

socialist republic

Paper of Peoples' Democracy

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The Burntollet March

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT INSIDE

IRAN: Mass Action shows the way. Victory to the Revolution!



FEBRUARY THE 11 TH WILL GO DOWN IN HISTORY AS DAY I OF THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION. IN A CLASSIC DEMONSTRATION OF THE POWER OF MASS ACTION THE IRANIAN WORKERS WENT FROM STRIKES AND MASS DEMONSTRATION TO ARMED INSURRECTION. THE ARMED FORCES WERE EITHER WON OVER TO THE CAMP OF REVOLUTION OR SWEEPED AWAY BY THE SHEER POWER OF THE RISEN PEOPLE.

THE REVOLUTION STILL FACES MANY PROBLEMS. THE GENERALS HOPE THAT BY PULLING BACK TO BARRACKS THEY CAN ISOLATE THE ARMY FROM THE REVOLUTIONARY CONTAGION AND PRESERVE IT AS A WEAPON OF REACTION. AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI AND THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS WILL NOW TRY TO HALT THE REVOLUTIONARY FERMENT AND THE WEST WILL MOVE TO SUPPORT HIM IN THE HOPE OF PREVENTING THE WORKERS COMING TO POWER. BUT WHATEVER PROBLEMS ARE POSED IN THE FUTURE NOTHING CAN TAKE AWAY FROM THE JOY AND GRANDEUR OF A DAY ON WHICH THE MASSES EXERTED THEIR STRENGTH AND DEALT A CRUSHING DEFEAT TO IMPERIALISM.

WE CARRY A BACKGROUND REPORT ON IRAN ON PAGE TEN.

**forward to
workers' power!**

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The entry of Ireland into the proposed European Economic Monetary System has raised a number of important questions about the political and economic future of Ireland. Many commentators, on the right and the left, believe that membership of the EMS will signal a final break with British imperialism. The reformist Republicans (Officials) and the social democrats imagine that closer integration with European imperialism will create a modern, independent Ireland. This reasoning serves as an excuse to abandon the struggle against British imperialism and adapt to the pro-multinational bias of the trade union leadership.

Leaving aside the curious logic which posits that dependence on European rather than British imperialism will lead to Irish independence, what truth is there in the view that Britain is no longer the decisive economic and political influence in Ireland?

It is true that over the last decade and a half Irish trade has diversified considerably. Roughly half our trade is now with countries other than Britain. Similarly, a substantial part of industrial investment comes from the U.S. and European countries. But it is simplistic and superficial to think that this reflects a qualitative change in Ireland's relationship with Britain.

The Imperialist Link

The growth of foreign trade with Europe was actually fuelled by dependence on Britain. The decline of the pound sterling had the effect of cheapening Irish exports vis a vis commodities produced in other currency areas. It was precisely the relationship with Britain which permitted and encouraged diversification of trade. This of course was the reason why no serious move was made to break the sterling link.

Furthermore there is no substance in the belief that the new trade pattern has fundamentally strengthened the Irish economy. It is true that the decline of Sterling precipitated an export boom. But if devaluation has cheapened exports it has also made imports dearer. The result is a widening trade deficit, a balance of payments crisis and an enormous national debt. The international credibility of the Irish economy is currently at a low ebb. Continued confidence by the international finance agencies (in the form of exploitative loans) cannot be expected unless the balance of payments deficit is trimmed down. This in turn means

trimming still further the living standards of working people - not a very big change in nature for Irish capitalism!

But surely entry in the EMS, despite Britain's refusal, shows that Britain can no longer dictate terms in Ireland?

It should be obvious that economic policies best suited to an imperialist country do not necessarily serve the metropolis when extended to its colonies. In this sense Britain and Ireland have different but not antagonistic attitudes to the EMS.

Capitalists Compete

Britain is hesitant about the EMS. For several years Germany has footed the bills of its poorer imperialist relations in Europe. To avoid a trade war it has continuously revalued the Mark thereby making its own exports dearer and its imports cheaper. The balance of payments crisis of other European countries eased as a result. But the EMS will at the very least slow down the rising value of the Mark and enhance the competitive edge of German industry. Despite the on-going devaluation of sterling and the revaluation of the Mark Britain already has a 20% trade deficit with Germany. In the context of the EMS Britain would be further at the mercy of German imperialism.

However, Britain is not in principle opposed to monetary union, which in the long run would benefit all European imperialist powers. The free floating of the Mark confers only short term advantages. Revaluation of a strong currency means at the same time devaluation of a weak currency. The imports of the lesser powers eventually become clearer. France in particular has found to its cost that its gains from German revaluation were lost through the devaluation of the Franc in the form of higher capital

costs in agriculture. In principle, a stable European monetary union suits all the imperialist powers.

Britain's success is in the long run tied to the success of European imperialism and it cannot indefinitely counterpose its specific needs to those of its partners. But the short term benefits of the floating Mark have not run out for Britain as they have for France. Failure to impose wage restraint on the unions means that Britain must fully exploit the competitive advantages accruing from the present monetary chaos. Not until an effective incomes policy is enforced will British imperialism be competitive enough to cope with the challenge posed by a project such as the EMS.

Ireland, by contrast with Britain, has a much more satisfactory level of industrial productivity. The National Wage Agreements were relatively successful in containing wages and export competitiveness improved. But it is necessary again to stress that this is not a sign of independent or strong growth. In reality it reflects imperialist distortions of the Irish economy. The high mobility of foreign investment (demonstrated by the flight of foreign firms during the last recession) has confronted the Irish working class with an immediate and stark choice between low wages and unemployment. In the absence of adequate political leadership Irish workers have had to be content with the lesser evil of wage restraint.

As in the case of the diversification of trade, it is Ireland's dependence on imperialism, which has afforded it a limited amount of manoeuvrability vis a vis the EMS. So long as there is no major and prolonged divergence between Sterling and common European currency, the Irish economy will be able to make short term gains without conflicting seriously with British interests. Such a divergence seems unlikely since the rest of Europe would suffer from the resultant British crisis.

Those who are expecting a fundamental break with sterling and with British dependence - are engaged in wishful thinking. Independence will come by only one route, anti-imperialist struggle.

PEOPLES DEMOCRACY:

The People's Democracy.

bases itself on the following points :

We agreed that the central political question for the Irish people is the political, economical and military domination of Ireland by Imperialism and that the central task of the Irish revolution is the solution of the national question through the ending of partition and achievement of political and economic independence.

We are united in our rejection of the claim that any lasting solution to the oppression of the Irish people can be found in a 6 county framework, and in our rejection of any 'right' of the Loyalist minority to continue partition.

As Marxists we believe that the capitalist state must be smashed and replaced by a workers' state and that only the organised working class can provide the motive force for doing this.

We believe that a crucial area of capitalist oppression is the oppression of women, and that this is especially so in Ireland, given the history of clerical power here. Women are oppressed as a sex and even a successful socialist revolution will not automatically guarantee the elimination of this oppression. For this

reason we unconditionally support the right of women to organise independently to fight for their emancipation.

What we stand for.

As Marxists we believe that the working class has the ability to successfully challenge and defeat Imperialism. It produces the wealth of society without being able to control or distribute it. It is potentially stronger than any other class because of its ability to organise politically on a mass base, combining its economic power and its strength of numbers.

We accept that workers have the right to defend themselves against the violence of Imperialism. However we do not accept the ideology of militarism - the belief that armed groups can substitute themselves for the masses and win freedom for them.

We believe in the building of an organised and experienced leadership, in a Marxist party based on the Leninist theory of Party Organisation, the central feature of which is democratic centralism.

The organisation is internationalist. It commits itself to holding an organised discussion with representatives of the Fourth International on the questions of affiliation and the XIth World Congress of the Fourth International. Members of the organisation may hold individual membership of the F.I.

WHIDDY ISLAND



50 PEOPLE DIED AT WHIDDY ISLAND IN JANUARY IN THE BIGGEST INDUSTRIAL DISASTER IN RECENT IRISH HISTORY. THE 50, CREWMEN OF THE FRENCH TANKER BETELGEUSE AND IRISH TERMINAL WORKERS, WERE KILLED BY SUCESSIVE IRISH GOVERNMENT'S POLICY OF MAKING THE 26 COUNTIES A HAVEN FOR DIRTY AND DANGEROUS MULTI-NATIONAL FIRMS THAT MOST OTHER COUNTRIES WOULDN'T HAVE.

The Betelgeuse disaster was predictable. From the beginning the Whiddy story has been a long saga of the Dublin Govt. turning a blind eye to the totally inadequate safety and anti-pollution measures at the terminal run by the giant multi-national Gulf Oil company. In the first six years of Gulf's operations at Whiddy there were two dozen reported oil spillages polluting Bantry bay, the biggest one in October 1974 pumping 650,000 gallons of crude oil into the bay and another one three months later spilling 115,000 gallons.

The reason Gulf could get away with this was that as a result of a deal with Fianna Fail, there was no harbour authority to enforce safety regulations for the first six years. Eventually in 1975, the Government was forced, as a face-saving measure, to establish a harbour authority but it was only a front for the Gulf Company. The result was the lack of safety measures which

doomed the fifty workers.

What did the Irish people get out of this long record of criminal negligence? Gulf Oil provided about 150 jobs in Bantry, they paid no harbour dues and it is reckoned that in their first five years they paid the Irish authorities only some £35,000 in rates. In the same period it was reckoned they paid off their capital investment and made a profit of over £40 million. The oil off-loaded at Bantry isn't even used in Ireland: its crude oil which is simply stored for delivery to refineries in Britain and Europe.

Gulf came to Whiddy simply because nowhere else in Europe would have allowed them to operate with such inadequate safety measures - which meant that Gulf saved themselves alot of money. They are only one of many multi-national firms which Irish governments have allowed to operate dangerous processes with totally inadequate precautions. Another

example is Asahi in Killala which is transporting highly dangerous chemicals right across Ireland and pumping toxic waste into Killala bay. Yet another is Raybestos Manhattan which has been dumping dangerous asbestos waste beside residential areas in Co. Cork. Potentially most dangerous of all is the Government's plan in league with the U.S. Westinghouse Corporation to build a nuclear reactor at Carnsore Point.

There is to be an official enquiry into the Whiddy Island disaster but all the indications are that it will be a whitewash. If we don't want alot more Whiddy Islands then we must force the trade unions to fight for a full and open enquiry into the disaster and stop the process of turning Ireland into a dumping ground for all the poisonous rubbish of multi-national capitalism.

SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY

The Conference of the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) held over the weekend of January 27 & 28 showed that there is not much point in having a correct programme taking the right side in the fight against British Imperialism without at the same time having some idea of how to put it into practice. When the party was founded there were grounds for hoping that the membership would learn from its experience. While there is no doubt that this has happened to some degree, complete awareness of this lesson does not yet exist. More than that it became clear at the conference that there is a small right-wing minority which has no interest in supporting the fight for a united Ireland, never mind struggling against atrocities like H Block, which doesn't consider itself bound by conference decisions and feels free to oppose them publicly.

This grouping though not yet formally organised, and lacking agreement on all issues (largely due to personal petty rivalries) does have one thing in common - a reactionary 'labourist' position on the National Question. The most prominent member of this clique, Noel Browne TD, demonstrated his contempt for the party he is supposed to represent in the Dail by writing a letter to 'The Irish Times' on January 9th in which he made the scandalous allegation that the campaign for the restoration of Political Status is "elitist". This flew in the face of SLP policy and caused a number of delegates to put forward a resolution re-iterating support

for the prisoners in the H-Blocks and calling for a public statement to be issued disassociating the party from Browne's comments on this issue.

The motion was 'referred back' to the party's National Executive Committee (NEC) by 73 votes to 47, though to this writer and other independent observers it appeared a lot closer. In any case it was clear that many delegates in favour of the "reference" back" privately agreed with the motion and were trying to preserve party unity.

Their mistaken belief that a fight could be avoided on this

Battle Lines Drawn

issue simply encouraged Browne to go even further. The next day he attacked party president Matt Merrigan for taking a principled stand on the Provisionals' bombing campaign. Merrigan's subsequent attempt to retreat on this principled support shows that the left made a serious mistake at the conference in not forcing home the censure of Browne.

The right-wing's confidence will have increased as a result of this episode. If the left is not to lose further ground then it must ensure that the resolutions on the H-blocks are turned into action on the streets.

THE LEFT MUST FIGHT BACK!

The utter contempt in which the right wing of the Socialist Labour Party holds the party's membership was vividly demonstrated at the first meeting of the new National Executive Committee, held in Dublin on 10-11th February.

Not only did the NEC refuse to censure Browne for his attack on the H-block prisoners but it went on to overturn the conference decisions to mount an action campaign on the H-blocks.

Under cover of high-sounding criticism of the "narrow nationalist aims and methods of the Provisional I.R.A.", the Socialist Labour Party NEC turned its back on the growing anti-repression struggle both in the 26 counties as well as in the North.

Any doubt on this score is ruled out by Party Chairman (sic!) David Neligan who has stated that the S.L.P.'s priorities in the coming months will be the Southern local government elections and

campaigns against a new National Wage Agreement and opposition to Haughey's Family Planning Bill.

recall conference

To oppose such campaigns to the urgent need of combatting repression is a sorry state for any 'Socialist' Party to find itself in. Opposition to the NEC decisions must be built immediately.

Belfast NEC member Joan Kelly walked out of the NEC meeting in opposition to its undemocratic overturning of conference decisions. She and other members of the NEC opposed to the disgraceful flouting of conference decisions should tour the SLP branches and build support for an immediate recall conference of the S.L.P. Such a conference should censure the NEC and demand the implementation of conference resolutions opposing repression.

Irish Troops Out of Lebanon!

Because of the bombardment of U.N. positions by Israeli-backed christian forces, the countries with troops in the Lebanon (except Ireland and Norway) refused to allow them to serve a new term there. They were initially requested to send troops after the Israeli army invaded in an attempt to destroy, once and for all, the Palestinian resistance.

However, this blitzkrieg style invasion has generally eroded international sympathy for Israel. This is hardly surprising since the invasion of 25,000 troops was in response to the killing of 44 people in Israel. This pretext lost all credibility when the concentrated assault on the Palestinian population became known. As a consequence there were roughly $\frac{1}{2}$ million extra refugees according to U.N. reports.

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The Industrial struggle of Women

A GROWING FORCE

In the last 18 months, the number of strikes involving mainly women has increased dramatically. Women all over the country - in Dublin, Donegal, Drogheda, Enfield etc - have gone on strike; in the Lombard and Ulster bank, Pizzaland, telephone and unemployment exchanges, Enfield post office, Kilmartin's bookies, the Sweepstakes, Shelbourne Hotel etc. And their demands for things as basic as union recognition, staff toilets and payments under the National Wage Agreement, reflect their employers' mistaken beliefs that women cannot be as militant as men.

The telephonists are pursuing a claim for equal pay which was made ten years ago as part of a general claim for equal pay in the public services. In 1977 their 4 week strike, supported by the male workers, severely disrupted countrywide communications. At that time if the claim had been granted only 14% of the women would have benefitted immediately from the action as the others had not attained maximum years of service - the point where full and equal pay would apply. But the strike was suspended because of the Department of Post and Telegraph's refusal to negotiate while a strike was on or threatened. Instead the claim was to be processed through civil service conciliation channels. The Labour Court and the Equal Pay Commissioner have rejected the claim on the basis that the women telephonists do not do night shifts even though night shift pay is an extra onto the basic wage and it is in equality of the basic wage that the women are looking for. So, two months ago, in December '78, 3,000 day telephonists from all over the country, except Dublin, embarked on a daylong protest; and staged marches in Cork and Limerick. These were 'unofficial' but the telephonists are undeterred and there remains the possibility of a general countrywide strike. In Drogheda, women occupied a clothing



factory when their employer skipped the country owing three weeks wages plus six months worth of stamps and taxes which he had deducted from their wages but had not passed on. Their case seemed hopeless; their union, the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers, were giving no real help or assistance and it was difficult to know just to whom they should make their demands. Bonte had arrived on the invitation of the IDA with no screening done of his background or financial position. Due to their own militancy and to support from other trade unionists and also feminists, the women forced the IDA to accede to their basic demands. These were; payment of the money due to them, a guarantee of no victimisation and first preference of jobs when the factory opens again.

The Irish Nurses Organisation, at their annual conference, voted to demand a 50% wages increase on the threat of mass resignations on March 1st. More militant industrial action is now being considered. In the past, before the present period of upsurge, the lesser number of strikes by women has said a lot about the type

of job they traditionally get - in offices, shops restaurants and the declining footwear/textiles firms - where unionism is difficult to introduce due to the highly personalised character of the work (similar to the kind of work women are expected to do in the home) or where employers claim inability to pay National Wage Agreement increases ETC. But it is also true that from birth women are encouraged to see themselves as passive, accommodating 'girls'. This self-image is in total contradiction to the kind of activist solidarity required for workers to defend themselves.

Once in unions, women face male trade union bureaucrats who want to contain any struggle, whether of women or not, within the limits set by their need to control any situation thus maintaining their role as acting for the workers, not with them. However women have now shown that they can organise and fight, and fight to win. And where the traditional union structures prove unhelpful, it is possible to go beyond them and to obtain wider support among independent trade unionists and feminists.

THE LESSONS OF

FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE UNTIL AUGUST '69 EVENTS MOVED AT BREAKNECK SPEED. FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS A MASS RESISTANCE TO UNIONISM GREW, DEVELOPED AND GAINED CONFIDENCE. EVERY CHALLENGE WAS MET AND OVERCOME AND BECAME A VICTORY IN THE STRUGGLE. THE VICIOUS POGROMS OF AUGUST '69 MARKED A FINAL THROW BY THE UNIONISTS. THEY BROUGHT THE GUN BACK INTO IRISH POLITICS IN AN ATTEMPT TO SMASH THE RESISTANCE. THEY FAILED, BUT THE ATTEMPT MARKED A DEEP SEA-CHANGE IN THE FORM AND DIRECTION OF THE STRUGGLE AND RAISED QUESTIONS WHICH HAVE DOGGED THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST MOVEMENT UNTIL THE PRESENT DAY.

The Unionists

It's worth remembering today the leading role that the unionist party played in the pogroms. It was they who ordered the RUC assault on the Bogside and they who mobilised the sectarian thugs of the B Specials. It was local unionists and orange associations who organised and armed the sectarian mobs. It was the RUC, now trying to establish itself in ghettos, which led the mobs with a wall of armoured cars and heavy machine guns.

The pogroms were meant to utterly crush the morale of the minority in the North. They failed miserably. The whole minority population rose up to defend themselves. The ferment in the South and the direct entry of British troops on to the scene left the Irish question wide open for the first time in 50 years. The pogroms also showed clearly that the North could not be reformed and opened the way to the final fall of Stormont.

The British

The pogrom weapon was not new to the unionists - it was the fundamental method by which the state had been founded and maintained. And time after time the British had turned a blind eye to their activities, but this time it didn't work. The confidence and experience of mass organisation led the Northern minority to react with anger rather than with terror. Even more importantly a larger and more aggressive working class in the 26 counties in sympathy with the civil rights struggle made it very likely that to continue the pogroms would be to risk the whole existence of the Northern state and desta-



bilise British control of Ireland as a whole. The British moved in slowly and hesitatingly to halt the orange mobs and oversee the internal workings of the state.

Many Catholics, probably the majority, welcomed the British troops. They had been largely defenceless in the face of the orange attacks and felt that the British were protecting them. They were exhilarated by the 'no-go' areas and the absence of the RUC. And the support increased when Wilson announced inquiries into discrimination, the abolition of the B Specials and the reform of the RUC.

In fact the troops had been sent in 'in aid of civil power' - in other words to save Stormont from collapse. Even the reforms were designed to increase the stability and credibility of Stormont. But this wasn't clear to the mass of Catholic workers and warnings by PD

and the Republicans were largely ignored.

This state of affairs couldn't last very long. The British found that any reform was fiercely resented by the loyalists and they were soon locked in conflict with Orange mobs in the streets. A series of skirmishes convinced the British that any major confrontation with their unionist allies would endanger their main power-base in Ireland. Generally they began to bow to loyalist pressure. At the same time they found that Catholic trust in them had definite limits and would not stretch to the return of the RUC. The result was an increasing number of punitive raids on the ghettos. A new Tory government added speed to this process and it reached its culmination in July 1970 with the 'Battle of the Falls'. This massive attack on a ghetto area marked a new stage. The mass movement was now directly in con-

OF AUGUST '69

lict with the forces of imperialism.

The South

Since the Lemass period the Southern Govt. had pursued a policy of full-scale collaboration with foreign capital culminating in the Anglo-Irish free trade area. It could not afford to clash with its British overlords by opposition to their policy in the North. Also they were as frightened as the unionists of the civil rights upsurge and wanted it stopped before it spread South.

Lynch couldn't afford to admit his dependence on the British. In the absence of real independence he went in for bluster and sham republicanism. His response to the August pogroms was to announce 'that he would not stand idly by' and to send the Irish army to the border. This enraged the unionists without doing anything to defend the minority but it gave 'Honest Jack' the republican image he needed.

Partly as a result of rivalry in the cabinet, partly to keep the Northern struggle off their own backs, the Dublin Govt. provided some money for arms. But when the British blew the whistle Lynch cracked down and sacked his main rivals. By the time of the Falls curfew he was firmly in control and was able to back British policy, putting the Southern Govt. in the background as the 'second guarantor'.

The Resistance

Despite the violence of the pogroms the Northern minority had not been defeated. In fact it was the British and unionists who were thrown off balance. The fact that Lynch was able to defuse mass support in the South was the first major setback for the movement and the beginning of an isolation that was to prove critical.

In part this was due to

different circumstances North and South. The economic boom that brought crisis to the North had a much less dramatic effect in the South. The national question had receded into the background and in a whole series of struggles workers had won real gains in their standard of living which made them more willing to accept the status quo. But NICRA had never really attempted to link up with these struggles in the South and the mass movement's main weakness lay in its lack of a 32 county perspective.

There were other weaknesses as well. NICRA had set out to be a pressure group like the NCCL in Britain, but the pressure of events had forced a rather ramshackle united front structure. For much of its period of leadership it had a good democratic structure. This is very important for the development of a movement. It is by a process of action and debate that the movement advances. The mass of the people gain confidence and begin to establish their independence and throw off the traditional leadership of the bourgeoisie.

Unfortunately the Republicans and the Communist party had no stomach for forcing the discipline of the mass movement on the nationalists and the future SDLP. Right-wingers like John Hume were able to set up a completely undemocratic structure - the Derry Citizens Action committee - and claim for it the authority of the Civil

Rights movement. Also they consistently opposed any broadening of the demands for fear this might frighten away the Nationalists. They tried to freeze the movement into a pattern of reform and the result was that it eventually split into fragments.

Armed Struggle

In any struggle where the working class is in the leadership the question of force first poses itself as one of the defence of the movement. The response usually leads to a fair degree of democratic control over the use of force at various points in the struggle.

In NICRA the question was posed the first time that the RUC drew their batons, but it was not seriously discussed for fear that it might frighten the bourgeois leadership. The reformists felt that the state would defend them - some argued that to defend yourself was sectarian. No-one was experienced enough to foresee just how savage the state would be when it struck.

After August '69 the minority wanted above all to defend itself. Because NICRA had failed to deal with this question it was ignored and local defence committees were set up. Thus a fundamental division occurred in the struggle - a division between political action and the use of force. This division was to bedevil the movement up until the present day.

Irish Troops

Out of Lebanon!

Despite protests to the Israeli government, the 26 County government shows no desire to withdraw. Accustomed to helping imperialism attack all the efforts to achieve

national independence in Ireland, the 26 counties government now collaborates actively and without hesitation with Israel in attacking the Palestinian movement for national independence.

Therefore it is the duty of all anti-imperialists to demand the withdrawal of Irish troops from the Lebanon and to support the liberation struggle of the P.L.O.

IRSP

SPECIAL COURT FRAME UP

Last month the trial of three members of the IRSP charged with the great train robbery, ended. After the longest trial in Irish legal history the three Osgur Breathnach, Brian McNally and Nicky Kelly were found guilty and sentenced to thirty three years penal servitude, all told. The only evidence against the three defendants was their own confessions, beaten out of them by the gardai.

The case, which lasted a total of 105 days, in Dublin's juryless Special Criminal Court was a crucial one for the gardai. It was as long ago as April 1976 members of the IRSP were swooped on in one of the biggest police operations ever carried out in the South. It was from this time that there were widespread allegations of garda brutality. Despite the public reaction to the allegations and the promises by Fianna Fail that the matter would be fully investigated, the garda have survived, unscathed. The brutality allegations in the IRSP case were firmly backed-up by independent medical evidence.

Nearly a dozen doctors, including prison medical officers, listed the injuries inflicted on the three defendants. Osgur Breathnach was so badly injured that the High Court ordered his removal to hospital (the presiding judge then, Hamilton, was the same judge that sentenced Osgur in the Special Criminal Court). As well as the torture and brutality, the prosecution admitted that constitutional rights of the defendants (eg right to a solicitor) had been broken (though unintentionally!) by the gardai.

Special Criminal Court Farce

To complete the farce the prosecution claimed that the injuries incurred by the defendants were either self-inflicted or inflicted by their fellow defendants, a point which they didn't try to prove. The court accepted the prosecution 'case' although Osgur Breathnach was in hospital during the time the prosecution claimed the injuries were self-inflicted.

Brutality Legitimised

The conviction of the IRSP 3 was a vindication of the Gardai and the 'heavy gang'.

Osgur
Breathnach

Those who have been consistently accused of beating suspects within the Gardai have not been either investigated publicly or brought to trial. In fact the opposite is the case. Under Gerry Collins most of them have in fact been promoted. The three key figures in the Garda frame-up of the IRSP, Ned Ryan, John Courtney and Michael Canavan have been promoted by Fianna Fail since the trial began.

Campaign Should Continue

The campaign to release the IRSP members convicted by the Special Criminal Court has already been initiated. The Peoples Democracy is fully behind this campaign. Illusions among the public that Fianna Fail have any intention of ref-



forming the apparatus of repression in the South must be broken. All socialists and republicans must ensure that the case of IRSP 3 is taken-up and the campaign for their release fully supported.

BURNTOLLET

R.U.C.

REVENGE ATTACK

One of the main casualties of the Burntollet march was the carefully fostered myth of a 'new' RUC. A weekend of harassment and attacks on the marchers wrecked years of cosmetic surgery by the British.

Nothing has changed as far as the RUC are concerned and two weeks after Burntollet some members of the thuggish Special Patrol Group underlined this with a revenge attack on three young people who had been on the march.

The attack occurred as the 3 victims Michael Conlon, Eamon MacMahon and Bernadette McNulty, were passing an RUC vehicle checkpoint when they were recognised. They were immediately surrounded by hostile RUC men and moments

later found themselves kicked and punched to the ground.

All three received head injuries and Bernadette was so seriously injured that she is still on crutches at the time of writing - that's three weeks after the attack.

This gallant band of SPG men was led by a well-known figure - Sergeant Rudowicz, an ex-Foreign Legionnaire and part-time preacher. His sidekicks for this adventure were 'Joker' Adams and Constable Moffat. In classic RUC style, they then held their victims for eight hours and charged them with various offences. Bernadette, a slight 5ft 6ins. was charged with assaulting two SPG men!!

The cases will come up at the Belfast Petty Sessions on Monday, 26th February. Support for a defence campaign is urgent to prevent further revenge attacks. Those willing to help should contact the Student Campaign Against Repression through

F.Duffy, Students' Union,
Queen's University, Belfast 7.

POLITICAL STATUS — Unity Can Win!

OPPOSITION TO BRITAIN'S H-BLOCKS HAS BEEN STEADILY GROWING OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS BOTH IN IRELAND AND ABROAD. DESPITE MASON'S DISMISSAL OF THE SUPPORT WHICH EXISTS FOR THE REPUBLICAN AND SOCIALIST PRISONERS IT IS AN INCONTESTABLE FACT THAT MANY OF THE MARCHES HELD OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS COMMEMORATING TEN YEARS OF STRUGGLE HAVE DRAWN MUCH LARGER NUMBERS OF DEMONSTRATORS THAN THE ORIGINAL PROTESTS OF A DECADE AGO. CENTRAL TO ALL THESE MARCHES HAS BEEN THE DEMAND THAT POLITICAL STATUS BE RETURNED.

In Britain, in America and most important of all in the 26 counties' there exists increasing sympathy and support for the political prisoners and a corresponding hostility to British policy.

The effectiveness of this spreading opposition has been shown not only by Mason's pathetic propaganda pamphlet which tried to ridicule the prisoners' protest but also by the somersaults of both the SDLP and Fianna Fail on the H-blocks. Although the blanket protest is well into its third year, both the SDLP and Fianna Fail have up to now contemptuously dismissed the protest as 'Provo propaganda'. Yet in the last few weeks both have been forced to denounce British intransigence to the political prisoners' demands.

It is no fancy to state that the struggle in solidarity with the H-block prisoners was never stronger. Major credit for this must go to the many Relatives' Action Committees which exist in all parts of the 6 counties' and in particular to the Belfast RACs who were the first to take the struggle onto the streets.

The success of the RACs lies in their determination to keep the plight of the prisoners to the fore at all times and to the fact that they are independent organisations who decide their own policy. We in Peoples Democracy have not always agreed with decisions taken but we have always accepted them because of the democratic and independent nature of the RACs.

Over the past month the independence of the RACs has been under serious threat. At the beginning of January Sinn Fein informed the Belfast Central RAC that unless the IRSP and TUCAR were banned from RAC platforms

then Sinn Fein would not speak on RAC platforms. In the case of the IRSP this was a particularly scandalous proposal, as some 50 of the blanket-prisoners are supporters of the IRSP.

Sinn Fein explained their proposal by claiming that the IRSP had criticised the Feakle talks — all of two years ago!! Sinn Fein also declared that it was not in TUCAR's 'best interests' to be identified with the RAC — something we would have thought was up to TUCAR itself to decide!



It is of course, entirely a matter for Sinn Fein to decide who to invite onto its own platforms. But to issue ultimatums to the RAC as to whose support they should accept or reject is another matter altogether. The reception which the RAC gave to the Sinn Fein proposal shows that the RAC did not care about this even if Sinn Fein is not!

Sinn Fein's ultimatum did no credit to themselves nor was it any service to the H-block prisoners. Fortunately, Sinn Fein has eventually withdrawn its ultimatum for special consideration from the RAC. We hope that this indicates a recognition by Sinn Fein of the potential that the RAC has for uniting broad forces in the defence of the political prisoners.

The simplest lesson of our struggle is that united action is not just something to be preferred — it is essential if the struggle is to advance! The RACs are uniquely placed to take the lead in strengthening united action around the demands for Political Status, End Repression and British Withdrawal! That is why we in Peoples Democracy call on the RACs to organise a conference for all those throughout Ireland who support these demands to discuss united action. Such a conference must not be a 'talking-shop' but should be a working conference designed to map out a plan of action that can set us on the road to victory!

Contraception action programme. (from page 12)

Q. What is the state of the present campaign?

A. I'm not very happy about our organised opposition and whole contraception campaign. I'm disgusted that only apparent opposition came initially (beside CAP of course) from IMA (and limited reservation at that) but now that seems to be withdrawn. It is disgraceful that of all organisations who have political positions and policies on Contraception, that they have remained totally silent. As someone involved in the discussion on clinics response to the Bill,

I'm hoping that clinics will organise some public campaign and at the very least warn the public of dangers inherent in it.

CAP Campaign Activities:

Feb. 8th. Galway, Regional Tech. College
Feb. 8th. Ballinteer, Dublin, re-organisation of Ballinteer Group.
Feb. 10th. Dublin. Ballymun shopping Centre Sales!
Feb. 17th. Dublin, National Planning Meeting, Usher Theatre TCD
2-6p.m.

All Welcome

Feb. 11th. Limerick: Street meeting city centre.
23/24/25th. Dublin: Fianna Fail Ard Fheis-activity planned.
1st. Mar. Dublin: IMA general Council activity planned.
6th. Mar. Ballinteer: Public Meeting CAP Group.
28th. Mar. Dublin: National Rally, Mansion House (date may be changed).

Thousands died in the mass protests which have convulsed Iran over the last year and which eventually forced the Shah's departure. They died in the streets, unarmed; shot down in cold blood by the Iranian army. Yet in all that time not only have the western imperialist powers consistently supported the Shah but the media also has presented a thoroughly distorted and hypocritical image of the conflict there. The Shah's regime has been projected as an agent of modernization which succeeded in bringing substantial economic and social advance to Iran. The Shah himself appears as a reasonable and highly civilized person, a benevolent monarch confronted by ungrateful subjects who are determined to drag the country back into the stone age. Even now that the enormous popular uprising has clearly revealed to the world the breadth and intensity of the hatred which the masses feel for the Shah, the media continues to gloss over the true nature of the dictatorship.

Roots of Regime

In reality the Shah's regime was one of the most brutal and despotic ever known as the Secretary General of Amnesty International put in 1975 "no country in the world has a worse record on human rights than Iran". The major instrument for repression was the secret police, SAVAK. Since its foundation SAVAK has extended its power and influence to virtually every area of Iranian life. 'Newsweek' magazine claimed in 1974 that SAVAK had between 30,000 and 60,000 full-time employees and perhaps as many as 3 million (out of a population of 33 million) Iranians acted in one way or another as SAVAK agents. Its primary function was simply this; to uncover and destroy any opposition to the Shah. Amnesty International claimed that there were between 30,000 and 100,000 political prisoners in Iranian jails. Not only imprisonment faced oppositionists, since the late 1960's torture had become commonplace; the rule rather than the exception. Alongside this the Shah built up the Iranian army to be the best disciplined and best armed in the whole of the middle East with a dual purpose; to suppress any popular rising in its own country and to act in a similar role to Israel, as the policeman of the imperialist powers in the region. In all this he was aided by the US and Britain. Indeed it was the CIA which planned the coup in 1953 which brought the Shah back to power. It was also the CIA which assisted in the formation of SAVAK including training their agents in 'modern' forms of torture.

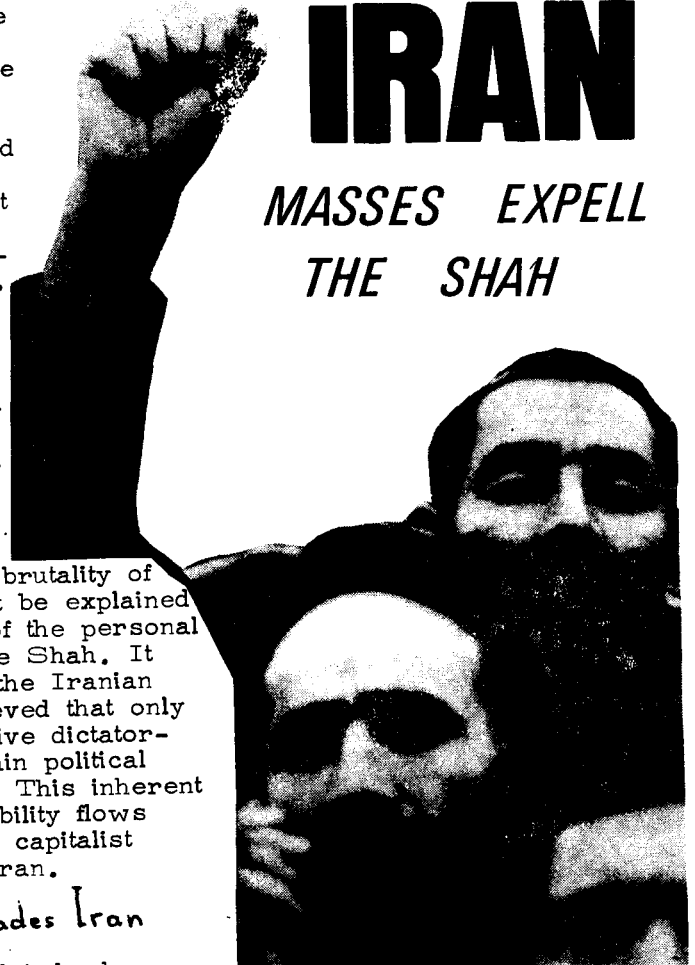
However the brutality of the regime cannot be explained solely in terms of the personal viciousness of the Shah. It existed because the Iranian ruling class believed that only a highly repressive dictatorship could maintain political stability in Iran. This inherent tendency to instability flows from the form of capitalist development in Iran.

Imperialism Invades Iran

The Shah did indeed preside over a period of considerable economic development, but of a very uneven kind. The motor force of the economic development was oil production. Oil production although bringing massive financial returns employs very few workers. In Iran it is the state alongside the western oil companies which controls this production. Control of the state apparatus enabled the dominant sectors of the ruling class to plunder their national resources. Very little of this money was reinvested in manufacturing industry or improving the people's standard of living. The main effect of oil production on the rest of the economy was to insure that all areas of society were integrated into, and dominated by, the market economy. Millions of Iranians left the land to become wage-labourers and although not sharing in the oil wealth they felt its effect through steep rises in the price of rent and basic commodities. Iran became a society of dramatic social contrasts. On one side the newly urbanised power and on the other a small but tremendously wealthy elite who assimilated all that is gross in western culture, aping the lifestyle of the Californian nouveaux riches.

IRAN

MASSES EXPELL THE SHAH



Masses take to the Streets

In this context it was only a matter of time before the explosion came. Given the massive repression directed against the political expression it was natural that once the muslim religious leaders began to campaign against the Shah, that the people should swing behind them with a vengeance. Likewise it was inevitable that much of the anger be directed against the cultural symbols of their oppression and that it be expressed through Islamic concepts. It is precisely because the Ayatollah Khomeini was such an intransigent opponent of the Shah that he became the symbol of popular revolt. But one thing ought to be clearly understood - what we are witnessing is a social revolt. Its dynamic goes far beyond the objectives of the muslim religious leaders. Whether it becomes a social revolution will depend on whether a socialist movement emerges which is capable of guiding and giving coherence to the demands of all the oppressed layers in Iran, including the oppressed nationalities.

Student Conference

USI BUREAUCRACY FACES OPPOSITION

This year's congress of the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) was significantly different from previous years. In contrast to the usual back-slapping session there was sharp debate on many key issues and for the first time in years, opposition to the leadership's reformist line.

Several members of PD were at USI Congress this year - Below they report on events.

On the issue of finance for education a concrete and detailed amendment from UCD which called for a national campaign on concrete and specific issues and called for support of staff unions and the ICTU in campaigns to raise grants in line with inflation and the abolition of the means test was only narrowly defeated this year. Though the government's recent white paper deferred the question of finance for education to a white paper on education, all the signs point to cutbacks all round, the eventual doubling of fees and the introduction of a loan scheme - all of which would further endorse the trend that third level education is becoming more and more a privilege.

USI policy on education - "a right not a privilege", judging by its recent congress, will continue to remain a relatively meaningless demand. However the congress in an emergency motion from UCD committed itself to joining with Dublin Council of Trade Unions in a march and lobby of the government on the question of taxation levels and against the removal of food subsidies. It also committed itself to continued liaison with the DCTU. This is certainly a progression from previous years where joint marches were thrown out by congress.

On the women's question USI delegates took definite steps forward this year. Amendments put forward to weaken a comprehensive motion on contraception and rape were easily defeated. The congress rejected Haughey's Bill as repressive and called for USI to campaign actively towards free contraception on demand, for USI to affiliate to CAP, for USI to educate and inform its members on contraception and to reject any attempt to restrict availability of contraceptives on any basis.

Congress called for an immediate change in rape legislation and for government support for the rape crisis centre. Congress also supported the initiative taken by women in organising the rape march in Dublin last October. Finally the congress condemned the government for not taking steps to remove legislation which makes abortion a criminal offence.

Opposition Meets Bureaucratic Resistance.

On the national question a comprehensive and detailed motion coming from UCD calling for a realistic campaign to end repression north and south and also a concrete campaign against special courts and calling for special category status and an end to the conditions in H Block was defeated and the main motion coming from the USI officers, which portrayed a weakening in commitment to those oppressed in the North was accepted. This however does not depict the reality of the situation since delegates from UCG, QUB and NI Poly. were also in favour of the U. C.D. amendment.

This motion was defeated through reformists instilling provo paranoia and by indulging in provo bashing.

The ironical situation is

that USI takes a strong line against repression in other countries eg S. Africa, Chile, Nicaragua etc. and this year confirmed support for the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, support for the Iranian people in their struggle against the Shah's regime.

On the question of repression in Ireland, one cannot but question the conduct of USI leadership at congress. The deputy president John Gallagher called people from the Student Campaign against Repression "scabs and a scar on the student body". SCAR is open to all students, regardless of political viewpoints, who wish to work against repression - North and South. The Peace Jobs Progress Campaign run by USI was, during the Congress, pointed to as a campaign for everyone but the unfortunate situation is that it offers no real campaign to anyone and therefore enjoys no real support. It was pointed out that as long as PJP continued to talk about "social reconstruction" without tackling the problem of repression that it was meaningless and a "cop-out" on the part of the student body.

SCAR is the obvious alternative; students can join in a real united front campaign against repression on specific issues eg. H. Block, Special Courts etc.

Anti-Nazi League

PUBLIC MEETING

Speaker: **PAUL HOLBORROW**
(from England)

Tuesday, February 27th at 8.00pm.

Q.U.B. Students' Union

CONTRACEPTION ACTION PROGRAMME

INTERVIEW WITH C.A.P. MILITANT

The Contraception debate is now once again raging in the Republic. Ten years have elapsed since the first family planning clinics were established by voluntary groups and yet the demand for a comprehensive family planning service has not been met by the state. Large numbers of working class people in particular are discriminated against by the lack of services. The Contraception Action Programme, founded in 1976 at the initiative of the feminists, has renewed its campaign with vigour. The comrades of Peoples Democracy are in the forefront of this campaign, along with militants like Ann Connolly of the Dublin Well Women Centre, who is interviewed below for her personal opinions on the current situation and the campaign. She gave this interview just before a very successful C.A.P. meeting in Cork which drew an audience of 150 people.

Q. In '69, we saw the establishment of the Fertility Guidance Clinic by a handful of committed individuals. Ten years on, do you think Contraception is still a political issue to be resolved?

A. Yes, Contraception and the whole question of the right to control our bodies has yet to be resolved. To date, any attempts to have laws changed fundamentally have been defeated. The battle which involves Church state relations and the power of the Church, basic civil and human rights has been frustrated by politicians.

The present Bill before the Dail is one of restrictions and is in grave danger of being passed. Many people are apathetic, either because they can readily avail of a contraceptive service through the clinics or because they are simply weary of the fight and tend to feel that some Bill is better than none. Nothing could be further from the truth. The proposals in the new Bill will mean that

(a) Contraception will continue to be unavailable to people living outside the main towns or cities unless the local G.P. is aware of and willing to prescribe a suitable method.

(b) As the doctors can decide on "bona-fide" family planning cases (to quote the Bill) and opt out of the scheme, this leaves people without a real service.

(c) 13,000 women who get contraceptives under the GMS no longer have this eligibility guaranteed.

(d) It gives the minister arbitrary powers since he may at any time change the regulations and conditions of licenses at any time. Why are these draconian powers necessary?

Q. What kind of political organisations and individuals form the opposition to legalised contraception. What kind of material interests do they represent?

A. The organised forces of the opposition are right-wing offshoots of Catholic organisations such as the Knights of Columbus, Opus Dei, and lesser organisations such as the League of Decency etc. These put forward a socially more extreme right-wing view, the use of which the Catholic Church seems to be shifting from in their propaganda. The Church's own position has shifted over the years from one of opposing Contraception (family planning) on the grounds that it was selfish and materialistic to one of "family planning" (by natural

methods of course) being a good thing. However, it is important to note that representations made by the Hierarchy have been successful in so far as the new Bill is restrictive on aspects like advertising, sex-education etc. The opposition mounted by the right, is heavily financed by the wealthy members of the Knights, which include lawyers, doctors, accountants, solicitors, the editor of the Irish Independent and the assistant general manager of Aer Lingus Niall Dargagh. These are the kind of forces we have to expose and resist.

Q. Has this kind of pressure been successful? Will the government be forced to meet the needs of people obviously expressed in the numbers attending the family planning clinics?

A. The government by listening to the objections of the Catholic Church are callously disregarding views of Irish people. They can no longer excuse themselves on the grounds that there is no longer support for family planning. There certainly is an overwhelming demand for contraception in 26 counties.

Restrictions on Contraception are of great significance to women. Until women can control their fertility, talk of women's equality is meaningless. Therefore the current proposals hold serious threats for women.

**continued
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socialist republic

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

ON BURNTOLLET

BURNTOLLET: marching against repression

The first Burntollet march 10 years ago was a turning point in the struggle here. It revitalised the flagging Civil Rights movement at the time, exposed the sham of Terence O'Neill's reforms and showed the world the rottenness of the sectarian 6-county state. The 10th anniversary march may well prove to have been a similar turning-point.

The commemoration march was a resounding success. It mobilised thousands of people right across Co. Derry and got to its destination, it exposed the real face of the RUC, it served notice on the British government that the H Block issue is going to dominate politics here in 1979, and it provided a remarkable demonstration of political unity in action. As such we hope it has pointed the way forward for the anti-imperialist movement as a whole.

GROWING SUPPORT

The popular support for the march was evident from the beginning. Not only did 200-300 people leave Toomebridge on a week-day morning for the start of the march but many more showed their commitment by making food for the marchers in Bellaghy, Gulladuff and Maghera. Even more striking in a way was the spontaneous action of local people who came out to the road-side with bags of sandwiches as the march went past or who left their work or their farms and joined in.

Probably the most impressive proof of the popular support was in Dungiven on the second day of the march. Almost the entire population of the town came out to clap and cheer the marchers - those who hadn't already joined in on the Glenshane

Pass - while that night well over 100 marchers were put up by local people in their homes. That should give the lie for good to Mason's claim that there is no support for the prisoners in H Block. People don't open their homes to total strangers unless they are strongly in favour of their cause.

On the last day despite the petrol shortage, harassment and obstruction by the UDR and RUC, UDA threats and a general atmosphere of intimidation some 3,000 people made it to Burntollet bridge, about 10 times the number who were there 10 years ago: Burntollet which was previously just a symbol of loyalist and RUC thuggery has now become a symbol of the unbroken determination of the anti-imperialist population in the North to carry on this struggle to ultimate victory.





The marchers on the
Glenshane Pass

The march was the clearest demonstration yet of the depth and breadth of feeling in the anti-Unionist population on the H Block issue. It gave the people of Co. Derry an opportunity to turn their passive sympathy with the prisoners into active support - an opportunity they seized with both hands. And by mobilising that support in the first days of the New Year it made very clear that 1979 will be the year of the H Blocks: that there will be more and more protests throughout the 32 counties until the British give in on political status.

MASON & NEWMAN OUTFLANKED

Both Mason and Newman, the head of the RUC, acknowledged the importance of the Burntollet march: Mason by denouncing it in his New Year speech to businessmen and Newman by laying on the biggest security operation since the visit of the British queen in 1977. It was a set-back for both of them - for Mason because it clearly had popular support and for Newman because his massive police operation only demonstrated that the RUC and its role hadn't changed a bit from the days of the original march.

69-B - MEN 79 - RUC / UDR

The RUC have done a massive public relations job over the last few years portraying themselves as a reformed and non-sectarian force. It hasn't convinced those who have seen at close quarters the handiwork of the torturers in Castlereagh but it has had some effect. Archbishop O'Flaherty said just

before Christmas that he thought there had been real changes in the RUC and many people in the South and even some in the North were taken in. As part of this propaganda campaign Newman would probably have liked to adopt a low profile during the Burntollet march with RUC men merely directing the traffic but political necessity didn't allow that.

The British can only keep their hold here by using the Northern loyalists and in return they have to bow to the wishes of the local bigots. The Burntollet march had to be banned from somewhere to keep the loyalists happy and they chose Bellaghy, the lower end of Maghera, and Claudy, without a shred of an excuse for any of them. Newman's 1,500 police and hundreds of UDR and British troops were not there as he laughably claimed, to protect the march (if that's what he calls protection we'd hate to see RUC aggression) but to enforce these arbitrary bans. So once again the RUC were seen in their traditional role as message-boys for the loyalist politicians and enforcers of the loyalist territorial imperative. Besides buckets of Newman's white-wash can't hide the ingrained sectarian bigotry of his force. The thuggery, brutality and sheer naked hate displayed by the RUC in the confrontations at Bellaghy and on the Glenshane Pass - and recorded by the press - were enough to undo years of careful propaganda. After focussing attention on the H Block issue that was the second major achievement of the march cogently and forcibly reminding people throughout the 32 counties of the real nature of

the RUC and therefore of the system they serve.

ANTI - IMPERIALIST UNITY

The third significant thing about the march was the degree of political unity it involved. The organising committee was made up of 4 Relatives Action Committees, TUCAR, the Student Campaign Against Repression (SCAR), Women Against Imperialism and 5 political groups PD, IRSP, RRP, SLP and ISP. Once agreed on the three basic demands of the march - End Repression, Political Status and British Withdrawal - all these organisations worked well together. A speaking rota was arranged so that each group had a speaker at at least one of the meetings held during the march and decisions during the march were taken by the organising committee. The success of the march demonstrated that anti-imperialist unity is possible around a clear set of common demands and a definite programme of action and that a united demonstration can mobilise people who would not come out to something organised by any of the individual groups.

A sour note was struck by Sinn Fein who officially boycotted the march, tried to persuade some of the RACs not to support it and attacked it in the Andersonstown News - though many Sinn Fein supporters, especially in Co. Derry not only took part but worked hard to organise the march. The reason given for the Sinn Fein boycott was the Committee's decision to give notice of the march to the RUC. Sinn Fein claimed that this was recognising the RUC. In fact however marches are illegal in the North unless notice is given and not to give notice would have been to give the RUC an excuse to ban the march completely, something they would have dearly loved to do, and could have enforced in this case where the initial number of marchers was relatively small. Then we would have lost the opportunity to stage such a striking demonstration in support of political status and to so clearly expose the RUC.

SINN FEIN WITHDRAWS

Sinn Fein's attitude showed the sort of inflexibility which defeats itself. The only way to beat the imperialists in the North is to use every weapon available to us and to exploit every contradiction and every chink in their armour. The question of giving notice to the RUC is a tactical one and to try to turn it into a principle which prevents militants from using an important method of struggle like long marches is to fight with one hand tied behind their backs.

There may have been something more than the question of notice behind the Sinn Fein boycott however. Sinn Fein have never been happy working with other organisations. Time and again they have withdrawn from united committees and united fronts, the most recent examples being the PHRC in 1974 and the Irish Front in Derry last year. There are indications that they are going into another 'Ourselves Alone' phase at the moment where they are unwilling to work with any other political group. Such an attitude would be little short of criminal at the moment when the maximum unity is needed to

defeat Mason's H Block policy. We can only hope that there will be enough grass-roots pressure within Sinn Fein itself to stop this disastrous trend before it goes any further.

BUILD 32-COUNTY RESISTANCE

The Burntollet march has given a major boost to the movement for political status and has pointed the way forward but it is important to follow it up quickly so as not to lose its impetus. In the immediate future we in PD feel that it is vitally important to extend the anti-repression struggle to the 26 counties so as to mobilise the latent support there on the H Block issue and to focus attention on the Special Criminal Court and the Offences Against the State Act as well. We believe that it should be possible to build the same type of unity which we had on the Burntollet Committee around an initiative in the 26 counties as well. In the longer term we believe that it is time to have another Coalisland-type conference. The first Coalisland Conference a year ago, though it had no direct organisational results, did a lot to rekindle interest and involvement in the H Block struggle right across the 6

Counties and helped to stimulate the growth of local RACs. The Burntollet march showed the degree of political unity that can be achieved in the anti-repression struggle. The time is ripe to try to unite the RACs, the other united fronts like TUCAR, SCAR and the women's groups, and the political organisations in a co-ordinated campaign around common demands for the rest of 1979. It is for the RACs, the organisations which have played the leading role in this struggle so far, to take the initiative in recalling the Coalisland Conference.



Patsy Molloy of Dunliven after R.U.C. attack

'BLACK BOB' AND THE VERMIN

One of the clearest examples yet of RUC collaboration with loyalist violence came during the confrontation around Bellaghy. Robert Overend UUP member of Magherafelt District Council and former Convention member was standing with the RUC who blocked the Bellaghy Rd. at Ballydermot. When the marchers bypassed the road-block Overend pulled out a pistol and openly threatened marchers. The RUC did nothing.

Later on when the marchers were crossing one of Overend's fields to try to reach Bellaghy he appeared waving a rifle. This time the RUC disarmed him but made no effort to arrest him. Minutes later he ran towards the marchers, pulled out an automatic pistol and fired a shot in the air then levelled the gun

at a couple of marchers only about 20 yards away and fired again. The shot went wide because an RUC man knocked his arm up and then a couple of them relieved him of the pistol. Once again they made no attempt to arrest him and merely say they've referred the matter to the Director of

Public Prosecutions. Meanwhile Overend walks free and has presumably got his guns back.

Continued on Page 4



R.U.C. attack marchers

JOIN US IN THE FIGHT!



The Last Lap

'Black Bob'

Continued

Meanwhile Overend has no regrets. He boasted on Radio Eireann that his rifle was for shooting vermin and that he regarded the Burntollet marchers as vermin and he has since proposed a motion at Magherafelt District Council condemning Mason for letting the march take place at all. It was passed by 7 votes to 2. No-body mentioned Overend's own activities.

This wasn't Overend's first shooting foray. During the loyalist stoppage of 1977 he and other South Derry loyalists tried to block the road at Toome with tractors. When the local people chased them Overend fired several shots but the RUC did nothing about that either.

It was P.D.'s belief in the force of a united movement that led us to call for a democratic Burntollet committee. The aims of "End Repression", "Troops Out" and "Political Status" are the logical continuation of the demands which prompted the original march. The Coalisland Conference on these issues last year, while it did not lead to a united organisation, helped, we believe, to increase the militancy of the population and led to the formation of Relatives Action Committees all over the North. A similar initiative this year organised by the R.A.C.'s could bring even more people into the fight against repression and would be a major gain in the battle for political status for those suffering in the P-Blocks.

People's Democracy today is a Marxist organisation with firm roots in the anti-imperialist movement. A lot of our policies have been learnt the hard way through mistakes and splits but we are confident in our basic ideas and this confidence was shown by the fusion in October of two groups, the Movement for A Socialist Republic and the Peoples Democracy into one organisation under the banner of the People's Democracy.

The fusion conference affirmed our belief that the greatest single barrier to a Socialist Republic is the presence of British Imperialism and rejected that the loyalist minority have any right to continue partition. The conference thought that the oppression of the Irish working-class and in particular of women can be ended by that working-class using their economic and political strength. The building of a united 32-county mass movement is the central task of the Irish revolution and a strong revolutionary Marxist party will have a major role to play in it.

The solidarity and spirit of those who marched showed the growing support for the struggle against repression. Everyone should get involved in that struggle by joining their local R.A.C. and by fighting in their student union and trade unions. Those who support the aims that P.D. are fighting for should join us.

For further information about P.D. contact us c/o

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Avoca Park,
ANDERSONSTOWN

or 38 Clanawley Road,
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