

# MARXISM, TERRORISM & THE IRA

(Excerpts from articles and editorials in Workers Republic, Workers Fight, and Socialist Organiser).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 2. ASSESSING THE IRA, 1967

(From Workers Republic January 1967)

### 3. AFTER BLOODY SUNDAY, JANUARY 1972

(Workers Fight, February 5 1972)

### 4. ALDERSHOT, FEBRUARY 1972

(Workers Fight, February 26 1972)

### 5. 'BLOODY FRIDA', BELFAST JULY 1972; AND A CORRECTION

(Workers Fight, July 23 1972 and August 6 1972)

### 6. 'MARXISM AND TERRORISM', JANUARY 1973

(Workers Fight, January 4 1973)

### 7. PRESS STATEMENT ON ARMED POLICE RAID ON WORKERS FIGHT HEADQUARTERS, SEPTEMBER 1973

(Workers Fight, October 10 1973)

### 8. THE BIRMINGHAM PUB BOMBINGS, NOVEMBER 1974

(Editorial, Workers Fight November 23 1974; letter and reply, Workers Fight January 4 1975)

### 9. THE CHELSEA NAIL BOMB, OCTOBER 1981

(Socialist Organiser, October 15 1981; EC minutes, October 11 1981)

**NOTE ON AUTHORSHIP:** The article 'Marxism and Terrorism' was written by Keith and Carolan; the NC resolution was drafted by Kinnell; the press statement, by Gardiner and Carolan; the Socialist Organiser article by John O'Mahony. The other pieces were written by Carolan. The 1967 article was published under the name of a well-known former IRA member who wrote the first draft of one section concerning events of the mid-'50s in which he had participated.

This excerpt is from an article which was published in *An Solas/Workers Republic*, magazine of the Irish Workers Group, in January 1967. It was an attempt at an assessment of the history and politics of the IRA and of its connection with both mainstream bourgeois politics and communist politics in Ireland. At that time the rump IRA was 'rethinking' after the complete failure of its attempt at a guerrilla war on the Border in the late '50s, formally wound up early in 1962.

*[On the 1939 IRA military campaign in England]*

And so the IRA's hand of retribution fell on England... but it was a light hand by any standards. The plan was to strike at power centres etc. But the congenital inefficiency of the organisation, aggravated by the harrying of the Fianna Fail government, reduced any effectiveness it might have had. In modern wars resources and productivity are decisive. The only way to beat a superior military technique is to disrupt it from within. For proletarian revolutionaries this means extending the class call into the enemy's camp: with this weapon the Bolsheviks succeeded in defeating vastly superior military forces. But the IRA's outlook excluded this, and, reduced to a confrontation of military technique, the campaign was ludicrously ineffective. By its 'nation against nation' approach it helped to alienate the only potentially decisive ally which could have been called in to tip the balance against the British ruling class; and the imperialist propagandists were provided with ample material to feed British nationalism.

We are not preaching a naive propaganda appeal to the British working class, which has still to clearly separate its own identity from that of its rulers (a confusion sanctified by nationalism). What was needed was to prepare links with the advanced elements in the British labour movement, but this could only have been done by a workers' party in Ireland. The IRA instead aided the imperialists to present the case to the British workers in the worst light (though a number of unfortunate accidents in the campaign also contributed). The British workers actively sabotaged the intervention by British troops in Bolshevik Russia. It could — were its class interests involved — have thrown aside nationalism and come to the aid of the Irish workers too.

The issue of bombing in England is not one of principle. All sections of all oppressed nations have a right to wage war on their oppressors. Here it is a question of appraising for their effectiveness the methods which its outlook led the IRA to adopt. The results of the 'invasion' bear out our contention that it was the least efficient way to achieve the desired end. On the issue of principle suffice it to point out that the British Trotskyists at that time, when British chauvinism was at its height both before and during the war, openly defended the right of the IRA to fight the Empire. They also defended the IRA victims of imperialism at a time when 'His Majesty's Communist Party' supported the hanging of Republicans. But at the same time they pointed to what was wrong with the tactics and conceptions of the IRA and advocated the Bolshevik programme as an alternative. (As did the Irish Trotskyists who had some following in the Dublin Fianna Eireann in the 1939-41 period)...

*[On the IRA and the Protestant workers]*

There is a further contradiction within Sinn Féin, and that is the discrepancy