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# Britain and the IRISH CRISIS

## A Communist view of the White Paper

### GORDON McLENNAN

### 10p

CONFERENCE WILL DISCUSS LIBERTY IN IRELAND

Morning Star Reporter

WHITE PAPER has drawn attention for those concerned in the crisis

Secretary of State stays in charge of law and order

White Paper of Unions

An 80-member assembly elected by proportional representation

inwards the remainder of operations self-government are contained in a White Paper published by Mr Whiteley, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland yesterday

Mr Whiteley also made a statement to the Commons, and for once the House, turned back to listen to the farthest back benches in the all-passions in

No promise by Whiteley

Mr Whiteley the final of the government white paper claimed to have acted against British on to admit had been de



Catholic boy dies in Belfast gun attack

Ulster Bill split to allow June election

Party hopelessly split, Mr Craig says

# **BRITAIN AND THE IRISH CRISIS**

## **A Communist view of the White Paper**

**by Gordon McLennan**

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### **Introduction**

For over 50 years Tory policy in Northern Ireland has been determined by one central consideration. British rule will be maintained at all costs. There is no departure from this position in the recent White Paper or in the Parliamentary legislation necessary for its enactment. The form changes but the essence of British imperialist policy remains the same. The interests of Ireland and the Irish people, North and South, are secondary to the interests of the great industrial, commercial and financial monopolies that determine the main lines of British government policy.

Because this is the basis of the approach in the White Paper, the crisis that has gripped Northern Ireland with particular sharpness and bitterness in the past five years will not be resolved by the new proposals of the Tory Government. It cannot be said too often or too strongly that the crisis, with its grim toll of Irish and British lives, with its pain and suffering for our two peoples, is rooted in British imperialist policy. Only when that policy is scrapped and a totally new policy operated that puts the interest of Ireland and of her people first, will the "Irish question" be finally answered to the satisfaction of the Irish and British people.

The Tories, as on so many other issues, are trying to adjust their Irish policy to the new conditions facing British big business. They are manoeuvring in the face of the great mass pressure built up over recent years by all those associated with the struggle for civil rights in Northern Ireland. But Whitelaw, on behalf of the Heath Government, refuses to make any fundamental change of policy. Yet the solution of the crisis in Northern Ireland demands fundamental change, not Tory sleight of hand. For this reason the White Paper and the accompanying Parliamentary legislation fail to meet the demands of the progressive movement in Ireland and Britain.

The struggle for democracy, independence, and freedom for the people of Ireland will therefore continue in the new conditions that forced the Tory government to produce the White Paper.

The British Communist Party has throughout its history championed the Irish people's cause. In a Communist Party pamphlet produced in 1921 (*The Irish Question*, by William Paul), our Party declared that British Communists had a sacred duty to perform in connection with the Irish question. That duty was to help Ireland in her struggle because Ireland was the victim of British imperialism.

That help must now be given by the entire labour and progressive movement. Not only is this demanded as an elementary expression of working class solidarity, but we owe it to the Irish people because of British responsibility for what has happened in Ireland over the past 800 years. Such help is also an act of enlightened self interest. The people of Ireland and Britain have the same enemy—British big business and its political representatives. Victory for the struggle of the Irish people would help speed the victory of the British working class movement too.

To fully estimate the effect of the White Paper, and the conditions in which the struggle must now be waged, it is necessary to look at the background on which the White Paper was produced.

### **Background**

The struggle for Ireland's independence from Britain has been waged for centuries. It reached a crucial stage prior to and during the First World War. In that period, through the experiences of the 1913 Dublin Strike and under the leadership of James Connolly, the Irish working class movement was involved more than hitherto in the struggle for national independence.

Though the Easter rising of 1916 was brutally crushed, and Connolly and other leaders executed, their spirit and ideals found reflection in the General Election of 1918. Sinn Fein representatives supporting the republican cause won a big majority, declined their seats in the Westminster Parliament, met in Dublin, and constituted themselves the "Assembly of Ireland".

The British Government, headed by Lloyd George, was terrified. Already confronted at home and abroad with the political consequences of World War I, they saw that success for the Irish people in their age-old battle for independence would be a very big blow for British imperialism. Terror and repression was unleashed on the Irish people by the notorious Black and Tans and other British troops. In that part of the country now known as Northern Ireland, religious sectarianism was inflamed, Catholics were brutally attacked and their homes pillaged, and the same fate was meted out to those courageous non-Catholic socialists who refused to be intimidated by Protestant bigotry and violence.

In the situation thus created, Lloyd George enforced the partition of Ireland, formalised in the Government of Ireland Act of May 3rd 1921. The sources of today's crisis are to be found in these actions of British imperialism, not in differences of religious belief amongst Irish working people. The bitter fruit now being harvested is therefore primarily a British responsibility. It was a British Government that violated Irish unity and forcibly tore off the Six Counties from the rest of Ireland. Only when this basic wrong is righted will the justified demands of the Irish people be fully met and Ireland be at peace.

### **The Unionists**

Having torn away the Six Counties from the body of Ireland and annexed them to Britain, the British ruling class established a form of rule based on the political monopoly of the Unionist party. It was this Party's primary function to ensure that the British connection was maintained. The Unionist Party was, in fact, a puppet instrument fulfilling a function on behalf of British imperialism.

For the Unionists no action was too foul for them to employ in maintaining their domination. Discrimination, division and gerrymandering of votes on the one hand, repression and terror on the other. Religious sectarianism and political division were deliberately fostered amongst working people, making it more difficult for Catholic and Protestant worker alike to win a better life.

The Unionists have never hesitated to use violence to achieve their ends. As early as 1912, they established the "Ulster Volunteers", who were armed and drilled as part of the Unionist campaign to frustrate the Home Rule policy of the Liberal Government in Westminster, a campaign which had the support of the British Tories. The *Times History of War* says that these "Ulster Volunteers" were recruited from the armed scabs used against the workers in the Belfast Transport strike of 1907.

In 1921, they were recruited into the newly established Special Constabulary, the notorious B-men to which Catholics were not recruited, because it was essentially a Unionist anti-nationalist para-military force. The B-men were disbanded in 1969. But they did not fade out. Most of them were allowed to keep their guns. There are estimated to be from 100,000 to 300,000 fire-arms in Unionist possession. Many are held by organised gun-clubs and irregular Unionist bands.

### **An Alliance of Landlords and Businessmen**

From its inception, the Unionist Party was an alliance of landlords, large businessmen and large farmers. These were able to mobilise support from Protestant small businessmen, small farmers and workers by the cynical exploitation of religious sectarianism which they used to whip up an atmosphere of fear, distrust and bigotry, and by the false claim that the link with Britain was necessary to prevent economic depression through loss of markets, with resulting decline in traditional industries, rising unemployment and stagnation in agriculture. The leadership of this alliance remained constantly in the hands of the landed aristocracy until it was shattered in the present decade by the pressures of the civil rights struggle and new conditions arising from the growth of British monopoly capitalism's stranglehold on the economy of Northern Ireland.

In the 1950's and 1960's the overall strategy of British monopoly capital demanded new financial and industrial investment in Northern Ireland which conflicted with the economic interests of sections of the Unionist Party. Northern Ireland was increasingly opened up to British, US and West German monopolies. As a result of this, Unionist manufacturers were swallowed up or forced out of business. Small and medium farmers attached politically to the Unionists were driven off the land, and Unionist-minded shopkeepers became victims of British chain-store groups. The resulting clash of class interests produced splits in the ranks of Unionism from the 1960's onward, splits that are much more pronounced today, as seen first with the establishment of the Alliance Party, and now Craig's Vanguard Unionist Progressive Party.

When the Unionist Party, because of these splits and the rising mass struggle for civil rights, was no longer capable of guaranteeing British domination over Northern Ireland, direct rule was introduced. Since then the Tories have sought to establish another political basis for British imperialist rule in Northern Ireland.

It cannot restore one-party Unionist rule since the Unionists are now split, and even if they could be joined together again, the anti-Unionists would never accept it. So Whitelaw seeks to establish another political grouping made up of the Unionist rump, plus centre forces like the Alliance Party as well as elements drawn from the Catholic community, who, it hopes, whatever their particular differences may be, will acquiesce in British domination. But British imperialism is not over confident in these hoped for allies. That is why the White Paper makes clear that for the foreseeable future British Government intervention in Northern Ireland will be far more direct, especially in decisive matters, than it ever was during the 50 years of Unionist monopoly control.

### The Civil Rights Movement

The Tories and their Unionist hirelings, while maintaining that "Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom", have always bitterly opposed every attempt by the people of Northern Ireland to establish democratic rights and social and economic conditions on a par with those applying in Britain—even though these are far from satisfactory!

Increased investment by British and other monopoly capitalist groups in Northern Ireland in the 1950's and 1960's not only adversely affected sections of the upper class and middle strata within the Unionist party, it did nothing to improve living standards for the majority of working people, Protestant and Catholic alike. Jobs were steadily lost in manufacturing industry. Between 1958 and 1968, the numbers employed in these industries dropped from 148,000 to 139,000.

Traditional industries were simultaneously run down. Figures issued by the Stormont administration in the late 1960's showed that while 56,000 "new jobs" had been created, 70,000 jobs in the "old" industries, such as farming, textiles, shipbuilding, etc. had been lost. In these years unemployment has consistently been two to three times higher than in Britain, with Catholic workers particularly badly hit.

It has been reported, for example, that out of five leading firms in Belfast three employed no Catholics at all, one employed 1.4 per cent Catholic workers, and another 5 per cent. These figures need to be seen against the fact that 33 per cent of the working population of Belfast are Catholics. In view of this, it is not to be wondered at that in those areas of Belfast where the tenants are predominantly Catholic, unemployment sometimes reaches as high as 50 per cent of the male population. Similarly in towns like Newry, Strabane and Derry, where the majority of working people are Catholics, unemployment can vary between 15 and 25 per cent of insured workers. In such circumstances one can understand why emigration averages 6,000-7,000 every year, as workers are forced to leave Northern Ireland to seek jobs elsewhere.

It is on this background, and under the impact of the world-wide struggle for national liberation, democracy and socialism, that could not but find an echo in Ireland, that various sections and organisations of the people of Northern Ireland began to develop a comprehensive programme embracing economic and democratic demands.

In September 1966 the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trades Unions, representing 225,000 workers—85 per cent of the total trade union membership in Northern Ireland—presented to the Northern

Ireland Government a request for the satisfaction of seven basic requirements They were:

- (1) Electoral reform, boundary revision, and redistribution of seats in Stormont elections.
- (2) Electoral reform and boundary revision in local government elections.
- (3) The representation of minority groups on government-appointed public bodies.
- (4) Measures to diminish discrimination on religious or political grounds in employment.
- (5) Measures to diminish discrimination on religious grounds in the allocation of houses.
- (6) Appointment of an Ombudsman.
- (7) The total repeal, as in Great Britain, of the Trades Disputes Act of 1927.

True to form the Unionist clique in the Northern Ireland Government refused to concede these reforms and the trade unions were drawn closer to the other groups in Northern Ireland that were campaigning on similar policies.

These groups came together in 1967 to form the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA), making possible the development in recent years of the great mass movement of the people of Northern Ireland which has profoundly affected political developments in the last six years and which has an even greater role to play in the days that lie ahead.

The demands that NICRA advanced from its foundation and developed in the conditions of each year since 1967 fell into three categories:

- Introduce effective democracy:*
- (a) Dismantle Unionist domination.
  - (b) Establish a democratic and autonomous Parliament for Northern Ireland based on proportional representation.
- End discrimination and sectarianism*
- (a) Sever links between sectarian organisations and political parties.
  - (b) Introduce foolproof legislation against sectarian incitement.
  - (c) Pass laws to end discrimination.
- Finish with oppression*
- (a) Abolish the Special Powers Act and all repressive legislation.
  - (b) Take action against the Unionist gun-clubs and para-military forces.

### Why These Demands?

Points have been made earlier about the relatively poorer economic position of "that part of the United Kingdom" known as Northern Ireland. In other aspects of their lives too the people there are infinitely worse off than we are in Britain. Take the example of the Special Powers Act of 1922.

Under these powers it is possible amongst other things for the Government and the police to:

- ★ Intern a person without charge, trial, Habeas Corpus, or recourse to a court of law.
- ★ Arrest without a warrant.

- ★ Prevent a person imprisoned without trial from having his relatives or legal adviser visit him or communicate with him.
- ★ Permit punishment by flogging and deny claim to trial by jury.
- ★ Arrest a person who by word of mouth spreads false reports or makes false statements.
- ★ Arrest a person for failing to inform the police that some other person has acted, or is about to act, in contravention of these regulations.

These powers are in direct conflict with more than two-thirds of the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to which the British Government is a signatory, as well as with many British constitutional rights.

As if that were not enough the Acts also provide that the police may arrest a person who does anything "calculated to be prejudicial to the preservation of peace or maintenance of order in Northern Ireland and not specifically provided for in the Regulations."

It was this clause that excited the admiration of the late Prime Minister of South Africa, Dr. Verwoerd. In the debate on the apartheid laws in the South African Parliament on April 24th 1963 he is quoted as saying:

"If honourable members were to say to me now that this legislation like other legislation is far reaching then I will agree with them at once it is drastic, but I would like to tell them also that this Government is not the only Government which has been faced with such a situation. I say this, that I am prepared to give up every single clause of this legislation for one clause of the Northern Ireland Special Powers Act of 1922."

Those who argue that the way to change such laws and economic and social conditions is by voting for change in local and parliamentary elections, are ignoring the notorious practice of gerrymandering which has operated for over 50 years in Northern Ireland.

The word "gerrymander" first became known in America where the Louisiana State Governor, named Gerry, rigged the boundaries to suit his own political ends. To do this he produced a constituency shaped like a salamander, hence the word "gerrymander". The British ruling class had nothing to learn from Governor Gerry.

In the 1918 referendum, the Irish people voted overwhelmingly for separation from Britain. But Lloyd George refused to accept the verdict of the people.

Two of Ireland's 32 counties had voted by big majorities not to separate from Britain. These were joined to four neighbouring counties to create the new statelet of Northern Ireland in which two-thirds of the population were Protestant, and, as a result of the divide-and-rule tactics of the British imperialists and the sectarian activities of the Unionists, the bulk of these had been misled into believing that their best interests lay with maintaining the British connection. The remaining third were Catholic, and, like the majority of the Irish population, were mostly in favour of separation.

By this process, the British imperialists created a majority in the North out of what was a minority of the total population of Ireland, and at the same time, they made those in the North who supported the majority Irish opinion into a minority. This was gerrymandering on a gigantic scale with grave consequences for Britain and Ireland in all the years since. The practice of gerrymandering has been carried forward from that day within the Six

Counties. The most quoted example, but by no means the only one, is the city of Derry.

Derry was divided into three different wards. The North Ward, with about 7,000 electors, roughly divided in voting patterns 2-1 in favour of the Unionists and had eight seats. The Waterside Ward, with roughly 5½ thousand electors, again divided 2-1 for the Unionists, had four seats. In the South Ward, with nearly 16,000 electors, divided 12-1 against the Unionists, there were eight seats.

Naturally the Unionists won the twelve seats in the North and Waterside Wards and their opponents the eight seats in the South Ward. The Derry Council therefore had a gerrymandered Unionist majority of twelve seats as against eight for their opponents, although the total Unionist vote was 9,235 as against 18,551 for the non-Unionists. As a result all the jobs in that council and in their local government machine went to Unionist supporters. From this example it is clear why there has been great bitterness in Northern Ireland about the practice of gerrymandering and why it was necessary for the civil rights movement to have as a central proposition in its programme the demand for proportional representation as the basis of voting in all elections.

### August 1969

Through 1967 and into 1968, NICRA took every opportunity to present its programme of demands in memoranda and in other forms. As month followed month it became clear that more than eloquence was going to be needed to win concessions from a Cabinet composed of people like Faulkner and Craig. The protest marches then emerged in the autumn of 1968 and with each new demonstration support grew amongst the people.

The only answer that the Unionists had to this mass protest movement for civil rights that developed through 1968 and 1969 was increased repression and police violence. When this failed the ultras of Unionism attempted to scare the anti-Unionist forces into submission with their 1969 pogroms against the Catholic population.

In August 1969 despite warnings of possible consequences, Stormont, at that time headed by Chichester-Clark, refused to ban an Apprentice Boys Parade through Derry on Tuesday, August 12th. The troubles that developed from that march led to attacks on the Catholic population in the Falls Road and Ardoyne areas of Belfast, led by "B" special constables and the Ulster Volunteer Force.

Commenting on these developments on Monday, August 18th, the *Morning Star* editorial declared:

"The 'B' specials are rightly regarded by democratic opinion in Ireland as a viciously anti-Catholic force, with an appalling record of thuggery in support of the Unionist regime. By setting them loose, and then justifying it afterwards, Major Chichester-Clark has demonstrated the determination of his Government to continue the oppressive and dictatorial policies which have produced the present explosive situation."

The reaction of the Wilson Government was to move in new contingents of British troops to reinforce the standing garrison of the British Army which had been established in Northern Ireland since 1921.

This further military intervention was not aimed essentially at protection of the Catholic minority but primarily to prevent Unionist extremists from



jeopardising British imperialist interests in Ireland. At that fateful moment for the Irish people a joint statement issued by the Communist Party of Northern Ireland, the Irish Workers' Party, and the Communist Party of Great Britain declared:

"The recent period has witnessed a mounting death-toll, hundreds of casualties, thousands rendered homeless, shootings, the employment of CS gas, the burning of houses and factories, arrests without charge or trial, and the livelihood of ordinary people completely disrupted.

"All this is a consequence of the Northern Ireland Government's attempt to suppress the legitimate struggle of the people for their democratic rights.

"Unless a programme involving the introduction of these rights is announced and implemented immediately, there is the prospect of a drastic worsening of the situation, and as usual the consequences would weigh heaviest upon the working class."

The demands of this joint statement were not met and developments in Northern Ireland moved to a new and even grimmer stage.

The Wilson Government bore a heavy responsibility for this. Instead of enacting a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, guaranteeing civil rights and ending discrimination in jobs and housing, instead of taking measures to stimulate economic development in the Six Counties in the interests of the working people, Home Secretary Callaghan cooked up a "reform" programme with Prime Minister Major Chichester-Clark. But the much lauded reform programme avoided crucial questions at the heart of Northern Ireland's crisis. The Special Powers Act remained in force, the Public Order Act was strengthened and partition was declared "not an issue".

### **Violence and Counter-Violence**

One of the responses to the ultra-Unionist pogrom and violence of August 1969 was the counter-violence of a section of the Republican movement. This is such an important facet of the Irish situation today that we need to explain our attitude to it.

For Communists the question of peaceful or armed struggle against oppression cannot be decided by a fixed abstract formula that applies equally in all cases whatever the circumstances. For us the decisive issue always is whether the particular action or form of struggle chosen is in the best interests of the working people. Does it serve to strengthen their unity? Does it increase their participation in activity for their own future? Is it the most effective way to advance their cause?

Sometimes, because of the nature of the physical force and coercive laws used by the enemies of the working people, and the consequent drastic restrictions on the people's possibilities of utilising their full power in civil struggle, armed action becomes necessary, as it did in Europe during the fascist repression or today in a number of countries in Southern Africa.

Even in those cases, however, armed actions have always been regarded as only part of the total struggle, which has also included other mass actions by the people—strikes, demonstrations, political propaganda and so forth. The test, as we have said, is whether the particular action helps to strengthen the unity and activity of the working people.

In Northern Ireland, the actions of élitist groups, especially the bombing of civilian targets, has come under sharp criticism both from the Communist

Party of Ireland as well as from the Civil Rights Association. The official wing of the IRA has also condemned these bombings, while asserting the right to use arms for defensive purposes.

The reason for these expressions of disapproval is that such actions have deepened the gulf between Catholic and Protestant workers, thus preventing the unity of the working class at this critical hour. Moreover, they have given a new pretext to the British military forces to step up their repression and at the same time made it possible for the armed right-wing extremists to emerge more openly and intensify their terror campaign against anti-Unionists, Republicans, and even Catholics in general.

In these circumstances normal political and trade union work is severely handicapped, often meetings cannot take place, and an atmosphere of fear and tension hangs over working class areas, especially in Belfast.

It should never be forgotten, however, that the Irish people have been victims of British ruling class violence for several hundred years. They were massacred by Cromwell. They suffered appalling economic repression in the nineteenth century, and millions were forced into exile by the potato famine and subsequent economic catastrophes. Their justified Fenian uprising was met by British terror. James Connolly and other patriotic and socialist leaders were executed in 1916. Then followed the dark days of the Black and Tans.

The 1960's and 1970's have also witnessed British imperialist repression and violence being used against the anti-Unionist and nationalist supporters in Northern Ireland. Special Powers, internment without trial, daily harassment by British troops—such has been the experience of the past five years.

For the British people, therefore, the question of ending violence poses the question of their responsibility to bring to an end British imperialist repression and to help the people of Northern Ireland win the democratic freedoms that would enable them, free from all forms of intimidation, discrimination, and pressure, to determine their own future.

This would be a vital contribution which British people could make to helping the working people of Northern Ireland unite their forces, a unity bringing together Catholic and Protestant, Republican and non-Republican, rank-and-file Unionists and non-Unionists. This unity is indeed the essential basis for achieving a peaceful, democratic solution in the interests of the entire working class.

### **The Tories Take Over**

With the coming to power of the Tory Government in June 1970 Heath and his gang, with their willing accomplices at Stormont, intensified the attacks on the democratic forces. Daily use was made of repressive legislation, hundreds were interned without trial, the British military forces were increased in numbers and moved over to an even more aggressive role against the Catholic minority.

Police and army violence was increasingly answered with counter-violence leading to ever more insistent demands from reaction in Northern Ireland and Britain for more coercive laws and a "military solution". On one day alone, 9th August 1971, over 300 Northern Ireland citizens were arrested under the Special Powers Act by the British army. This was a measure of the grave nature of the situation after about 14 months of Tory policy.

The response of the civil rights movement was to extend their demon-

strations, develop rents and rates strikes, and intensify every form of mass struggle and civil disobedience.

The correctness of this approach was demonstrated when, during 1970-71, Ireland witnessed great mass actions uniting diverse labour and progressive forces. The 32nd Congress of the British Communist Party, meeting in November 1971, pledged "its full solidarity with this historic movement." We called on the British labour movement to intensify its campaign for a fundamental change in Government policy in Northern Ireland and outlined the kind of steps necessary to produce a new situation in the Six Counties and facilitate the speedy withdrawal of British troops as follows:—

★ As a first immediate step, the British Government should accede to the demands of the progressive forces in Northern Ireland for the withdrawal of British troops from non-Unionist areas, and the cessation of all repressive acts against the democratic forces.

★ All detainees and political prisoners should be released and internment stopped.

★ The British Parliament should enact a Bill of Rights which would introduce democratic liberties, end discrimination, especially in jobs and housing, abolish the Special Powers Act and similar legislation, and deprive the Northern Ireland Government of any authority to use the powers of internment or to practise discrimination, repression and intimidation.

★ To prevent unauthorised pressures against the anti-Unionists, all right-wing armed forces and rifle clubs should be disarmed and their re-establishment in any form prohibited.

★ Proportional representation should be introduced, an end be put to all electoral discrimination, and electoral boundaries be re-defined in order to eliminate all gerrymandering.

### **Derry, January 30th, 1972**

Sunday, January 30th 1972, is a date that will remain of the utmost significance in the entire history of the Irish people's struggle for freedom and independence. On that fateful day, 30,000 men and women gathered together in Derry and marched in support of the demands of the civil rights movement. The intent of the march had been clearly proclaimed by the organisers in a widely publicised statement on January 28th on the front pages of both the *Derry Journal* and the *Irish News*, the two newspapers most read by the people of Derry:

"A call for a massive turnout at the Civil Rights Demonstration planned for Derry tomorrow has been made by the Executive of the Civil Rights Association. Making the call the Executive pointed out that the British Government are now full-tilt on repression and coercion and that a massive peaceful demonstration was vital if world opinion was to be impressed by the justice of the democratic cause in Northern Ireland.

"The twin major aims for Derry is a demonstration that is both huge in numbers and perfectly peaceful and incident free. It is pointed out that any violence can only set back the civil rights cause and play straight into the hands of the Tory-Unionists by providing a justification not only for any violence they might contemplate against the demonstration itself but also for the daily violence of the security forces."

The Westminster and Stormont Governments had a different approach. A huge military force was deployed to prevent the march from taking place. At the meeting after the march, British paratroopers fired on unarmed civilians. Twelve people were killed and 16 injured, one of whom subsequently died, in a cold-blooded massacre that was a direct product of Heath's and Faulkner's brutal oppression.

Lord Brockway, who was about to address the meeting when the firing started, said: "the march was not provocative in any way. I don't believe there would have been any trouble if it had been allowed to go on as planned." Seven priests in Derry declared: "We accuse the colonel of the paratrooper regiment of lawful murder. We accuse the soldiers of shooting indiscriminately at fleeing crowds."

The Political Committee of the Communist Party in an immediate statement demanded that all paratroop units be immediately flown back to England and that the rest of the troops in Northern Ireland be taken off the streets and confined to barracks preparatory to their complete withdrawal.

On Wednesday, February 2nd, 50,000 Dubliners demonstrated outside the British Embassy in protest against what became known as the Bloody Sunday Shootings.

The following weekend, showing immense courage, determination and unity, a massive 50,000 march organised by the civil rights movement took place at Newry. The Tory Government, in the wake of the storm of protest following the Derry massacre, kept British troops away from the scene of the march, while protesting its illegality. The Newry demonstration was a triumph for democracy and the civil rights movement.

The Derry massacre raised anew, in a sharper form than previously, the question of the presence of British troops in Ireland.

### **British Armed Forces in Ireland—The British Communist Party's Attitude**

British troops have been in Northern Ireland ever since the Stormont regime was established in 1921. Our Party always opposed their presence, recognising that the troops were an instrument of imperialist policy and repression.

Over 20 years ago, in our programme *The British Road to Socialism*, we declared that a solution to the basic problems of Ireland required the withdrawal of British troops. This, together with the ending of all British political, administrative and economic control, would enable the people of Northern Ireland, together with those of the Republic, to take the necessary steps to end the imperialist-imposed partition and establish a united Ireland, free from discrimination and sectarian strife.

When the crisis arose in Northern Ireland at the time of the anti-Catholic pogrom in Belfast in August 1969, the British Government dispatched additional troops there. We pointed out that the sending of these further troops would solve nothing, that what was needed was a fundamental change of policy.

Today, more and more people are coming to realise this, and to appreciate that political problems require political solutions.

Armed forces, after all, are one of the weapons of the State. They are an expression of class power. The use and behaviour of the British troops is determined by the policies they are directed to pursue by the British govern-

ment. That is why the question of their behaviour and withdrawal must be linked to the fight to change government policy.

British Communists, in common with others opposed to imperialism and colonialism, have always demanded the withdrawal of British troops from colonies. This stand has been based on firm principles. But this should not lead anyone to ignore the special features of Northern Ireland.

In the case of the former colonies it was a question of a united territory, governed directly by Britain, and with a majority of the people in open opposition to British troops and domination, and ready and available to provide an alternative power, an alternative government. The demand for the withdrawal of troops in these cases was linked with political demands, the essence of which was: "Let the people rule their own country."

In Northern Ireland we have a truncated statelet, not an entire territory. Moreover, the progressive forces at the moment are at a considerable disadvantage. They are at this stage not a majority, but a minority. The people of Northern Ireland, including the working class, are not united against the Unionists nor against the British connection.

There are anything between 100,000 and 300,000 guns said to be in Northern Ireland—the vast majority of which are in the hands of Unionist extremists. These weapons of force—and not only British troops—are available for use against the anti-Unionist minority.

For these reasons, the demand for the withdrawal of British troops must be related to the other political demands which, taken together, form the basis for overcoming the present crisis.

That the British troops should go is not in question. Of course they should—and events underline the urgency. But the problem is: how to create the political conditions that will get them out. And how to get them out under circumstances that will assist the further advance of the progressive movement in Northern Ireland and not create new immense difficulties for it.

As we have emphasised, it is essential to end the repression, introduce democratic changes, and withdraw the troops. These three points must go together. It is this total policy which is needed, and should be fought for now by the combined strength of the Irish and British labour and progressive movements. In this regard the position of the British labour movement in relation to the Irish people's struggle is decisive.

### **A Bill of Rights**

An important step in support of the Irish people was taken by the 1971 British Trades Union Congress, when it passed unanimously a resolution calling for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. This was a signal giving encouragement to the anti-Unionist forces. They saw it as an indication of the growing understanding by the British working class movement that its responsibilities and class interests demanded this expression of solidarity with the Irish labour and progressive movement. What is meant and involved in a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland?

First it needs to be made clear that given the present relationship between Britain and Northern Ireland, only the British Parliament has the power and authority to enact such a Bill. Secondly, while the provisions of a Bill of Rights (in line with the text of such a Bill placed before the House of Lords in 1971 by Lord Brockway) would be designed to protect the minority of

Northern Ireland, it would in fact equally protect the freedom of all sections of society. The main provisions of a Bill of Rights would be:

#### *Discrimination*

The main proposal here is that the Race Relations Act now applying in Britain be extended to Northern Ireland and religion included among the grounds upon which discrimination is made illegal.

#### *Republicanism and Nationalism*

Since partition in 1921, Nationalists and Republicans have sought to secure the reunification of Ireland. Many restraints have been placed on organisations and publications supporting this course. The second main section of the Bill of Rights would enable such organisations to exist and propagate their views.

#### *Flags and Emblems*

The present "Flags and Emblems Act" restricts the right to display the Irish tricolour. The third section of the Bill of Rights permits the display of national emblems in peace time.

#### *Gerrymandering*

For many years, as we have said, electoral boundaries in Northern Ireland have been drawn with the purpose of giving numerical advantage to Unionist candidates. A Bill of Rights would propose that all elections in Northern Ireland should be by a single transferable vote system of proportional representation with four or five members being returned for each constituency.

#### *The Special Powers Act*

Hundreds of men are still imprisoned without charge or trial under the provisions of this Act. Its continued operation is a principal obstacle to change in Northern Ireland. A Bill of Rights would take the necessary steps to ensure that the future laws make impossible the violations of democracy that have been commonplace in Northern Ireland's legal and prison system.

#### *A United Ireland*

This final section of a Bill of Rights establishes an important principle, the right to initiate constitutional progress conferring on the Government of Northern Ireland or its successor the power of linking up with the Republic, either in part or in whole. The central issue here is that the Irish people themselves should be able to work out their own destiny.

#### **The White Paper**

It is against this background of Irish history, in particular of the last six years of mass political struggle, and bearing in mind the demands of the trade union and civil rights movement and the proposed provisions of a Bill of Rights, that we need to examine the Tory White Paper and estimate whether it offers a real and lasting solution to Northern Ireland's crisis.



The last sentence of paragraph 32 of the White Paper shatters any such illusions. It reads:

"The Bill (to enact the White Paper) will therefore include a statutory declaration that Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom and will not cease to be part of the United Kingdom without the consent of the people of Northern Ireland."

Here is brutal reaffirmation of the long standing Tory approach. The Six Counties torn from the body of Ireland in 1921 are not to be restored to Ireland except by decision of a built-in majority in the Six Counties whose views on this question are in direct opposition to those of the overwhelming majority of the Irish people.

In so far as the views of the majority in Northern Ireland have been sedulously fostered in every possible way by the Unionist bigots in Northern Ireland and by successive Westminster Governments, that majority opinion could hardly be other than it is at present. Fear has been created amongst the majority in the Six Counties that their present standards and rights, marginally better than those of the Catholic minority but much lower than those of most British workers, would be in jeopardy if Ireland was ever re-united. But as has been said previously, the enactment of a Bill of Rights would protect the rights of all citizens, not just the minority.

### **Self-determination denied**

The White Paper, in the sentence quoted from paragraph 32 is also a categorical and absolute denial of the right of Ireland to self-determination in present circumstances.

As the Connolly Association said in their statement of March 25th on the White Paper:

"It (the White Paper) does not contain any recognition of the right of Ireland to self-determination. It is indeed a denial of that right. It consists of proposals for the further government of the Six Counties by England, and for associating the 26 counties with English interests and those of the EEC.

"It does not pretend to be anything else, and it must be judged for what it is, and not for what we would like to see. As it does not recognise Irish self-determination, the struggle for self-determination must go on, and will go on."

The Tory Government, recognising that this must be the basic reaction of the Irish people to the central provision of the White Paper, spells out in paragraphs 54-61 how they intend to ensure that Northern Ireland remains completely in the control of Westminster.

Paragraph 54 states: "Whatever powers to legislate may be devolved upon a regional law-making authority in Northern Ireland, it must and will be made clear that such devolution does not diminish in any way the right of the United Kingdom Parliament to legislate for Northern Ireland, as for any other part of the United Kingdom, in relation to any matter whatever."

Paragraph 56(a) explains that there will be certain "excepted" matters on which the new assembly "may not in any circumstances legislate". These include foreign affairs, the armed forces, certain powers of taxation, powers of the kind exercised under the Special Powers Act, prosecutions, elections and the franchise, and the appointment of magistrates and judges.

Paragraph 56(b) lists the "Reserved" matters in which the assembly may only legislate with the agreement of the UK Government: "Within this category will be certain matters within the field of law and order, including the criminal law, the courts, penal institutions and the establishment and organisation of the police."

Paragraphs 58 and 59 make clear that the proposals of the Diplock Commission will be enacted simultaneously with the repeal of the Special Powers Act. As the White Paper puts it quite bluntly, the Diplock Commission recommended: "various changes in the arrangements for the administration of justice in Northern Ireland so as to make it possible to bring before the courts more of those engaged in terrorist activities in Northern Ireland while pointing out that in some cases there is no substitute for procedures such as those prescribed by the Detention of Terrorists Order 1972."

### **The Diplock Proposals**

Under the new legislation to implement the Diplock Report, those charged with "scheduled offences" (mainly involving violence and weapons) will generally be denied bail so that remand in custody becomes virtually mandatory. Juries will not be permitted. Trial on indictment by a judge alone is provided for "scheduled offences."

The presumption of innocence until proved guilty will not apply to cases involving firearms or explosives found on premises or in a vehicle. The person involved will have to prove he had no knowledge of their presence or had no control over them.

Written statements signed in the presence of a constable can be admitted as evidence without producing the actual witness in court if there are what are described as "good reasons" for not doing so. The right of cross-examination is therefore denied.

Confessions are accepted unless the accused can himself prove that it was extracted under torture or as a result of other inhuman or degrading treatment. Memories of torture and ill-treatment revealed by the Compton and Parker Reports can only add to the concern in this regard.

Detention without trial is to continue, and the police and army are given the power to arrest "suspected terrorists" and detain them for up to 72 hours. The police and army are also given wide powers of entry and search, in some cases even without specific suspicion.

These are just a few examples of the way the new legislation violates basic human rights and principles of established law. They show that the intention is to achieve the same purposes as the Special Powers Act by other very similar means.

The argument that these sweeping powers are needed to deal with an emergency situation will not hold water. As the Diplock Report admits, there has been an intermittent emergency since 1921. The Special Powers which have operated throughout have helped to cause and aggravate that situation.

Ireland to remain divided, British rule to continue, with effective power in all key sectors in the hands of Westminster, including all the instruments of force and repression: that's the essence of the White Paper's approach. Has the heroic struggle of past years been in vain then? Has the mass movement achieved nothing? Is there no possibility of improved democracy and working class advance in the new situation? Such an assessment would be mistaken. New possibilities do exist.

## Proportional Representation

The White Paper has had to recognise the new situation created in recent years and declares in paragraph 35: "The significant developments since 1969, both in the general situation and in the structure and organisation of parties, have totally changed the political scene." And further, in paragraph 39: "It has been decided that there shall be an assembly of about 80 members, and that the system of election best suited to this occasion is the single transferable vote (STV) method of proportional representation applied to the 12 Westminster constituencies."

Not only in relation to election procedure and constitutional reform have the Tories been forced to change ground, as indicated in these paragraphs. They also, in paragraph 63, concede an important principle to those of Republican views with the recommendation that "a draft order-in-council . . . will remove in time for the forthcoming local government elections, the requirement for a statutory declaration to be made by a councillor on acceptance of office".

Earlier in the same paragraph there is a formulation that could provide a better basis for the future struggle against discrimination. It says: "the Northern Ireland Assembly shall not have power to make any law of a discriminatory character. This is one component of a complex of proposals designed to afford protections and safeguards amounting to a charter of human rights."

Part 4 of the White Paper, which has been highly praised by Tory Government supporters, is a lengthy dissertation on "A Charter of Human Rights". The proposals here, in direct contrast with the earlier sections that dealt with how British rule will be maintained, are extremely vague. They can only be given life and meaning as with the other positive, though limited, proposals in the White Paper, by an ever greater mass struggle inside Ireland actively supported by the British labour movement.

The Communist Party of Ireland, which was formed in 1970 by the uniting of the Communist Party of Northern Ireland and the Irish Workers' Party, has indicated what must also be fought for in the present situation:

(1) There must be an end to discrimination in employment, not by taking jobs from Protestant workers and giving them to Catholics, but by large scale provision of new jobs through a massive injection of finance. Priority in industrial allocations should go to areas where the highest rates of unemployment exist.

(2) The present tense situation should be de-escalated by immediately releasing all those interned without trial, loyalist and Republican. Both the Diplock Commission recommendations and the Special Powers Act should be scrapped. Freedom should be given to all organisations to contest the elections and to engage in normal political activities.

These are not unattainable goals. Ulster Unionists are divided as never before. British imperialism cannot rule in the old way. That there is a common bond between the Irish and British labour and progressive movements in their struggle against monopoly capital is underlined by those paragraphs of the White Paper that deal with the relationship of the Irish situation to the Common Market.

The White Paper lists what it calls a number of significant developments since October 1972, when the discussion document, forerunner of the White Paper, was published. The first is: "On 1 January 1973, the United Kingdom

and the Republic of Ireland both became member countries of the European Economic Community, a development which is bound to have an ever-increasing impact upon the lives of all who live in these islands."

Again in Part 2 this theme is repeated when the White Paper states: "At a time when new opportunities and new challenges are posed by membership of the European Economic Community no area, let alone an area with special economic and social problems, can afford to be handicapped by continuing strife and stability."

And further, in the final section of the White Paper, which deals with "Relations with the Republic" the point is hammered home: "It is therefore, clearly desirable that any new arrangements for Northern Ireland should, whilst meeting the wishes of Northern Ireland and Great Britain, be so far as possible acceptable to and accepted by the Republic of Ireland, which from 1 January 1973, will share the rights and obligations of membership of the European Communities."

All this is clear evidence that the British ruling class is now looking at Ireland in the context of its central economic and political strategy based on participation in the Common Market and aimed at establishing a firm basis for British imperialism in the new world situation facing it today.

They are confronted with the need to try and create new conditions in the whole of Ireland where the road will be opened to economic co-operation between the two parts of Ireland as a prelude to future political reunification, provided that both parts of Ireland, whether separated or united, are under the control of British monopoly capitalism.

This is the thinking behind the "Irish Dimension" of the White Paper, and reflects an attempt to adapt traditional imperialist attitudes and policies to the new conditions of the 1970's, in which the entire capitalist world is in the grip of a deepening crisis.

For British monopoly capitalism, this crisis is particularly acute. More and more the Tory Government is striving to impose the burden of that crisis on the backs of working people and are meeting with increasing resistance.

The British working class movement by mass militant action and by its growing adoption of left policies on key political, economic and social issues is causing tremendous concern for the Tories and their allies. Throughout Western Europe unity of action of the Communist, Socialist and progressive forces is winning important new victories against reaction. Ireland is not and will not be immune from this historic process. The momentous struggles of the past six years are the guarantee of that.

The key question remains unity in action of the British and Irish labour and progressive movement against the Tory government and its anti-working class policies, and for new governments in Britain and Ireland that will be forced to legislate by the power of the mass movement in the interests of working people. To this end the British Communist Party will work in active solidarity with the Communist Party of Ireland and all labour movement and progressive forces in our two countries.

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