

A QUESTION OF CLASS

IRELAND: THE NATIONAL QUESTION IS A CLASS QUESTION

When the present 'crisis' in Ireland began – in the years '68 to '69 – it seemed simple enough to many British people, particularly to many working class militants. The Catholics wanted civil rights – and they were justified. The state of Ulster was a living barbarism of discrimination and there *had* to be change. That was obvious to even the most feeble democrat.

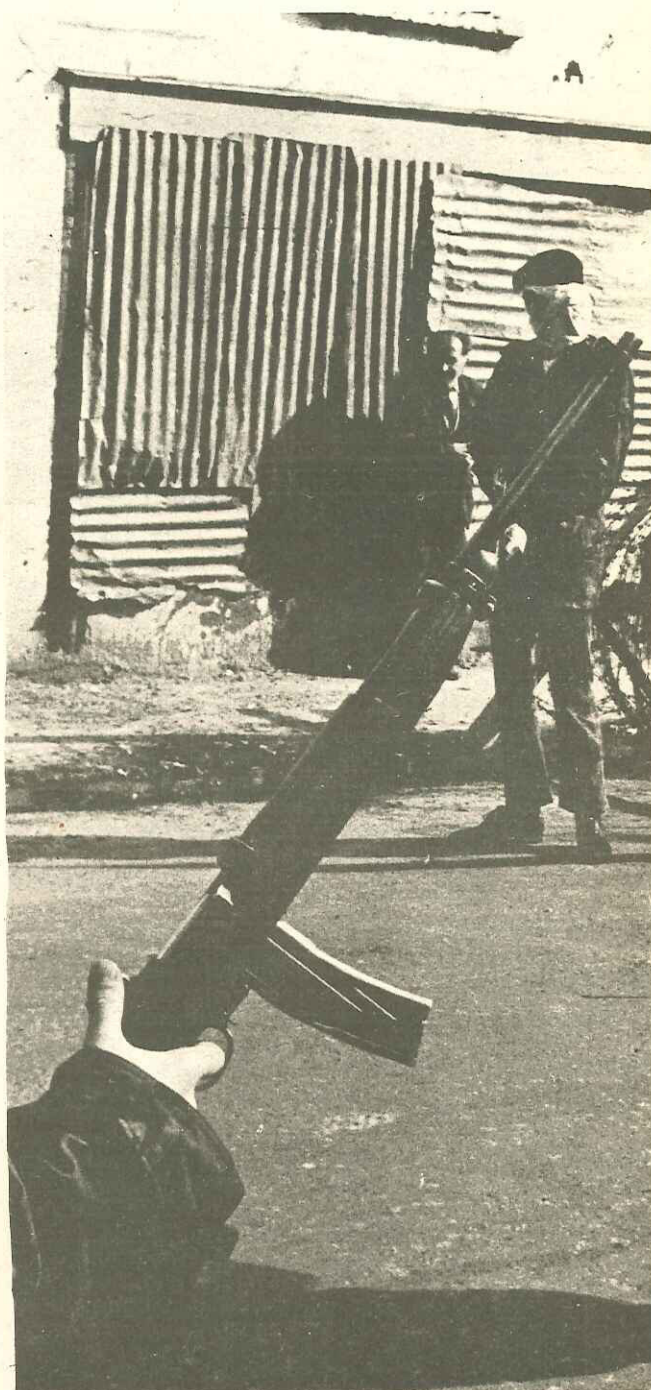
But it didn't stay simple. It became violent. The Catholic people were forced to take on the ruthless, marauding forces of the state; streets became battlegrounds; the Army went in and soon there was a guerilla war and a Provisional IRA. Internment was introduced, and almost the entire Catholic communities went on a rent and rates strike and NO-GO areas were formed. Once more the working class showed how divided it is, and the Loyalist workers gave support to the sectarian murder gangs of the UDA and UVF.

The most simple solution then for most people in Britain was to accept what the British state said about Ireland, and put it down to the 'mad Irish' refusing the kindly services of the Army and the British politicians. Only the small forces of the revolutionary left challenged that, and instead explained that it was Ulster itself – the state, the colony – that was the problem. That there would always be violence and sectarian divisions whilst Ulster existed, and that Britain was not a friend of Ireland but its enemy. Its enemy because it propped up Ulster and the Loyalist establishment. For that reason, only the revolutionaries remained the democrats over Ireland by demanding an immediate end to British colonial rule: **SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE AS A WHOLE! NO TO ULSTER! NO TO THE SECTARIAN COLONY!**

But even inside the socialist left, there has been much confusion over the Irish struggle. The way it has developed, the forms it has taken, have misled people about what the struggle is all about. In particular, it has led many socialists to see the fight in Ireland as something other than a *class fight*. And today there is a chorus of them – from the International Socialist group who, more or less, do support the Irish national struggle, to the disgraceful Militant group in the Labour Party Young Socialists who don't – suggesting how the struggle in the North can *change* to become a 'class' struggle.

Nothing could be more absurd; and nothing could do more to confuse the British working class about Ireland. *It may not be happening in factories; they're not on strike and few of them are active trade-unionists. But for the last six years the Catholic working class have been in the most resolute and fierce class struggle in these islands. And nothing else.*

How else can it be described? It is from the Catholic working class communities that the struggle has been waged, and it is there that it continues to be waged long after the middle class politicians of the SDLP have ducked in under



Derry '72: the IRA defends the community.

Britain's wing. And what is it when such a community does come alive: to say 'no' to twenty percent unemployment, or the shit, low-paid jobs; 'no' to housing shortages; 'no' to the state and its repressive armour, and 'no' to any other section of the working class which is committed to its own supremacy over them; to its own alliance with the bosses, and not committed to the working class as a whole. What is it but a *class struggle*? *Class revolt*?

Being Catholic in Ulster was the *particularly vicious way* that these people experienced themselves as exploited and oppressed working class people. Their struggle immediately brought them up against the 'national' question — the false border imposed fifty years before by Britain — because their immediate, most basic needs were denied by the very existence of the British colony, Ulster. But the national struggle in Ireland has been fought by republicans for centuries, and against the colony, Ulster, for fifty years. *But in 1969 this already heroic struggle was remoulded; remoulded into mass proportions because it expressed the class revolt of the Catholic working class.*

It's for this reason — and the preceding interviews show it — that inside the Catholic communities there has been such a radicalisation in people's attitudes and consciousness. Why, for instance, the grip of the church has lessened, and the influence of socialist ideas and socialist politics has become very widespread.

32 COUNTIES

The struggle in the North is also the most important front of the class struggle in the whole of Ireland, North and South. Although the struggle in the South has other battle-fronts, even there the main question is the border and the six-county state. Nothing stirs the South so consistently; nothing threatens to bring out the class antagonisms more than the Northern situation — given the pro-imperialist collaboration of the Southern bourgeoisie versus the instinctive, if often sleepy, solidarity of the working class with the Northern Catholics. Remember the reaction to Bloody Sunday in the South, when the Dublin working class burnt down the British Embassy, investment fled the country, and Lynch, the Prime Minister, looked on nervous and helpless? This is very important to understand because it's here that we find the potential for a socialist Ireland. A potential for socialism that will not be realised by *changing* from the present Northern struggle but by *winning* that struggle.

The situation in the North is critical. The Loyalists are determined to cling on to their state and their privilege. And that despite Britain if need be. The Northern minority are faced with a very serious situation. Working class communities like the Ardoyne, New Lodge and Short Strand in Belfast are surrounded by Loyalist territory and are in danger of being wiped out if the Loyalists move.

Any defence of the minority and any successful destruction of Loyalist power will need the full involvement of the working class in the South. That's the crucial point. By themselves the minority in the North cannot break the forces of Orange reaction. *But* a mass mobilisation in the South on an anti-imperialist, anti-Loyalist basis will mean a conflict with most of the Southern ruling class who every day are chasing, legislating against, interning, torturing and shooting those who are fighting for national liberation. The very process of winning in the North will bring the classes in the South into direct collision.

The struggle against the Ulster state would thus involve all sections of the Irish anti-imperialist working class into the creation and development of its own apparatus of power and survival — military, political, community, defence, food and supplies, production, etc. It could also mean the internal collapse of sections of the Southern state apparatus — as we have said, mutinies in the Free State Army are always on the cards when the Northern Catholics are in danger and have happened before.

Thus the national struggle always *threatens* to initiate the growth and explosion of a revolutionary dual power situation in which the majority of the Irish working class

would be faced with the choice of continuing its own struggle and establishing its own, permanent workers state.

This does not mean that there would be an automatic move to socialism. This depends on the extent to which the working class, North and South, are able to push on and consolidate their own mobilisations and make *forever* a break with the Irish bourgeoisie. On the extent to which the fight can be led by a clear working class politics and not taken in and led by the Catholic, bourgeois, nationalists who cry 'Ireland free' to make sure that their own nest remains feathered, and on the extent to which all these revolutionary developments can reverberate through the Protestant working class and present it with an alternative to the Ulster supremacy and to the idea of being press-ganged into a Catholic state.

But the point is made: *class struggle*. That's what the existing national struggle in Northern Ireland is about. *Socialism*: that's what it can be about *if* the anti-imperialist working class can gain sufficient political clarity about its own interests and the possibilities of its own fight. But this comes down to the clarity of *class* politics and the development not only of the struggle but of a conscious socialist leadership *within* that struggle.

For this reason, it is important to understand the different socialist organisations involved in the Irish struggle. The organisations are: the Provisional Irish Republican Army and Sinn Fein; the Official Irish Republican Army and Sinn Fein; the Irish Republican Socialist Party; the People's Democracy, and the Socialist Workers Movement.

SOLIDARITY

Of course, to begin with, we are in *total solidarity with all anti-imperialist socialist and republican organisations*. This means that we support them in their fight against British imperialism and the Ulster establishment. We're on the same side even if we don't always agree with their particular attitude on how imperialism and capitalism should be fought, and even if we don't agree with every action they take in that fight.

And that goes for the Irish struggle as a whole. We support the fight for self-determination, whether or not in the end that does lead to socialism. We can't say to the Republican movements: 'prove that you are completely socialist and will set up a socialist Ireland *before* we will support you against imperialism and its army'.

You don't demand that workers on strike understand capitalism before you support them; you don't demand that Black people are revolutionary before you support them against police harassment, and you don't demand that people of an oppressed nation are socialist before you support them against the oppression of imperialism and colonialism.

But to be in solidarity with all republican and socialist groups, whatever their politics, does not mean we have the same politics as them all, or that we do not politically criticise them if, in our opinion, they do not best develop the struggle for Irish freedom and self-determination.

FORGETTING THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE

For this reason, we in Big Flame say that the important organisations in Ireland — the organisations from which will come any revolutionary movement — are the Provisional Republican movement, the People's Democracy and the IRSP. We say this because these are the three main organisations that have shown any understanding of the Northern struggle and its leading role in the Irish revolution.

Two other organisations see things differently. Firstly, there is the *Socialist Workers' Movement* (fraternal group of the International Socialists) who usually ignore the national question and instead concentrate on 'economic' issues in the South. As a civil war approaches, it is difficult to see how this organisation can fail to be swept aside. 'Economic' issues in the South are obviously important, but unless they are linked to preparing the Southern working class to take an organised line of class solidarity with their Northern



Searching a suspected infiltrator.

brothers and sisters, then they are effectively a *diversion* from the main question facing the Irish class struggle.

Secondly, there is the *Official Republican Movement*. Like the SWM, the Officials downgrade the national struggle. Occasionally they do take action against the British Army, but overall their position is to *reform* the Ulster state and not *overthrow* it. Their line of reforms is supposed to work to unify the Northern working class, Catholic and Protestant. So they concentrate on such issues as the proposed Belfast ringroad (now shelved owing to lack of money rather than mass protest), and fight for Catholic/Protestant unity against redevelopment and clearance. What the Officials ignore is that the divisions in the Working class are a direct result of the existence of the Ulster statelet, and that a precondition for unity is therefore the Protestant workers *giving up their allegiance to their Ulster protestant supremacy and privilege*. The Catholics can hardly unite with any section of the Irish working class which wants to keep its privileges over them. And, in practice, this means that unity is not on *until* the powers of the Ulster establishment and the sectarian state are swept away; until the UDA and UVF are demoralised and have crumbled.

After so long, this ought to be apparent to the Officials. Their boast that they have working links with the working class Loyalist organisations; their claims that leaders like Sammy Smyth (UDA) or Ken Gibson (UVF) are somehow socialists, is a mockery of the facts. The fact that, for instance, the UVF brags about its murder of Catholics, and recently bragged that it had tried to murder Cathal Goulding, the leader of the Official Republican Movement!

Since the split which has formed the IRSP, the Officials have lost a lot of their support. However it must be said that they do have experience of armed struggle. And though they do little at the moment to prepare the Catholic working class for a major Loyalist attack in the event of civil war, the Officials could play a role in the immediate defence of the Republican areas.

IRISH REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST PARTY

In terms of political organisations, the most interesting development in Ireland for some time has been the forma-

tion of a new party, the IRSP. The IRSP, founded in December 1974, is mainly a split from the Officials, though it has recruited a number of previously independent socialists as well as a number of people from the SWM, ex-Provisionals and ex-PD members.

The split from the Officials was based on a rejection of the way that the Officials dealt with the national question. They demilitarised the struggle in the early '70s when armed defence of the Catholic ghettos was needed; they played opportunist games with the Loyalist organisations as a consequence of their 'unite-and-fight' strategy. Above all, the leadership stifled internal democracy in the organisation. The grouping that finally split to form the IRSP were at times physically prevented from expressing criticism of the leadership's policy. This was made even more explicit after the split, when the Officials launched a campaign of terror against the IRSP which erupted into a feud in which several comrades of both organisations lost their lives or were beaten or shot.

The main planks of the IRSP's programme are: British troops out — support of all strikes in support of wage-claims - no redundancies and worksharing with full pay - a bill of rights. However it is obvious that there is a hangover from the politics of the Officials in such a demand as a bill of rights. It is a reformist demand which implies a role for the Ulster state, when the point is to deny *any* involvement of the imperialist state in Ireland. Secondly, the IRSP claim to be the only major organisation in Ireland which understands the relation between the class struggle and the national question. But this is far from clear. IRSP militants tend to talk about the socialist struggle as the economic or factory struggle, and the national struggle as the existing struggle of the Catholic working class in the North. We think that this is wrong. The anti-imperialist struggle is the main front of the class struggle for the whole of Ireland. To be a socialist in Ireland does not just mean being 'in' the factories as well as 'in' the national struggle. It means, mainly, to be in the Republican struggle as a socialist, i.e. to fight for mass involvement in the defence of the Catholic communities. It means fighting to make clear the *class* content of the Northern struggle and the need for an independent working class politics, North and South. And it means

mobilising the Southern workers in anti-imperialist solidarity with the North. The IRSP have yet to show that this is what they mean, and in particular some of the leading militants have expressed the idea that in the South the main political issue is the struggle in the South itself and not the Northern fight.

THE PROVISIONALS

Without a doubt, the most important force in the Irish struggle has been the Provisional Republican Movement. This is *the* guerilla army of the Catholic working class and the organisation identified by the masses as the major and leading organisation. And the reason is very simple. It was the Provos who expressed the desire of the Catholic working class to go forward and take on the Ulster state and the forces that upheld it, i.e. the British Army. When you're in Ireland you realise just how much basic respect and regard there is for the Provisional volunteers because of this.

Leadership

The political leadership of the Provisional movement (the Army and Sinn Fein) is quite definitely a petit-bourgeois leadership. Its programme – 'Eire Nua' (New Ireland) – in no way expresses the class content of the Northern struggle. The leadership wavers on the question of the Southern state and mobilising the Southern workers, combining left wing rhetoric with little concrete action. For instance, the Provisionals achieve little in opposition to the repression of Republicans in the South. It has a confused position on the reactionary forces of Loyalism – sometimes opposing them, other times suggestion that they may be won over by discussion. And the movement as a whole has a tendency towards elitism, i.e. it does not see the need to back up the guerilla army with political work and mobilisation of the mass of the Catholic working-class.

But many rank and file Provos and Provo sympathisers express the same doubts. Many Provo supporters are revolutionary socialists or moving firmly in that direction. Many understand that the Northern struggle is a class struggle that can and should lead to a workers' state, and not simply to some sort of mystical, petit-bourgeois, reformed 'New Ireland'. However, these people still see political change as coming *within* the Provisional movement because that is the one and only movement that has consistently answered the question of the armed struggle against the state; the armed

struggle in defence of the communities.

Whether the left-wing in and around the Provisionals can emerge as the conscious and organised vanguard of the Irish working class, that remains to be seen. At some time it will require a clear break with the petit-bourgeois tendencies in the movement. But for the time being – with the prospect of civil war – there seems little chance that this clear break will happen.

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY

The PD is an important socialist organisation that has been virtually ignored by socialists in this country. It is an explicitly marxist organisation which consistently understood the importance of the Northern struggle, its class content, and so has refused to get drawn into an SWM-type obsession with the 'economic' struggle in the South. For this reason, it has often mobilised thousands of people in demonstrations on its own slogans and political demands.

Today PD provides the clearest analysis of the Irish struggle. At the moment, for instance, its voice is the loudest in warning of the dangers of an attempted Loyalist takeover and the need to organise to prevent that happening. PD is limited to Belfast, Armagh and Dublin and is largely absent in other parts of Ireland. Organisationally, it is still quite small. But this question of size and influence is not a technical problem, it is a political one. It was the Provos who bore the brunt of the armed struggle in the early years, and so it is still the Provos who act as the main organisational focus for Republican militants.

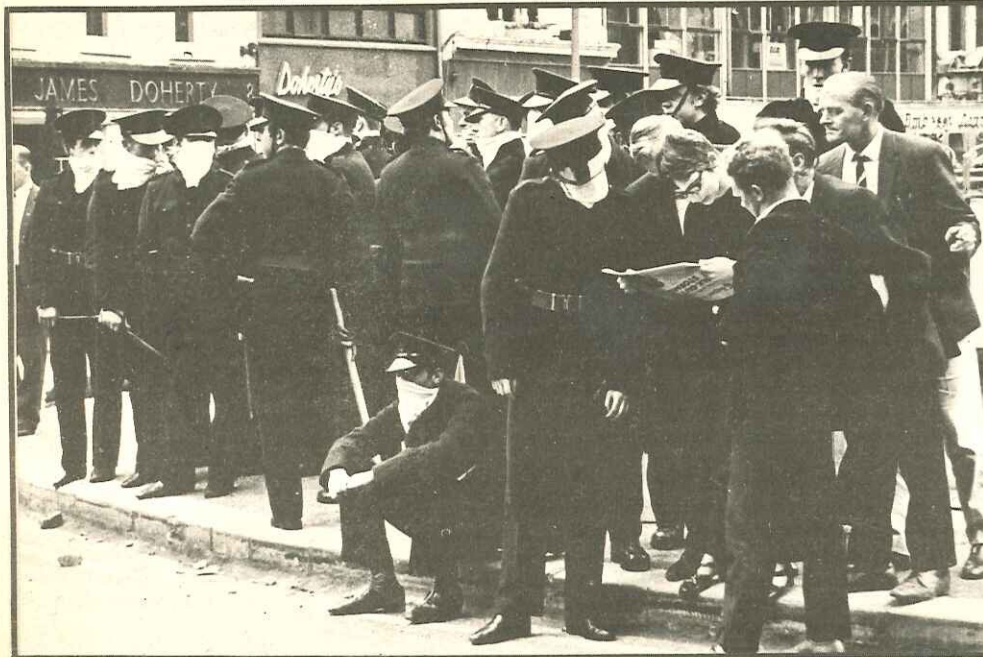
Recently, an armed group who follow the political line of PD, the Revolutionary Citizen's Army, has been formed. The effect this could have on PD's role in the struggle could be significant.

The success of the Irish revolution hinges on the success of the struggle in the North: the struggle against the state of Ulster. Around this struggle hinge all the major questions: the unity of the working class; the conflict between the Southern workers and Southern bourgeoisie; the development of workers' power. As the struggle develops so too will the need for a conscious socialist leadership. It's likely that that leadership will be forged from three currents: the Provisionals, the IRSP and the PD.



The British Army against the people.

THE HISTORY OF DIVIDE AND RULE



B Specials
Storm-troopers
of the Loyalists

Now disbanded;
but they live on
in new uniform-
that of the U.D.R.

A HISTORY OF LOYALISM

Ever since England first invaded Ireland in 1169 (at the invitation of the Pope), the Irish have rebelled regularly. One attempted answer to this was to 'plant' a large population of settlers in Ireland. People clearly different to the native Irish and dedicated to continued British rule. These 'settlers' were the ancestors of the modern Protestant Loyalists.

The first settlements (during the reign of Queen Mary) in Counties Leix and Offaly were, as it happens, a complete failure. The few settlers quickly intermarried with local people and ceased to hold any allegiance to Britain. Only the rich feudal landowners remained trustworthy.

ULSTER

Of all the Irish provinces, the most Northern one, Ulster, was the most rebellious. For almost the whole of the second half of the sixteenth century, Ulster was in open revolt. But in 1607 it was firmly defeated and this was immediately followed by a massive immigration of lowland Scottish Presbyterians, English Protestants and English soldiers. These were planted on the lands of the native Irish, the owners being driven out by force. The city of Derry was sold to a consortium of London merchants and renamed Londonderry.

Most settlers were no richer than the people they evicted. Most were landless peasants. The Scots spoke the same language as the Irish (Gaelic) and they continued to be exploited by the landlords as much as the natives. But, because the Church reform in Britain had barely touched Ireland, the newcomers were all Protestants while the Irish remained Catholic. And the way in which the settlers had

taken the land – by force – meant that the Catholics used equally brutal means to recover it: resulting in conflict from the start.

BRITISH POLICY

Ever since then, British policy has been to encourage that conflict. Protestant peasants were given privileges over the Catholics. For instance, under the 'Ulster Custom' laws, a Protestant peasant was far safer from eviction by the landlord, and was entitled to the benefits and value of any improvements he made to his holding. This meant that Ulster Protestants had an incentive to improve their property by extending farm buildings and starting a small 'cottage industry', spinning flax. In contrast, the Catholic peasant constantly feared eviction and so made less attempt to improve the holding.

The Protestants were confirmed in their strong position by Cromwell's victory in the English Civil War. He invaded Ireland, and in the process of defeating the Irish supporters of King Charles I, had every man, woman and child in the towns of Drogheda and Wexford massacred. He then ordered *all* native Irish to move to Connaught, only one quarter of Ireland's land area. Those who refused were threatened with death or slavery.

Cromwell did not succeed. The Irish fought back in small guerilla bands called, in Gaelic, 'Toiridhe' – which later became the word Tory, which now means something completely different!

The later accession of a Catholic, James II, to the English throne, worried the Ulster Protestants, and they supported the invasion of England by the Dutch Protestant, William of Orange. James fled to Ireland, followed by King Billy (as

he is now known) and they fought an indecisive battle at the River Boyne in 1690. This is now celebrated as a great loyalist victory over the Catholics, though King Billy did not finally beat James until the battle of Aughrim in 1691. Ironically, King Billy's greatest ally was none other than the Pope, who thought James II was becoming too powerful. Billy was just the man to eliminate the upstart James.

THE UNITED IRISHMEN

After King Billy's victory, Ireland was held in an unshakable grip for nearly a century. The only resistance came in the form of 'rural agitation'. Small bands of peasants, faced with increasing rents and fearful of eviction, struck back at the aristocratic landlords with arson attacks on barns, hayricks or manor houses. Landlords were found murdered. Catholic tenants formed groups called 'Defenders', whilst Protestant tenants called themselves 'Oakboys' or 'steelboys'. Unfortunately in areas of mixed religious communities, each regarded the other as the traditional enemy in the fight for land. And the landlords, mostly Protestant, weren't slow in exploiting this.

But in towns like Belfast and Dublin it was different. Capitalist industry was developing and the owners, regardless of religion, resented the competition of British industrialists. New ideas of independence, inspired by the French Revolution of 1789, and the American War of Independence, were spread by middle-class Protestants like Wolfe Tone and Napper Tandy. Tone led the *Society of United Irishmen*, formed in 1791 to agitate for independence and the unity of Catholic and Protestant.

THE ORANGE ORDER

In 1798 the United Irishmen rebelled all over Ireland. Behind them they had the mass of Catholic peasants as well as a significant number of Presbyterians. The revolt was quickly defeated. But the threat of a people united against tyranny was not lost on the British establishment. They became determined that it should never happen again.

Previous to 1798, the landowners had regarded the Protestant 'rural agitators' with almost as much horror as the Catholic 'Defenders'. But now they took greater interest in those Protestants who had formed 'Orange Lodges': secret societies dedicated to maintaining the Union with Britain, and the supremacy of Protestantism over the Catholics. It is significant that the first meeting of 'Orange Boys' came soon after the beginning of the United Irishmen in 1795. This meeting was held near Loughgall in County Armagh (the area known today as the 'triangle of Death' because of the Catholics murdered there). The Orange Order quickly gained the support of the Verner and Blacker families, big landowners of the area. It also spread to Dublin where it was supported by members of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy.

WEALTHY BACKERS

But it was after the 1798 rebellion that the Orange Order really began to expand. And crucial to this was the respectability given it by support from the army and the aristocracy. By 1813, the Duke of York (*the Duke of York*) C-in-C of the British Army was a member of the Order. And in fact it was through army units returning from Ireland that Orangeism came to England — lodges being set up in Manchester, Ashton, Stockport and other Lancashire towns. The Duke of York became the English Grand Master.

The Orange Order became firmly allied with the most right-wing Tory elements of the establishment, and the rank and file Orangemen repaid their masters by becoming the shock troops of the ruling-class.

For instance, in 1818, when a huge working class meeting at Peterloo in Manchester was attacked by armed dragoons and men, women and children were cut down without mercy — who was it who followed up by assaulting the survivors? *The Special Constables recruited mainly from the local Orangemen!*

Similarly, large numbers of Orangemen were drafted in to break the strike of farm labourers on the Earl of Erne's estate, Co. Mayo, in 1880. Tenants and workers refused all



A Loyalist march. More British than the British.

dealings, even conversation, with the Earl's land agent, Captain C.S. Boycott. Their campaign gave us the word 'Boycott', but thanks to the Orange, the Earl's harvest was saved.

The history of the Orange Order is the history of working class Toryism. English workers in Liverpool, fearing for their houses and jobs after the vast influx of Irish workers in the 1840s, were attracted to the Order's violent anti-Irish and anti-Catholic prejudice. This was the basis for the strength of Orangeism in Liverpool and the working class Tory vote. In fact, the first Tory organisation on Merseyside consisted of Orange workers, the 'Conservative Working Men's Association'. And the Order was responsible for organising violent attacks on early Labour Party meetings. Their anti-working class attitudes even exceeded that of the local Catholic Church hierarchy.

IRISH RADICALISM

In comparison, the radical tradition of the United Irishmen, followed by the Fenians in the 1880s, through to the Easter Rising of 1916 and the Republican revolt of today, has been consistently progressive and anti-establishment. For example, the early textile union in Lancashire was based on the local organisation of the United Irishmen. The composer of the Labour Party's 'Red Flag' was a Fenian, John Connell - who later helped establish trades-unionism in California. The entire history of the workers' movement in England is littered with the contribution of Irish (and Welsh) radicals and Republicans.

HOME RULE

The Fenian (Republican) uprisings in Ireland in the 1860s caused the Orange Order to be reactivated after a period of quiet. The Fenian movement was put down, but a new challenge to Loyalism came, when Gladstone and the Liberal Party began to discuss Home Rule for Ireland. At heart, what the Liberals wanted was the votes of the eighty-six Home Rule Irish MPs. But the Tories, under Lord Randolph Churchill, famous for his son and his disease, were equally cynical.

Churchill travelled to Ulster to invite the Loyalists to take up arms against Home Rule. Nearly all the Ulster Protestants opposed any suggestion of Irish independence. The leaders were the local industrialists (shipyard owners and textile bosses) who feared losing their British market

Though the first Home Rule Bills failed in Parliament, in 1912 Sir Edward Carson, Leader of the Ulster Unionists, had forty thousand German guns landed in Ulster to arm the Ulster Volunteers. Like today, the officer-class in the Army refused to put down their armed rebellion. Fifty-eight officers at the Curragh Army Camp mutinied rather than oppose them.

WAR

War broke out in 1914 and the Ulster Volunteers joined the Army to be massacred on the Somme in 1916. Thousands of Catholic Irishmen also died because middle class nationalists promised Home Rule if they gained Britain's confidence by fighting in Britain's war!

During Easter week 1916, rebellion broke out in Dublin, led by the socialist and trade union leader, James Connolly, and the left-wing of the Irish nationalist movement. Though defeated, the Easter Rising had begun the War of Independence that finally drove the British from most of Ireland by 1921.

PARTITION

But the Orangemen were determined to remain outside any Irish state that would refuse to grant them their accustomed privileges.

Ulster was the most industrialised and profitable part of Ireland. The first industry, textiles, had developed there because the Ulster Custom laws had created a 'cottage' textile industry. Following textiles came heavy engineering

(building textile machinery) and shipbuilding.

Much of the heavier industry was for Protestant workers only. The policy of the old landowners, of giving preferential treatment to 'Loyalist' Protestants was adopted by the capitalists in industry. Today there are hardly any Catholics employed at Harland & Wolff's shipyard, Mackies and Sirocco's engineering plants, and many other factories. In fact, Protestant workers fiercely resist any change in this.

Of course, the interests of Protestant workers, as *workers*, frequently clashed with the employers. Both Catholics and Protestants worked on Belfast docks, for example, and both joined the Irish TGWU. In 1911, led by James Connolly, they fought together for a shilling extra per week and reduced workloads.

Earlier, in 1903, Protestant workers formed the Independent Orange Order because the old Order was ruled by the employers. Though it co-operated with socialist and nationalist organisations, the IOO never really dealt with sectarianism. Once Home Rule became an issue again, it had no answer to the Orange bosses' insistence that Home Rule meant lower living standards for Protestants. The Independent Orange Order's radical MP, Thomas Sloan, lost his seat in 1910; the Orange Order closed ranks and the IOO disappeared.



Paisley: fair play for Protestants, foul play for Catholics.

TODAY

In fact, it was inevitable that Protestant workers would support their exploiters and reject unity with their fellow workers. In an area of high unemployment and bad housing conditions, being an Orangeman may mean a job, not unemployment, or a decent house, not a slum on the Shankhill Road. And it means being 'British' (something special) and not 'just another Paddy'. These are not easily dismissed considerations, and few Protestant workers care to. Today the bulk of Protestant workers follow the lead of sectarian murder gangs like the UVF and UDA. And they have flocked into the expanded Royal Ulster Constabulary and Ulster Defence Regiment to get guns and training.

The Ulster state is the guarantee of Protestant superiority. It channels British investment and subsidies into the Protestant community, even including a few crumbs for the workers. British policy is to support the Ulster state. The workers will only be able to unite when that state has been removed and British control in Ireland is ended.

THE SECRET WAR



THE 'DIRTY TRICKS' DEPARTMENT AND THE SECRET WAR

We often see photos in the press of 'ordinary' soldiers charging round Northern Ireland 'protecting the people from themselves'. It's no secret that fifteen thousand troops are stationed there.

But an essential part of the British state's 'war effort' remains hidden. Indeed, the activities of the Army's 'dirty tricks' department, the assassinations, the mystery bomb explosions, the kidnappings, may never be fully revealed. Certainly not by the British press.

Back in 1972, the body of a 31-year-old Englishman, David Seaman, was found in Co. Armagh near the border. Three months before, on 23 October 1971, Seaman had appeared at a press conference in Dublin and revealed that he was an ex-member of the Special Air Service, the British Army's 'undercover' unit. According to Seaman, they had been active in Ireland since early 1971, carrying out bomb explosions to discredit the IRA. Seaman had wanted no part in this work but was unable to interest the 'news hounds' of the British press. His desire to 'tell all' led him back to Northern Ireland and, soon after, to his death. His death effectively removed a potentially greater embarrassment to the 'peace-keeping' forces.

'MYSTERY BOMBINGS'

Had he lived, Seaman might have revealed details of mystery bombings and shootings attributed to the IRA but, in fact, the work of the SAS. But there is sufficient evidence in certain cases.

For instance, on 1 June 1973, just after midnight, an Army patrol searched the offices of the Ace Taxi Services in Antrim Road, Belfast. Two young Catholics, Terry McGuigan and Malachy Devlin, were working there. Three hours later, a group of men in civilian clothes came in and opened fire, seriously wounding both. It sounded like just

another sectarian murder attempt in a mixed area. Except that both men announced that they had recognised two of the gunmen. They were members of the army patrol that had come in earlier!

Only a few days before this incident, a group of men in plainclothes opened fire on a car in Silvo Street, off the Protestant Shankhill Road. Local people assumed that they were IRA men and attacked them with sticks and crowbars. But the gunmen were rescued by an Army patrol and it was later revealed, by the Army, that the men were 'intelligence officers' pursuing 'terrorists'. But the intended victims of the plainclothes squad had driven straight to Tennent Street police station to report the incident and were clearly not 'terrorists'. Clearly, the Army was indulging in 'tit for tat' murder attempts in order to keep the sectarian situation boiling.

TRAVELLING GUNMEN

It was to help prevent killings like these that the Catholics began to form unarmed vigilante patrols to protect their areas at night. Unfortunately, these vigilantes became target themselves. On 12 May 1972, a group of vigilantes, member of the Catholic Ex-Service-men's Association, were standing at Finaghy Road North in Andersonstown. Suddenly, just before midnight, a car drew up and a man inside mowed down all five vigilantes with machine-gun fire. A statement from the Army saying that the men were shot during a gun-battle was quickly dropped and replaced by a statement that the attack was carried out by 'unknown persons'. Forensic tests on the dead and wounded proved that they had been unarmed and later Chief Inspector Drew of the RUC admitted that he had been informed that an Army plainclothes squad was responsible. No soldier was ever charged with murder. An 'open verdict' was returned at the inquest.

PLAIN-CLOTHES SQUADS

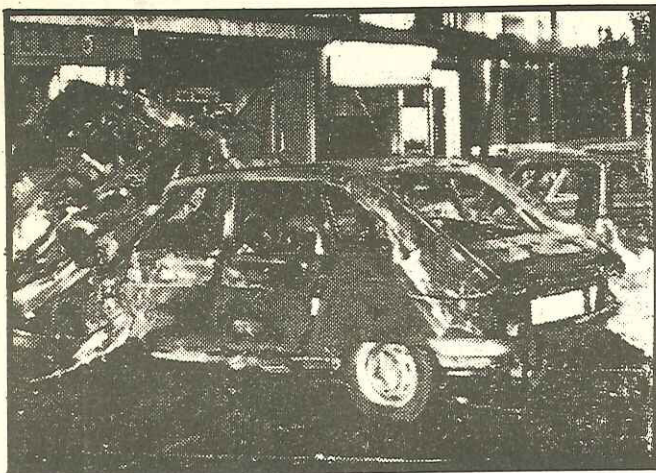
The number of such attacks, involving Army personnel, increased rapidly. A plainclothes squad admitted killing an

unarmed youth, Daniel Rooney, 19, in Belfast in September 1972. In April the same year, they had wounded two brothers called Conway in Ballymurphy on their way to work, and admitted responsibility for the wounding of three Catholic taxi drivers on 22 June 1972, shooting them down from a passing car on Glen Road, Belfast.

This last attack differed from the rest because two soldiers, a Capt. McGregor and Sergeant Williams, were charged with unlawful possession of weapons as a result of the incident. Most interesting was the fact that the gun involved was a Thompson sub-machine gun, *not* a standard Army-issue weapon at all. In fact, when charged McGregor is alleged to have said: 'That ammunition had nothing to do with me. It belongs to the police at Castlereagh and was issued by the Special Branch.' The point is that the Thompson is a gun associated with the IRA and so it was being used to discredit Republicans. McGregor, it transpired, was in the Parachute Regiment, which was not stationed in Ireland at the time. He was seconded to a more 'specialised' unit. Sergeant Williams admitted being commander of a unit of the MRF (Military Reconnaissance Force) which organises armed plainclothes patrols in Catholic areas. Both, of course, were acquitted at the subsequent trial.

REIGN OF TERROR

The plainclothes assassination squads serve several important functions. For instance, they help maintain a reign of terror in the besieged Catholic districts of Belfast. People dare not leave the area at night, sometimes don't dare even walk along the street. This is obviously of great value to an occupying power. It cripples attempts to organise open



LIBERTY HALL, Dublin 1972.

resistance and, as the number of murder victims mount, it forces people to give up their struggle in the desperate hope that, in return, the Army will protect them from the sectarian gunmen.

But it's pretty clear that the vast majority of nearly five hundred Roman Catholics murdered in the Six Counties were the victims of Loyalist gangs like the UDA or UVF, often using cover-names like the 'Ulster Freedom Fighters' or 'Protestant Action Force'. While the Loyalists organise mass, indiscriminate killings, the Army can concentrate on more selective targets.

CAR BOMBS

One target, it is widely believed, was the crowded city centre of Dublin on the night of 1 December 1972. On that night the Lynch government was trying to push through new legislation extending police powers of arrest and detention and effectively removing any illusion that Ireland, North or South, could ever be a truly democratic country while controlled by Britain. It was clear that the British government wanted the new laws passed in the Irish parliament, but it was equally clear that a majority of Irish TDs (MPs) were against the new Bill.

The British state stepped in quickly. Two car bombs blasted Sackville Place and Liberty Hall in the city centre, killing

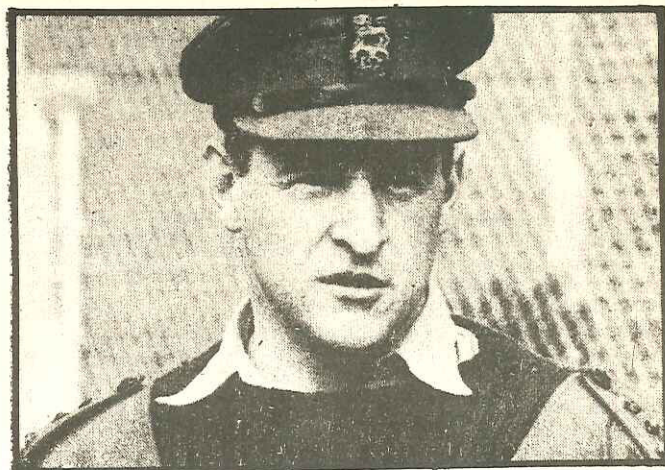
two bus drivers and injuring many more. Amid cries of 'mad IRA bombers', the Dail (Irish parliament) passed the new legislation without hesitation. Later, Lynch admitted publicly that neither he nor anyone else in the government believed Republicans to be responsible.

In fact, evidence points very clearly to British agents. Only a few hours before the explosions, an Englishman took a taxi from Dublin city centre to Enniskillen, over a hundred miles north in the Six Counties. Money, it seemed, was no object. But on arrival at Enniskillen, the passenger refused to pay, pulled a gun and ordered the driver to return to Dublin. The driver, not surprisingly, did just that, but reported the matter to the police.

BRITISH ARMY IMPLICATED

Nothing more happened until the following August when the taxi driver spotted the man at Dundalk races, just South of the border. He immediately gripped the man until a policeman could be called. Documents in his pockets revealed him to be a Major Thompson, a member of the British Army and also of the Conservative Party. Only a day later, Major Thompson, who used such desperate measures to get out of Dublin on the night of the bombs, was allowed to return to the Six Counties, no questions asked.

In fact, the presence of British agents in Ireland had been revealed soon after the Dublin bombs when an Irish policeman, Patrick Crinnion, and an Englishman, John Wyman, were arrested on 21 December. Crinnion, at first described as a 'clerk', turned out to be a special assistant to John Fleming, head of the Irish Special Branch. Wyman was a member of MI6. They had been co-operating, it was sug-



KITSON, the rising star.

gested, in the exchange of information on Republicans. But Wyman may have been involved in more violent activities, because Wyman was identified as the co-ordinator of a bombing and bank robbery group by the Littlejohn brothers who had been jailed for these activities. Kenneth Littlejohn admitted to bombing several Irish police stations and robbing banks, pretending to be in the IRA. These actions, he said, were authorised by the British government and designed to discredit Republicans.

While in Ireland, the Littlejohns had lived only a few miles from Co. Meath, the proven origin of the explosives used to blast the Parachute Officers' Mess at Aldershot in early 1972. In fact, Kenneth Littlejohn said that the day after the Aldershot bomb (which killed seven) he was phoned by the then Army Minister, Geoffrey Johnson-Smith, who congratulated him on the good job he was doing.

And, having escaped from Irish police custody, Littlejohn went to live in Birmingham. He lived there with a self-confessed police informer and National Front member until the Birmingham pub bombings which killed twenty-one. It was only then that the police moved in and arrested him. Maybe they thought that his activities as 'agent provocateur' were getting out of hand!

The technique of blaming crime on Republicans is particularly widely used. Unfortunately for the Army, soldiers involv-

ed in such operations may get carried away and keep the proceeds, or else carry out more crimes than required. For example, in March 1973 two soldiers, Lance Corporal Simpson (an Ulsterman) and Signalman Tynon, carried out armed robberies at Garvagh and Frogh Lough, Northern Ireland, dressed in civilian clothes. Simpson was alleged to have said to people being robbed: 'Well, that's a wee bit more for the cause!' Both were actually captured and sentenced to six years, though both had ten years' service and exemplary records behind them.

THE NEW MODEL ARMY

Mystery bombings, shootings, robberies and the manipulation of governmental and public opinion. These are part and parcel of the British Army today. They don't just fight in the 'front line'. They fight behind the scenes, ensuring the 'correct' decisions are made by the government. Already we have seen how the Army is capable of sabotaging the British government's plans during the Ulster Workers' Council strike in May 1974. The UWC stoppage was aimed to destroy the government's power-sharing 'solution'. Yet the Army, supposedly just a wing of 'democratic' government, *point blank refused* to take down the UWC barricades which were openly intimidating workers from going to work. It was only the sight of soldiers collaborating with the reactionary UWC personnel that convinced most Loyalist workers to join the stoppage. The Army top brass, in the shape of GOC Sir Frank King, has since publicly opposed another government strategy, the ceasefire with the IRA: The Army has very noticeably separated itself from the rest of the state in recent years and is now allying

itself more and more with the extreme Loyalist 'solutions' proposed by the UWC.

Though this move towards a political role for the Army has been a response to the Northern Ireland situation, there have also been people within the Army hierarchy who have advocated just such a role. The best known is Brigadier Frank Kitson, a former brigade commander in Ulster and an officer in Kenya during the 1950s uprising. In his book, *Low Intensity Operations*, Kitson suggests that the future task of the army is to tackle 'subversion' in Britain. Following his experience in Kenya, Kitson urges the setting up of 'pseudo-gangs', groups of soldiers or policemen who carry out acts of violence attributed to the resistance force. He wants greater control by military authorities over press and TV. At the moment in Ireland, most journalists base reports on Army press releases anyway, but the occasional 'news hound' may actually venture beyond the plush bar of the Europa Hotel for a 'scoop'. Greater control over this by the Army will become essential in the suppression of the British working class.

If anyone thinks Kitson is just a right-wing crank with political ambitions, they should reflect on Kitson's meteoric rise to fame since his ideas were first published. He was quickly made head of the School of Infantry in Warminster, Wilts. The present generation of officers is being taught the importance of the 'peace-keeping on the mainland'.

The feeling amongst the Army top brass that they have a right to intervene in the class struggle in Britain is another product of the Irish conflict we could well do without.

STUCK IN HELL!

COMING INTO THE STRUGGLE FROM THE OTHER SIDE

Most of the squaddies in the Army are working class kids who join up for lack of anything that appears better to do. We're printing here an account by an ex-soldier who went into Northern Ireland in '69.

Why did I join up? That's hard to say — originally it was personal reasons — I suppose everyone has. I was 18, things were bad at home. I had a lousy job and things like that. It was very depressing. That prompted me — it was either going away, down south or something like that, or joining up. I just walked into the Army office — one really bad day — and, well, it was all so fast. He said, 'Well, you've passed your little exam, do you want to go down for your medical?' It was so quick — it doesn't really hit you for three or four weeks. They give you your little book and ten bob, or whatever it was, and you're actually in the Army, signed up. Then they give you twelve weeks to sort yourself out, and you can buy yourself out for £20, which I didn't have. And you're in.

Trades — Training The initial training, it's hard, it's all just physical, runs, drill and that. And a bit of weapon training, but mostly drill, for the 'discipline'. What I felt was, I'd only got to stick it for three years, not like some poor bastards, in for six. You only met people just joined — nobody who'd been over there, you'd got no idea what to expect.

I went to Germany and just pissed about cleaning trucks. For the average bloke, thinking about getting a trade, it's crap. It's like anything — they pick who they want and that's it. I was just an ordinary rifleman — it's very deceiving for kids, the fucking posters and all the crap they put on the telly all the time. I mean, I'd say to anyone who's going to join up — just *don't*. You get pushed into what they want. I wanted to be a cook, so they said, 'Just sign here and we'll let your regiment know when there's a vacancy'. They never did. It was just lies.

In Ireland: 1969 The first few weeks we were there, we were among the Protestants. There was a kind of lull. We



Rubber bullets.

weren't told nothing about the scene, just a few bits of propaganda and shown pictures of men we had to lift on sight. We patrolled up and down the Shankhill at that time. Just going round. You had two pieces of paper — the Riot Act and the Yellow Card. Funny that — it went: 1. Protect property; 2. Protect people; 3. Apprehend any kind of suspect doing anything. In that order!

When we first went in there was a riot with the Protestants against us cos they thought one of us had shot at them — it was an accidental discharge, and they went wild. That started it — the whole atmosphere changed. We just didn't know what it was all about, they didn't tell us. After that, we were moved out of the area into a Catholic area. I think they left that barracks on the Shankhill empty after that. Everything changed.

Training after 1970

When we first went in, we just had