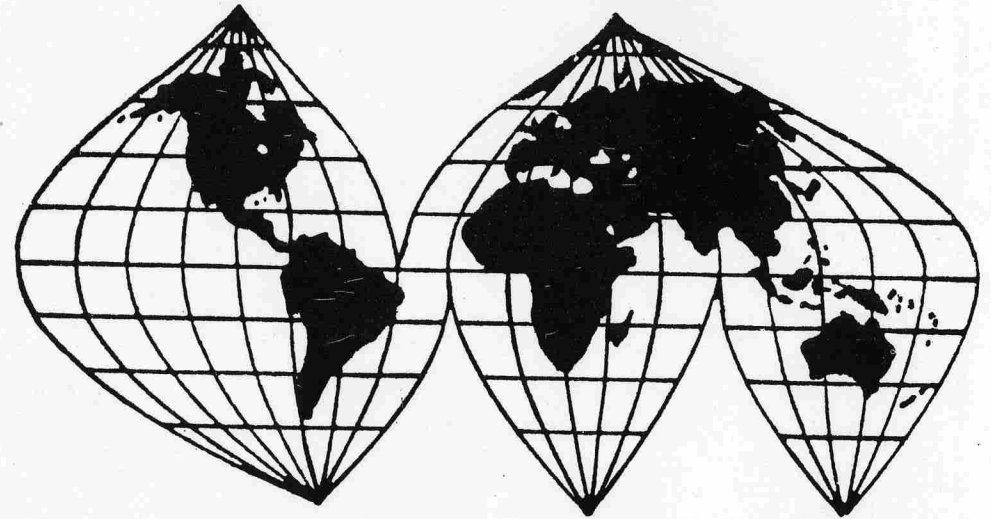


IRELAND & THE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES



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Text of speech delivered by Séan Garland, General Secretary The Workers' Party to a meeting of Party members in Dublin. January 1986.

Ireland and the Socialist Countries

Ireland does not exist and as we well know, cannot exist in isolation from the struggle of the two socio-economic systems, Capitalism and Socialism, in the world today. Ireland falls within the field of gravitation of these systems with each one having its own specific influence. Up to very recently and in most areas of Irish society still, it has been the conservative, reactionary forces that have directed and aligned Ireland on the side of capitalism.

The October Revolution of 1917 marked a fundamental turning point in world history for it was then that capitalism ceased to be the only all-embracing economic system. The Second World War made further and deeper changes in the nature and strength of these forces. On the surface the first decade after World War II presaged an era of unprecedented prosperity for the US. The US, its industrial base intact after World War II, had established a seemingly impenetrable domination of the Western world in the '50s. The US government had poured funds into the restoration of the economies of Western Europe and Japan to strengthen them as allies in the Cold War. By the '60s US corporate conglomerates had obtained control of entire sectors of industry, especially in Britain, but also in France, the FRG and Japan, US transnational corporations and banks used holdings in Britain and French corporations to gain access to markets and resources in the former colonies. The banks and other financial institutions shifted billions of dollars into the Euro dollar markets contributing to the accumulation of vast sums of capital outside the control of national government.

British and French industrial and financial strength on the other hand declined in the post World War II era as their colonial empires crumbled under demands for national liberation. Their aging home industries characterised by outmoded technologies long protected by colonial preference, required major state assistance merely to survive. In the '60s many of the new politically independent African states opened their doors to more aggressive transnational corporate investors. US firms operated in the former colonies directly as well as through British and French affiliates and increasingly overshadowed the former colonial powers. Industrial and financial corporate giants from West Germany and Japan aided by aggressive state intervention as well as massive infusion of US capital and technology had recovered from the World War II in the '60s. They steadily expanded and strengthened their hold over markets and resources in the Third World. By the mid sixties and early seventies they were exporting basic manufactured machinery as well as capital in sharp competition not only with the declining British and French interests but also with US firms.

By the late '70s the US had lost its pre-eminent position among Western nations. It had lost the Vietnam war, had suffered severe setbacks in Southern Africa with the liberation of Mozambique, Angola and Zimbabwe. The fall of the Shah in Iran, the overthrow of Somoza in Nicaragua and the continued struggle for liberation in many other American, Asian and African countries added to this decline. Military expenditures and overseas investment had also over-burdened its balance of payments so that it was forced to devalue its currency contributing to the emergence of the international monetary crisis. On top of this, the mobilisation of the oil producing nations in OPEC raised world oil prices 8—10 fold. The bubble of Western prosperity burst in the mid seventies. First a severe recession and then economic stagnation accompanied by mounting inflation settled over the Western world.

The War and its aftermath

The situation in the socialist countries after the defeat of Hitlerite fascism was much worse than that in capitalist countries with the total destruction of towns, cities and industries. What the Nazis could not steal for themselves or sell, they destroyed. In the Soviet Union they plundered, blew up and burnt completely or to a great extent 1,710 cities and towns, over 70,000 villages, 32,000 industrial enterprises, 98,000 collective farms and almost 2,000 State farms. They destroyed 65,000 km of railways, blew up or stole 16,000 railway engines and 428,000 carriages.

Alongside of the millions of people killed by the Nazis, 20 million in the Soviet Union alone, the people of the socialist countries had to begin rebuilding entirely from their own resources. Not for them the massive injections of capital and equipment which the US gave or loaned to its allies. Just one other figure will I think give some small idea of the immense task that faced the people of the Soviet Union in particular. A total of 25 million homes had been destroyed in the war — this is equivalent to every home in Canada being destroyed. Coupled with this was, as I have just said, the total destruction of factories, schools, hospitals, farms.

Even before the war had ended, Churchill and his gang had begun to take steps to launch the Cold War. It is now admitted by the US that they had plans to drop atomic bombs on targets in the Soviet Union in the years after 1945. It is of interest too, to recall how quickly and easily the US recruited and used thousands of top Nazis in its efforts to subvert and destroy the socialist countries. Having played the major role in defeating Hitlerite fascism, one would have thought that the Soviet Union could have at least been able to depend on its wartime allies for reconstruction, instead it had to continue to build with one hand and to be constantly prepared to defend itself, for at all times its very existence was threatened. It has always been and continues to be a dominant feature of US policy to attempt to bleed the Soviet economy dry, to force the Soviet Union to devote valuable and scarce resources to defence.

Peace Policies

Compare too the policies and the actions of the socialist countries and those of the capitalist on the issue of world peace and disarmament. Armaments are big business for capitalists and mean huge profits for a tiny minority who control and dominate the arms industry. No person in the Soviet Union or any other socialist country makes a personal profit out of defence. Rather it is seen by all, government, Party and people, as a waste of resources which could be used to more quickly improve the quality of life of all the people. Time after time, positive proposals to reduce the danger of nuclear war have been made by the Soviet Union at the United Nations and other world meetings. The most recent and far reaching of these proposals extends the Soviet Moratorium on nuclear explosions for more than three months, if the United States for its part stops nuclear tests. Coupled with this is a plan to reduce by 50% U.S. and Soviet weapons, which could reach each other's territory, within the next eight years. After this period a second stage lasting between five and seven years other nuclear powers, China, Britain and France would begin to engage in nuclear disarmament, whilst the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. would continue to eliminate intermediate range weapons and would freeze their short range or traditional systems. Stage three of this plan would begin after 1998 and would see the elimination of all remaining nuclear weapons. By the year 1999 the plan proposes there would be no nuclear weapons on earth and a universal accord would be drawn up that such weapons would never again be manufactured. It will be of interest to all of humanity to see how the U.S. administration reacts to this plan. Going on their record it does not give much hope for each time it is the United States which refuses to take steps which would lessen tension and reduce nuclear armaments. Rather does the US seek to increase and escalate the arms race by basing Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe and now is actively proposing to extend the arms race to space with its SDI programme. Despite all this however, the Soviet state has been able to develop its economy, to expand industry, to maintain an effective defence, to improve the life of all its people and at the same time render considerable and critical assistance to its allies and those people struggling for freedom, peace and socialism throughout the world.

Capitalism's Objectives

Many countries in Europe, Asia and Africa, freed themselves from capitalism/imperialism in the years after 1945 and this led to the enlargement and consolidation of the socialist economic system. Co-existence, competition and confrontation between the two systems became and is the main feature of the world today. Capitalism is losing its economic, technical and military monopoly and although it is still the leader in many areas, socialism is gradually overtaking it.

In any examination of the role of the socialist countries it is essential to

remember that the first socialist state in the world was established in 1917 just 69 years ago. During that time this state has had to withstand and overcome many very serious and critical dangers. From the beginning it faced counter-revolution, invasion, civil war, famine, along with other major issues such as the land question, the struggle against the various factions in the party, most notably that against the Trotskyists who, true to form, refused to face the reality of the period and were more caught up with their rhetoric of the world revolution than with the immediate and pressing problems that faced the people. Under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, a predominantly agrarian country has in a relatively short space of time been turned into one of the world's most powerful industrialised countries. The Soviet Union today accounts for one fifth of the world's industrial output and it has built a society without inflation, unemployment and crisis.

The doctrine of scientific socialism formulated and developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels is only in its infancy when we compare it to capitalism in world history. It is in fact only a short few years since the centenary of Marx's death so this gives us some idea as to how far humanity has come in such a short period of time. It is necessary to bear this fact in mind, for very often it is easy to forget the tremendous problems that the socialist countries and socialists in general have had to overcome. It is all too easy to be critical, to have a holier than thou attitude, to point the finger at what the mass media in the capitalist countries promote and publish about the Soviet Union in particular. Since 1917 capitalism has never ceased in its attempts to destroy the Soviet state. On many occasions they have, as I have pointed out, used force and terror; at all times they have waged a propaganda campaign of distortion and slander. They have, of course, never found it difficult to find people willing to be its agents or dupes from the likes of Solzhenstyn who so admires the Czar and all he stood for to the Sahkarovs and Walesa of today, who have become the darlings of the capitalist media.

Capitalism has within itself many contradictory and competing forces. Today there are three major centres of capitalism each prepared to gut and annihilate the others in order to be the dominant one. They are united in only one thing, their hatred and opposition to socialism and the socialist countries. Wherever capitalism feels itself endangered or under threat, it can be and is entirely ruthless in its struggle to survive. Just look for instance at how the capitalist countries are now acting in regard to international organisations. Now the United Nations is no longer regarded as a safe or good organisation. Imperialism has lost its control of the UN because over the past years the UN had admitted to membership dozens of newly liberated countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America. The most recent and most blatant example of how capitalism reacts and attempts to dominate international organisations is the issue of UNESCO. Here, because UNESCO has attempted over the years to develop a progressive and rational programme for such issues as a New Information Order, a New International Economic Order, to combat the reactionary and wide

influence of capitalism, to create some sort of balance, particularly in the developing countries, the US now joined by its client puppet state, Thatcher's Britain, has decided to withdraw from UNESCO in order to punish as they see it, the other member countries of UNESCO who will not adopt or follow a pro-US line in the organisation.

There can be no neutrals

The task of socialists, the making of a new society with new morals and ethics, is not an easy or quick task. Lenin recognised that it would take many generations to eliminate all the backwardness, all the false values and attitudes that people had acquired throughout thousands of years of oppression, corruption and greed. Marxism-Leninism which is the revolutionary science of the development of the human society, holds a tremendous attraction for the people of the world today. Already one third of humanity has embarked on the road of socialism and communism. Every day it is having more and more effect on the course of world history. It would be wrong and stupid to view the modern socialist world through rose coloured glasses. Never before has a socialist society been built and it naturally follows that socialist states have their problems and difficulties. At present it is true, as we said earlier, that the socialist countries are behind capitalist countries in terms of per capita national income and in the level of the production of consumer goods. But the mass media under capitalism who are opposed to socialism always give these points undue prominence and yet always remain silent about the fundamental changes taking place in the life of the citizens of a socialist country, the right to work, to free education, to free comprehensive health services to name just a few basic and fundamental rights. It has been stated that under socialism there is only one privileged section of society and that is the young.

In the struggle to achieve a new and just society there can be no neutrals. In our day then this struggle is reflected in the struggle of the socialist countries to survive, expand and develop, and so assist the rest of humanity to secure freedom and justice. On the other side are the forces of capitalism which means the domination and control by a few of the wealth, the resources and people of the world. *There can ultimately be only one victor.* We have chosen to take our place with the forces for progress, on the side of the great mass of humanity. Naturally there will be some contradictions and strains along the way but we must bear in mind all the time what is our objective and who is our enemy. The central issue for us and all those struggling to achieve a better world is in whose interests is the revolution to be achieved, who is to be the power and what interests does this power represent. We maintain this must be the interests of the working class. I think it would be interesting to take a couple of examples from one part of the world, Africa, where this struggle is at its most intense and where the battle-lines are more clearly drawn and recognised between the two systems and compare how each system views and acts in relation to the needs and wishes of the people. We can then easily see and judge who

stands for the liberation and emancipation of humanity and who it is that blocks the path to progress and justice.

US aims and objectives

Back in the days before Ronald Reagan became President of the United States he made this blunt, frank and I would add one of his few coherent statements and I quote: "Many Americans have interpreted our interest in Africa as an extension of our own desire to achieve equality and the elimination on injustice based on race. I'm afraid that is a naive oversimplification of what really is at issue." To underline what the US considers what is at issue I would now like to quote from a report drafted by the US State Department for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in its Arms Transfer Policy. These aims are, and I quote:

- "1. To assert American influence and to weaken the positions of the opponents of the United States.
2. To influence the political orientation of states which control access to resources of strategic importance.
3. To retain the requisite balance of power between all US orientated countries in order to prevent undesirable regimes from taking political power.
4. To strengthen the military potential of America's principal allies.
5. To weaken the position of the Soviet Union.
6. To maintain American influence over the Governments and military elites whose political orientation is important to the United States in deciding regional and global problems.
7. To preserve the right to use military bases and military strongholds and station armed forces and intelligence services."

I don't think we can get it any clearer than that and remember, this is coming from the horse's mouth.

Monopoly capitalism needs and wants total control of the oil, the uranium and other valuable metals and mineral of other countries, so areas like the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, Africa and Latin America are declared spheres of US vital interests. The needs and wishes of the people of these countries are not taken into account, only the wishes of the monopolies.

National liberation struggles

The mass media in the capitalist countries have over the past few years made great play of the fact that Soviet forces are fighting in Afghanistan. They naturally fail to point out that the Soviet Union was asked to assist the Revolutionary Government in Afghanistan because the United States was engaged in a campaign of destabilisation through its puppets in Pakistan. The Afghanistan situation is very comparable to what happened and is continuing to happen in Angola. When the MPLA Workers' Party of Angola achieved independence it was immediately attacked by the racist South

Africans acting as the primary agent of imperialism in Africa and using native lackeys such as Jonas Savimbi who had an organisation called UNITA. The CIA had decided that Jonas Savimbi and his UNITA gang represented the best means for re-establishing imperialism's grip on Angola. They poured in millions of dollars worth of war material plus advisers and also arranged for the fascist South African regime to provide personnel and all other necessary equipment and facilities to attack the People's Republic of Angola. This combination of CIA, fascist South Africa and UNITA did succeed initially in making advances in Angola.

It is now an historical fact that the new People's Republic of Angola would not have been able to survive this onslaught without the support of essential materials from the Soviet Union and the physical presence of some thousands of Cuban soldiers who inflicted severe and costly defeats on the enemy. This war continues and the people of Angola have suffered greatly from the attacks of these gangsters. This struggle of the Angolan people is of course intimately linked with the struggle of SWAPO to achieve freedom for Namibia. Again this is of course another reason why the imperialists are so determined to destabilise Angola and it is the same reason again why they wish to turn the clock back in Afghanistan because they fear, and let us hope rightly so, the effect a people's Afghanistan would have on the many other countries in the region. Without the socialist countries and in particular, without the Soviet Union, there would be no Socialist China, no People's Korea, no Vietnam, Kampuchea, Laos or Cuba, to name just some. The freedom movements of Africa as we have just mentioned, MPLA Angola, SWAPO, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, would not have been able to survive, let alone carry through any kind of socialist construction of society. The ANC of South Africa would long ago have been defeated as would the PLO and even many Arab nations would be completely at the mercy of the imperialists and their agents such as the Israelis who have for years now conducted an aggressive and genocidal war against Lebanon and its people. Imperialism will not countenance any threat, however small or remote it may be, to its power and influence. We need only recall some of the more aggressive actions of the United States over the past twenty years to see the proof of this. The bloody war against Vietnam, the attacks and blockade of Cuba, military interventions in Lebanon and the Dominican Republic, its organisation and direction of the coup which overthrew Salvador Allende, of Chile, the invasion and occupation of Grenada, the continued aggression against and interference in Nicaraguan affairs.

The Central Question

So it is clear that when we talk about Ireland and the socialist countries and our attitude to them we are in fact talking about a good deal more. We are talking about our attitude to the entire revolutionary scene in the world. For us there can be no middle ground in the struggle to abolish capitalism

and achieve socialism. It is, and I repeat, essential for us who are living under capitalism that we look beyond what the media in our society report about socialism and the socialist countries. Whenever we see or hear reports about the situation in these countries whether it be the Soviet Union, Cuba, Afghanistan, Poland or any other, we must look at the source of these reports. Those who peddle anti-communism, who engage in anti-sovietism are siding with the forces of reaction and capitalism.

We have in this country, as there is indeed in most capitalist countries, a band of people who parade themselves about as Marxists, as revolutionaries, who see themselves and are seen by some as the real revolutionaries, who never do anything wrong simply because they never do anything, except to lend what they term critical support to various and sundry factions and gangs of terrorists. The most noteworthy of these outfits usually are in the Trotsky tradition, highly individualistic, prone to long and weary debates about the purity of the Revolution and yet all the time they are sowing confusion and despair among people. They are indeed tools and frequently allow themselves to become part of the continuous efforts of such organisations as the CIA to destabilise and undermine the socialist countries and lend aid and comfort to the forces of imperialism and reaction whatever issue it is they wish to promote, whether it be the Soviet Union, Poland, Afghanistan.

To return then to the central question of this short talk. There are two competing systems in the world today — capitalism and socialism. One system must inevitably triumph. We believe that capitalism has run its course and that whatever benefits it initially had in the development of human society that this value no longer applies. The forces that capitalism represent are of course determined to ensure its survival and have taken many measures to make this survival possible. Ronald Reagan who is today the main spokesman for capitalism has embarked on what he calls a crusade against the socialist countries. We know exactly what Reagan means by this, it means support for the military dictatorships and repressive regimes in South and Central America, Chile, Paraguay, El Salvador, Guatemala, for the military and fascist regimes in Asia, Indonesia, Phillipines, Pakestan; for fascist and racist South Africa, for the Zionists in Israel.

Can there really be any question as to where we in Ireland stand in this struggle? There can only be one answer, we must stand with those forces who are supporting the liberation and freedom movements of all these countries and so many others, for it is clear that without the socialist countries, not only would many liberation movements perish, but the world itself would be nothing less than a world of reaction and oppression. The new Nazis of Washington, Bonn, Pretoria, Tel Aviv, and London would walk the world untroubled and untouched.

That is both the question and the answer to this talk — Ireland and the Socialist Countries.