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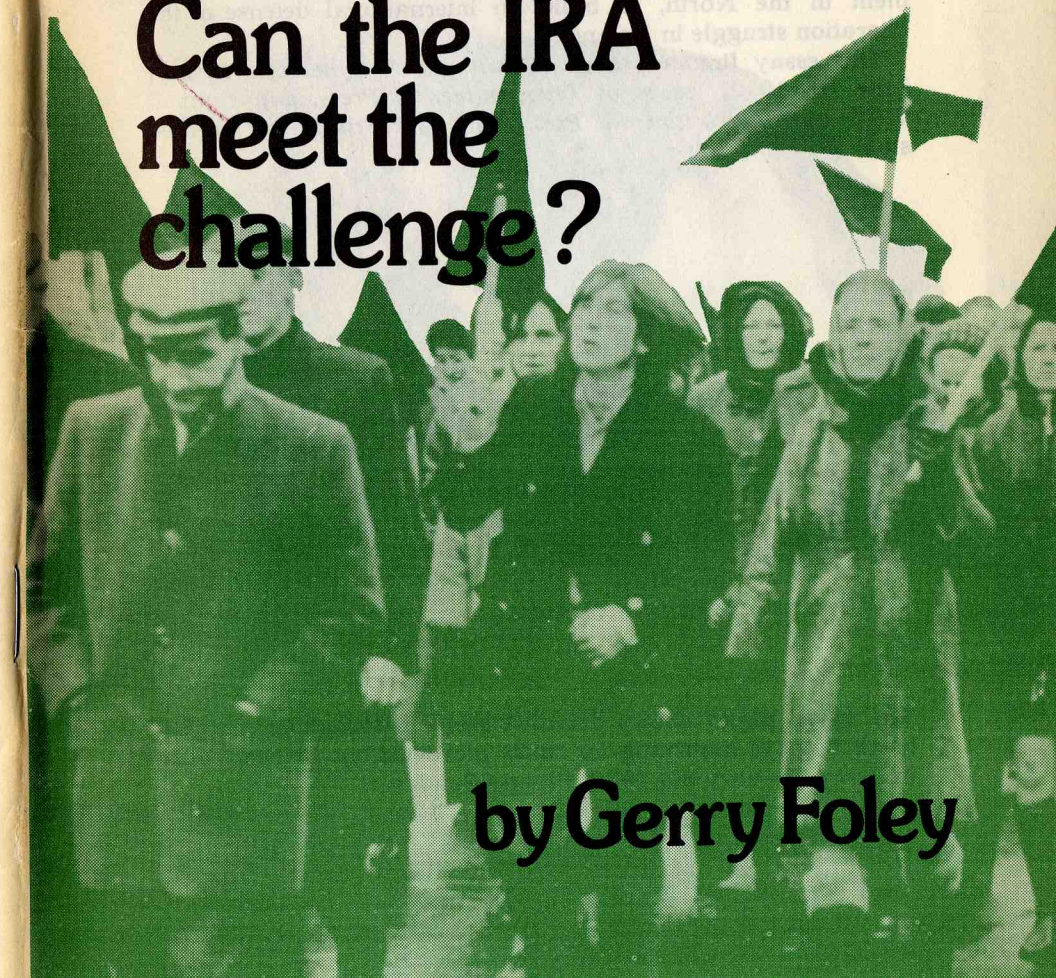
Problems of the Irish Revolution

Can the IRA meet the challenge?



by Gerry Foley

Gerry Foley became a supporter of the Celtic nationalist movement at the age of fourteen, learning all the Celtic languages. He joined the Young Socialist Alliance in 1961. Since 1966, he has written for *Intercontinental Press*, a weekly international Marxist news service.

In the summer of 1970, Foley spent a month in Ireland and interviewed a number of revolutionary nationalist leaders, including Cathal Goulding, the man known as the chief of staff of the Irish Republican Army, and Tomas MacGiolla, the president of Sinn Fein, the political arm of the republican movement. Foley returned to Ireland in the turbulent early months of 1972. He went on to tour Europe and Scandinavia with Malachy McGurran, leader of the Official republican movement in the North, to build an international defense of the liberation struggle in Ireland.

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The cover photo shows demonstrators in Dungiven carrying black flags in mourning for those murdered by British troops in Derry, January 30, 1972, Bloody Sunday.

Introduction

For almost four years one of the most acute social crises in the Western world has existed in Ireland, concentrated in a few relatively small communities in the northeast corner of the island that remains under British political control. In editorial after editorial, the voice of the most powerful imperialism in the world, the *New York Times*, has expressed concern over the developments in this tiny and economically almost insignificant region. The second most powerful imperialist country in the world, Great Britain, has found itself forced to put an unprecedented strain on its military machine. It has even been threatened with having to withdraw some of its troops from the border of the "Free World" in West Germany to maintain "order" in its oldest colony.

Violence is endemic in Northern Ireland, which was created to block the Irish people from achieving their full national aspirations and to maintain the religious caste system that has been the bulwark of British rule for more than three centuries. Repression and discrimination are an essential part of the system, which involves permanent violence against the almost 40 percent nationalist and Catholic minority. It was this minority who were the main losers when the Irish national revolution went down to a partial defeat in the ebb of the wave of revolutions that followed World War I. But in the period leading up to 1968, the dominant forces in the society thought that the time was ripe for reinforcing their political position.

For their own purposes, the Irish and British ruling classes wanted to clean up the image of the Northern regime by eliminating some of the more obvious religious bigotry, which served as a living reminder of the worst features of the old imperialist system. The Catholic bourgeoisie was in the process of dumping the last vestiges of Irish national aspirations and of coming to a full and final reconciliation with British capital.

It was embarrassed by the brutal oppression of the Northern Catholics.

But in this attempt, the Northern regime and its British backers ran into two difficulties: They created expectations among the Catholic population that they could not meet. And they alienated sections of the Protestant establishment that saw their interests dependent on maintaining the old system unaltered. So a split in the Unionist apparatus went hand in hand with an increasing radicalization of the oppressed minority. Moreover, the status quo in Western Europe had become unstable. In this situation, only a few months after the upsurge in France in May-June 1968, a mass movement developed among the nationalist minority in Northern Ireland.

The rise of this movement also reflected other changes that had been accumulating beneath the surface. After the failure of the 1956-62 guerrilla campaign, the traditional nationalist movement, the IRA, had been forced to rethink its historic positions. In this process, it moved away from concentrating exclusively on guerrilla warfare in the name only of national unity and full independence. It began to develop a program of political action based on the immediate needs and aspirations of the mass of the people. This new orientation enabled it to become the backbone of a movement that could appeal to the majority of the nationalist population in the North, who had lost their belief that a united Ireland could be realized or was even worth fighting for. But while being based on the most modest democratic demands for equal rights for Catholics, this movement, the civil rights movement, touched off the most powerful revolutionary upsurge in Ireland since 1918-21.

One of the first effects of the massive fighting that developed in August 1969 was a split in the IRA. The rise of communal warfare encouraged some of the veterans of the 1956-62 campaign, who had been opposed or indifferent to the new orientation, to break away from the Official movement and form a Provisional IRA. Although they, too, have been changing under the pressure of the situation, the Provisionals have generally stressed military action as the main form of fighting the oppression of the Catholic community. The Officials have tried to combine commando group activity with peaceful mass action.

But in general, the distinction between the two groups has been seen in terms of mass action *vs.* guerrilla warfare. Smaller socialist groups, which had tended to discount the revolutionary potential of democratic demands, have found themselves either isolated or drawn into the orbit of one or the

other militant nationalist organization, since this was the arena where the struggle for leadership was centered.

A number of key lessons have been established over close to four years of struggle in which the Irish vanguard has been severely tested again and again. If traditionalism is not dead yet, the pressure of events and the spread of new ideas seems to have dealt it a mortal blow. In the future any radical organization in Ireland will have to stand on its political program and not its historical credentials. Now that an ebb in the struggle has set in, marked by the progovernment vote in the Common Market referendum in the South and the "peace offensive" in the Northern Catholic ghettos, it is essential to try to sum up these lessons.

GERRY FOLEY

Problems of the Irish Revolution

It was the public reaction to the execution of nineteen-year-old William James Best, who was shot as a spy May 19, 1972, by the Official Irish Republican Army unit in Derry, that apparently led the national leadership of the revolutionary organization to announce May 29 that it was suspending armed offensive operations in Ulster.

The IRA said that it was taking this step in response to an appeal from the executive of the Republican Clubs in Northern Ireland, the political organization of the movement in the area. The statement, quoted in the May 30, 1972, *New York Times*, said: "The executive proposed to the I. R. A. that in view of the growing danger of sectarian conflict the I. R. A. should immediately suspend all armed military actions." The announcement continued: "The I. R. A. has agreed to this proposal, reserving only the right of self-defense."

Since the Official IRA has stressed repeatedly that it was following a defensive strategy, the effect of this decision seems to be to call off retaliatory terrorist actions against the repressive forces.

The possibility of sectarian warfare, of course, does not depend on the policy of the IRA but on the intentions of the imperialists and their local allies, to whom large sections of the Protestant population are bound by their caste prejudices. But the renunciation of terrorism could improve the political position of the IRA by making clear the real source of the violence in Northern Ireland. It is doubtful that this will impress sections of the Protestant community imbued with a caste mentality, but it could have a positive effect on the nationalist community and world public opinion.

It seems clear that the retaliatory strikes of the Official IRA have not helped to further the struggle of the nationalist population, which is the main potentially revolutionary force in Ireland at the moment. Instead these actions have helped the imperialists and the Catholic "moderates" to split and demobilize the nationalist population. The reaction to the Best shooting is only the latest and clearest example of this.

The May 29 statement of the Official IRA was, thus, politically unclear. By claiming implicitly that the movement had changed its policy out of concern over the reaction that might be provoked from the Protestants, the pronouncement turned the issue on its head and opened the way for dangerous confusion.

This confusion was made worse by the fact that the May 29 statement did not explain whether the Official IRA had changed its concept of organizing armed action. Thus, it is unclear whether the Official IRA is rethinking its traditional positions or simply responding to pressure, which would be a very dangerous course in a situation as complex and volatile as the one in Ireland. In any case, in the wake of the Best shooting and the successes of the "moderate" peace offensive, it seems apparent that the republican movement is trying to reorient itself. It faces some profound problems; it also has some substantial achievements to build on.

To try to estimate what turn events are likely to take, now that the situation is shifting so rapidly in Ireland, it seems necessary to reach some judgements about the policies of the Official republican movement, since it has provided the main political leadership to the struggle so far.

It does not seem justified, for example, to view the Best shooting as a local and accidental error. It is true that the Derry unit, which carried our the execution, is not typical of the Official IRA. Among other things, British ultraleftist and workerist groups have exercised a more marked influence in this area than in other parts of Ireland. Despite this, the shooting of Best seems to flow logically from some of the basic policies of the Official IRA. This act was merely the latest of a series of assassinations of British soldiers. The rationale was the same as in other cases. "The army of the people" had punished the people's enemies.

When the Official IRA bombed the British paratrooper base in Aldershot, England, killing a number of nonmilitary personnel, it defended the action on the grounds that the base was a military target, that the paratroopers had gunned down Irish people, and that in acts of war, harming innocent persons cannot always be avoided. Fundamentally, the defense of the Aldershot action was a moralistic one, in line with the ideology and traditions of terrorism. The Russian Narodniki could claim equally valid moral justification for gunning down or bombing the czarist hangmen. In both cases, the result of these actions was the same—they tended to substitute for and disrupt mass political activity. Furthermore, they prevented

the development of armed action by the masses.

If the IRA had taken advantage of the political mood that prevailed in the wake of the Derry massacre, they might have been able to organize mass self-defense, and in that event it would have been difficult for any of the repressive regimes active in Ireland to prevent them from arming a large section of the population. This opportunity was wasted for the sake of the essentially moral satisfaction of killing a few British soldiers, with politically negative and militarily insignificant results. Instead of being buoyed up by the upsurge that followed the Derry killings, the Official IRA found itself again isolated from the masses.

Like the team that bombed Aldershot, the members of the IRA court that condemned and executed Best were acting "*on behalf of the people,*" since the republican movement in Derry has been unable to win the full, conscious involvement of the community or to give impetus to mass democratic organization of the people.

Such terrorist actions flow from the historical character of the IRA. Building a secret army that does not grow out of the struggles of the people and that engages in daring armed operations that are not an integral and natural part of mass struggles—that is, not the acts of armed detachments of the people—can hardly help but lead toward elitist militarism. This holds true regardless of the social and political conceptions of those who lead this clandestine force.

The republican movement has a long experience of the results of recruiting on the basis of the appeal of armed action. Once individuals begin to act in the name of the masses, but without being under effective popular control or under the discipline of a mass revolutionary party, it is practically inevitable that they will engage in politically harmful adventures. It is all too easy, moreover, for politically untrained or miseducated youth to become so dazzled with armed initiatives that they lose all taste or aptitude for the tasks of political propaganda or organization. Under these conditions, any propaganda that is put forward is likely to be reduced to romantic extremist appeals that cannot educate the masses.

The fact that the Derry unit of the Official IRA chose to carry out an action like shooting Best, apparently on its own, illustrates another key political weakness that has appeared more than once since the Irish crisis began—the inability to see the political situation in Ireland as an organic whole. Among other things, this was shown by the political character of the Official IRA's intervention in the Mogul silver mine strike in July 1971.

In this long, bitter strike against a foreign company, the Official IRA applied its policy of using terrorist methods in support of popular struggles. They tried to blow up a transformer supplying electricity to the mines. In itself this was not an unusual act of industrial sabotage in hard-fought strikes. Unfortunately a young IRA man, Martin O'Leary, was killed in the operation. At his funeral, the chief of staff of the Official IRA, Cathal Goulding, hailed O'Leary as "the first martyr of the new campaign in the South," a campaign against the "capitalist vultures" by means of the "bomb and the bullet."

The IRA had intervened in a similar way in the Shannon electrical workers' strike in 1966, but that action had not provoked the threat of a general repression. In 1971, however, Goulding received a summons on a sedition charge, and this move by the government seemed to fit into a general buildup for the introduction of the concentration camp system for political suspects in both North and South Ireland. The government in Dublin retreated when the extent of the resistance of the people in the North to internment became evident. But the situation in the summer of 1971 was extremely dangerous in the formally independent part of the country.

In the conditions since 1969, when a general crisis in the imperialist control of Ireland began, the intervention of the Official IRA in a local strike offered the Dublin government the opportunity it was looking for to move against the developing revolutionary forces. The whole system was at stake and the authorities moved in a concerted way to remove the threat. It was the revolutionists who could not see the implications of their action in the context of a unified strategy—a serious failure, certainly, from a military point of view.

The fact that the local labor leaders approved the action did not change its political effect. It is a syndicalist delusion shared by most of the left groups in Ireland that if they can align themselves with the workers in some partial struggle, the government will automatically be embarrassed or discredited and restrained from attacking them. The fact is that the whole history of trade unionism shows that among the workers there is a fundamental difference between economic and political consciousness. This has been shown time and time again in the most dramatic way by unions giving political backing to bourgeois and reformist politicians directly responsible for strikebreaking and even atrocities against the striking workers.

At the same time, one of the justifications given for actions like the dynamiting at the Mogul mine was a certain conception of the unity of the imperialist system in Ireland. Since it is imperialist capitalism that holds the country in bondage, ac-

cording to this view, national liberation fighters should engage in all concrete forms of struggle against exploitation. In a general sense, no revolutionary Marxist could dispute this.

Moreover, the Official IRA has been anxious to reorient its members from the traditional pattern of concentrating on military struggle in the North toward fighting the imperialist system in the South and understanding that the Dublin regime is just as important an obstacle to national liberation as the fortress state in the Six Counties. This is also correct in a general sense. But the problem is that these conceptions are too static and general and, as such, in practice they cannot serve as a guide for a unified strategy.

It is true that the neocolonialist regime in the South is essentially part of the same system as the Unionist setup in the North and that an essential part of defeating Unionism is to mobilize the people in the South against the dependent capitalist system that exists in their own area. However, the whole development of the crisis since 1969 shows that there are important practical differences between the Belfast and Dublin regimes that revolutionists cannot ignore.

Despite the repressive legislation and inclinations of the Southern government, republicans have been able to operate more or less legally in the formally independent part of the country. It is ironic that this fact should be underestimated by the republicans while they place so much stress on the need for achieving the right of legal political activity in the North.

It is true, moreover, that it is the same capitalist-imperialist system which oppresses the Irish people in both parts of Ireland. However, this system has political and ideological aspects as well as directly economic characteristics, and it has a certain specific historical form in Ireland. The fact is that the crisis of capitalism in Ireland has arisen from the struggle of the nationalist people in the Northern ghettos. This was the weakest point of the sociopolitical system of imperialist capitalism in Ireland, and the cracks are spreading out from there. The crisis is not developing gradually in direct conjunction with general economic conditions but explosively as the historical lines of cleavage widen, partly under the impact of economic changes but also in response to political and social factors.

While the Mogul mine strike was related to the general economic problems of the Irish nation, it had no clear specific connection with the fight in the North, which was, and is, the main factor affecting the political thinking of the people thoughout the island. Thus, it did not challenge the system in Ireland in a direct way, did not point toward a solution

of the crisis, and apparently did not increase the support for the IRA to any significant degree.

The same kind of one-sidedness seems to have paralyzed the Official IRA's political strategy during the upsurge after the Derry massacre in January 1972. As angry crowds of thousands and tens of thousands of people gathered in early February to demonstrate against the British atrocity, the Official IRA called on them to vote against Common Market entry in the May 9 referendum. That was its main demand. The republican speakers argued that if the crowds wanted to oppose British imperialism, they should oppose the plans of imperialism for Ireland, that is, Common Market membership. This appeared logical, but it did not take into consideration the political dynamic.

Mass upsurges also have their logic. By nature they are short-lived. They dissipate harmlessly unless they are given a concrete and immediate focus. In the week after the Derry massacre, there was a mass challenge, in essence, to the system in Ireland. The Official republicans did not understand how to direct this pressure against the weakest point of the capitalist-imperialist structure as a whole at that particular time and thus they seem to have failed to make any substantial gains from one of the most powerful upsurges in recent Irish history.

Thinking in general concepts divorced from dynamic realities, the republicans display an essentially schematic and static notion of the way social change takes place. The same approach is shown in the Official IRA's slogan of reconquering the country mine by mine, factory by factory, and so forth. The other side of this in the North is the idea of building people's power street by street and neighborhood by neighborhood.

By trying to develop the primitive forms of popular power that have arisen in the embattled nationalist ghettos, the Official IRA has shown its devotion to the ideals of revolutionary democracy and in some cases has responded very effectively to the challenge of the state's policy of all-out repression. But unless the concept of revolutionary democracy is integrated into a general strategy based on politically educating and organizing the masses of the Irish people for a centralized assault on the entire imperialist system, the policy of the Official IRA is apt to end up in a utopian impasse.

The barricaded areas are politically important primarily as a challenge to the state and the status quo. By showing the power and logic of an independent mobilization of the

masses under the leadership of sincere revolutionary militants, the incipient forms of popular self-rule that have appeared in Derry, in particular, point the way toward a new and higher form of society. However, the barricaded areas are the front lines of a bitter struggle that will decide the fate of the Irish people; they cannot be the models of the liberated society itself.

It is a dangerous delusion to think that just by "running their own lives" on a few streets or in a few besieged neighborhoods people can make any basic and lasting improvement in their condition. Instead, the politically most advanced section of these communities can wear themselves out in isolated community-betterment projects and in maintaining the basic services, while under the pressure of the surrounding society, life becomes more and more difficult for the general population and the politically backward masses slide into indifference and eventual demoralization.

Inevitably, the people of these small, isolated, marginal communities will tire if they do not see their fight as part of a much larger struggle that has a chance for victory and offers a real possibility for solving their social problems. Eventually it will be easy enough for sections of the community to begin to say: "Let's just have peace and leave the street cleaning to the corporation."

Rooted as it is in an essentially vague and static conception of society, the populist notion of people's power spreading from neighborhood to neighborhood seems to be sort of a left version of the concept of revolutionary "stages" that underlies the Official republican strategy in the Northern conflict. According to this theory, the British have to be forced to introduce bourgeois democratic freedoms in Northern Ireland before a revolutionary struggle in the full sense of the word can take place; civil equality for Catholics is necessary to eliminate the sectarian divisions in the working class; republicans have to have the opportunity to talk to the Protestant workers in order to be able to win them over to the idea of a united Irish workers' republic.

This concept was expressed clearly in the January 1972 issue of the Official republican organ, *The United Irishman*, where the editors argued that it was impossible to think in terms of a socialist revolution in the North as long as the Protestant and Catholic workers were not united. By reducing the working class to a populist abstraction, this approach also distorts the nature of social evolution. Just as the struggle against imperialism is supposed to proceed in regular steps, so the unity of the working class is expected to develop in a

steady progression as the result of propaganda and piecemeal economic struggles.

This scheme of things seems reasonable enough from a pragmatic point of view. Obviously we have to be able to walk before we can run, as the saying goes. Furthermore, the whole ideology of bourgeois society inculcates the idea of "progress," in the sense that the present society is supposed to be in the process of steadily "evolving" into something better. The pragmatic approach, moreover, can have its attractions when the only aternative presented is ultraleftist disregard for the real process of the masses learning through experience.

But an objective look at history shows that it does not move in such neat patterns. In the twentieth century in particular, there has been a succession of great social crises throughout the world that have either led forward to a fundamental change in the organization of society or backward to even more brutal forms of repression and exploitation.

The revolutionary theory of social change, Marxism, denies that history moves in even patterns. It distinguishes certain general phases of historical development in order to determine the direction in which society is moving and the underlying tendencies. But the essence of Marxist analysis is to show, by referring to those abstract patterns, how these phases combine in the real world. Marxists see society as a dynamic, constantly shifting balance of forces that inevitably develops in an irregular pattern, where long periods of slow evolution lead up to abrupt leaps forward—or backward—that is, to a period of crises.

In the long phase of capitalist stability and expansion in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a tendency developed in the workers' movement to interpret Marx's concepts as meaning that social evolution was a simple, automatic process. When the capitalist system went into a deep crisis with the outbreak of World War I, it became apparent that this interpretation was an adaptation to the trade-union and party bureaucracies, which had acquired a certain stake in the established order of things and a routinist and legalistic mentality.

One section of these "progressives" saw a German victory in the war as the way forward, since Germany was economically the most advanced of the contending powers and had the best-organized working class. Another section looked to the Western allies, which had long since passed into the "democratic stage."

Along with James Connolly, Lenin was one of the few leaders of the prewar socialist movement to reject such "stages"

theories. Lenin's opponents, the Mensheviks, argued that since Russia was a backward absolutist state, there was no possibility for making a workers' revolution until a long period of bourgeois democratic development had been completed and the working class had become the majority of the population.

Lenin and Trotsky argued, on the other hand, that the capitalist system had already reached the phase of a global system — imperialism — to which the primitive repressive systems in the colonial and semicolonial countries had become adjuncts. The war, in fact, had shown that bourgeois democracy was beginning to decay even in the countries of its birth. Therefore, despite the terrible difficulties of making a socialist revolution in a backward country like Russia, with all of its bitter internal national divisions and religious fanaticisms, there was no other way forward.

Since capitalism as a world system was in crisis, moreover, the fight to overthrow it had to begin where the contradictions were most acute, where the lines of cleavage had first opened, and it was highly likely that the political situation would be difficult and complex precisely in those places. The regeneration of the workers' movement also had to begin there, since the parties that had failed to respond to the revolutionary challenge of the war had shown that they were no longer workers' parties in the political sense; that is, they were not ready and determined to intervene in the crises of capitalism to overthrow the system. They in fact functioned as part of the system, siphoning off its discontents and diverting the revolutionary aspirations of the oppressed strata.

Moreover, since revolutionary opportunities arose in abrupt and relatively brief crises, because of the irregular movement of history, parties had to be created at once to lead the workers in the task of overthrowing bourgeois society. Since the capitalist system had become reactionary on the world scale, every deep social crisis now posed the possibility of a fundamental attack on the system itself. A leadership was needed that clearly understood the dynamics of society and knew how to orient the revolutionary forces in time. Only a well-timed, well-coordinated, and well-planned political offensive could lead to victory. The party had to help prepare the workers to strike with daring and decisiveness at the proper moment, concentrating the political blows on the key lines of cleavage in bourgeois society.

Against this revolutionary conception of social development, the opportunists and pacifists who led the bureaucratized workers' parties in the West raised vague schemata that put off any

possibility for socialism to the indefinite future. In the countries where the deepest crises occurred, the reformists could argue that the "democratic stage" had not been completed. In the case of Austria, where the crisis was exceptionally violent, the centrist leadership tried an approach somewhere between pure reformism and a revolutionary program. They tried to guarantee that the "bourgeois-democratic stage" would be carried through to the end by maintaining soviets, the apparatus of a workers' government, parallel to the regular bourgeois institutions. They even had a militia. But the bourgeoisie was not willing to accept halfway solutions. Because of its slowness and indecisiveness, the workers' movement was crushed, opening the way for fascism.

To prove that they were the authentic Marxists, the opportunist leaders could argue that they led mass workers' parties. They commanded a vast network of trade unions and educational institutions. They had in some cases shown their abilities in leading the economic struggles of the workers. If the socialist revolution was going to come about as a result of the development of the working class, surely they would lead it. In any case, there would be no socialist revolution until all the workers wanted it, and the fact that the evolutionist parties retained their hold on a large section of the working class proved that they did not. In some cases, as in Austria, even Catholic parties and unions maintained their grip on many workers. How could you make a socialist revolution when sections of the workers were still under the influence of clerical reaction?

And most important, how could it be hoped that a socialist revolution could occur in Russia when the working class there was relatively so small and culturally backward? The Russian workers would have to wait at least until their Western brothers and sisters were ready to join in the fight with them. Wasn't it proof of the non-Marxism of the Bolsheviks that their support tended to be among the youth, the intellectuals, and marginal layers of the working population, rather than in heavy industry and the most powerful unions? Such forces could never make a revolution.

To these arguments, the revolutionists replied that Marxism was not a form of vulgar materialist sociology. Such a view, in fact, could only give an essentially static picture of the world and could never serve as a guide to revolution. Marxism, in contrast, was a method of analyzing social development that took into consideration the underlying tendencies and the interrelation of all factors. Since it saw society in motion, it also saw that every fact of life had its contradictions. Since

the world capitalist system as a whole had become reactionary, the most backward areas were likely to be the places where the most acute contradictions existed—the weak points of the whole interlocking machinery of world capitalist society.

However backward the consciousness of the popular strata in these areas, they could not solve their elementary problems without striking out against the capitalist system as a whole, which condemned them to permanent misery and slavery. Therefore, not only was it likely that revolutions would occur first among backward sections of the workers, it was likely also, for better or for worse, that the more advanced workers would have to be set in motion under the impact of these rebellions. Calling on the disadvantaged sections of the workers to wait until more powerful but conservatized sections were ready to move meant in fact turning off the driving force of revolution.

Thus, the process of the world revolution itself would be irregular, involving violent conflicts and splits in the working class before higher unity could be achieved. Uniting the workers would not be the result of routine propagandistic and trade-union work, as the reformists claimed. Unity could be achieved only through a complex and often violent, and above all political, struggle, in which the revolutionists would have to stand resolutely on the side of the interests and aspirations of the most exploited and oppressed sections of society. Full unity might in fact only be achieved after the completion of a successful socialist revolution.

As he moved away from the economic schematism of his earlier work toward an understanding of the place of national revolution in emancipating the Irish workers, James Connolly also came to understand the contradictions in the working class of his own country. In his article "British Labour and Irish Politicians," written in May 1913, he wrote:

> From time to time I propose to give some attention to the elucidation of the problems peculiar to Ireland and particularly to this part of it [the North]. For the present it is sufficient to emphasise the fact that the religious affiliations of the population of Ulster determine their political leanings to a greater extent than is the case in any part of Europe outside the Balkans. But the manner in which this has developed is also unique. I believe that it is true to say that, politically speaking, the Protestantism of the North of Ireland has no parallel outside this country, and that the Catholicism of the Irish Catholics is, likewise, peculiar in its political trend.
>
> To explain—I mean that, whereas Protestantism has in general made for political freedom and political Radicalism, it has been opposed to slavish worship of kings and aristocrats. Here, in Ireland, the word Protestant is almost a convertible term with Toryism, lickspittle loyalty, servile worship of aristocracy and hatred of all that savours of genuine political independence on the part of the "lower classes."
>
> And in the same manner, Catholicism, which in most of Europe is synonymous with Toryism, lickspittle loyalty, servile worship of aristocracy and hatred of all that savours of genuine political independence on the part of the lower classes, in Ireland is almost synonymous with rebellious tendencies, zeal for democracy, and intense feeling of solidarity with all strivings upward of those who toil.
>
> Such a curious phenomenon is easily understood by those who know the history of Ireland. Unfortunately for their spiritual welfare—and I am using the word "spiritual," not in its theological but in its better significance as controlling mental and moral development upward—the Protestant elements of Ireland were, in the main, a plantation of strangers upon the soil from which the owners had been dispossessed by force. The economic dispossession was, perforce, accompanied by political and social outlawry. Hence every attempt of the dispossessed to attain citizenship, to emerge from their state of outlawry, was easily represented as a tentative step toward reversing the plantation and towards replanting the Catholic and dispossessing the Protestant. . . .
>
> Then the Protestant always saw that the kings and aristocrats of England and Ireland were opposed by the people whom he most feared, and from recognizing that it was but an easy step to regard his cause as identical with theirs. They had a common enemy, and he began to teach his children that they had a common cause, and common ideals. . . .
>
> The Catholics, for their part, and be it understood I am talking only of the Catholic workers, have been as fortunately placed for their political education as they were unfortunately placed for their political and social condition. Just as the Socialist knows that the working class, being the lowest in the social system, cannot emancipate itself

without as a result emancipating all other classes, so the Irish Catholic has realised instinctively that he, being the most oppressed and disfranchised, could not win any modicum of political freedom or social recognition for himself without winning it for all others in Ireland. Every upward step of the Catholic has emancipated some one of the smaller Protestant sects; every successful revolt of the Catholic peasant has given some added security even to those Protestant farmers who were most zealously defending the landlord. And out of this struggle the Catholic has, perforce, learned toleration. He has learned that his struggle is, and has been, the struggle of all the lowly and dispossessed, and he has grown broadminded with the broadmindedness of the slave in revolt against slavery.

Connolly used the *historical* Marxist method; he did not argue about the real economic differences in the position of Protestant and Catholic workers like a vulgar bourgeois sociologist. Of course, he ended his article with the assertion that with the prospect of home rule, that is, democratic reform of the British system, the differences between Protestant and Catholic were fading away. But from his own argument this seems to have been just a hope. And the "civilization" he saw coming to Ireland with this reform has not only been delayed in that country but throughout the world; civilization in general has tended to go backward. The age of reform was already over when Connolly wrote those lines. In the age of capitalist decay, it is hard to imagine the British ruling class definitively giving up such a strong prop of reaction as the Orange caste, at least not as long as there is any threat of a nationalist revival in Ireland.

Lenin and Trotsky did not see the working class in a romantic glow that concealed its contradictions and weaknesses. Most of all, they looked at the workers from the standpoint of the system as a whole. They knew that the workers had had to fight sections of their own class in Russia in order to win. They knew that the working class revolution had been inseparably and directly combined with struggles for civil rights and national liberation. They knew that when the working class itself melted away in the civil war, the party representing the historic interests of the class had preserved the historic foundations of workers' power. They had no sympathy with the successors of the Narodniki who thought that the party should "serve the people." Russian Marxism was built in a fight with this theory of dissolving into the masses and carrying on an

aimless round of economic struggles. The party had to be the general staff of revolution and intervene in history in a single-minded, purposeful, and scientific way.

When the Stalinist bureaucracy rose to power in the Soviet Union and destroyed the party that had made the revolution, workerism and the "stages" theory made a comeback. These concepts served the Soviet bureaucrats in the same way they had served the trade-union bureaucrats and electoral politicians of the Social Democracy — as a justification for reformism. The Kremlin bosses lost all interest in extending the revolution, which might endanger their positions by reviving the revolutionary aspirations of the people they ruled. Like all intermediate social layers — including the conservative "nationalists" in Ireland — they maintained their position by balancing between the fundamental forces in society.

By exploiting the prestige of the party that they in fact liquidated, the Stalinist bureaucrats were able to inculcate reformist concepts into the minds of generations of militants who may have begun with revolutionary aspirations. These false ideas have become part of the general baggage of the left. In some cases, they have even had a fitful revival in the recent period, as some youth have tended to romanticize the Stalinism associated with the great class battles of the 1930s and the expansion of the Soviet sphere of influence immediately after the second world war. A reaction against the ultraleftism of the early phases of the youth radicalization has also produced a certain nostalgia for the "organization" of the Stalinist parties and the "realism" of reformist trade-unionists.

The romantic populism and workerism of some young radicals fits in very well with the general underpinnings of Stalinism, just as many aspects of Narodnikism did with Stalinism during the period of the rise of the bureaucracy. (The theory of Socialist Realism, for instance, represents largely a revival of Narodnik theories that were combated by Russian Marxists, including Lenin.)

Although reinforced by general pragmatic ways of thinking, the "stages" theory in the Official republican movement clearly has a Stalinist source, although it may not be direct. The formulation in the "Manifesto of the Irish Workers' and Farmers' Republic," reprinted in August 1971, is the classical Stalinist one, touched up with some of the scholastic fuzziness typical of the British Communist Party:

> Both the national independence revolution and the socialist revolution are two stages of one democratic transformation of society, separate in time, each stage of which

> entails political and economic change in the interests of the mass of the people. How long a time elapses between the establishment of real national independence and unity and the establishment of a socialist form of society will depend on the interaction of the democratic forces of the Irish people and British imperialism together with the allies and clients of the latter within the country. In favourable conditions this may become a matter of gradual steps; it is not possible to be dogmatic about it.

By stressing the separateness of the two stages of the revolution, this passage in effect denies that socialism or socialist demands and perspectives have any relevance for the present, except as ideals. In the last sentence, it even holds open the prospect of peaceful evolution to socialism. The concept is clearly a reformist one in all its practical implications.

Because of that, this dogmatic approach can paralyze practical political action. In an age when capitalism as a whole is in crisis, partial struggles cannot be conducted effectively unless the leaders understand that any mass struggle tends to run up against the system, reaching a point where it can only be carried forward by raising socialist demands.

Whether or not the possibility exists for carrying the process all the way, at such times important ideas can be gotten across to the masses and advanced positions gained for the next wave of struggles.

However, unlike the Communist parties, it seems that most of the membership and leadership of the Official republican movement have not drawn outright reformist conclusions from this and other formulas. In fact, the "stages" theory seems to have had a rather contradictory history among the republicans.

To the extent that the republicans learned that there are different phases and levels of social struggle and different tasks appropriate to each, the "stages" theory was at least an advance over the previous romantic and moralistic absolutism of the republican tradition. At least partially under the influence of this theory, they seem to have moved away from the old dead-end notion of trying to restart the guerrilla war of 1919. They moved instead toward the idea of mass social struggle based on demands arising out of the most acutely felt aspirations of the widest possible sectors of the population.

The civil rights movement led by the republicans achieved the first major breakthrough against the repressive system since the war of independence. However, this movement did

not achieve the modest goals the republicans set for it; instead it created an explosive, potentially revolutionary situation, which they apparently did not expect, were unable to exploit in any consistent way, and seem not to have wanted. Now the "stages" theory is obviously holding them back. Only a consistently revolutionary social theory explaining the interaction of democratic and socialist struggle can point the way forward.

The Official republicans were proved correct in their fight against the ultralefts who wanted to liquidate or divert the mass struggle for civil rights. But by failing to see that in Ireland democratic and socialist tasks are inseparably intertwined, they seem to have promoted dogmatism and adventurism in their own ranks.

In a period of deepening crisis, the lack of a bold and unified revolutionary strategy will inevitably give rise to adventurism in some sections of the movement that are more undisciplined or feel more acutely the forces of "order" moving in for the kill.

Furthermore, the youth in Northern Ireland know that the capitalist system offers no future for them. For three years they have fought the repressive forces largely on their own, without following the directives of any political or military organization. The young intellectuals, in particular, in the midst of this social turmoil can see the capitalist system faltering all over the world. Only four years ago, they saw it come to the brink of collapse in the neighboring country of France. And everywhere they have seen capitalism become steadily more repressive and reactionary.

These potential cadres of the revolutionary movement cannot be persuaded to accept the utopian concept of a long "democratic stage" ahead, especially when the most enthusiastic proponents of this idea are the dismal reformist hacks of the Northern Ireland Communist Party. Only a revolutionary conception of the role of the civil rights struggle can win these youth to accepting the discipline of a revolutionary mass party.

It has to be explained to these youth that by mobilizing the masses around modest and reasonable-seeming demands, they can set in motion revolutionary struggles that can lead to the overthrow of the capitalist system in the "short run," and not at some problematic future stage. This is exactly what the history of the civil rights movement shows.

It has to be explained also that the basic techniques of making a revolution are political—the science of knowing what to do and when to do it.

In order to train and discipline their revolutionary instincts, the youth need to learn that you can exploit the contradictions of capitalist ideology without becoming entrapped in it. For example, a republican in the civil rights movement does not have to say: "If policemen did not carry guns and were under effective civilian control, they would be respected members of the community." A revolutionist does not have to say: "All the people want is democracy; they would be satisfied with that." That is repulsive kowtowing, totally unworthy of honest revolutionists. But a socialist can say: "If the British and the Unionists claim this is a democratic system, they must at least give us all our democratic rights."

It is not necessary to accept the framework of the parliamentary system to make such demands. There is no point either in relying on paper rights. But you can demand that the British authorities who stand behind the Northern Ireland regime either maintain democratic rights or get out. How they do it is their problem. As long as the mass pressure for democracy is maintained, without making any compromises with the British system, any formal concession will be a spur to further struggles.

On the other hand, projecting complete plans for democratization presumed to be acceptable to one or another section of the British establishment only spreads illusions in the possibility of democracy under the British system. The effectiveness of the new Whitelaw regime in Northern Ireland in using completely false promises of reform to split the nationalist population is eloquent testimony to the dangers of encouraging such illusions.

The problem of revolutionists is not to try to figure out what concessions the ruling class can give, or how to make it easy for them; the problem is to mobilize the masses, to expose the system and prove by experience that it has to be overthrown. In the period of capitalist decay, the imperialists do not give reforms in general because the demands are reasonable; they give them under the threat of development toward revolution. If the leaders of the masses accept the limitations of the system from the start, there is no incentive for the capitalists to grant any concessions.

What is important is that the demands seem reasonable to the masses and that they expose the fundamentally and irreparably antidemocratic nature of British rule in Northern Ireland. This kind of demand can cut the ground out from under reformists, or promisers of reform, who want to split

and demobilize the oppressed community. Calls for democracy are entirely reasonable and the opposite of reformist in this context, in that they reach the masses at their present level of consciousness and lead them in a revolutionary direction by exploiting the contradictions of the system. This is the *transitional* approach, the revolutionary method of mobilizing the masses.

But if mass work is regarded as "reformist" activity by nature, and in the long run subordinate to the revolutionary job of creating a "people's army," then it is obvious that as the young members of the republican movement radicalize they will become more and more attracted by "revolutionary" tasks, which are defined by this method as armed action. And, what is equally bad, the leadership in mass work will be left to genuinely reformist elements.

At the same time, while the core of the republican movement is organized on a military basis, it is politically very loose. Agreement is on very general concepts: "We are for the ordinary people and against the bourgeoisie North and South; we are for socialism." Discussion in republican circles seems oddly rambling and narrowly pragmatic, usually confined within the limits of a few commonly accepted assumptions. You seldom hear a systematic analysis of the dynamics of specific situations or an assessment of past predictions. Such an organization cannot help but be politically very slow moving. It cannot maneuver like a revolutionary combat party to take advantage of cracks in the system and respond immediately to new opportunities and new dangers.

If, for example, the republican movement tried at some point to give critical or conditional support to a militant move by a section of the Catholic establishment, a move that might develop under the pressures of the situation, the ranks would be disoriented. All the propaganda is devoted to denouncing these elements without explaining their contradictions in a scientific way. By nature such generic concepts are static. In practical politics, they leave no room for any stance but head-on attack or, perhaps more accurately, marching in place.

In the same way, raising the slogan of uniting the workers without explaining the contradictions in the working class in a scientific way, without explaining the historical dynamics of socialist revolution, opens the way for romanticizing economic struggle, that is, for dogmatism in this field.

It is easy for sectarians to say that the civil rights struggle

has polarized Catholic and Protestant workers rather than brought them closer together. Since political struggle against the caste system alienates the Protestant workers, in this view the fight obviously should be conducted on a purely economic basis, or at least there should be a relatively long "economic stage." On this level it is presumed that both Protestant and Catholic workers have the same interests. If the republicans do not understand what the civil rights movement has accomplished, if they do not understand how it challenges the fundamental structures of the capitalist system in Ireland, they may have a difficult time answering these arguments. The sectarians can also add the emotional argument that civil rights are not going to improve the economic condition of the workers or alter their basic position in society.

In the first place, the republicans could point out that it is an oversimplification to say that all workers have the same interests. Under conditions of scarcity and insecurity, even minute economic or social advantages can cause deep divisions. And, in a stagnant system, it is not going to do very much good to explain how unimportant these differences are in an absolute sense or relative to the advantages all the workers could have if they combined. Such a line would presuppose a socialist political consciousness on the part of the more advantaged workers.

But fundamentally, the republicans could explain that these sectarians have a one-dimensional, static view of reality. Economistic dogmatists cannot see capitalist society as a complete political, social, and economic system. They cannot understand that in historical evolution, while economic forces are the fundamental drive, other secondary factors can reflect back on and even change the course of economic development. If this were not true, the great Marxists have explained, socialist revolution itself would be impossible.

Marxism is not a theory of economic determinism; economic determinism is essentially a bourgeois theory with conservative implications. For the Stalinists and Social Democrats, economism is a way of justifying political immobility. Trade-union activity and piecemeal agitations are presented as the way toward progress. The political party of the working class becomes submerged in the routine of daily work and loses all perspective of making a centralized attack on capitalism. The classical motto of revisionism is that the movement is everything, the goal nothing.

The workerism of ultraleft sectarians is just the reverse of the coin. They arbitrarily interpret all economic agitation as

ipso facto revolutionary: every strike is a revolutionary episode. The effect is the same. Motion toward the goal becomes lost in aimless "militant" agitations and phrase-mongering.

The economists of both stripes accuse the republicans of being "inconsistent" in their orientation toward the Protestant workers. Fortunately, the republicans *are* inconsistent, or their activity would be as sterile as the other idealizers of the Protestant workers. But the situation in Ireland seems to have reached the point where the republicans can go no further unless they develop a consistent approach based on utilizing the positive lessons of the civil rights movement, its revolutionary lessons.

The danger now is—since the civil rights movement has not proceeded as expected and the republican leadership was evidently not prepared politically for the actual results—that disorientation will set in. Under the blows brought on by the political and organizational weaknesses of the movement, the disorientation could quickly become very grave.

If any of the republican leaders are really intellectually committed to the "stages" schema—that is, are ideological centrists in the full sense—the only direction they can go now is toward the right. The course set by one of the republican movement's political advisers, Roy Johnston, is probably a good example. After resigning from the movement, he published an "apologia" in the March 31, 1972, issue of the liberal Dublin biweekly *Hibernia,* in which he suggested that the whole idea of a mass, militant civil rights movement was a mistake.

> In retrospect, I am now convinced that the timing was wrong. We know that the mixture was explosive, but we understand, seriously, the difficulty of controlling the magnitude and direction of the blast.
>
> If the republican clubs had had a chance to find their feet, get engaged in local political activity, draw a few conclusions for themselves, establish some links with the students, etc., the idea of a civil rights movement would have emerged naturally.
>
> This was beginning to happen. By 1966 the Belfast republicans were beginning to be interested in tenants associations; there had been successful agitations about pedestrian crossings, etc.

The natural tendency for the centrists will be to try to reduce the civil rights movement to a liberal pressure group linked to the "democratic" establishment in Britain. The position of

the British Communist party in the trade-union movement and the various respectable left groups will be a key element.

Now that the imperialists have succeeded in splitting the nationalist community and restoring the position of the moderates, moreover, all the pressures of the establishment will be exerted to drive the mass movement to the right and demobilize it.

A *New York Times* editorial of June 1, 1972, was a good illustration of this tendency:

> Catholic leaders are now participating with Protestants in an advisory commission appointed by Mr. Whitelaw and the Social Democratic and Labor party has added its powerful voice to the demand for an end to violence and for Catholic cooperation with the British administration "to give peace a chance." The Official I. R. A. withdrawal leaves only the Provisionals and the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association as holdouts on the Catholic side.

The deceitfulness of this paragraph is obvious. The Official IRA has, presumably, withdrawn from using terrorist methods. The Provisional IRA is committed to a terrorist campaign. The Civil Rights Association, on the other hand, has only said that it will not cooperate with the government until at least the concentration camp system is ended.

The propaganda line taken by the *Times* also illustrates the danger in the Official IRA argument that it is essential not to provoke a Protestant backlash. The logic of this argument can be used to push the revolutionary militants further and further onto the defensive and eventually paralyze them.

The altriuism of the IRA cannot reduce or head off Protestant reaction. The fanaticism of the proimperialist community is not a result, fundamentally, of any "unreasonableness" on the part of the nationalists; it is the result of the historical structure of society in northeast Ireland. If the Orange fanatics see a chance to "put the Taigs in their place once and for all," they are going to take it, regardless of professions of brotherhood by any section of the nationalist population.

Furthermore, if the British authorities think that a general pogrom can be carried off without serious resistance (and too quickly for world public opinion to realize what is happening), there is no reason for them to oppose it. A terrorized Catholic population will be all the more grateful for small concessions. The position of the "moderates," moreover, will be reinforced, because the prejudices of the Orange caste will

be fully reestablished as the ultimate limit of what is politically possible in Ireland.

And what is more: How will the revolutionists be able to mobilize world opinion in support of the persecuted nationalist population when the leaders of the oppressed community themselves concede apologetically that the Catholics are largely or even equally responsible for the bigotry in Northern Ireland?

The fanatical opposition to change of 1,000,000 Protestants, more than one-fifth of the total population of Ireland, is a formidable obstacle to revolution in Ireland. But the balance of forces does not come down to comparing the organization and equipment of the nationalists on the one hand and the Unionists and the British army on the other. Political factors both in Ireland and internationally come into play. As long as they are mobilized on a reactionary political basis, the Protestants remain in the last analysis under the control of the bourgeoisie. Thus, their fighting capacity is limited by the will of the bourgeoisie, that is, by the political strength of the capitalist system in Britain and internationally. If this system appears to falter and hesitate in defending the status quo in Ireland, sections of the Protestants may become neutralized or susceptible to revolutionary propaganda. That is, they may come to realize that the caste system cannot be maintained even "in the short run."

In such a context, gestures of goodwill and reassurances from the revolutionary forces can promote a breakup of the Unionist bloc. But fundamentally only the pressure of the mass movement in Ireland and internationally can overcome the Protestant caste mentality, which is reactionary to the core.

Therefore, international support is vital to the success of the nationalist people's struggle. Although it is essential that this movement be as broad as possible, it needs a revolutionary axis. By focusing pressure on the lines of cleavage in capitalist society — that is, by exploiting its contradictions — a militant action movement can draw in nonrevolutionists and even sections of the establishment behind it. The U. S. antiwar movement is an example of this. It has pulled the whole consensus of the country far to the left and opened up the way for substantial growth of the revolutionary forces.

The antiwar movement did this, however, by mobilizing the masses independently in the streets, maintaining the campaign even in periods of steep decline in activity. It mobilized the masses on the basis of principled demands that challenged the basic contradictions of the system in a concrete way. In

this case, the demand was for immediate withdrawal of American troops, which meant in practice that the people of the U. S. had no interest in suppressing the Vietnamese revolution, the U. S. had no right in Vietnam, the American government was the source of the problem, and the Vietnamese people had a right to establish a socialist regime in their own country, regardless of the objection of substantial minorities historically backed by imperialism.

On the other hand, if the focus shifts from action in the streets to the lobbying of reformists in bureaucratic and liberal organizations, political energy will be drained out of the movement and the masses will fall into indifference, waiting for salvation from their influential "friends." Then, no matter how "broad" the support of the movement, or how many respectable personalities or "mass workers' leaders" (that is, reformist bureaucrats who may still be capable of a few radical gestures) have given it their blessing, the stage will have been set for the establishment to smash the movement or render it harmless. The history of Social Democracy and Stalinism is full of such examples.

The explosive development of the civil rights movement has no doubt made many nostalgic for the relatively peaceful economic agitation of previous years, which was only a nuisance to the system and not a deadly threat. It is possible that activity will return to this level. But it must be understood that a general confrontation with the capitalist system has been developing for the last three years. It will lead eventually either to victory or defeat. If it is defeated, conditions will not return to where they were before the civil rights movement started. If the defeat is complete, the situation may well be thrown back further. If the capitalists regain control of the situation, it is foolish to think that they will not take every step to eliminate the threat of future revolutionary developments.

In these circumstances, shifting back to economic agitation will not represent a change in tactics but the consequence of a defeat pushing the movement back to a lower level, to its knees.

Along with the threat of a rightward evolution of centrist elements, the revolutionary youth, who have been given only very general notions of socialist struggle, are likely to move in a more and more adventurist direction. The centrists moving right and the leadership displaying political immobility would strengthen the hand of ultraleftists who are anxious to lead the movement in that direction.

Sincerely revolutionary leaders of the republican movement

sometimes complain that the speed with which the crisis has developed has prevented them from politically educating their ranks. That is a general problem in an age of crisis by no means confined to Ireland. It would be an elitist illusion to believe that great social movements can be turned on and off to suit the convenience of vanguard organizations.

Furthermore, revolutionary groups themselves are, to some extent, the product of broader movements and conditions. Deep changes have taken place in the consciousness of the Irish people as a result of the civil rights movement, and it is probable that these changes have been reflected in the internal life of the republican movement and in the leadership's consciousness of its revolutionary perspectives.

Revolutionary education is not a smooth, automatic process comparable, say, to the programming of studies in universities or trade-union schools. By its nature, it involves conflict, argument, and learning from experience. It involves teaching a revolutionary view of the world and a precise technique for overthrowing the present system, not general philosophical concepts alone, or the views of the various socialist thinkers.

The most important element in revolutionary education is the program of the organization. It now seems clear, and the republican leaders would probably acknowledge it, that the political program of the Official republican movement has been insufficient and dangerously equivocal in some respects. Therefore, it could not serve as the basis for giving a rounded political education to the ranks. The leadership itself was learning from experience and from reality, which apparently did not develop as it expected. The republican movement's most important educational tools are its paper, its political statements, and the political discussions.

While the republicans were clearer on some fundamental questions than the other tendencies in Ireland, such as the need for political struggle and mass action, their political tools have been shown to lack a sharp cutting edge. This can only be a problem of leadership, a political problem. It could not be expected that abstract education could make up for this deficiency, although theoretical education of the ranks is obviously an essential task in developing the movement.

In the present situation, the sincerely revolutionary core of the Official republican leadership seems to have come to a crossroads. The situation calls for a bold reorientation. The movement, however, is in a good position in some respects to carry this out. Dead traditions have been severely shaken,

if not yet entirely eliminated; and this has opened up the way for casting away archaic forms that stand in the way of carrying out the real tasks of making the revolution in Ireland.

In particular, challenging the ban on political activity in the North and gaining recognition as a legal party in the South offer the possibility for effective revolutionary propaganda campaigns. By demanding the right to engage in legal political activity, the republicans can defend themselves in the most effective way against repression and at the same time consolidate solid gains. This, of course, does not mean that a "democratic phase" is opening up. All democratic freedoms are precarious in this epoch and especially so in Ireland. But the system can be forced to grant a certain room for maneuver at times, which must be used to advantage.

Through their campaign against the Common Market, the republicans appear to have gained valuable experience in conducting centralized agitations around key issues. They can move on from this to other acute issues facing the country. In the present situation, it is essential that these campaigns have a clear national focus and challenge the weak points of the system in the clearest way.

Elaborate schemes for reforming local government, education, etc., are not very useful for revolutionary agitation, especially given the resources of the republican movement. A few simple themes are needed on which all the propaganda of the movement can be focused, that is, transitional demands. Such demands should seem reasonable to the people they are intended to appeal to and at the same time should expose the contradictions of the system. In a period of general crisis, moreover, local and piecemeal economic agitation stand in secondary place for a revolutionary party. The most important thing is to give political direction and to wage a concentrated campaign against the enemy class, which itself is highly centralized and conscious of its general interests. It is not necessary, furthermore, for members of the movement to initiate and lead all local activity. Getting out the political ideas that can inspire and direct a broader vanguard is likely to generate more real activity and on a higher level.

By its devotion to the ideals of socialism and its uncompromising fight against all the conservative forces in Ireland, the Official republican movement has won the support of a large number of dedicated revolutionary youth. By waging centralized political campaigns and by giving clear political direction, it can weld these youth into the best political fighting

force in Europe. The main instrument of this process, however, cannot be an "army of the people"; it must be the *party* of the Irish revolution.

The perspective of armed struggle must be brought into closer consonance with realities. The truth is that trying to stick to the old-fashioned structures of a "secret army" is likely in the long run to limit the armed self-defense of the Irish people rather than advance it. This policy seems to lead the IRA to think in terms of avenging the people, of small-scale commando actions, and seems to keep it from turning its mind to the tasks of organizing the mass popular militias needed to defeat imperialism.

Effective political education is possible, in the last analysis, only within the framework of a party that has a fully developed program and a consistent way of looking at things. In such a context, developments can be continually analyzed and the analyses constantly and systematically reevaluated and deepened through democratic discussion.

As a result of its unique history, the republican movement is a very broad organization which has been evolving toward more consistent political positions. It includes various branches and allows considerable room for local variations. But it is dealing now with much more fundamental questions than it has before, and it can be expected that the movement will have to make some changes in its methods of organization in order to handle these effectively. Some more systematic form of discussion seems to be needed as a basis for education and developing positions that are both consistent and flexible.

The various tendencies that exist in embryo have to have an opportunity to develop their positions fully and see them tested in debate and practice. Otherwise, the fundamental questions can only be discussed in a superficial way. The disagreements will not be resolved but will be left to fester and express themselves in unprofitable ways. And, most importantly, the political program of the organization will remain on a vague general level and be largely useless as a practical guide to action for achieving fundamental changes.

At this point in its evolution, the Official IRA has many advantages. But like every new revolutionary force that has emerged in this period (and the Official IRA is basically a young radical movement, despite its long tradition and continuity), it is faced with the challenge of developing a consistent and integrated revolutionary approach.