

WORKERS SOLIDARITY

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IRISH ANARCHIST MAGAZINE

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X WE ARE BACK. It is almost a year since the last issue of *Workers Solidarity* and you want to know what happened. Ireland has little or no anarchist tradition so rather than just learning from those who went before us we had to make a fair few mistakes while we were developing our politics and building the *Workers Solidarity Movement*. The biggest mistake we made was putting too much emphasis on day-to-day activities at the expense of achieving a deeper and clearer understanding of the anarchist idea — it's libertarian values as well as its socialist goal.

Since our formation in 1984 we gained a measure of understanding and respect for anarchism in the trade union and left wing circles where our members were active. We made information about anarchism a bit easier to find by publishing pamphlets and a monthly paper. We took part in industrial and political struggles such as the Dunnes Stores anti-apartheid strike, the Divorce Action Group, the UCD cleaners fight for trade union rights, and the pro-abortion rights "Defend the Clinics Campaign".

For Starters

Unfortunately some members found it difficult to come to terms with the temporary lull in the momentum of the class struggle that we have seen in the last few years. Instead they started looking for short cuts to socialism and eventually rejected anarchism. When they resigned the remaining members decided to take a good look at what had happened and to learn from the mistakes we had made. After much discussion we identified much of what went wrong and now are in a position to step up our level of activity.

With our, temporarily, reduced numbers it would be quite a task to continue producing and selling a monthly paper. So *Workers Solidarity* has become a quarterly magazine. With the extra pages we hope to be able to go into issues in more depth. However we will not be able to cover current issues to anything like the same extent as before, what

is a burning issue now may not be in three months time and some of the information would be pretty stale.

The main aim of the magazine remains the same. It is not to throw out the "correct line" and expect you to accept it unthinkingly. It is to explain things, to win a "battle of ideas". We know that genuine socialism can not be created unless thousands upon thousands of people understand how to change society and have a clear vision of the type of society they want to live in. There is no way a tiny handful of "experts" or leaders can substitute themselves for this.

We want *Workers Solidarity* to be part of the process of spreading anarchist/socialist ideas and methods of struggle. We hope it will serve as a "magnet" to attract readers to the *WSM* to join in the struggle for socialism, freedom and human dignity.

THAT'S CAPITALISM

Well known friend of ex-Nazi war criminals and President of Paraguay, Alfredo Stroessner, has been re-elected for the ninth time. He has run, unopposed, nine times since becoming dictator in 1954. This time he got 89% of the vote, compared with 90% in 1983. Results at one polling station were announced ten minutes before the close of polls. In another constituency 40% more votes were cast than were listed in the electoral register.

South Africa's "Justice Department" was busy last year. One hundred and sixty four men were hanged. As with everything in the apartheid state, blacks bore the brunt of the repression, making up one hundred and fifty five of those executed. During three days in December twenty one blacks were hanged in succession — to clear the growing backlog of blacks now under sentence of death.

More than thirty juveniles are on "Death Row" in the USA for crimes

committed before they were 18. In Oklahoma age is not specified as a mitigating factor, even for offences that carry the death penalty. In 1977 the US government signed two international treaties forbidding the sentencing to death of youths under 18, but in the decade since they have refused to ratify either treaty.

"Socialism or barbarism" may sound like just another bit of jargon. Until you consider that... this century has seen 237 wars which left 99 million people dead. Right now every minute of every day the governments of the world spend 1.7m dollars on weapons of death. The cost of just one jet fighter would pay for the vaccination of three million children. Instead, ten die every minute of every day for the want of vaccines. The much lauded INF treaty will reduce nuclear arms by 4%, which leaves the other 96% still ready to be fired. The main aim of the deal was not really to reduce the nuclear threat — but to reduce the *cost* of the nuclear

but to reduce the cost of the nuclear threat, as both the US and USSR governments want to cut back on their spending.

The Stalinist rulers of Rumania know a thing or two about nepotism. Prime Minister Ceausescu has his son Nicu lined up to take over as party boss on his father's death. His wife is the vice-premier and 28 other close relatives hold important state and party posts. Egoism gets a look in too. On his recent birthday Ceausescu invented telegrams full of glowing tributes and congratulations from Thatcher and Reagan and had them printed in the daily papers.

Prisoners in Saudi Arabia can have their sentences reduced by half if they manage to pass an exam proving they have memorised the Koran, which has 114 chapters.



TRYING TO TURN THE TIDE

THE "DEFEND THE CLINICS Campaign" is running out of steam. The recent Information Picket on Dublin's O'Connell Bridge attracted only 20 people. It is unable to mobilise large numbers. Even those political parties with a pro-abortion policy are running scared of even raising the issue.

It is not too surprising. It is only five years since the "pro-life" amendment to the constitution was voted through 2:1, and it is debatable how many of those who voted against were actually voting in favour of abortion rights. Since then there has been a further shift to the right in Ireland. Even the promotion of condoms as a means of preventing the spread of AIDS was a matter of great controversy.

DEFIANCE OF LAW

Trying to turn this tide is a mammoth task. It is not possible to mobilise lots of people on the streets. First the argument about abortion has to be won. And while that is being done information has to be provided. This means defiance of the law.

The campaign is not even popular with all who should be its friends. Some, the Labour and Workers Parties in particular, haven't given their support because they don't agree with giving abortion information to women because that is against the High Court injunction. The fact that they haven't controlled the campaign may also have had something to do with their stance.

NOT TRUE

An example of this was seen at the recent ICTU women's conference with a bizarre attack from Gaye Cunningham (ESB Officers Association) accusing the campaign of collecting money under false pretences and of not supporting the legal battle against the Hamilton Judgement. This despite the fact that at a meeting in Liberty Hall in January, '87, about £900 was handed over towards the legal appeal, and that since that time the campaign has sought money exclusively for such things as printing leaflets or Fact Packs, establishing telephone helplines or booking halls for meetings etc.

The Hamilton Judgement, delivered on January 12th 1987, granted the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child an injunction against



Picket on Dublin's O'Connell Bridge

Photo: Workers Solidarity

Dublin Well Woman Centre and Open Line counselling, restraining them from giving non-directive pregnancy counselling. As a direct result, Open Line shut down and Well Woman no longer provide this service. There is now no legal clinic a woman who finds herself with an unwanted pregnancy can go to to receive advice on ALL the options open to her, free of intimidation or judgemental attitudes. The judgement is a new attack on the few rights women possess in holy Ireland. It also has implications for the future availability of the IUD contraceptive device and the morning after pill — and has already had an effect on the speed with which women can make it to England for a termination: there is a tendency now for Irish women to attend abortion clinics later in their pregnancies, resulting in increased cost and greater trauma.

NO EFFECT

Needless to say, despite contributing to the climate of fear and intimidation, despite having caused a huge fall-off in the number of women

attending for post-abortion counselling/check-ups, the judgement has had NO effect on the number of women travelling to Britain for abortions. In the first quarter of 1987, 987 women declared Irish addresses in British abortion clinics. The real figure is obviously higher — i.e. over 4,000 a year, over 10 a day.

Since January 1987, the campaign has published, and distributed to a wide range of organisations, a complete Fact Pack on Abortion, distributed tens of thousands of leaflets, put up posters around the city, organised pickets and public meetings, run information stalls in central Cork and Dublin, collected hundreds of signatures on a petition which endorses the campaign's aim to make the law unworkable, and, most importantly, helped establish phonelines in Cork, Galway and Dublin which provide a crisis service for women who need information.

HELP WANTED

All of this costs money. The cam-

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paign has been running on a shoe-string budget, and is once again nearly broke. The WSM urges everyone to affiliate to the campaign or to get their organisations or unions to do so. This will ensure that the information remains available, and the forces of reaction will not have succeeded in silencing us. Further, we urge all trade unionists to take this issue up at branch, or any, level. Discussion could be based around motions such as:—

- 1 This Branch/Congress condemns the Hamilton Judgement and upholds the democratic wishes of the 67%* of Irish Women who support the provision of information on Abortion as a Right. (*Sunday Press opinion poll).
- 2 This Branch/Congress supports the Defend the Clinics Campaign in its aim to make the law unworkable by continuing to provide this vitally needed information and to this end will make a donation to the Campaign of £....
- 3 This Branch/Congress will contact the Defend the Clinics Campaign, request information on Abortion, keep that information on hand and make it available to any woman who wants it.

FACING REALITY

Motions like these provide a chance to get discussion of the issue with your colleagues and workmates. They are important. They keep the issue alive and they win new support for a woman's right to choose. If we are honest we have to face the reality that we won't turn the right wing tide this year, or next — but we can make small gains and we can keep the phonelines in operation. This is what has to be done at present.

Information on abortion

DUBLIN: 01-794700

CORK: 021-502848 (Monday evenings).

BELFAST: 084-324914.

LONDON: Irish Women's Abortion Support Group,
031-251 6332/3 (Tuesdays,
6-9 p.m.)

For literature and information about the campaign write c/o 6 Crow Street, Dublin 2.

WASTED LIVES

In 1986, 35,00-40,000 more people than usual dropped dead in the USA. It might seem like nothing but the chances of this happening out of the blue are actually one million to one. When looked at closer the statistics show that the greatest jump in deaths was recorded in the four summer months of May to August. So? In April 1986 the nuclear reactor at Chernobyl blew up, sending a plume of radioactive smoke high into the atmosphere.

Eleven days later this radioactive cloud reached the USA, after passing over Europe and Ireland. Could these two facts be related? Such a theory would normally be scorned at by the assortment of "experts" who regularly defend nuclear dumping. This time they have remained quiet. Further statistical analysis has confirmed that a link between these deaths and Chernobyl is likely.

When scientists computed levels of radioactivity in milk samples taken in the US during the summer months and the increase in the death rate, the similarities were striking — the biggest increases in the death rate occurred in those areas where the highest levels of radioactivity were recorded in milk.

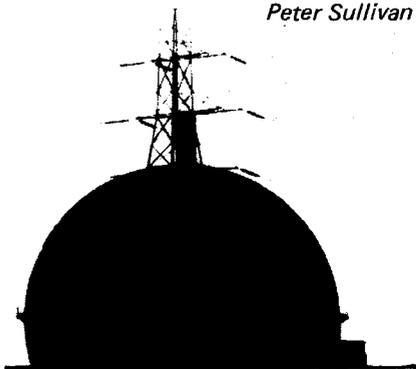
The fallout from Chernobyl that settled on the US (and Ireland) was "low level" radiation. We were told that low level radiation was harmless. These findings, along with recent reports coming from Japan, are now beginning to undermine this theory. It is emerging that such radiation is much more dangerous than was thought because of the particular way it affects humans. The idea that there is a "safe" level of radiation that can be discharged into the environment is more and more being shown to be a sham.

This has important implications. Low level radiation is the by-product of all work with nuclear power, both in power plants like Sellafield and any testing with nuclear weapons. Moreover low level radiation is by far and away the biggest waste product. It is so large in volume that storage facilities for it are not even considered. Hence the extensive dumping by British nuclear plants into the Irish sea.

It is unlikely that these recently reported connections between low level radiation and human death will lead to anything. The nuclear industry

both East and West plays a vital part in the arms production of both blocs. The electricity they generate is never valued costwise relative to other means (hydroelectric or coal-powered generation). That would only show up how expensive, and dangerous, it is. Its value to the ruling class lies in its contribution to arms research and its production of the raw material for nuclear weapons. Not to mention the control it gives governments over electricity supply. Compared to this the cost of human life is very cheap.

Peter Sullivan



X Working for £40

IT USED to be the case that students stayed on at school and did the leaving Cert so they would get a better paid job. At the moment Whitehall House Secretarial College, which is a state school run by the Dublin VEC is offering some of the cheapest labour to be had.

A letter dropped into businesses around the city seeks work for students who have their Leaving Cert and have a completed secretarial course qualifying them in:

- Shorthand,
- Typewriting,
- Audio Typewriting,
- Word Processing,
- Computer Studies,
- Secretarial English,
- Computerised Accounts,
- Business Calculations,
- Data Processing,
- Office Practice,
- Communications.

Any boss can have one (or more) of these students "at a moderate salary of approximately £40 per week". You can't blame the school for trying to arrange jobs for its students but you can get angry with a system that will only offer slave labour wages to those who have tried hard to get off to a good start in life.

WATT'S GOING ON

THE DAILY MIRROR, the SUN, TODAY and the DAILY STAR all ran stories on the fact that Tom Watt ("Lofty" from Eastenders) was interviewed in the British anarchist paper *Direct Action*. All four tabloids distorted what Tom actually said. The SUN has a particular grudge against Tom because he regularly picketed them during the Wapping dispute. Here is the original interview – compare it to the stories in the tabloids and see what we mean when we talk about Fleet Street's bias and lies.

What was your background before being an actor – like work and union activities?

My background was a nice comfortable middle class one. My parents were both teachers. I grew up in Holloway/Finsbury Park – round there. When I left school I worked for a year at an electronics factory and the words "trade union" were never mentioned. I wasn't particularly concerned or interested at the time – only in doing the job, getting the money and getting drunk. Then I went up to Manchester and did a degree in drama. At the same time I started a theatre company called the "Inner Threat" which did two or three productions.

Political productions?

Well no, it was more political in the way it was organised. One of the Plays was political called "Lay-by" about rape and pornography and the connection between the two. These were away from the university and mainly for theatres in Manchester.

Fringe theatres?

Well, we did do some at the Lesser Free Trade Hall. Manchester council are quite good like that. They'll let anyone use premises and if you write them a nice letter they'll give you £500 or so. Then I left the country for a couple of years, travelled in Guatemala and Mexico and lived in San Francisco working as a bicycle messenger for a year... Then I came back here and started a theatre co-op with a group of like-minded people who wanted to do theatre in a particular way... Its one thing to talk about doing political plays – that's one small part of it – it's much more important in how you organise what you're going to do. There's a lot of, well, boring political plays

that aren't going to reach anyone who doesn't already know what you're talking about.

We realise you don't write "Eastenders" but do you agree it has a liberal perception of working class people, for example the unemployed are portrayed only as victims who either become prostitutes or have breakdowns; there are no trade unionists or community activists who may see their condition in any kind of political light.

Yea, I think that's a fair observation. (laughter).

Well, do you discuss it with the scriptwriters?

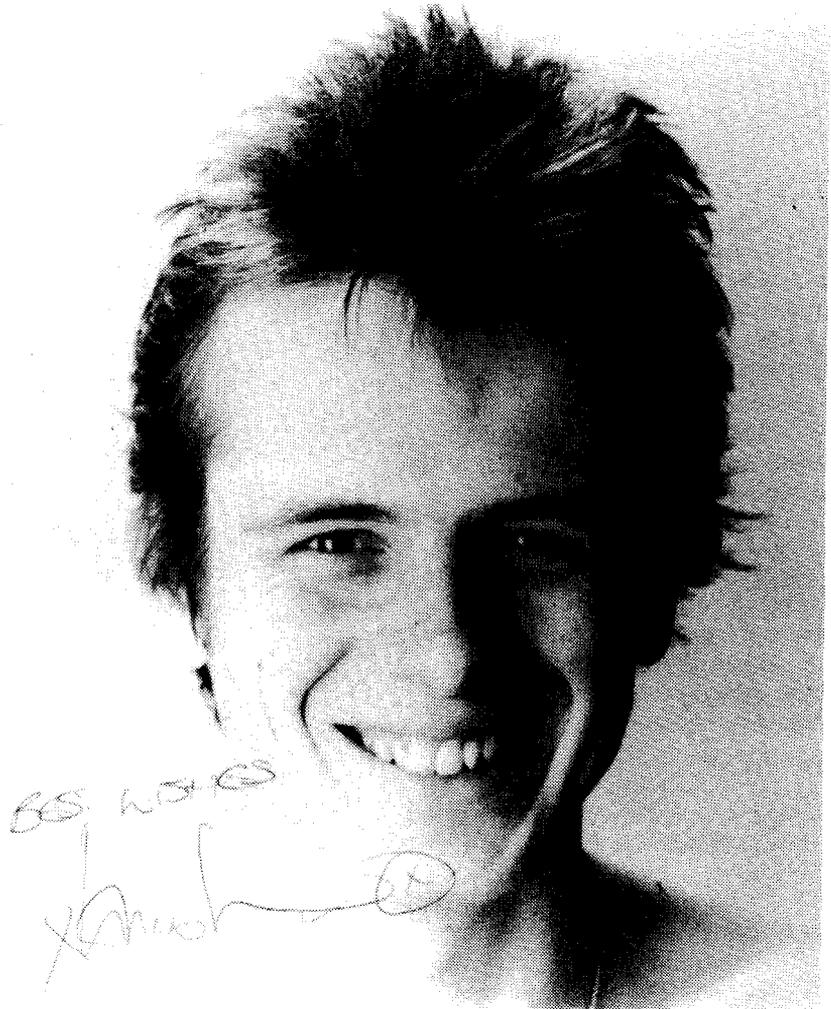
No, you don't have any say in what happens, you only have a say in the words they put in the character's mouth.

There are complaints by one actor

in "Eastenders" about the portrayal of black people.

I haven't talked to her about that, about what she was getting at, but you've got to appreciate that the thing was written and thought up by middle-aged, for the most part middle-class, white people. So I don't think it's a question of conscious racism or anything like that... I'm sure if you put them on the spot about what their values are they'd claim to be non-racist, non-sexist, etc. It's not just in "East Enders" – it happens everywhere – there's so few black writers, directors and producers. That means no matter how hard people try to be motivated about things they end up writing about things they know nothing about. The trouble with television

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TOM WATT

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is that subjects like racism and industrial struggles are always dealt with as something separate. They might have a drama or documentary about, say, the miners' strike, but you won't find it related to people's everyday lives.

You were involved in "Hands Across Britain". Don't you feel such stunts encourage people to passivity instead of taking direct action to affect their lives, and so rely on "personalities" to embarrass the government into some kind of action?

Yes, I do.

So why get involved?

Well, I still think you have to stand up and be counted. I'm not a great one for "not doing". I don't think that "Hands Across Britain" will be *instead* of other activities.

But "Hands Across Britain" included Tory politicians and bishops — we don't think that was a small step in the right direction but a positive hindrance to effective action.

Yes, I understand what you're

talking about. Obviously it was a wet fart of monstrous proportions, but I don't know to what extent energy was diverted by it. People are just as likely to think: "Well, that didn't do any fucking good, did it, what should we be doing?". I take your point but I got involved believing that pissing against the wind is better than not pissing at all. It wasn't something I did *instead* of going to Wapping or doing other things.

You're a member of Equity — do you "black" people who have worked in South Africa?

3 or 4 years ago the membership voted to "black" all performers who worked in South Africa and to an extent it was successful although it's difficult to tell on the shopfloor, so to speak, whether British actors are placing work in South Africa. I haven't heard of anyone being barred from the union.

Would you personally refuse to work with someone who had worked in South Africa?

Yes, but that's easy for me to say, isn't it?

Have you or any others attempted to influence those involved in commercials for firms in dispute. We were thinking particularly of the recent Silentnight dispute?

I'd have to say no. The only situation in which I've ever tried to talk to other actors is about things like Wapping, South Africa and sexist representations in the media. I wouldn't try to talk an actor out of a job or to try and talk an actor into a particular way of doing it. The profession is structured so that we are all self-employed and it's not as though anyone ever talks about their contracts and terms of employment. I don't believe it's up to me to get on a high horse about it. I don't personally like it which is why I'm part of an actors' co-op who do discuss conditions, what we're doing, etc.

Did you vote in June?

No, I didn't even get down to the polling booth this time. The last 2 elections I went down and spoiled my ballot paper.



The First MAY DAY

TRADITIONALLY, MAY 1st, has been a day with special significance for the labour movement. A day of worldwide solidarity, a time to remember and demonstrate our common interests and common goal — the emancipation of labour.

It all began over a century ago when the American Federation of Labour adopted an historic resolution which asserted that "eight hours shall constitute a legal day's labour from and after May 1st, 1886."

In the months prior to this date workers in their thousands were drawn into the struggle for the shorter day. Skilled and unskilled, black and white, men and women, native and immigrant were all becoming involved.

CHICAGO

In Chicago alone 400,000 were out on strike, a newspaper of that city reported that "no smoke curled up from the tall chimneys of the factories and mills, and things had assumed a Sabbath-like appearance". This was the main centre of the agitation, and here the anarchists were in the forefront of the labour movement. It was to no small extent due to

their activities that Chicago became an outstanding trade union centre and made the biggest contribution to the eight-hour movement.

When on May 1st, the eight-hour strikes convulsed that city, one half of the workforce at the McCormick Harvester Co. came out. Two days later a mass meeting was held by 6,000 members of the 'lumber shovers' union' who had also come out. The meeting was held only a block from the McCormick plant and was joined by some 500 of the strikers from there.

SCABS

The workers listened to a speech by the anarchist August Spies, who had been asked to address the meeting by the Central Labour Union. While Spies was speaking, urging the workers to stand together and not retreat before the bosses, the strikebreakers were beginning to leave the nearby McCormick plant.

The strikers, aided by the 'lumber shovers' marched down the street and forced the scabs back into the factory. Suddenly a special force of 200 police arrived and, without

any warning, attacked the crowd with clubs and revolvers, killing at least one, seriously wounding five or six others and injuring an undetermined number.

HAYMARKET

Outraged by the brutal assaults he had witnessed, Spies went to the office of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* (the daily anarchist newspaper for German immigrant workers) and composed a circular calling on the workers of Chicago to assemble in their numbers to protest on the following night.

The protest meeting took place in the Haymarket Square and was addressed by Spies and two other anarchists active in the labour movement, Albert Parsons and Samuel Fielden.

POLICE

Throughout the speeches the crowd was orderly. Mayor Carter Harrison, who was present from the beginning of the meeting, concluded that "nothing looked likely to happen to require police interference". He advised police captain John Bonfield of this and suggested that the large force of police reservists waiting at the station



Fielden and Parsons speaking at an anarchist meeting in Chicago.

house be sent home.

It was close to ten in the evening when Fielden was closing the meeting, it was raining heavily and only about 200 people remained in the square. Suddenly a police column of 180 men, headed by Bonfield, moved in and ordered the people to disperse immediately. Fielden protested '*we are peaceable*'.

BOMB

At this moment a bomb was thrown into the ranks of the police. It killed one, fatally wounded six others and injured about seventy others. The police opened fire on the spectators. How many were wounded or killed by the police bullets was never exactly ascertained.

A reign of terror swept over Chicago. The press and the pulpit called for revenge, insisting that the bomb was the work of socialists and anarchists. Meeting halls, union offices, printing works and private homes were raided, all known socialists and anarchists were rounded up. Even many individuals ignorant of the meaning of socialism and anarchism were arrested and tortured. "*Make the raids first and look up the law afterwards*" was the public statement of Julius Grinnell, the state's attorney.

TRIAL

Eventually eight men stood trial for being "accessories to murder" and "general conspiracy to murder". They were Spies, Fielden, Parsons and five other anarchists who were influential in the labour movement, Adolph Fischer, George Engel, Michael Schwab, Louis Lingg and Oscar Neebe.

The trial opened on June 21st, 1886 in the criminal court of Cook

County. The candidates for the jury were not chosen in the usual manner of drawing names from a box. In this case a special bailiff, nominated by State's Attorney Grinnell, was appointed by the court to select the candidates. The defence was not allowed to present evidence that the special bailiff had publically claimed "*I am managing this case and I know what I am about. These fellows are going to be hanged as certain as death.*"

JURY

The eventual composition of the jury was farcical, being made up of businessmen, their clerks and a relative of one of the dead policemen. No proof was offered by the state that any of the eight men before the court had thrown the bomb, had been connected with it's throwing or had even approved of such acts. In fact only three of the eight had been in Haymarket Square that evening.

No evidence was offered that any of the speakers had incited violence; indeed in his evidence at the trial Mayor Harrison described the speeches as "*tame*". No proof was offered that any violence had been contemplated. In fact, Parsons had brought his two small children to the meeting.

SENTENCED

That the eight were on trial for their anarchist beliefs and trade union activities was made clear from the onset. The trial closed as it had opened, as was witnessed by the final words of Attorney Grinnell's summation speech to the jury. "*Law is on trial. Anarchy is on trial. These men have been selected, picked out by the Grand Jury, and indicted because*

they were leaders. They are no more guilty than the thousands who follow them. Gentlemen of the jury; convict these men, make examples of them, hang them and you save our institutions, our society".

On August 19th, seven of the defendants were sentenced to death and Neebe to fifteen years in prison. After a massive international campaign for their release, the state "*compromised*" and commuted the sentences of Schwab and Fielden to life imprisonment. Louis Lingg cheated the hangman by committing suicide in his cell the day before the executions, and on November 11th, 1887, Parsons, Engel, Spies and Fischer were hanged.

PARDONED

600,000 working people turned out for their funeral and the campaign to free Neebe, Schwab and Fielden continued.

On June 26th, 1893, Governor Altgeld set them free. He made it clear that he was not granting the pardon because he thought the men had suffered enough but because they were innocent of the crime for which they had been tried and they and the hanged men had been the victims of "*hysteria, packed juries and a biased judge.*"

The authorities had believed at the time of the trial that such persecution would break the back of the eight-hour movement. Indeed, evidence later came to light that the bomb had been thrown by a police agent working for Captain Bonfield, as part of a conspiracy involving certain steel bosses to discredit the labour movement.

When Spies addressed the court after he had been sentenced to die he

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MAY DAY

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had been confident that this conspiracy would not succeed. "If you think that by hanging us you can stamp out the labour movement... the movement from which the down-trodden millions, the millions who toil in misery and want, expect salvation — if this is your opinion, then hang us! Here you will tread on a spark, but there and there, behind you — and in front of you, and everywhere, flames blaze up. It is a subterranean fire. You cannot put it out".

One hundred and two years after that first Mayday demonstration in Chicago, where are we? It has become little more than just another institution. We stroll through town with our union banners — about the only day of the year we can get them out of the head office. Then we stand around listening to boring (and usually pretty meaningless) speeches by equally boring union bureaucrats. You have to keep reminding yourself that Mayday was once a day when workers all over the world displayed their strength and proclaimed their ideals.

It is important that "once upon a time" it was like that. We can do

it again. Just as in 1886 the shorter working day is a real issue. The more hours we can knock off the working day the more jobs we can create for the unemployed. It would also give us more time to do the things we enjoy. It's time to give voice to the demand taken up by the American labour movement in the 1930s — "SIX HOURS WORK FOR EIGHT HOURS PAY."

Joe King

X DON'T PAY TWICE

IMAGINE BEING asked for money before a doctor will examine you in a hospital casualty department. It is the sort of thing we like to think only happens in places like the USA. It is now happening in some hospitals here.

The government has said that non-medical card holders have to pay the £10 charge. The union organising most of the staff who are told to collect it are in the LGPSU. They decided not to collect. Their general secretary did all he could to get that vote overturned, and finally succeeded. So much for the "left wing" Phil Flynn.

Some hospital staff are quietly refusing to take the £10 from patients. Some are doing it because they don't know what else they can do. And a few are going all out to make sure that everyone is hassled into coughing up. These are the ones who have fallen for the lie that this money is needed to keep the health service on the road. Of course the more money the hospitals collect, the less they will get from the state.

As far as we are concerned health care is a basic right (or should be) — nobody should be charged for it. And anyway we have already paid for it. It comes out of our PAYE and PRSI. The state is trying to make us pay twice. If they get away with it we can be sure that the £10 figure will rise and rise.

WHO SHOULD PAY?

But where will the hospitals get the cash they need? The answer is simple. Take it from the rich tax evaders. According to the Revenue Commissioners' own report there is over



'All they think about is money

£600 million in unpaid taxes that is still collectable. The government won't give them the staff to do the job properly. Surprise, surprise. The rich look after their own and try to take more and more from the rest of us.

Members of the LGPSU should take up the argument again on the job and at vocational group/branch meetings. Try to win the union to a position of not handling the £10. And patients can refuse to pay. It is intimidating to be ordered to hand over money when you are in hospital. But remember that, so far, you cannot be denied medical treatment. Even the LGPSU leadership felt obliged to publish a leaflet pointing this out.

X "1987 WAS A year of significant progress for lesbian and gay workers. 1988 could be equally important if we take all the opportunities for action that are now open.

The adoption by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions of the radical policy document on Lesbian and Gay Rights in the Workplace was an historic

breakthrough. If it is implemented it will considerably improve the working lives of thousands of trade union members.

Of course there are many other thousands of workers unemployed or in non-unionised workplaces who it will not directly benefit. And of course organised workers are facing the severe threat posed by the right wing anti-worker consensus that is growing in this country.

But we cannot afford to be defeatist. We should organise to make progress in any area that we can. The issue of lesbian and gay rights in the workplace is one where we can make substantial gains."

The above comes from the first issue of the *Lesbian and Gay Rights at Work* newsletter. Produced by an informal network of trade union members, it has hit the right note. The ICTU's policy marks the acceptance of gay rights as a valid issue by the official Trade Union movement. Already at least two unions (IDATU and FWUI) have won lesbian/gay equality claims with some employers. In the South a claim has been lodged with the Local Government Staff Negotiating Board on behalf of 70,000 workers by the LGPSU and in the North NIPSA has lodged a similar claim.

Get the facts, keep in touch with what is going on. For free copies of the *Guidelines for Negotiators on Lesbian and Gay Rights in the Workplace* write to the ICTU at 19 Raglan Road, Dublin 4, or 3 Wellington Park, Belfast. To get the newsletter contact is c/o P.O. Box 1890, Sheriff Street, Dublin 1.

Gays at work!

THE ANARCHIST IDEA: SOCIALISM AND FREEDOM

In the last twenty years, political unrest and turmoil has been a stranger to few corners of this world. Time and time again mass rebellions have occurred in countries as far apart as South Africa or Poland or El Salvador or Northern Ireland. Its not any wonder. Oppressive regimes exist throughout the world, in the East Block and in the West. Butter and wheat mountains continue to grow while in other parts of the world, famine is an ongoing way of life.

It is a scenario that contrasts bleakly with the fact that the resources and wealth of the world have never been as developed or rich. Every man, woman and child could live in comfort as they wish, if the wealth that is there now could be distributed equally. The United Nations alone has stated that if the money spent on arms and armaments were diverted into food and health care, starvation and hunger could be eliminated tomorrow from the world. But it hasn't happened. Instead, over the last 10 years, the gap between rich and poor in every country has widened.

Nevertheless, despite the odds and against the immense power of some states, some people have fought back against these injustices. In Nicaragua, the Phillipines and Korea, collective

action by people has made change. In some cases the most repressive of regimes have been stopped in their tracks or even overthrown. But what is often missed in all these events is that millions of ordinary people have done something about the systems they live under and their lives. They have challenged the authority that rules them and won some improvements, through their *own* actions.

Anarchism is the idea that the mass of people, as workers, could change the world for the better through their own direct action, replacing the exploitation, inequality and injustice that are all around today with a new world based on socialism and freedom. Such a society would be radically different from the class societies we now live in where the interests of the rich, who own and control the wealth of the world, comes first. Instead anarchism is the idea of a world where there are no classes — the rich having been sent packing. Where society is run and controlled through councils by those who produce the wealth in society, the working class. Where there is absolute freedom of ideas, of movement and of the individual. Anarchism is a society built on the abolition of all tyranny, in society and in the workplace, based on a belief in the right to

freedom of everyone.

Anarchism may at first glance seem utopian, but it has not been pulled out of thin air. Though it has existed as long as tyranny itself, being based on the idea that human oppression of any sort is unjustifiable, it has grown into what it is



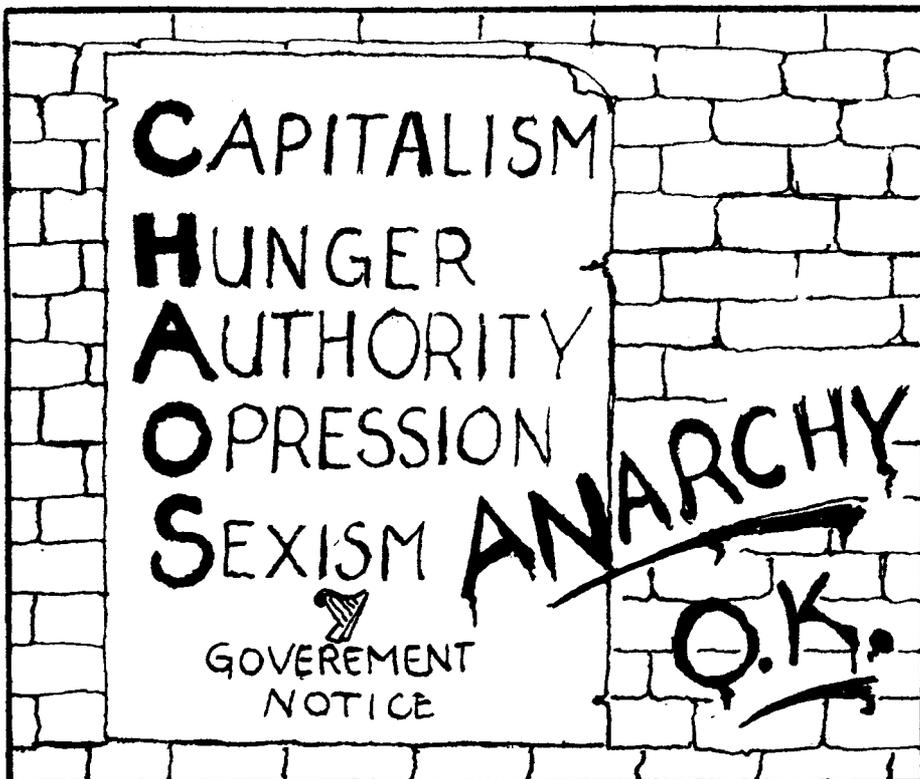
today on the experience of workers in many countries. Anarchism first emerged as a workers movement in the International Working Mens Association in the 19th century and spread from there, particularly to Italy, France, Spain and Latin America. Its ideas played a part in many revolutions, but in particular the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the Spanish Civil War in 1936.

Anarchism won such influence, in the workers' movement, partly because of its advocacy of direct action by workers themselves in changing things, but also because of its opposition to the authoritarianism of the workplace under capitalism which divides people into a few order-givers and a majority of order-takers. Other socialist ideas have often accepted this side of capitalism.



The essential idea of anarchism is that the inequality and authoritarianism of Capitalism is neither acceptable nor necessary. Workers and the poor are constantly being asked to make sacrifices and to tighten their belts for the "good of the country" or something else. The things we most depend on like housing, health care and education are the very things that are being "cutback" by the Government while all the time the huge wealth and profit of private industry remains relatively untouched by taxes. We are no strangers to this in Ireland. Anarchism opposes this situation, which, to greater or lesser degrees, is carried on in all countries. Anarchists argue that this doesn't happen because we have "bad" governments but because it is the way that capitalism works. In a society where a small rich class controls things, its inevitable that they will exploit

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and make the poor pay for as much as possible. And they do.

But as was said anarchists also oppose things because it isn't necessary that they be so. Could society be run without the rich? Of course it could. The owner of the Woolworths chain of shops, while away her day trying to decide which of her 5 mansions in Miami she will live in the next day. Its hardly a productive contribution to the world's economy. Unlike the rich, workers alone carry out the daily grind that keeps all services going in society. The other side to things is that rich and poor should not exist in a world that has wealth, food and resources aplenty. The one thing standing in the way of abolishing poverty is the interests of the rich class. For them, the struggle is to keep things the way they are – unequal. They have never been richer and they like it like that.



Apart from being an idea opposed to Capitalism and an idea about the way a better world could be run, anarchism is also a practical way to bring about a society of socialism and freedom. The traditional "way", in countries like ours, is through the ballot box. It is here that we are told that changes can be brought about if we want to make them. Anarchists don't agree with this and oppose involvement in the Parliament for two reasons. Firstly, real power in society doesn't reside there. It is mainly a talking shop. Even if you did get a socialist party elected to Government that stood for the abolition of Capitalism totally (instead of the normal situation where they stand for simply an increase in dole payments or a cut of 2 pence in the tax rate) they wouldn't be allowed to do it. The laws of the land enshrined in the Constitution "protect" the way



things are, which favours the rich, from being radically changed.

Such a situation was exactly what happened in Chile in 1973 when the Allende Government proposing minor land reforms was drowned in blood after the Army moved in to "save Chile from socialism". In other words then, real change through the Parliament is a sham. As long as the

Parliament confines itself to miniscule or meaningless change it will be allowed to function. But to challenge the basis of Capitalism – wage labour and private property is just not on.

But there is also another reason why socialism can't be brought about by electing a socialist government. Anarchists argue that socialism is about the working-class running society through workplace and community councils – in other words democracy in all parts of human activity. It is through this that a real equal distribution of wealth can take place. But most Socialist Parties *don't* believe in this idea at all. Rather they see socialism as something else. For them it is the idea of their Party "which represents" the workers interests taking control of the State and "making it work for the people". Anarchists argue that this is a nonsense – the State is a hierarchical institution based on one section of people making decisions and others (the workers) following them, an idea alien to socialism.

Anarchists also say that no one can actually "represent" workers interests but workers themselves. Once elected to power socialists experience the very opposite to what workers put up with. Governments are built on privileges (State cars, huge expenses etc.) and authority – members of them soon become corrupt. Anar-



chists argue that only those who suffer inequality and injustice can and will at the end of the day see the fight to end it through to the finish. Governments of socialists on the other hand soon get bogged down "in the national interest" and other compromises once in power. Far from changing anything, things can often get worse for many workers.



Anarchism then, is an idea based on revolutionary change of society, by the direct industrial action of workers. In the everyday class-struggle its aim is to build as much working-class unity as possible. It argues for workers to strengthen their organisation and their capacity to take control from the bosses by controlling their unions. Anarchism looks through this to the situation where workers will be strong enough by

virtue of their industrial power to take control. There is no middle ground. At the moment the Bosses are strong and in control. But when the time comes when workers are stronger, they must smash Capitalism and the State and run things for themselves. Immediately, the decisions affecting the economy, industry and society will be transferred to workplace and community councils. These will freely federate and begin running society by the use of recallable delegates.



It is in the anarchists demands for the immediate running of all society by workplace councils that the notion of "anarchism as chaos" was put forward by many of its opponents. Those who support capitalism say, to do this would lead to "anarchy" and chaos. "How could the workers run things – they wouldn't be able." But anarchists have complete faith in ordinary people running the affairs of the world. Far from chaos ensuing, things would get much better and moreover people would get the practical experience for the first time of having a huge degree of control over their lives – one of the main purposes of socialism.



But it is also on the question of workers immediately running society that anarchists differ from other revolutionary socialists. Marxist-Leninists such as the Bolsheviks in Russia in 1917 believe that the working-class isn't "able" initially to run society. In the transition period they need the Party to "guide" them and show them the right road. But apart from the lack of faith in workers' capabilities, there is also another side to the Party in that it sees itself as the most "advanced" section of workers. It argues that it "knows best" for workers and that moreover it has the "long term" interests of the class in mind while workers in their workplaces tend to be short-sighted and/or have less politically advanced views. It ascribes to itself the "right" to make decisions about workers' interests which the workers must follow, since the party is more "politically mature".

Anarchists don't agree with this elitism. In a revolution, made by the workers, which is about achieving their liberation from Capitalism there is no other supreme authority than the

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 hierarchial 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 intern-ing 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 downplay 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 2½ 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



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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 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 file is independent 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

France 1968

THE EVENTS of May 1968 revitalised the revolutionary movement in Western Europe. Events such as the worldwide protests against the American invasion of Vietnam and the birth of the Civil Rights campaign in the six counties radicalised hundreds of thousands of young workers and students. The struggle in France, in particular, caught the imagination of a generation. Raymond Mulkerns looks at the behaviour of the dominant political organisation in the French working class. The second article, which seeks to draw some conclusions from the events, is part of a longer piece published on the 10th anniversary in the journal *Liberarian Communist*.

AS IT IS NOW 20 years since the upheaval of ten million workers going out on strike in an "advanced" capitalist country, which many "thinkers" even on the left had called an impossibility, there will probably be plenty of media coverage on the anniversary of "Les Evenements". You'll probably read about the savagery with which the CRS (a paramilitary police force) attacked students in the Latin Quarter of Paris, of how within a week of this one million people marched through Paris, of how a generalised mass strike movement spread throughout France, of how at one point De Gaulle fled the Elysee Palace to an army stronghold at Baden Baden, of how a famous radio broadcast (made on his return on May 30th) brought half a million of the Gaullist faithful out on the street, of how the Gaullists won an absolute parliamentary majority in the June elections. You are likely to remain confused as to how such a massive movement was defused, and not even to realise the extent to which workers power became established in certain parts of France.

The first key to understanding the events of '68 is to realise that the driving force of the movement came from below and not above. By the end of May, there were at least 450 independent action committees generating and co-ordinating activity, in Paris alone.

By far the largest grouping on the left at the time was the French Comm-

unist Party (PCP), and they were as scared of a revolution as the establishment. As their paper shows, they would have condemned the movement completely had it not gained such enormous momentum — they tagged along ultimately but only to undermine it at a more opportune moment. As the strike and occupation movement wound down in June, they many times told contradictory lies to different factory committees in the hope of getting the workers to settle with the bosses and so stay within *their control*.

WORKERS CONTROL

In Nantes, on the west coast of France, the most thoroughgoing attempt at workers' control took place. There had been extensive student unrest in Nantes during May, but the most significant step was taken by the peasants around Nantes who, on May 24th, set up roadblocks on all the main roads into the city. These road blocks were later staffed by transport workers who controlled all traffic in and out of the city for over a week.

The power workers went on strike, but retained essential supplies to hospitals and the like. There was an inter-union committee which took over the running of the city from the town council. All public transport was organised in conjunction with the lorry drivers' union, using commandeered city council vehicles. Striking workers were protected from CRS assaults by specially set-up defense committees, many of them based in occupied factories. Food vouchers

were distributed to families in need. These could be redeemed at any of the shops which were open and which were subject to committee-agreed controlled prices (notices against profiteering signed by all three unions were placed in all shops). All petrol supplies were under committee control.

SELF-MANAGEMENT

A statement issued by the strike committee gives a good idea of the resolve of the workers: *We wished to show our capacity, and thus our right, as producers, to manage the means of production we use. We proved it.* While the achievement was significant, it must be noted that the inter-union committee was composed of existing executive members of the communist (CGT), "socialist" (FO) and ex-Christian (CFDT) unions — delegates were not directly elected from the shopfloor onto the committee, nor was there any participation in decision-making by non-unionised workers or community groups. Nevertheless, Nantes clearly showed that working class organisations could take over the running of a city.

The PCP paper, *L'Humanite*, progressed during May from hostility towards the student movement, to claiming credit for the large demonstrations in Paris, to appeals to workers not to go too far — always as a product of putting their own narrow interests before those of the working class. On the same day as the CRS were to occupy the Sorbonne (univer-

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sity), their paper said that the "Leaders of the leftist groups were exploiting student discontent and trying to stop the functioning of the faculties. They are seeking to prevent the mass of students from working and passing their exams... (Following a weekend in which the CRS occupied the Latin Quarter, and 20,000 had marched to demand the release of the arrested students and workers, the paper tells us (May 6th) "The discredit into which they are bringing the student movement is helping feed the violent campaigns of the reactionary press and of the ORTF (French TV station), who by identifying these actions with the mass of students are seeking to isolate the students from the mass of the population." On May 8th, the general secretary of the communist student union gave a good idea of the extent of his vision in an interview with L'Humanite, "What we must do is ask for a bigger student budget which would ensure bigger student grants..." By Monday 13th May, when there had been barricades and ferocious street fighting in Paris, when workers had been enraged by



the scenes of police violence shown on TV, the paper announced under a banner headline calling for a 24 hour strike (which had occurred in many factories without direction from above), "The PCP associates itself without reservation with the just struggles of the students..." Days after the spontaneous occupation of factories, the paper was claiming

(May 18th) to have initiated these same occupations.

LEADING FROM BEHIND

One could go on and on. But the picture is clear. It is of a party leading from behind, trying desperately to take the credit, keep control of its members and eager to sacrifice the interests of the working class to its own power ploys.

May '68 showed the need for independent organisations which would link students, workers and community groups. May '68 showed that at the end (or even the beginning) of the road, authoritarian socialists or reformist leaders will sell out their members to retain their own control. May '68 also showed that revolutionary activity is the most effective kind of industrial muscle: even though in many cases workers had to be tricked into accepting the settlements, which were typically well in excess of ten per cent wage increases alongside shorter working hours and greater union rights. But above all, May '68 showed that workers do not need the infrastructure of the state to run society and that the myth of the impossibility of revolution in "advanced" capitalist society was just that.

INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION

By June 30th just about everyone was back at work, and Gaullism seemed stronger than ever. Was May a defeat? For the vast numbers who wanted more than transitory pay rises, yes. For the revolutionaries who failed to co-ordinate a national strikers' organisation, deciding what the workers should produce for themselves, under their own conditions, in factories that were social property — yes, too. They had not managed to win over the mass of workers so that workers power was built by the free co-ordination of elected strike committees.

The beginnings of this movement in the organisation of food and the regulation of electricity and transport can be seen. There was a need for more revolutionaries to win over more workers to such a plan, against the reformism and parliamentarianism of the PCF and the Gaullists. It was the absence of this practical political work that was the cause of defeat. When trotskyists wasted time and energy trying to convince everyone of the need for a leninist party they

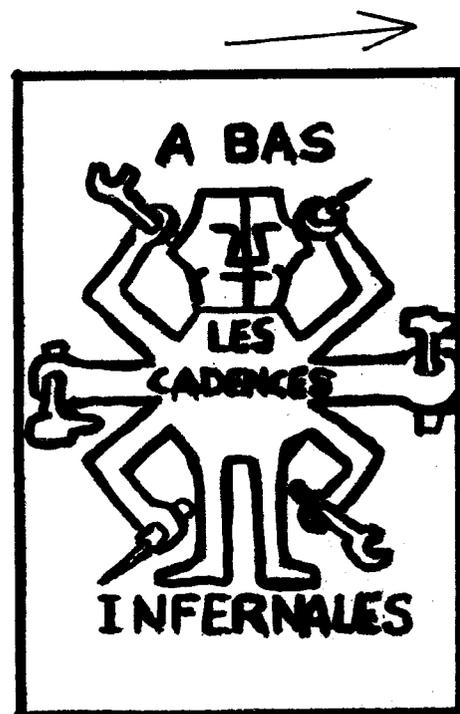
were wrong on two counts. Firstly their call 'Build the Party' was at leadership level, at best it meant that all the militants involved in M22M, JCR, etc. should join an organisation, but in no sense did it mean the co-ordination of struggles. Secondly, it was a 'magical' solution. It said a party on the basis of the programme will respond to the needs of the masses.

The masses, however, did not appear to want either party or programme. Their needs were more practical: to gain confidence that they could work industry in practice and from there make decisions for themselves about what to produce and for whom. What was needed was an organisation that could ask for instance, "Is it useful to manage for yourselves a government weapons programme?"

After 10 millions had been on strike the Trotskyist Fourth International could conclude merely that it had elaborated a programme, that there needed to be principled co-operation between revolutionaries, and

above all to build the party.

There were to dismiss ideas of self-management as confused. Indeed



Down with the speed-up

INSTEAD

they were – but the task of revolutionaries in May was to build the movement on a principled basis *out of* the movement not to dismiss it. (See *New Left Review* No. 52).

Paradoxically one might ask them to take a lesson from Lenin in 1917. Among his mottoes were 'Audacity, audacity and more audacity!' and 'One gets involved and then one begins to see'.

Workers Power will be expressed (if May '68 is relevant) in factory committees (union or otherwise) which will link up and fight together. The place of revolutionaries will be fighting for class unity in these organisations.

It will have to be remembered that May did not involve women, an aspect not to be repeated. If the Leninist party is built as it was in May, then it may be built over the corpse of the movement. Diversions into electoralism and simple wage struggles in a situation that is potentially

revolutionary will destroy that potential.

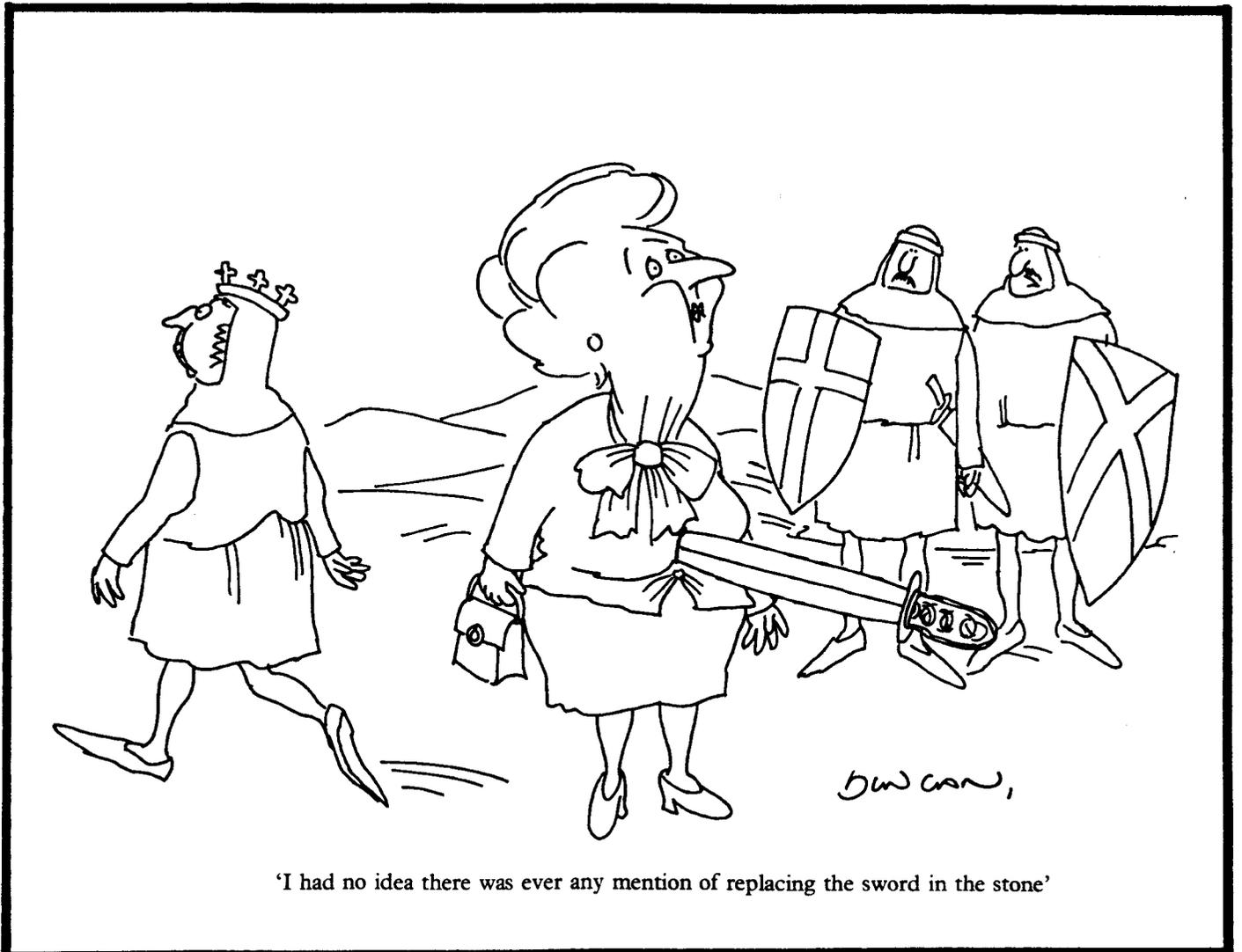
There are more general lessons too. The state will use violence but while it is not controlled by fascists it will use violence like a terrorist. It will repress small sections of workers one by one, in order to intimidate the rest.

May shows that it is possible with determination, organisation and preparation to defeat government repression – that it is even possible to make a revolution. Sociologists may pretend that problems don't exist, but as soon as authority is effectively challenged, as soon as liberation is in the air – problems, anger and self-organisation can appear. Neither Britain nor France is in a pre-revolutionary state today. As in the days before May there is a need for patient organisation against conservative solutions to the contradictions and instability of capitalism. For us today the ideas of May are important. We fight for total revolution, we don't compromise tomorrow

for today. We may not be able to implement all our ideas, all our programme; we relate our politics to the struggles that exist now, but we remain revolutionaries.



A worker tackles the Peugeot lion



'I had no idea there was ever any mention of replacing the sword in the stone'

THE RUSSIAN TRAGEDY

REVIEW

The Russian Tragedy. Alexander Berkman. (Phoenix Press IR£2.75).

ALEXANDER BERKMAN was no mere theorist. All his life he was an active anarchist militant. Born in Russia, by the age of fifteen he had been expelled from school for membership of a group which met to read radical books. By the age of nineteen he was in America and active in a revolutionary anarchist group.

In 1892 during the Homestead Steel strike the industrialist H.C. Frick hired Pinkerton detectives who murdered eleven strikers, including a ten year old child. He then declared that he would sooner see every striker dead than accede to a single one of their demands. For his part in an attempt to assassinate Frick, Berkman was sentenced to seventeen years in jail.

REVOLUTION

He second American jail sentence was for work with the No Conscriptio League during the First World War. Following this he went to Russia where the revolution had begun. While initially supportive, he was soon sickened by the Bolshevik duplicity and especially the events around the Kronstadt revolt in 1921. Forced to leave Russia he went to France where he remained active until his death at the age of sixty six in 1936.

This book is a must for anyone who is confused as to why the Russian Revolution went wrong, for anyone who feels that to explain the aberrations and atrocities perpetrated by the Bolsheviks as necessitated by imperialist blockades or 'objective circumstances', when the USSR spans half the Northern hemisphere, is a bit incredible. This book is a must for anyone who has bought the lie that Stalin singlehandedly changed the essential ideology of bolshevism.

DISILLUSIONMENT

This book is made up of a recent introduction, which places the essays in context, and three essays written by Berkman in the immediate aftermath of his intense disillusionment with the way in which the Bolsheviks

steadily rolled back the gains of the Revolution — on the way making more concessions to the pressures of international imperialism than to the Russian proletariat who had made the Revolution.

In broad sweeps, the introduction charts the period from early 1917 when the peasants seized the land and the workers the factories to October 1917, when the Bolsheviks used the slogan "All Power to the Soviets" to mobilise the masses behind them and from there to the establishment of secret police forces under the control of the 'Cheka' which in turn ruthlessly destroyed the power of the same soviets they had opportunistically supported, culminating in the savage suppression of the Kronstadt Revolt (1921) which made such mild demands as free elections to the soviets.

STATE CAPITALISM

Feeling secure in their dictatorship, they then denounced the previous excesses of "War Communism" and proceeded to establish the New Economic Policy which amounted to a reinstatement of capitalism — though this time in a State-ist rather than a Private guise. Not that this made much difference to the organisation of work: from early 1918 on (when they dissolved the Constituent Assembly which they had first opposed and then supported), the Bolsheviks had been replacing the workers councils with individual managers, often the identical managers who had run the factories in the Tsarist period!

The Russian Tragedy is the essay in which Berkman charts his progress from one who arrived in Russia 'not to teach but to learn; to learn and to help' to one who left Russia believing that 'the Revolution in Russia had become a mirage, a dangerous deception'. The key to Berkman's analysis is his understanding that revolutions are made 'not by any political party, but by the people themselves'. This is the understanding which enabled him to perceive the root cause of the Revolution's decay in Bolshevik ideology and action — rather than in the backwardness of the Russian people or external circumstances.

BEST COMMUNIST?

One of the guises under which the Bolsheviks fooled people into accept-

ing their dictatorship of all-powerful secret police, increasingly powerless soviets, mass executions and imprisonments etc. etc. was the label *War Communism*. Yet, when the USSR was no longer threatened by internal reaction or imperialist aggression, the long awaited fruits of the Social Revolution proved to be the re-introduction of private ownership and the re-establishment of free-trade (10th Congress, 1921). In Lenin's own words, 'Henceforth, the best communist is he who can drive the best bargain'. The final section of this essay looks towards a new Revolution in Russia, which unhappily we are still awaiting 70 years later.

The second essay, *The Russian Revolution and the Communist Party*, deals in much greater depth with Bolshevik ideology and the changing pronouncements of Lenin. Again, it puts the blame for the Revolution's failure firmly where it belongs. It will give the reader an understanding of the real nature of Bolshevism which is hidden by those Trotskyists of today who describe Russia as a "deformed workers' state". The third essay, *The Kronstadt Rebellion* deals with events that occurred in that garrison town, near Leningrad (then



Petrograd). Anyone who read of how under the direct command of Trotsky, the demands of the Revolutionary Committee (for such democratic rights as free speech, free elections to the soviets etc.) were portrayed to the Russian working class as White reaction and the Rebellion was crushed with brutal and bloody force, will understand that Stalinism is not a radical break with Leninism/Trotskyism but rather a logical continuation.

Myles Kennedy.

ANARCHISTS BEAT FRAME UP

WORKERS SOLIDARITY readers will perhaps be familiar with the case of the Vitoria 6, members of the anarchist union in Spain — the CNT — who were framed with charges of attempted murder, bank robberies, assaults and others by the Spanish state; abetted by tyre giant Michelin, where most of them worked.

On October 28th and December 1st they were at last tried by the Audiencia Nacional in Madrid, four years after their arrests. The October hearing judged the lesser charges of robbery, assault etc. alleged to have taken place during the 1981 strikes at Michelin. Vincente Alvarado received a four-year prison sentence for an alleged bank robbery while three others got 2 month sentences.

The 1st December hearing tried the 6 for the attempted murder of a Michelin manager who was shot in the street in Vitoria during the same period of industrial strife, an offence for which the prosecution had demanded heavy prison sentences. However the prosecution case, based solely on "confessions" gained by torturing the accused in detention, was exposed for the tissue of lies it was, and the six have at long last been acquitted.

BACKGROUND

The background to the framing of the Vitoria 6 workers was in Michelin's attempts to bring in new, harsh working conditions at their Vitoria plant. This was resisted by the workforce. 1980 saw a peak in this drawn-out conflict with a series of weekly strikes followed by a lock-out and bitter clashes between strikers and the police.

In May of that year the assistant to Michelin's Personnel Manager, Jesus Casanova, was shot at in the street by five unknown gunmen and barely escaped with his life. A month later another manager, Luis Hergueta, met his death under similar circumstances.

The conflict at the factory continued, defused only by the decision of the UGT (the Socialist Party trade union) and the CCOO (the Communist Party one) to accept arbitration in exchange for a return to work.

But these were not the only unions in Michelin. The Spanish anarchist union the CNT, had maintained

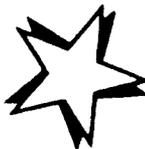
a consistent opposition to any sell-out of workers' interests, and as a result had grown both in size and influence.

By 1983 the CNT was predominant on the works committee in the factory and enjoyed massive support in the assemblies of the workforce. Needless to say, the bosses weren't standing idly by while this was going on.

ARRESTED

It can hardly be a coincidence that in late November 1984, just days after the CNT opposition to management's plans had received further approval from the workers' assembly, six prominent CNT militants were arrested in the early hours of the morning and detained under Spain's notorious Anti-Terrorist Law.

Under this law suspects can be held for 10 days without any visits from friends, family or solicitors. Cases are heard in special courts which can order a suspect to be held for up to four years without any trial.



This near successful outcome to the trials in respect of the major charges was not altogether surprising given the weakness of the State's case. However the significant solidarity shown by other Spanish workers in the lead up to the trials also played a part. International support was forthcoming from France, Italy, Britain and Scandinavia.

MURDER

Meanwhile another case of State repression of the anarchist union in Spain has come to light with the recent guilty verdict against the prison director and 5 wardens of the Carabanchal prison in Barcelona, accused of the murder of CNT union militant Augustin Rueda while in their custody. In a situation similar to the Vitoria 6 defendants, Rueda was arrested and an attempt made to implicate him in the possession of explosives and other material. Needless to say nothing substantial was ever produced to support this connection but he was in the meantime beaten to death.

JOIN THE WSM

The world's wealth is produced by us — the working class. We ought to enjoy its benefits.

The Workers Solidarity Movement is an anarchist organisation that fights for a 32 county Workers Republic.

We stand for a socialism that is based on freedom and real democracy, a society based on workplace and community councils.

This kind of socialism has nothing to do with the state capitalism that is practiced in Russia, Cuba and other police states.

We oppose coercive authority, and hold that the only limit on the freedom of the individual should be that they don't encroach on the freedom of others.

As part of our fight for anarchism we are involved in the struggles for higher wages, for trade union democracy, for women's rights, for jobs.

We oppose all divisions in the working class. We fight against all attempts to set Protestant against Catholic, men against women, skilled against unskilled, old against young, heterosexual against homosexual.

We are opposed to the British state's presence and to partition. We defend people's right to fight back. But we are not nationalists, we do not want to merely get rid of the border. We want to unite our class and create a totally new Ireland.

I want more information about the WSM.

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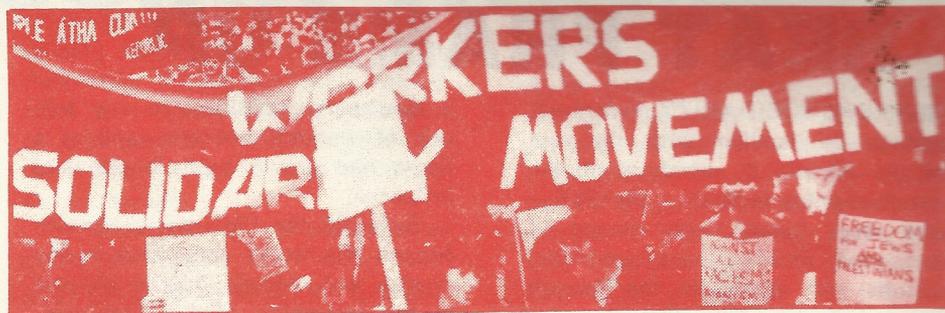
Here is £5.00. Please send issues of the magazine to that value.

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Return this form to WSM, P.O. Box 1528, Dublin 8.

Thinking about Anarchism



'Abolish the State'

Co-operation and workers' control become realities. This in turn leads to a classless society. Can this new society, even as a temporary measure, be ruled by a small minority utilising the structures of the State? Of course not. Is anyone going to seriously suggest that a minority rule a society where there is to be no rule by minorities? If we were to set up a system where the few make decisions and the many obey, it would not be socialism, nor even a step towards it. We would still be living in a class society.

WHO MAKES DECISIONS?

But won't there be a need for administration, planning, defence and so on? Yes, there will but just as the rest of society will be changing so will the way we tackle these tasks. Not only will we be rejecting the structures of the State but also the attitude that all the major decisions have to be left to "someone in charge".

We will have specialists working in each field, we will need efficient co-ordination and administration. But the decisions that effect us will not be made by a handful of politicians or "captains of industry". Everyone who will be effected by a decision will have the right to take part in making that decision. All major decisions will be made by delegates from workers' and community councils, such delegates will carry the

decisions to local, national and eventually international levels. If the delegates don't carry out the mandate given to them by the people who elect them they can be recalled and new ones elected.

POWER-SEEKERS

In such a structure there is no way that a small group of power-seekers could take over. Yet the affairs of society could be organised in a most efficient manner. This is the real democracy that we counterpose to the parliamentary democracy of the state.

Defence of the revolution against those who might attempt to return us to the old system by violence would not fall to a standing army. All who wished to be armed and trained would be enrolled in a militia. Needless to say recruitment would be organised through workers' and community councils where local knowledge would ensure that irresponsible or unstable people were not put in a position where they would have access to arms. The militia system makes it impossible for the army to become more divorced from the rest of the people and led into a "coup" by power-hungry officers.

Any attempt to create a "socialist state" will only be part of an attempt to create a new ruling class. It can never lead to economic and social liberty. Either the working class has a direct hold on power or someone else does - there is no middle ground.

X ANARCHISTS WANT TO "abolish the state". Because we see liberty and workers' control as part and parcel of our socialist goal, we want to get rid of the state at the same time as we get rid of the division of people into a ruling class and a working class. So what is the State?

When a minority class rules it needs its own institutions to enforce that rule. It needs a legal system to put its stamp of approval on its ownership of the means of production. It needs an army and police force to protect its interests from both external and internal challenges. It needs a way of convincing the majority that the way society is run is legal and fair. The State is put forward as the "impartial" guarantor of our rights.

The State is the means by which the ruling class enforces its rule, confers a legitimacy on its actions, arrives at decisions that are in their interest as a whole. It is the executive committee of the bosses. Whether it exists within a dictatorship or a liberal parliamentary democracy does not alter its fundamental character.

GIVE AWAY POWER

The main point is that the majority have relatively little power over their own lives. Whether we have that power taken away for force or we actually give it away in a polling station does not change the fact that we are left with little real control over the society we live in. The State only serves a purpose when a minority class rules. It is a means of keeping a minority in the driving seat. It perpetuates the division of people into bosses and workers, order-givers and order-takers. It can not be put to any other use. To try to change its very reason for existence and put it at the service of the majority is as illogical as trying to eat soup with a fork.

Socialism is about the creation of a completely new society. The working class take over the industries and do away with exploitation. Production is organised to meet needs.

