final Resolution of the Conference).

The Conference also clearly took a position against imperialist intervention and of support for the masses against the dictatorships:

"This Conference seeing the United States as being principally responsible for the situation, recognising the right of Nicaragua to organise its own political life and its sovereignty; demands the withdrawal of the military bases from Honduras

and from Panama; it recognises the FMLN-FDR as a force which is authentically representative of the Salvadorian people and condemns the naval blockades and military threats of the United States in the region. In relation to Guatemala, this Conference condemns the genocide ordered by the Rios Montt regime and carried out by the army; before world opinion, it holds the governments and landowners in Guatemala responsible for the armed civil war against the people who fight for national freedom under the leadership of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity". (further extract from the Final Resolution).



The final resolution of the Bogota Conference was carried unanimously but the question of support for bilateral negotiations was the result of a struggle against various organisations who opposed this policy or did not mention it.

This was seen when the representative from the WFTU was careful to make no mention of the question. At the same time, he attempted to divert the Conference with an invitation to attend an "International Day for Peace" to be held in Prague. The very place where militants of Charter 77 were repressed by the police last June - for demonstrating for peace!

We think that this Conference represented an important step in building an international defence of the Nicaraguan revolution and the struggles of the peoples of Central America.

The SLG stands for:

- * An End to US Aggression!
- * Unconditional support to the FSLN and to the Workers and Peasants Government of Nicaragua against Imperialism!
- * Unconditional Solidarity with the FMLN in Salvador and the GRUN of Guatemala!

POLAND THREE YEARS ON

SOLIDARNOSĆ

August 31st marked the third anniversary of the Gdansk agreement which led to the birth of **Solidarnosc** as the first mass independent trade union in one of the countries ruled by the Stalinist bureaucracy. To mark this anniversary, demonstrations took place in all the major towns and industrial centres of the country.

Contrary to the reports of the capitalist press the Polish workers did not fail to respond to the call of the **TKK** (underground union leadership), to mark the anniversary. The scale of the response and the methods which the regime had to resort to in response, demonstrate that the workers' movement is far from having been crushed.

A few illustrations show this clearly:

In **Gdansk** 31st August saw the town absolutely packed with police. In the morning around 30 people took part in a brief "official" ceremony at the memorial to those killed in 1970. These included six people supposedly representing the shipyards, including the Director and the chairman of Zaruzelski's "union". In contrast, at 2pm thousands of workers came to the monument from the shipyards chanting "Solidarnosc", Walesa among them. The ZOMO (riot police) attacked and the workers fought back.

In **Szczecin**, violent confrontations occurred on August 30th between thousands of demonstrators and the police. The ZOMO had to use tear gas and water cannon. Demonstrations continued all over the city until nine in the evening. The boycott of public transport was massively supported, particularly by the workers of the Adolphe Warski shipyard (where Edmund Baluka worked).

At **Nowa-Huta** thousands of workers from the Lenin steelworks fought the ZOMO, many injuries occurred on both sides and hundreds were questioned by the police. Tear-gas grenades were fired into a church where thousands of people were celebrating mass in memory of Bogdan Wlosik, a twenty year old worker shot by the police on a demonstration last October.

Such is the fear of the Stalinists that they cannot even allow a religious gathering in these circumstances lest the anger of the workers spills into the streets.

There is no "normalisation" of conditions. The "unions" set-up by the bureaucracy remain without members, held in contempt by the workers. The projected "dialogue" which the bureaucracy has

sought to promote blows up in its face. A very clear example of this was seen in August in the Gdansk shipyards. On August 25th, deputy prime minister Rakowski faced an audience of 2500 shipyard workers there. He said to them - "we are all one family here". "Except you!" came the reply. At this, the workers broke into chants of "Solidarity! We want free trade unions!" Walesa took the floor and was carried from the meeting shoulder-high afterwards to the monument to the dead of 1970.

Faced with Rakowski's statement that: "I see no possibility of sitting round the same table as Solidarnosc", Walesa raised the demand for opening negotiations. Rakowski again refused. "You will come on your knees!" shouted a worker. And Lech Walesa made the point: "In August 1980, our slogan was 'Socialism yes, its distortion no!'. Today it has become: 'Yes to socialism, no to the methods and the ways that you have chosen'."



Lech Walesa

This incident shows the true fighting-spirit of the Polish workers and people. Three years after the birth of **Solidarnosc**, eighteen months after the Zaruzelski coup, the political revolution opened in Poland goes on.

Faced with dogged opposition from the people, Zaruzelski only hangs on with the backing of the Kremlin. The people and workers of Poland have not finished "shaking the world".

IRELAND

THE CRISIS OF PARTITION

By Paddy Healy



Annual exchequer borrowing in the 26 county state is now running at 16½% of Gross National Product, one of the highest rates in the world. Debt servicing is absorbing the whole of income tax revenue and Irish income tax is the most penal in western Europe. Investment volume has declined by 20% over the last two years.

Despite large grants and tax holidays for private industry, employment in that sector declined by 8000 in the year to mid-April 1982 and production only increased by 1%. The total of people at work is about 1.2 million and the total on the live register of unemployed was about 180,000 at the end of 1982, of whom 30% were under 25 years of age. The labour force is increasing by about 20,000 annually and this is projected to continue for many years. Since these figures were announced there has been a rush of closures leading to an accelerated increase in unemployment and several sit-ins throughout the state. In 1982 the increase in unemployment was 39,000. If current trends continue there will be half a million unemployed by the end of the decade, a figure which will not be far below the total in work outside agriculture.

This would mean that the conditions which exist in the nationalist ghettos of the six-counties will have become the norm throughout the thirty-two counties of Ireland. And it is the unemployed youth who are the backbone of the IRA.

"MIRACLE" ENDED

The economic boom in the 26 counties which took off in the 1960's has long since come to an end. It involved the complete subordination of the economy to the needs of international capital. All previous restrictions on foreign ownership and control of enterprises were removed as were all restrictions on movements of profits out of the country. Tax laws were arranged so that manufacturing firms effectively paid no tax and large grants were made available to attract foreign firms. A free trade agreement with Britain, which progressively abolished all tariffs and eventual EEC entry were an essential part of the plan.

Before the advent of the world recession, which was marked by the first oil crisis, this policy appeared to be working. Whilst the total at work, including those on the land, did not increase, emigration slowed to a trickle. There was a massive transfer of the population from farming to industry and services. The farming population, who up to twenty years ago were a majority, now account for only twenty-two percent.

As the whole policy rested on the non-taxation and subsidisation of a big and growing sector of industry, money had to be raised elsewhere to pay for the infrastructure needed to underpin the industrialisation drive and satisfy the demands of the population. The massive investment in education, roads, electricity and other services came from two sources: loans were forthcoming from international bankers, but provision also had to be made to drastically increase taxes on personal income and spending.

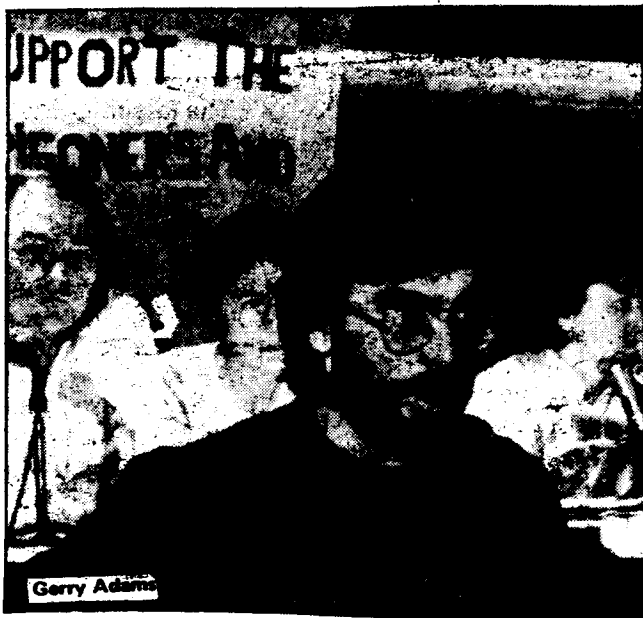
The PAYE system was ideal for extracting money from a population with ambiguous attitudes to a statelet based on partition. A turnover tax on spending was introduced in the mid-sixties and this was converted into VAT after EEC entry.

As the number of wage and salary earners climbed steeply, revenue from wage packets and spending climbed also. The rate of taxation on the paypacket was gradually raised by the simple device of taking no budgetary action to raise tax-bands and allowances in line with inflation.

The increased demand for labour and the shortage of skilled labour in the sixties, greatly increased the bargaining power of industrial workers. Wage gains were made in wave after wave of unofficial strikes. Eventually, in 1969, a strike committee representing 19 craft unions and backed by 50,000 general workers, routed the employers' confederation and established wage rates as the basis of all modern wages in the 26 counties. Gains were also made by the working class in education, social welfare and health care.

These gains bolstered the confidence of the already restive nationalist population in the North. The "civil rights" revolt called into ques-

tion the political mechanism through which imperialism rules in Ireland. This is the partition system established in the civil war of 1922-3. All the institutions of partition were racked by the crisis, including Free State institutions. The main bourgeois nationalist party, Fianna Fail, then in government, divided as to how it should respond to the crisis. The Irish Labour Party, which showed a left face throughout the sixties veered sharply to the right, offering to go into coalition with the traditionally right-wing party, Fine Gael, in order to protect the institutions of the state. The pro-Kremlin faction in the revolutionary nationalist IRA redoubled its efforts to constitutionalise the Republican movement and provoked a split in 1970 which gave birth to the Provisionals and the war.



The 32-county General Strike of all nationalists in response to the shooting of 13 civil rights activists by the British Parachute Regiment in Derry in 1972, dramatically demonstrated the threat to the institutions of the 26 county state arising from the Northern crisis. Together with the growing military resistance, this persuaded Heath to abolish the six-county parliament at Stormont in an attempt to ease the crisis. An important institution of partition had been sacrificed in order to protect an essential one.

The relative stability of imperialist rule which has existed since 1922 was to be no more. This fact has a bearing on all aspects of bourgeois policy in Ireland, including the economic policy of the 26 county government. Frontal attacks on workers' living standards were to be avoided if at all possible less further damage be done to the political stability.

The 1973-77 coalition government met the onset of the world recession and the first oil crisis by massive borrowing, not just for capital purposes but also to fund government spending. The growth of the number of wage earners ceased with dire consequences for government finances. PAYE

taxation was increased, both through inflation and by direct government action. Its blatant anti-nationalism combined with the effects of the recession, led to the coalition being swept from power by a landslide. It was replaced by Fianna Fail, the bourgeois Bonapartist party par excellence.

The new government sought to combine popular concessions with wage restraint, particularly in the public sector. This policy was defeated by a five month strike of postal workers which enabled wage gains in private industry to be fed into all areas of the public sector. The crisis of state finances was severely worsened. Repayments on foreign loans were becoming a major burden which was exacerbated by high interest rates and currency movements.

TAX ISSUE

A new crisis soon erupted on the question of PAYE taxation which had become completely intolerable. The Dublin Council of Trade Unions called a one-day general strike despite the opposition of top union leaders. The strike was 26-County wide and in Dublin alone 250,000 marched (the equivalent in London would be a demonstration of in excess of 2 million). Concessions, though temporary, had to be made.

The conservative Fianna Fail leader Lynch fell and was replaced by the more populist Haughey, who had been acquitted of attempting to import arms for the North in 1969.

The 1979 tax demonstrations marked the final failure of the policy of complete subordination of the economy to the needs of international capitalism.

The international recession has torn away the curtain of relative prosperity which hid the modern form of super-exploitation of the Irish people. Through penal taxes the profits of the multi-nationals were being subsidised. The state alone was paying about £1,000M per annum to foreign banks as compared to a total income tax revenue of about £1500M p.a. Worse still, the policy was not jobs on the required scale and the unemployment bill was soaring.

Though careful not to dwell on the vast hemorrhage of funds out of the country, established economists began to criticise the failure of foreign investment to generate self-sustaining economic development despite massive state subsidies and tax holidays.

The refusal of all 26-County governments to extract any significant tax revenue from farmers and the non-salaried middle class makes the burden of taxation on workers even more provocative. This tax free status of the middle class is the modern form of state patronage which was always exercised by the 26-County government. It is necessary in order to maintain middle class support for the institutions of the state which lack bourgeois democratic legitimacy. It has succeeded in keeping

significant middle class forces out of the Republican movement.

H-BLOCK CAMPAIGN

The mobilisation behind the prisoners was 32-County wide, though it realised a higher intensity in the 6-Counties. It was essentially a campaign for Irish unity and it threatened to open the revolutionary crisis in Ireland as a whole by defeating a 26-County government on the fundamental question of imperialist domination and partition. The scope of the mass movement and the fundamental problems of class rule that it raised caused the Republican leadership to retreat. The crowd of 100,000 assembled at Bobby Sands grave and the 250,000 who stopped work throughout the 32-Counties were told that the IRA would "respond in its own way in its own time" and that they should go home in peace. Far from attempting to lead a general strike, the Republican leaders would not allow any national demonstration in Dublin until the campaign was defeated.

The unstable coalition government which replaced Fianna Fail during the H-Block campaign fell after a few months when it attempted to reduce living standards. It was replaced by a more unstable Haughey government backed by a handful of deputies sympathetic to Stalinism. This also survived less than a year and failed in an attempt to introduce austerity measures. The bourgeoisie has now succeeded in putting together a government which was able to get an austerity budget through the Dail. But it is a crisis ridden government. The Minister for Finance freely admitted in his budget speech that the government was committed to play their part in rescuing the international financial system by reducing foreign borrowing. Accordingly virtually all wage and spending taxes were increased and government spending cuts introduced. These measures are deepening the recession which is already undermining revenue from spending taxes. If big reductions in the number at work occur revenue from PAYE will also be threatened. A new revolt in taxation was temporarily snuffed out with the help of trade union leaders.

Attempts by the government to introduce wage restraint have already been defeated in the private sector. The key creamery employers, covering 10,000 workers, held out for less than a day against a recent strike.

In an attempt to keep similar settlements out of any part of the public sector, the government has effectively conceded a comparable increase to give to general workers in direct state employment.

In an attempt to establish a stable government which could launch such attacks, the Taoiseach, Dr. Fitzgearld made concessions to extreme demands by the Catholic hierarchy to make abortion, already illegal, also unconstitutional. Forced by liberals in his own party to retreat on this commitment he now faces a revolt by pro-clerical

hardliners in his own party.

The votes for Sinn Fein in the Assembly and Westminster elections are a new blow to the stability of the 26-County state. Irish unity, which receded as an immediate possibility after the defeat of the H-Block campaign, is re-emerging as a credible way forward for the Irish people. The constitutional nationalists of the SDLP who protect the fundamentally collaborationist 26-County state have been severely damaged

The all-Ireland Forum, set up by the SDLP and from which Sinn Fein is excluded, has been dealt a heavy blow.

THE THREAT TO THATCHER

Ireland is the achilles heel of the new Tory government. The hanging debate showed the great caution with which the British establishment must treat measures affecting Ireland. The speeches of John Hume and Merlyn Rees were essentially pleas not to provoke the collapse of the 26-County state.

The British government has 15,000 regular troops in the six-Counties. It has a further 15,000 locally recruited crown forces in an area where it has the political allegiance of 60% of the population.

The collapse of the 26-County state would pose problems on a completely different scale. After all international agencies (UN troops etc.) had been exhausted, the British state would have to use its own forces because in the last analysis it has responsibility for maintaining imperialist rule in Ireland. Would 100,000 troops be enough to hold down Ireland? Conscription would have to be introduced.

Revolutionary conflict in Ireland would be a rallying point not only for the Irish in Britain but also for those sections of the British working class who were becoming convinced of a revolutionary solution to the British crisis.

The fall of Stormont was a blow to the British state. The collapse of Leinster House (the Dail) would be a catastrophe.

Solidarity with the Irish revolution has a key role to play in the building of a revolutionary party, section of the Fourth International. We, in the Irish section of the FI(ICR) are fully aware of the excellent work done by our comrades in the SLG during the H-Block campaign.

In the wake of the Sinn Fein electoral victories and the deepening crisis of the 26-County state the Trotskyists in Britain and Ireland will be fighting side by side toward the development of perspectives for the seizure of power in Britain and Ireland.

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