
INTERNAL BULLETIN no.2

JANUARY 1982

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IB no.3, containing other material already submitted, will appear shortly. Articles for IB no.4 should be sent to Kinnell at the centre by March 1st, preferably typed A4 on Roneo stencils.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

RECEIVED

APRIL 10 1964

TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

RE: [illegible]

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THE E.E.C.

The EEC is the inevitable result of the laws of capitalist economic development. Faced with increasing competition from American capital, which had the inbuilt advantage of economies of scale resulting from its vast domestic market European capital was bound to protect itself, first by an enlargement of its own domestic protected market and then through concentration and centralisation of European capital.

"The emergence of American capital within the walls of the Common Market, whether in the form of new direct subsidiaries of US companies, or through merger with or absorption of existing European units, always represents, in the last analysis, a means whereby part of the European market is taken away from European capital ... It is unrealistic to assume that European capital will not react and defend itself against this process. Inasmuch as we are confronted here with a process of intensification of international capitalist competition, the amalgamation of European and American companies, in 99 cases out of 100, means in reality a defeat of European capital as a result of that competition." (Mandel - International Capitalism and "Supranationality" from "International Firms and Modern Imperialism" - Hugo Radice).

If under present conditions Britain were to withdraw from the EEC, what would be the result? Either it would work out some close association with the EEC almost equivalent to membership or its miniscule economy would be totally insufficient to enable capital to dispose of its over-production. And it would be totally incapable of raising the vast sums necessary to devote to R & D, and capital construction.

British capital would be ravaged by international competition, and American and European capital would step in to pick up cheap acquisitions. In short Britain would be turned into an object for imperialist expansion.

Comrades from the WSL appear to argue that such a turn of events is no bad thing. At the North west aggregate meeting on 28th June PL argued that socialists must support the weakening of capitalism and demands which make the crisis of capitalism deeper. But it is mechanistic to equate capitalist crisis with working class advance.

"The political effects of a crisis (not only the extent of its influence but also its direction) are determined by the entire existing political situation and by those events which precede and accompany the crisis, especially the battles, successes or failures of the working class itself prior to the crisis. Under one set of conditions it may give rise to a mighty impulse to the revolutionary activity of the working masses; under a different set of circumstances it may completely paralyze the offensive of the proletariat, and should the crisis endure too long and the workers suffer too many losses, it might weaken extremely not only the offensive but also the defensive potential of the working class." (Trotsky 'Flood Tide' from "The first Five Years of the Communist International")

If withdrawal from the EEC were a part of an overall class battle in which the policies of a Workers Government and the interests of the working class were coming into immediate collision with the EEC, then yes, we would have to withdraw de facto by refusing to accept EEC instructions. In such circumstances any concomitant economic crisis could serve to spur the working class forward towards revolution.

But we are not in those circumstances, and the call for withdrawal at the present time has simply the effect of leading the working class up a nationalistic blind alley whether that is the intention or not.

... any successful campaign for real withdrawal would inevitably have to be followed up by the siege economy aspects of the AES in order to prevent foreign capital carving up Britain.

As E. Mandel wrote in his economic analysis (though the USFI's political line is different!)

" The position of socialists towards the Common Market can best be derived from the traditional Marxist position towards capitalist concentration. Marxists are not in favour of trusts as opposed to small business; at the same time, they understand that to try artificially to protect small business against capitalist concentration is a reactionary policy...

In the same perspective, it would not make sense from a Marxist point of view to call either for bourgeois supranational powers over the national state, or to defend the bourgeois national state against the growth of supranational powers".

As Marxists we do not oppose the inevitable laws of capitalist development for the sake of it. We see in such development the further development of the inherent contradictions of capitalism. We seek to further the revolutionary elements in that contradiction by our intervention.

JL says that we must not be neutral on 'whether or not the British imperialists cement a new economic alliance which will strengthen their hand against the working class at home or abroad.' Exactly how the EEC strengthens the bosses' hand is not spelled out. If JL means that the EEC strengthens European capital because it enables concentration to take place more easily and because it does away with some economic frictions within the community (tariffs, capital movements etc.) then I would not disagree. But this sort of strengthening is essentially no different from capital being 'strengthened' by new technological developments which provide the potential for capital to increase the rate of exploitation. Marxists do not oppose the introduction of (say) the micro processor, we argue for work sharing without loss of pay in order that the working class can fight for such technology to be used for its benefit.

Nor can the growth of capital be seen as automatically against the interests of the working class. "But a boom is a boom. It means a growing demand for goods, expanded production, shrinking unemployment, rising prices and the possibility of higher wages. And in the given historical circumstances the boom will not dampen but sharpen the revolutionary struggle of the working class". (Trotsky, ibid.)

It is difficult to see in what other way the EEC strengthens capitalism vis a vis the working class. Does being in or out of the EEC make any difference to Ford's ability to move work from Britain to Germany during a strike? Of course the answer is no, and must be no because the EEC is no more than the bourgeoisie's attempt to bring the political and juridical superstructure into line with the reality of European economic relations as they have developed since the late '50s.

JL's presentation of the EEC is one sided. Marxists have always stressed that capitalism is unable to carry out the necessary transformation of Europe because of the contradictions inherent in trying to satisfy the divergent interests of the various capitalist states. But the fact that these contradictions exist and the limited nature of the transformation that capitalism is able to bring about are not an argument for withdrawal. Rather they should be at the centre of the propaganda we make in relation to the needs of the European working class, peasants, and small farmers.

Indeed the contradictions and divergent interests of capital within Europe offer certain advantages for us in terms of political intervention. Take for example the question of Ireland. Labour and Ireland No.5 carried an article by Richard Balfe which related how support in the Socialist Group

in the European Parliament. 3. Now a telegram had been sent to Thatcher calling her to negotiate with the hunger strikers. OK the telegram was pretty useless, but it was an advance on the position taken by Labour at Westminster.

More importantly, Balfe says that Ireland "has made campaigners against the Berufsverbot in Germany, for civil rights in Italy, for the right to petition to the Court of Human Rights in France, realise that they have potential for alliance on all of these issues between groups in different countries."

And on 29th June a demonstration of European trade unions took place against unemployment. Without the existence of the EEC to provide a focus is it likely that such a demonstration could have taken place? At that demonstration Len Murray said that the TUC was there because they were opposed to Thatcherism in what ever language it was spoken.

For how long are the nationalist solutions to unemployment peddled by Murray and Co. going to remain compatible with statements like that, which openly say to the working class unemployment is an international problem?

If there has been any weakness in the ICL's position, it has been that our propaganda has been aimed almost entirely at the British working class rather than towards raising demands in relation to the EEC capable of uniting the working class, peasantry, and small farmers throughout Europe. One of the most obvious areas where such demands should be raised is in relation to the CAP.

The CAP maintains high food prices, creates massive overproduction and waste, and barely provides a subsistence for the peasants and small farmers for whom it is supposedly designed. An internationalist policy would suggest raising the demand for the nationalisation of the large farms, a minimum wage for the peasants and small farmers, the provision of state finance for the modernisation of the small scale farms and incentives for the peasants to form collective farms, for the defence of workers living standards through a sliding scale of wages.

JL however sees the high prices caused by CAP purely as an attack on the British working class, and instead of a united class response to the CAP offers withdrawal. Such a response not only offers no solutions to the peasants and small farmers of the EEC but is also unlikely to result in any lowering of the cost of living for British workers (let alone other workers!)

The argument is a very strange one. Marxists have argued that one of the incentives for imperialism was the need for sources of cheap raw materials, and particularly cheap foodstuffs in order to reduce the value of labour power. By reducing the amount of necessary labour time, so the argument went, so the amount of surplus labour time would be increased. Now if JL is correct that the strategy of capital is to attack workers living standards through the CAP by keeping food prices high we must assume that imperialism was on completely the wrong tack before. Instead of sources of cheap food it should really have been looking for more expensive food!

In fact JL's argument really gives unintentional help to the reformists. It says instead of a fight to protect workers living standards through the sliding scale of wages, blame it on the EEC. If taken to its logical conclusion, this argument, by shifting the focus of struggle from wages to prices should lead us to calling for price controls in Britain to protect workers living standards.

Even without the sliding scale it is doubtful whether workers living standards in Britain have fallen as a result of higher EEC food prices. Indeed one of the reasons for the acuteness of the present crisis in Britain stems from the ability of the working class to defend its standards of living

against the needs of Europe for the last

One final note: As Trotskyists we have ^{always} made propaganda for the United Socialist States of Europe. But to say either the USSE or nothing is maximalist sectarianism. An internationalist perspective must be based on unifying the workers, peasants and small farmers around Transitional Demands which expose the inadequacy of capitalism's attempts at restoring the economic life of Europe. In Britain we have raised the slogan of the Workers Government. Now, I believe, is the time to raise the slogan of the Workers and Peasants' Government for Europe.

"The slogan: 'A Workers and Peasants' Government' is designed to meet the growing attempts of the workers to find a way out by their own efforts. It has now become necessary to point out this avenue of salvation more concretely, namely, to assert that only in the closest economic co-operation of the peoples of Europe lies the avenue of salvation for our continent from economic decay and from enslavement to mighty American capitalism." (Trotsky - 'Is the Slogan of "The United States of Europe" a Timely One' from The First 5 Years of the Comintern).

Scott

Letter to Socialist Press from the RCP, July 18 1981.

Dear Comrades,

Your article on recent events in Coventry (18 June) begins by correctly arguing that militants should build anti-racist defence within the ~~existing~~ labour movement. In fact this has been the consistent perspective implemented by the RCP in fighting racism in East London, Manchester, Coventry and other areas where it is active.

The day after the racist murder of Satnam Singh Gill in Coventry preceinct Coventry Workers Against Racism was launched with this objective. Within the wider anti-racist movement COWAR supporters argued for this position against those such as Socialist Organiser who felt it was sufficient merely to support the action of blacks in defending themselves. Such a perspective in itself can never overcome the existing isolation of blacks from the organised labour movement. The defence of black people must be built by and in the working class or it will not succeed.

Nevertheless despite this rhetorical agreement the WSL and others on the left have joined in with the general witch-hunt against COWAR launched by the police, local councillors and MPs. Responding decisively to an important political problem becomes an action which "cannot be so strongly condemned". Why does the WSL want to distance itself so far from the beginnings of workers' defence in practice? Is it that it provokes opposition from the state? Is it concern about how some Labour Party members might respond? The fact is that the practical organisation of workers' defence is bound to provoke opposition from those on the side of the bourgeoisie, precisely because it challenges bourgeois "law and order". The WSL must come out openly in the pages of SP or SO and state whether it supports or condemns workers' defence.

Yours fraternally,

Phil Murphy for the RCP.

Reply from P. James, for the WSL.

Dear Comrades,

Socialist Press has always argued for workers' self defence. The whole of the article from which you quote is about fighting for workers' self-defence inside the labour movement, and calls specifically for it in two places. Socialist Organiser in its articles on Coventry has called for workers' self-defence, and so have leaflets produced.

Workers' self-defence has always been the position of both the I-CL and the WSL, and will continue to be so in the newly-fused WSL.

For this reason it appears to us that your letter is in some way designed to draw attention away from the fury caused amongst all those actively fighting fascism and racism in Coventry. As our article made clear and as we will now make clear, our condemnation was of the RCP members in Coventry who sought to substitute media stunt politics in place of the political struggle to build workers' self-defence inside the labour movement.

At a time when the fury of the black working class, youth and large sections of the white labour movement was mobilising against the fascists and police collaboration, the consistent theme of the capitalist press and the media, the police and all the reformist traitors in the labour movement was that the "trouble" was caused by outside left-wing extremists. The capitalist media in their constant

struggle to undermine ~~the~~ independent working class politics and action pay journalists to invent these stories.

In Coventry however they found people who were prepared to explain in print and on television how they organised it all! The people of Toxteth and Brixton no doubt await further revelations.

Our very carefully considered criticism was to alert both black and white youth and working class militants to the dangers created by the shameless opportunism of your members in Coventry and the utter sterility of the politics behind it. For as we said in the SP of 28 May. "Workers self defence squads cannot simply be declared. They must be fought for by posing labour movement solutions for anti-racist and fascist defence." And: "Black self-defence cannot be artificially divorced from workers' self-defence because it is at work and on their way to work that thousands of black trade unionists are most at risk from fascist attacks."

"Unions must take up the fight to ensure that the many black women who work at night, the many black transport workers, etc, receive adequate protection and that the bosses are made to make provision for workers' self-defence."

"Teachers must organise blacking of fascist students through the unions, school students must build NUSS branches in their schools, those on the dole must build unemployed workers' unions with which to fight."

While supporters of Socialist Press and also of Socialist Organiser were fighting within the organised labour movement for this programme we at the same time supported every mobilisation and organisation for self-defence which emerged within the oppressed black community and fought programmatically against the reformist and Stalinist leaderships of the black labour movement organisations.

How different is this principled Trotskyist politics from the sterile abstention from day-to-day working class struggles of the RCP. While our members stood in solidarity with the black and white workers of Coventry and fought against the betrayal of the Stalinists, the RCP turned their backs ~~on them~~ in contempt and declared that they alone were the workers' self-defence of Coventry against the forces of fascism and the capitalist state!

The RCP are too kind. It is easy for us to come out openly as a Trotskyist organisation and state openly our ~~reference~~ support for workers' self-defence ~~at the same time~~ and at the same time find it difficult to condemn too strongly the stunt politics that the RCP degrades the name of workers' self-defence with.

Our arguments with the RCP's activities in Coventry in the area of anti-fascist work are as follows:

- 1) We distinguish between workers' self-defence and anti-fascist vigilante groups; and
- 2) between the immediate tasks of anti-fascist defence and the political tasks of building workers' self-defence;
- 3) We know that workers' self defence cannot ever be built by those who hold the working class in contempt or by those who seek to substitute themselves for the class;
- 4) As Marxists we know that the defeat of fascism can only be through the working class, by its overthrow of capitalism, and that the struggle ~~at~~ against fascism is part of the political struggle for revolutionary politics inside the working class.
- 5) You say that workers' self-defence must be built by and in the working class, but how do you propose to do this by your abstention from the day-to-day struggles of the working class, your substitutionism, your contempt, your denunciatory politics?
- 6) Your isolation and contempt is shown by your reference to the

isolation of black people from the labour movement. Because you are not in the Labour Party, trade unions, etc, you happily miss the fact that the Stalinists of the IWA, CPI(M), Naxalites, Maoists, etc, play the major blocking role, and the role of leading black reformists inside the Labour Party in the black areas of Coventry.

7) That you cannot declare the "way" without taking up the fight against the people who consistently block independent working class activity.

8) We feel that your comrades in Coventry cannot be unaware of our defence of them against the reformists and the Stalinists of the black community. Our defence of them against the state goes for us without question - our criticism of you is to alert ~~black~~ youth and working class militants - both black and white - to the dangers created by the activities of your members. When the whole drift of the propaganda of the state and the labour movement is to say that the trouble in Coventry is caused by left wing agitators and not the valid self-defence of the workers black and white, the RCP gives interviews on TV and in the Tory Press to claim that they are the agitators. It is shameless opportunism and worse it threatens all those inside the labour movement engaged in anti-fascist work.

Further, our opinion is that RCP members, while proclaiming to the world that it is they alone who are conducting anti-fascist work in Coventry, through COVWAR, and at the same time sitting on the CARDS committee, are playing a cheap sectarian role. We do not seek to build a party in this manner, as COVWAR and the RCP do. We will continue to expose such tactics wherever possible.

Fraternally,
P. James for the WSL.

Blacks, the Fight against racism and ourselves - the problem?

McInnis

To oppose racism in an effective, permanent way, whites have to fight alongside blacks, on an off the streets. To be effective ourselves, we have to gain the trust of the people fighting against their own oppression, not for an hour or a day or in an area but everywhere we work to oppose racism. Why do the left not have such trust and why in general do we not?

I think the reason lies in approach and attitude. Basically we assume the role of the latter-day missionaries coming to tell them how to fight racism. By which I don't mean we shouldn't fight tooth and nail against those in the black communities who espouse community relations politics. I don't mean we shouldn't find opportunities to discuss our ideas and bring them into practice. I mean that we approach those who have some consciousness of their oppression and ask them what is happening, ASK them what it means to them, ASK them what they think about this and everything political and ASK them what they think should be done about it. In this context our ideas are offered. Else we become like the missionaries coming to save the stupid wogs. That is why we fail.

It's important to know who you're dealing with and it's important to start from the point of view that we have a lot to learn. If this approach is taken ~~seriously~~ there should not ultimately be too much difficulty from being in touch enough with the mood and thought of those under attack, and to know how to work alongside them to oppose racism.

I am asserting that this is miles away from our attitude now. I am asking for: (i) stated agreement or disagreement; (ii) suggestions for remedying this situation; (iii) an overall assessment of where we stand in relation to the black and other national groups threatened with racism; (iv) an overall plan of action.

McInnis.

The Bangladeshis and the labour movement: Brick Lane and the Fight Against Fascism

The revolutionary left groups raided the Bangladeshi community, waving their irrelevant papers in people's faces and having the odd scrap with a fascist or two. Needless to say the attacks have continued and the TC secretary has done all in his power through his connections with Bangladeshi organisations to demobilise the struggle against these attacks and against the Nationality act and to buy off the youth.

A succession of left groups have moved in in attempts to capitalise on the situation and all have failed because they didn't have any real grasp of what was happening in the community under attack. We also held meetings which failed.

Bangladeshi youth already in some cases see the LP as their way to get somewhere materially as individuals. This is because the council leaders and Trades Council officials and MPs ~~have~~ have control, amongst other powers, of the grants (£4 million into Spittlefields for 'youth projects' among Bangladeshis in the last few years) (Nothing to non-Bangladeshis).

Leaders and background powers that be in B. community are lawyers, travel agents, and restaurant owners who play the continuing role of the agents and tax gatherers in Bengal under British imperialism. Have control over others in the community through material and other powers. Eg when the youth leaders were in a rage they created them, promoted them and wrote their speeches. These people lead the Bangladeshi ~~community~~ institutions such as the Welfare Association, which

are in a dependent relationship materially and politically to the council leaders and Trades Council officials. Hence the need for both parties to control the youth as described above.

Essentially the results of this are collaboration with the police and the Home Office and the smashing of any moves to form autonomous anti-racist movements, increasing corruption.

McInnis

Letter

- from cde JQ.

The nationalist victory in the Fermanagh-South Tyrone by election has produced two contrasting positions in Socialist Organiser.

John O'Mahoney, writing on August 27, notes that communal tensions between Catholic and Protestant have become greatly increased by the H Block campaign, and laments this as a further step towards a sectarian civil war. Marie Campbell replying to him on September 10 acknowledges that a polarisation that could escalate to civil war is indeed taking place but unlike Mahoney she welcomes the impending slaughter as a major step forward for the Irish working class. Again O'Mahoney's preference for normal class politics over communal antagonisms is objected to by Campbell as the importation of British notions and prejudices into holy Catholic Ireland.

It is probable that Campbell is not fully aware of what a rabid and obscurantist tradition her remarks place her in. It has been a common practise in Ireland for more than a century now for Catholic bishops and nationalist politicians to attack as British and unIrish any and every manifestation of, socialist, secular, i.e. 'normal' thinking. Arthur Griffith, the founder of Sinn Fein used the paper he edited of the same name to repeatedly attack the great labour leader Jim Larkin with arguments that Marie Campbell hardly improves upon and which really ought not to be heard from anyone claiming to be a socialist and an internationalist. For a nationalist like Griffith there was a certain logic in denouncing Jim Larkin as an English socialist agitator who fomented strikes on the Dublin docks for the purpose of driving trade away from Ireland to England. But for a socialist?

Of course class politics is no more peculiarly British than communal warfare is distinctly Irish. Campbell merely wishes to avoid confronting a dilemma that should preoccupy all socialists who support Irish nationalism. Socialism is opposed to all brands of nationalism including the most pure and just. For a specific national struggle to merit the support of socialists its objectives must advance the cause of democracy and facilitate the international unity of the working class. In Ireland however only a blind person could deny that the more vigorously the nationalist struggle is prosecuted the more rapidly is democracy diminished and working class unity made impossible. And even if Irish nationalism could achieve its objectives the police methods required to keep one million Protestants within a state they were violently opposed to would leave I fear precious little room for democracy.

This grim scenario does not exist for Campbell who registers it instead as major forward steps for the Irish working class. Yet nothing so vividly illuminates why nationalists have forfeited the right to rule all of Ireland than her revealing definition of the Irish working class. The Protestant working class who see Sands' and Carron's electoral victory as anything but major steps forward are clearly excluded, are simply not part of Campbell's "Irish working class". From the middle of the nineteenth century Irish nationalism developed as an exclusively Catholic movement. Early attempts to enlarge Irish nationalism's conception of itself as a Pan-Celtic movement which embraced Wales and Cornwall were easily beaten off. Later attempts at the turn of the century by the socialists to lead the nation were not so much beaten off as swallowed whole by the nationalists without any visible after-effects. But those very few Irish nationalists like William O'Brien who proposed a more generous definition of nationalism which would include the Protestants was isolated in the Irish Party and for his pains incurred the lasting hostility of the Catholic Bishops.

Instead nationalism and Catholicism became inseparable as the Church gave its approval to nationalism's claims to self-government while the Nationalists surrendered to the Church the power to control education and thus perpetuate a future confessional state. And at the centre of this partnership was the local branch of the Irish Party which inevitably had, prominent when not dominant in its councils, the local parish priest.

Such a movement could scarcely hope to capture the enthusiasm of Protestants. And certainly it had no right to rule them. This is fundamentally the reason why the Protestants see through the pseudo-humanitarian humbug of the H-Block campaign and recognise it for what it is - a manoeuvre in a war of national oppression waged against the Protestant community. Whose objective is to drive the Protestants into a united Ireland, an Ireland which happens to be the most socially backward and reactionary state in Western Europe.

It is not only the North that has had its membership card of the working class withdrawn by Campbell. The H-Block campaign is facing visible defeat and collapse and a significant if not decisive factor in that is the clear lack of support from the working class in the South. For the British left whose newspapers carefully tell them nothing about what is going on in the South (and instead write of Northern Ireland as if it is Ireland) this will be difficult to understand. After all what kind of a so-called national liberation struggle is it that is rejected by the working class in the North and the South? Fortunately for Margaret Thatcher she has more reliable sources of information at her disposal than the papers of the British left. She knew what the "class of '68" weaned on a heady and vicarious diet of nationalist solidarity didn't want to know. Having had its own state for more than half a century the Southern working class has developed a very "English" appetite for normal class politics. It has grown up and the anti-British nationalism of its childhood has less and less claim upon its affections. Without that greatly diminished popular support for nationalism Thatcher could never have risked calling the bluff of the Provisionals.

As only subjugation and conquest will take the Protestants into a united Ireland, Marie Campbell's conception of Protestant and Catholic working class unity is a mockery of what socialists ordinarily mean by the term. In conclusion perhaps I could sketch the elements of a programme for a free voluntary unity that is not only more compatible with socialism and democracy than Campbell's "Prods lie down" unity but actually has I feel a much greater chance of success.

- 1) That socialists and trade unionists in the South turn their growing indifference to nationalism into a more active campaign to force the Dublin government to repudiate its constitutional claims to rule North East Ireland.

- 2) Once the rights of Protestants not to be coreced into a state that is deeply repugnant to them has been embodied in the Southern State's constitution, the way will then be clear to redraw the boundary and incorporate into the Republic those parts of Armagh Tyrone and Fermanagh that are overwhelmingly Catholic in composition.

- 3) No Parliament or Stormont-type government should be restored in the more compact North East. Protestants never wanted to rule Catholics and never wanted Home Rule for themselves and consequently shed few tears when Stormont was closed down by the British government. Instead the North East should be fully integrated into the British state and ruled from Westminster in the same way as Yorkshire.

- 4) The Labour Party should then organise and agitate in the North East just as it does in Yorkshire and elsewhere in Wales Scotland and England.

5) Those Catholics who still feel an historic sense of national grievance and cannot give their allegiance to the North East as a province of Britain should be assisted to settle in the state to which they belong. A fund set up by Britain, the Irish Republic and the EEC would finance such resettlement.

Like many socialists who have pondered the Irish question for many years I can propose no better democratic solution than the above, but again like I'm sure many other socialists would welcome the calm and reasoned arguments of those who can.

Yours fraternally, JQ.

The Mole and the Bears.

The article by Martin Thomas "New International Committee fails test of French struggle" (S.O. 67) gave our readers little on which to base any concrete assessment of the recent split in the F.I. (I.C.). It also contained various sweeping statements which were either unsubstantiated or reflected the narrow insular national Trotskyist world which is sadly the limited horizons of many "would be Trotskyists" (to use Thomas' phrase) in Britain.

Contrary to Professor Thomas' view the attitude of the O.C.I. towards Mitterand and the French Socialist Party has not been "well known for years". I am certainly not familiar with this attitude and have yet to read any substantial critique of the O.C.I.s practice in this regard.

The article ends with the view that "the lesson of the split is the need to have International regroupment on solid political foundations, developed through honest discussions rather than hasty self-proclamation". This, of course, sounds very Bolshevik and principled and I might add, very smug. To the average reader of S.O. it means nothing. What are the solid political foundations? How will the discussions be organised? Who should be involved? The article has nothing to say about these questions for one simple reason - the author is not interested in ever asking them.

The F.I.(I.C.) was a brave experiment which we stood outside of. The test of our correctness will be shown graphically by the failure of the T.I.L.C. to win any significant forces which were involved and it's further decline as an International tendency.

But more is involved. The W.S.L. and the T.I.L.C. bears a portion of the blame for the failure of the F.I.(I.C.) and for the political weakening of the U.S.F.I. in the earlier period. By refusing to co-operate with those International groupings, by standing outside of the struggle to build a revolutionary International we contributed to the recent split. Where in the F.I.(I.C.) was there a national Trotskyist group with authority in it's own class struggle to match ours? If we had been in the F.I.(I.C.) we could have attempted to wield that authority against the splittest moves we could have demanded a discussion on the issues and even if we had failed we would have immensely strengthened our forces internationally.

The failure of the F.I.(I.C.) should not lead us to deepen our sectarian approach. Cde. Thomas' article suggests that the U.S.F.I. and F.I.(I.C.) are built on diplomatic silence. Now the article does not go on to justify this simplistic judgement by explaining what is meant, nor does it attempt to use the example of the T.I.L.C. to show a different approach.

The hoary old chestnut of the 'open conference' is trotted out to show that the F.I.(I.C.) was not interested in discussion of outstanding differences. It is all very well for us to say this but when has the T.I.L.C. tried to organise an open conference. If the comrades in favour of such a non-event are serious about it they should organise one. I hope they don't because it will be a catastrophe.

Even if the nature of S.O. allowed us to write freely about the T.I.L.C. we would be unable to do so because the T.I.L.C. and in particular the W.S.L. bears all the hallmarks of a "diplomatic alliance".

The U.S. fusion brought together two groupings with fundamentally different methods of work. The forces of the old R.W.L. did absolutely nothing about the P.A.T.C.O. strike which we considered important enough to headline on. If the S.W.P., which the R.W.L. considers to be centrist/revisionist had behaved like that we would have had a field day. In the event we maintained a diplomatic silence - in the face of the destruction of a whole union by the Reagan government.

Another point I wish to raise is where Carolan correctly states, 'Between what happened in Chelsea and a Birmingham - style slaughter is a thin line of chance'. However, is it not likely that the accident involved an IRA ASU, while the 'slaughter' was the work of the state to get the PTA passed?

This may appear a minor point, but if we are to win the Republican movement and its recruits to our programme, we should not make ignorant comments.

My final criticism of the article is that it contradicts itself. It states, towards the end of the article, that 'they (the IRA) have every right to strike at the British Army', however when they do so, they are 'indefensible... unjustifiable... and don't give a damn about people'. Again you say 'incidents like Chelsea happen because of what successive British governments have done to the Catholics in Northern Ireland', yet 'this (the bombing) was no accident of war'.

Another issue that the article illustrated, which we must discuss, not only to aid Republicans but also for those in Britain to win the arguments, is what perspective we have to offer the Irish republican movement. The armed struggle is attacked, the National II Block/ Armagh campaign mobilised workers across the artificial border. What have we to say except formalism about 'class unity' and 'socialist policies' to resolve the national question.

I feel that the criticism I have raised deserve a reply by comrade Carolan to clarify his position. I feel his article can only be explained by ignorance, confusion, or a capitulation to 'public opinion'. Unfortunately until I can read his reply I feel inclined that the latter explanation is the most accurate.

IRELAND AND THE BOMBINGS - NJ.

I have written this rather long letter in response to comrade Carolan's article on the Chelsea bombing. I felt that it left the position of the paper and its supporters a bit unclear on the Irish war and this (particularly now) needed clarification.

Firstly I would like to criticise the general tone of the article. For example the description of the bombing as an 'atrocitiy'. This is because it means an act of great cruelty and wickedness, which it was not. Another example of this point is the claim that "at best they (the IRA) didn't give a damn about the people on the streets". I feel this is totally wrong and it uses emotional reaction instead of analysis of what occurred.

I feel it also lends itself to the view that the IRA are a bunch of evil, cruel murderers. But if they were and didn't give a damn about the people on the streets, then why not have bombed a more public place, e.g. Speaker's Corner?

If cd Carolan agrees, then why say 'they deliberately cut a swathe through a streetful of civilians.

Secondly, even if this was the case (and it is not) it would still be the duty of communists to defend the right of the IRA to fight imperialism. And thus uphold the basic socialist principle of unconditional defence of the right of the oppressed to fight their oppressors,

I think that it is important that the comrades understand that defence of the rights of the oppressed to fight does not mean support for them. I think the article equates the two and criticises the right of the IRA to bomb Britain as opposed to criticising the tactic of bombing Britain.

To give an example, the Trotskyist movement unconditionally defended (but did not support) the right of the Algerian national liberation army, FLN, to fight French imperialism and the bombing inside France in which civilians were killed.

If the comrade agrees then why does he say the IRA bombing was 'indefensible' and 'unjustifiable'? I would have thought the recent 'murder' by Thatcher of ten republican POWs was reasonable justification for the oppressed people, and the Leninist principle of the rights of the oppressed reasonable defence.

Thirdly, the article raises the claim that 'it will help them (the Tories) to rally British support for repression'. I think this is a false, diversionary, and utterly reactionary claim. It not only gives the right wing and fake-cat trotskyists of the Militant group an excuse to sabotage solidarity work within the labour movement, but also it negates the whole necessity and validity of the armed struggle. If fighting provokes reaction, why fight? If it is true of Ireland, then it must also be argued that the PLO provoke Zionist reaction. The blame for repression should rest with those who create its necessity, in this case British imperialism and its bi-partisan lieutenants.

Fourthly, I would disagree with comrade Carolan's claim that 'The British government dared not concede the 5 demands'. I disagree as the only demands that cannot be conceded are transitional (or perhaps governmental) demands. Also it has conceded the essence of the 5 demands, political status, to those sentenced before March 1, 1976. There exist today in Long Kesh special category prisoners. I think that it was not an inevitably defeatist campaign, as cd Carolan must mean, but as Kinnell in paper no.56 pointed out, it was 'the British labour movement doing too little, too late'.