

# WORKERS' WEEKLY 2p.

## Workers Association Bulletin

18.1.75 Vol.2 No.32

THE PROVOS HAVE CALLED OFF THEIR CEASEFIRE. FROM THEIR POINT OF VIEW IT IS A VERY INTELLIGENT THING TO DO. THEY HAD TWO ALTERNATIVES - FIGHT ON OR SURRENDER - AND THEY HAVE CHOSEN TO FIGHT ON.

And it will be easier for them to begin their campaign again now, after only 25 days peace, than it would have been if the ceasefire had continued - and more detainees had been released as a consequence.

The ceasefire has, however, served a useful function. The Provos called it from a position of weakness and there is little doubt that they will be furthered weakened in the Catholic community by starting up again. For a few weeks the Catholic community in West Belfast have enjoyed a taste of normal life, largely free from the attentions of the British Army (and entirely free from the attentions of the Protestant assassination squads). All that is likely to change now and the Provos are not going to get any thanks for it.

# THE END OF THE CEASEFIRE

And they are not going to be able to stir up the Catholic community over internment any more, no matter how many crocodile tears Maire Drumm sheds about them languishing in their miserable conditions in Long Kesh. The Provos have been seen to have it in their power to set them free.

### POLITICS INSTEAD OF WARFARE

There has been a great deal of talk about the Provos going in for politics instead of warfare. But that would amount to surrender and they know it. They have no realistic politics to offer. There is no chance of persuading the Protestant community (or the Catholic community, for that matter) to accept their Eire Nua. The Provos' impact on the Northern Ireland situation has come out of the barrel of a gun. If they had been relying on the words of Maire Drumm and Seamus Loughran they would have merited a few lines on an inside page of the Irish News and nothing more. And if they called a permanent ceasefire that's all they would get in a few month's time. (And it was not John Hume's persuasive powers which got him on to the N.I. Executive: it was the bombs and bullets of the Provos).

### A GLIMPSE OF PROVO "POLITICS"

The Irish Times of Jan 15th provided an interesting glimpse of Provo "politics," when it reproduced an interview given by Seamus Loughran to "Red Weekly" (organ of the British Trotskyist International Marxist Group). The gem of this piece was the following:

INTERVIEWER: *What kind of withdrawal are you talking about?*

LOUGHRAN: *Withdrawal of the British way of life from this island. This is Ireland. The British way of life has no place on this island. All things British we are talking about - not just the withdrawal of the British Army which is a necessary first step.*

That, for what it's worth, is the political programme of the Provos. (And you thought flat-earthers were mad?) What would be left if we lost the British way of life? The black taxis and french letters would have to go for a start, and presumably we would not be <sup>able</sup> to communicate in English any more. The Provos would be a joke if they weren't prepared to fight. With politics like these, had the Provos any alternative but to call off the ceasefire.

THE W.A. HAS INSISTED SINCE ITS FOUNDATION THAT WHAT IS CALLED REPUBLICANISM IN IRELAND IS A VERY DIFFERENT THING FROM THE REPUBLICANISM OF THE ENGLISH, FRENCH, AMERICAN, ITALIAN OR GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS.

Everywhere else Republicanism has been associated with the social movement for a democratic secular state. In Ireland it has been nothing else but Catholic nationalism. Or, to put it more accurately, the 20th century Republican movement in Ireland has been Catholic nationalist - the 18th century Republican movement based in Belfast, the United Irishmen, was a secular democratic movement. But, for all that they invoke the name of Wolfe Tone, the 20th century Republicans do not in any sense derive from the United Irishmen, and they are alien to the political spirit of that movement.

### CATHOLIC CLANS ?

A second point insisted upon by the W.A. is that Catholic Ireland does not stretch back into the mists of antiquity, but is a pheromeron of the past 200 years. Gaelic Ireland was not nationalist and its Catholicism was of the most superficial kind. There was no independent clerical caste in Gaelic Ireland, and the Church had no independent social power. The modern "Taoiseach" of the Irish Republic is a man who has been moulded by the Bishops, and the most radical cabinet minister must take careful account of the final power of veto of the Church. Not so the Gaelic chieftan. As between Bishop and chief there was no doubt who ruled. The Bishop was a subordinate member of the chiefs entourage. Catholicism lay very lightly indeed on Gaelic Ireland. Up to the Reformation the Vatican viewed it as a barbarian society still in need of conversion. After the Reformation it found it advantageous to support the rebellion of a Gaelic chief against the Crown. But Hugh O'Neill had not fewer wives than Henry the VIII, and he saw no need at all to consult the Pope about the matter: and the Pope knew better than to try to impose Catholic morals on O'Neill even though O'Neill was supposed to be a champion of the true church against the heretic. Not until Gaelic society began to break up did the Church begin to establish independent power in it. The groundwork was done in the 18th century. The fruits were reaped in the 19th century. Gaelic Ireland became Catholic nationalist Ireland.

### CATHOLIC REVISIONISTS

When this view was first put forward a few years ago it was dismissed as a paradox by that confused conglomeration of people called "the left". But every piece of

# MODERN SECTARIAN REPUBLICAN, ISM

objective investigation bears it out. It is borne out by a recent R. J. E. lecture (Dec. 9th) by Professor J. A. Murphy of University College, Cork, in the hey-day of Catholic nationalism. U.C.C. was totally dedicated to the mediaevalist mission of that nationalism. Since the economic foundation of the Catholic nationalist movement collapsed about ten years ago unexpected things have been happening in U.C.C. Having taken Catholic nationalism most seriously, it is also taking the implications of its collapse most seriously. According to Professor Murphy: "Before the Famine the mood of Irish Catholicism was already there but the Catholic Church faced great problems of manpower and personal . . . In 1850 there were 5,000 religious to service a Catholic population of 5,000,000. By 1900, the number of religious had risen to 14,000, while the total Catholic population had dropped to something over 3,000,000. So we have a new clerical caste in Ireland, impinging on the people in a way they had never done before. This has clear implications in all kinds of spheres . . . In the 1870s and 1880s the final touches were put to modern Irish Catholicism . . ."

"Since 1912, we have been very uncomfortably aware of the Protestant north-east and one of the reasons why partition was resented was that it exposed the comfortable and fallacious equation between Catholic and Irish. I suggest that . . . being an Irish Catholic today is as strong and as important a feature of Irish identity as it ever was."

There were two variants of nationalism: "There was the liberal democratic nationalism . . . the product of the Young Ireland movement. To this nationalism we paid lip service . . . But it was solely Catholic nationalism with which we instinctively identified."

Soon it will only be the "socialist Republicans" who remain immune to historical fact.

THE PERIOD OF THE CEASEFIRE  
PRODUCED DIVERGENT  
REACTIONS WITHIN THE  
U.U.U.C.

Immediately after the truce was announced (and indeed since then Paisley has continually complained that the British government are engaged in a sell-out and that they have given the I.R.A. secret assurances that they intend to leave Northern Ireland etc. Undoubtedly there has been contact between British civil servants and the IRA but it is highly unlikely that the British government has given any of the assurances Paisley complains of.

If there is one thing the British government, both Labour and Conservative, have learned over the past 6 years it is the fact that the commitment of the Ulster Protestants to the Union is not some passing, whimsical fancy but a solid, political reality which will not disappear either through argument or by force. This is a fact which influential sections of both parties have been unwilling to accept and have done their utmost to deny, but today even they cannot avoid facing up to the unalterable reality and so now we have the spectacle of a Labour government headed by a Prime Minister who only a few years ago was drawing up plans for the unification of Ireland within 15 years, adopting an increasingly Unionist position.

This is a situation which democrats and socialists must heartily welcome as it emphasises the defeat republicanism has suffered politically as well as militarily, because it can no longer persuade large sections of the British working class that its cause is both just

"WE ALL  
WANT THE  
SAME THINGS"

ONE OF THE MOST ABSURD INCIDENTS OF THE CEASEFIRE WAS DR. WEIR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND MAIRE DRUMM SITTING TOGETHER ON TV AND DR. WEIR SAYING: "WE ALL WANT THE SAME THINGS." DR. WEIR SHOULD TAKE OUT A SUBSCRIPTION TO "RED WEEKLY."

# POWELL V. PAISLEY

and democratic and that opposition from the Ulster Unionists to it was based only on reaction and bigotry. But all this Paisley ignores and talks as if nothing had changed. For him, the British government are involved in a conspiracy of betrayal.

On the other hand Enoch Powell, in a recent speech in Co. Down has taken a fundamentally different line. Recognising that the real significance of past events for the future of Northern Ireland is not the I.R.A. truce which was the beginning of the acknowledgment by the I.R.A. that they have lost the war, but the changed attitude of the British government and parliament towards Northern Ireland.

*"Two years ago," he said, "the Conservative government and the Labour opposition were openly talking and thinking in terms of political unification of the island of Ireland. All this talk of killing off British Ulster has been replaced by an embarrassed silence. There is nothing now about the Irish demension . . ." (Irish Times, 8.1.75).*

Because of this fundamental shift in attitude Powell declared himself to be guardedly optimistic about the future of Northern Ireland. All this contrasts very sharply with the approach adopted by Paisley who refuses to recognise any real change whatsoever. And it is the approach of a political opportunist for, despite its superficial bravado, it induces a feeling of despair and defeat because it implies that the violence of the last five or six years has been for nothing and that the Ulster people stand totally isolated, their cause finding no response anywhere.

Powell's analysis is much more in accord with reality and moreover recognises that it has been the very steadfastness and solidity of the Ulster people in the face of armed attack which has brought about the transformation in the attitudes of British political parties. If the U.U.U.C. is to develop politically they will have to reject completely the defeatist rantings of Paisley, otherwise republicanism could win a death-bed reprieve.

WORKERS WEEKLY is published by the Workers Association, 10 Athol Street, Belfast.

## THE OFFICIALS AND THE PROVO CEASEFIRE

The official IRA in a statement in the Irish News 8.1.75 welcomed the ceasefire but at the same time got a dig at the Provos in a couple of very revealing quotes. They say that if all internees were released and the troops were withdrawn to barracks this "would lay the groundwork for ending military conflict. The conditions would then exist for rebuilding the struggle of the people which was so tragically broken. The people are asking for peace so that they can then renew the fight for justice."

What "struggle of the people" are they talking about? Could they by any chance mean their Civil Rights Campaign which even in a war situation had its demands granted? The more extravagant demands for one man, one house; and one man one job; have not been granted yet and presumably we will have to wait on the arrival of the Irish Workers and Small Farmers Republic to see them come to fruition.

Surely they couldn't mean the struggle against the British Army? They blame the Provos for the rise of sectarianism, and reprisal killings etc, conveniently forgetting that it was their so-called Civil Rights campaign which caused the violence initially. The Official IRA, as they admitted themselves were the driving force and guiding light of the Civil Rights Association. They provoked the violence and the Protestant backlash in 1969 and capitalised on it afterwards. They underestimated the determination of the old guard of die-hards who would never have let an opportunity like August 1969 slip by. Both Provos and Officials became quite strong military organisations but seeing the Provos were basically more honest and didn't have to keep on kidding themselves they were non-sectarian they proved the more durable, now they too are nearing their end. Catholic nationalism is fast running out of ammunition and the Officials blame the Provos.

They also blame them for weakening the struggle by losing the international support, "which had built up for the Irish struggle including the aid of the British working-class." When that is translated it means that the Provos didn't spend enough time spinning fairy tales to the world press and the "left" about how they were trying to unite the Protestant and Catholics in a "socialist" war to expell British Imperialism from Ireland. The Provos were too busy trying for another August 1969 only on a much grander scale and a subsequent re-vamping of their

military power on an all Ireland basis to finish the historic struggle.

POSTSCRIPT: Guess who is responsible for the end of the ceasefire according to the Officials; the British Government, of course - they didn't end internment. The Provos had nothing to do with it.

## KING BILLY RIDES AGAIN

Every July as sure as the 12th day march, "Unity" organ of the now northern area of the Communist Party of Ireland, trots out a version of history that purports to show that the defeat of Catholic reaction in Ireland at the Boyne was an irrelevancy as far as the Protestant working class is concerned.

Stubbornly the Protestant working class enthusiastically celebrate William's victory and ignore Unity's interpretation and now lo and behold William of Orange commemoration mugs appear in Ulster made - would you believe it - in Romania. Now the Romanian Communist Party has had long and close relations with the CPI, a quantity of "Unity" being despatched weekly to Bucharest. Could it be that the Romanian trade commissioner has used his eyes to see the reality of politics here rather than swallow Jimmy Stewarts "ifs" and "buts."

Anyway the Romanian pottery industry is on a winner. Maybe that explains why the growth rate of the Romanian economy is the highest in Eastern Europe!

## THE END OF THE PATRIOT GAME

At one time a spokesman for Catholic nationalism could always depend on a hearing anywhere outside Ulster or Toronto.

In the world of folk music the Dubliners have carved a niche as an inspired if undisciplined group. In the national conflict they have foolishly attended every Catholic nationalist festival from the Ardoyne to Derry - foolishly because they had a lot of fans from amongst Ulster Protestants.

Now it appears that they recently gave a concert in the West Berlin Philharmonic hall where they reportedly dedicated a song to the leaders of the IRA. The reaction of half the audience was to get up and walk out.

The Dubliners are not renowned as practitioners of precise logic but it must now be clear even to them that the "Patriot Game" is now over.

IT LOOKS AS IF MILK IS NOT THE ONLY THING  
TURNING SOAR THIS WEATHER.