

Socialist Worker

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After the London bomb

No return to the war DON'T LET THE TORIES WRECK THE PEACE

The way forward

The bombing in London which broke the ceasefire is a tragedy. It's immediate impact has been to cause needless injury to the lives of English working people.

In the longer term it opens up an horrific scenario where the most right wing elements of the British and Irish states get ready to impose repression.

Within minutes of the bombing the RUC were announcing they were getting back to their old habits of

the last 25 years. This bloated armed force of 14,000 was worried that its numbers would be cut if the ceasefire continued.

But in all the worry and fear that will grow with this bombing, it is vital to understand who is to blame for the breakdown of peace.

The reality is that the British government has refused to take the smallest of measures that might have helped to consolidate the peace process.

* After talking to the IRA before the ceasefire, they refused to talk to Sinn Fein after the ceasefire for weeks until they used the word 'permanent'.

* They then drew up the excuse about 'de-commissioning' -- while refusing to

even contemplate disarming the RUC or demanding that the 150,000 legal weapons in the Northern Ireland were called in.

* They openly encouraged the Unionist Party in their demand for an elected assembly in the North: knowing that such an assembly dominated by Trimble and Paisley would only be a stepping stone to a return to the old Stormont type regime.

Sinn Fein should have been taken into all-party talks immediately.

The ceasefire is breaking down today because the Tories, which are a hated government, was more interested in hanging onto power with Unionist support -- than making any real move to peace in Ireland. It is their actions which must loudly be condemned if there is to be any hope of regaining the peace in the North.

The months of peace opened up new horizons for tens of thousands of workers in the North. People like Trimble were shaken as many Protestant workers began to ask what had his fur-coat brigade of Unionism ever done for them.

Many began to see class as the main divide in the North. They began to ask why their schools were based on an 11+ that discriminated against all working class people.

They wanted a united fight against the Tory attacks on the health service and the unemployed.

Of course, the sectarian tension never went away. Many were pulled in two directions at once: seeing the sense of class politics, but still staying open to the sectarian political structures that the Northern state has established.

The way forward in Northern Ireland today means recognising that all workers in the North have lost out because of sectarian tensions.

Today it is necessary to turn the battle against oppression into an overall fight against the two rotten states that grew out of the partition of Ireland.

There needs to be a political force that argues with Protestant workers that loyalism has brought them nothing; that any notion of being superior to Catholics only works to the betterment of the Orange bosses; that the RUC are not their police force -- but one that will repress all workers. Similarly, it is necessary to argue with Catholic workers that whatever about the past unity with Protestant workers can be forged and that this offers far more than aligning themselves with either Albert Reynolds or the US president. In the immediate term there has to be a response from our union which says:

NO RETURN TO THE WAR: DON'T LET THE TORIES WRECK THE PEACE: CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT WORKERS UNITE

Republicanism at a dead end

The republican movement grew out of a fight against oppression and sectarianism in Northern Ireland. But the two main tactics they have used in recent years shows that the movement is bankrupt.

LOOKING FOR FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES: This was the Adams approach. He did everything to ingratiate himself with the White House, even welcoming Clinton's trip to Ireland and encouraging people to line up like stage Irishmen for the photo-call that would be used in his re-election campaign.

He thought that they and the Southern government might put pressure on the British

government to move forward.

But the reality is that the White House runs a huge military machine that is designed to protect the profits of Western capitalism. Clinton presides over terrible discrimination against black people in the US.

Expecting the leaders of US imperialism to help working class Catholics in Northern Ireland was always a foolish illusion.

The US government was only interested in

increasing its influence in order to make more room for US multi-nationals to get more cheap labour from both Catholic and Protestant workers.

It was never going to lift the burden of poverty and discrimination from the many working class people who supported Adams.

ARMED STRUGGLE: As frustration with the Adams approach grew more republicans began to talk about a return to armed struggle. The London bombing shows they have started to win the argument.

But the tactic of bomb-

ing brought few results over the last 25 years. Instead it helped to isolate the struggle against discrimination to the Catholic working class areas.

Increasingly it became more and more counter-productive as bombs were often concentrated in Protestant towns. It pushed thousands of Protestant workers into the hands of the UDA and UVF.

Any resumption of that tactic today will be even more disastrous. It will give the British and Irish state a free hand to impose massive repression, including probably