

The first supplement is dedicated to the memory of Vol. Thomas Power I.N.L.A. who was murdered on January 22nd 1987 by counter revolutionaries. His two essays, "An Historical Analysis" and "Contradictions" are intended as a contribution to the ongoing discussion and analysis of the Republican Socialist Movement and the recognition of the need to build a genuine revolutionary communist organisation.

When Thomas 'Ta' Power was released from prison on December 22, 1986, he was a man with a mission. He had set himself the task, firstly to help resolve the problems besetting the Irish Republican Socialist Movement, and secondly, arising out of a resolution of these problems, to join with other comrades of like mind, in the building of a revolutionary party - a communist party. Before the laying of firm foundations he considered it necessary to clear the ground, sort out the weeds and get the correct mix; hence his immediate commitment to resolving the contradictions existing at the time. In advance of his expected release, Ta committed some of his ideas to paper. The weeks following his release, rather than being a period of rest, were spent meeting the people, explaining contradictions, pointing to past errors and always insisting on the necessity to build for the future on firm foundations, rather than compromising for short term advantage. For those who met and debated with Ta, he was indeed a breath of fresh air, displaying a vitality and zest for the work ahead, that served as an inspiration to us all, particularly to those who had grown somewhat weary of the mindless bickering of recent times. Here was a man with a breadth of vision who, all believed, would in time leave an indeible mark on our movement. From Belfast to Cork we all rejoiced at his homecoming and we all gladly looked forward to working with him. But our expectations were short lived. On January 20, 1987, less than a month after his release from prison, Thomas Power, revolutionary communist, was slain at the Rosnaree Hotel, Drogheda, Co. Louth. He died while on the business of attempting to resolve problems which he saw as an impediment to the development of the Irish Republican Socialist Party as a revolutionary party. Having come up against unresolvable contradictions he favoured the 'parting of ways'. He went to make peace and met death. The assassins' bullets robbed us of this fine comrade.

We are fortunate that Ta took the time to begin to commit his thoughts to paper. Two essays written by him were presented to the IRSP shortly after his release and they were supported by hours of discussion. Though prison essays are nothing new, Ta's essays are indicative of a welcome trend developing within the prisons in recent times. In the past when prisoners found time to review the republican struggle in was only to judge the policies and tactics employed. Now an increasing number of prisoners have begun to examine the basis on which the struggle for freedom is being waged, and more importantly there is the demand that **freedom** be defined. Empty rhetoric has lost currency. James Connolly's comment that **"the Irish are not philosophers as a rule, they proceed too rapidly from thought to action"** has sunk home to many. Ta Power realised that without a theoretical base there can be no revolutionary movement. Without this base we, workers and exploited, will forever be cannon fodder for petit bourgeois idealists at best, and for imperialists at worst.

An Historical Analysis

This essay is just a broad, general view of the emergence of the I.R.S.P. what it arose from, what historical conditions and needs gave birth to it, what role it has played, and what role it has still to play.

December 1974 is the date when the I.R.S.P. publicly and formally announced its formation, but it didn't spring up, fully formed out of the blue - it, like everything else, had its roots in history, going back to the 1960's and the leftward direction which the Republican Movement was then embarking on. The Republican Movement at this time, as indeed throughout its history, was not a monolithic Movement, ideologically united and disciplined in its strategy and tactics - it contained an element which embraced the old traditional militarist approach to resolving the National Question; while its biggest element was the now avowedly Socialist element and their approach involving Republican participation in all the social and political issues of the day throughout the entire country - a trend was already developing "within" this element; a very influential and leading section, which while spouting the Socialist approach and the need for an armed wing to confront imperialism and

AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE I.R.S.P.; ITS PAST ROLE, ROOT CAUSE OF ITS PROBLEMS AND PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE.

'Ta' Power



its allies in Ireland was steadily working towards a fully reformist position on the National Question with an abandonment altogether of an armed confrontation with Imperialism.

Yet there also existed a smaller 'element' which maintained that both the National Question and the Social Question were inextricably bound up, that both must go forward together ie. the National Liberation struggle in the six counties alongside the class struggle in all of Ireland. This element was personified primarily in Seamus Costello.

The events of 1969 in the six counties plus the dropping of the abstentionist policy of the Republican Movement resulted in a crisis emerging among the above elements, leading to the mainly traditionalists splitting to form the Provisional Republican Movement. It is one of those events in history that while those who split were right as regards having to confront imperialism in the six counties, at the same time they lacked the ideological outlook and ability to expand the struggle, to mobilize the mass of the Irish people in active support of the struggle - while on the other hand those who probably possessed the ability to do this were heading towards a reformist position and the denial of a struggle for National Liberation altogether; this was the Official Republican Movement. The position of part of those who stayed with the Officials - Costello etc. - was one in which they saw the best possible conditions existing for the development of a Revolutionary Movement.

The events of 1969 had resulted in an influx of new members into both the Officials and the Provisionals to fight against British rule, and

while the Provisionals engaged on a far bigger scale in the fight, the Officials were also very active - basically the rank and file wanted to expand the struggle while coming increasingly up against leadership resolved on stopping it altogether. The introduction of internment was a blessing in disguise for this leadership as it allowed them to gradually wind their involvement in the struggle down - as many militants were interned, arms supply began to dry up etc.; but even this didn't go by without some opposition; early moves which may have led perhaps to a split in early 1972 concerned Joe McCann and others who were aware of the Officials leadership's intention to call a ceasefire and to which they were totally opposed. However, this ended as McCann was shot dead by the Brits in April 1972 - the Officials declared that he should have split there and then instead of continuing to work inside the Officials to try and change it. He hated splits as they inevitably led to demoralisation, acrimony and possibly feuds.

The Officials Leadership refused to accept that struggle against imperialism was in progress, their line was that the struggle in the six counties divided the Protestant and Catholic working class and that they must **"first" unite them before they could challenge imperialism. This was a false strategy which ignored the fundamental fact that Partition and all that it implied divided the working class and that this must be removed to achieve the unity of the working class.**

Throughout 1972-73 more militant

policies were promoted in the Officials in relation to the National Question but the leadership was frustrated and refused to implement these - instead they launched on a concerted campaign to isolate the main protagonist of this more revolutionary line which resulted in Costello being suspended in 1973. From here onwards the divergence between Costello and the now openly reformist leadership was out in the open. Much discussion took place all over the country, and inside the jails as well, on their respective positions, with the leadership of the Officials trying to stifle debate, issuing threats and finally expulsions, especially of Costello at the 1974 Ard Fheis.

The dismissal of Costello only formalised what was already a fact - parting of the ways of a revolutionary and reformist strategy on the National Question. Costello was already in the process of forming a new Party when he was formally dismissed and events now proceeded at a quickened pace over the remaining months of 1974 with revolutionary Republicans, Socialists and Trade Unionists coming together to form the I.R.S.P. The same process took place in the Officials Cage in Long Kesh as well. When it was announced in December 1974 that this new political Party had been formed, the slogan under which it was launched was: **FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION AND A SOCIALIST REPUBLIC.**

ATTACKS ON THE PARTY

Its announcement resulted in widespread defections from the Officials all over the country ie. those who had been the most active and politically conscious members. The leadership of the Officials, in order to halt this and wipe out the I.R.S.P., loosed armed attacks on I.R.S.P. members in Belfast in early 1975. After several months of feuding, three Belfast members of the I.R.S.P. were dead and many others wounded. The arms which the Officials had straved and denied to their own membership to confront imperialism had been delivered in plenty in a counter-revolutionary manner to be used against those who had formed a new movement in order to confront imperialism. This onslaught brought a halt to the resignations from the Officials, it also frightened off many others who would have joined the I.R.S.P. from outside the Republican Movement and overall it badly affected the growth of the Party.

At this point we must examine what made the I.R.S.P. different from both the Officials and the Provisionals.

OFFICIALS:

On the National Question: that it couldn't be resolved until the Protestant and Catholic working class were united. That the six counties could be democratised; that a Bill of Rights was needed etc. This position ruled out the National Liberation struggle; it ignored the fundamentally sectarian nature of six county state and how the Brits through this maintained their rule and influence over the entire country.

PROVISIONALS:

At this time they still had a one-sided concentration on the National Question; they were still controlled by the old traditional leadership which advocated a federal solution - which Admas was later to refer to as a **"sop to Loyalism"**; they concentrated on the military effort to the exclusion of revolutionary politics throughout Ireland; they maintained their abstentionist position. Costello criticised the Provisionals for their **"elitist and conspiratorial approach which was no substitute for the development of a people's struggle"**.

I.R.S.P.

Most of what follows is the direct words of Seamus Costello upon outlining the programme of the I.R.S.P. **"We must make no secret of the fact that we're a revolutionary Socialist Party, prepared to give leadership on the streets and in the elected chambers. And that we're out for Revolutionary Socialist State."** "Part" of the struggle for a Socialist State entails resolving the National Liberation Struggle and ending British imperialist intervention. **"We stand for unity of the anti-imperialist struggle and the class struggle"**. What are the vital social issues of the day? Along with the National Question there exist many strands to the anti-imperialist struggle. **"To hold the National Question "above" all other issues is to isolate oneself from the people and will result in evitable defeat. We must involve the masses in issues that effect them.**

Political agitation, propaganda, etc. should not be confined to the six counties."

ON ABSTENTIONISM

"There is no Parliamentary road to Socialism. But elected members should use such chambers as a platform for the pursuit of our policies and for achieving publicity for them, but members elected to Parliament etc., would have to be active in politics outside the Parliament i.e. in extra-Parliamentary and agitational politics on the streets. We see both Parliamentary institutions in Ireland as institutions that have to be abolished if we are to make progress towards establishing a Socialist Republic. When we say we are not an abstentionist Party, we mean we are not a Party in principle committed to abstention. But there are circumstances under which it might be desirable at any particular point in time to abstain from Parliament and if we felt it was tactically desirable, that we would do so."

ULTIMATE GOAL

"To end imperialist rule in Ireland and establish a 32 county Democratic Socialist Republic with the working class in control of the means of production, distribution and exchange."

BROAD FRONT

"This advocates the maximum degree of anti-imperialist unity. We recognise the absolute necessity of securing a constitutional solution to the present crisis which will allow the Irish working class the freedom to pursue their interests as a class in the context of the development of normal class politics. In our view the first step in securing a constitutional solution which meets this requirement must be for Britain to concede the right of the Irish people to exercise total sovereignty over their own affairs. This objective can only be achieved through the creation of a unified struggle on the part of all anti-imperialist organisations. We would therefore support the formation of an Irish anti-imperialist Front composed of delegates from affiliated organisations who support the agreed political programme of the Front. The primary objective of the Front would be to mobilise the maximum degree of support for its declared objectives throughout Ireland. The Front should clearly be seen as the leadership of a mass movement against all forms of imperialist control and interference in Ireland. The Front should have sufficient support and assistance from its affiliated organisations to enable it to open a head office with a full time staff. We propose the following political demands as the basis on which an Irish Anti-Imperialist Front should organise:

1. That Britain must renounce all claims to sovereignty over any part of Ireland or its coastal waters.
2. That Britain must immediately disband and disarm the UDR, RUC and RUC Reserve and withdraw all troops from Ireland.
3. That the British and 26 county Governments must immediately release all political prisoners and grant a general amnesty for all offences arising from the current conflict.
4. That Britain must agree to compensate all who have suffered as a result of Imperialist violence and exploitation in Ireland.
5. Recognising that no country can be free and independent while it permits imperialist domination of its economic life, the Irish Anti-Imperialist Front will oppose all forms of imperialist control over our wealth and resources.
6. That the Front rejects a Federal solution and the continued existence of two separate states in the 6 and 26 counties as a denial of the right of the Irish people to sovereignty and recognises the only alternative as being the creation of a 32 county Democratic Republic with a secular constitution.
7. That the Front demands the convening of an All Ireland constitutional conference representative of all shades of political opinion in Ireland for the purpose of discussing a democratic and secular constitution which would become effective immediately following a total British military and political withdrawal from Ireland.

These were the primary differences between

the I.R.S.P. and the Officials and Provisionals when Costello launched the Party in December 1974.

After the onslaught by the Officials ended in mid 1975, the Movement strove to structure and stabilise its organisation. By late 1975 the Party was organised on an all Ireland basis with approximately 800 members, it provided a quarterly internal Bulletin which promoted debate on matters of policy, strategy and tactics within the Party, and it also produced a monthly newspaper 'the Starry Plough.' Its main activity was to promote the concept of the Broad Front in support of the National Liberation struggle while also campaigning on Trade Union issues, women's issues, unemployment etc. On March 12th 1977 it convened the first Anti-imperialist conference at the Spa Hotel in Lucan - though these talks at the conference broke down, we will examine the reasons later on.

FREE STATE REPRESSION

April 1976 saw a concerted attack by the Free State to smash the I.R.S.P. After a train robbery in County Kildare over 40 members of the IRSP were arrested. The so-called 'Heavy Gang' marked down 14 of these for 'in depth' interrogation. Nine were severely tortured and six were framed for the robbery. The IRSP offices were ransacked and files burned and stolen.

The IRSP launched a campaign to highlight the torture, frame-ups, denial of legal rights and also initiated civil proceedings against the State for damages. This resulted in Civil Liberties groups, Trade Unions etc. in Ireland and abroad calling for an impartial public enquiry. It also resulted in bringing to Ireland for the first time Amnesty International - its findings



reported evidence of widespread Garda brutality, the Heavy Gang by this time being internationally notorious, it also found that the trial of those framed "failed to scrutinise such allegations according to the principles of Law" and called for an impartial inquiry. The Government and the State, highly embarrassed by the whole episode, whitewashed the whole involvement of the Gardai - it sentenced two members of the I.R.S.P. to 12 years imprisonment while another fled abroad. The campaign to free those convicted again attracted national and inter-national dimensions and both were freed on Appeal in 1980, the Appeal Court giving no reason for freeing them. Nicky Kelly came back to clear his name and was likewise imprisoned for 12 years, another campaign resulted and after a Hunger Strike and widespread protests he was released also.

GLORIOUS RECORD

In the six counties and also in other parts of these islands the movement actively confronted imperialism, many members being killed and wounded, with many more being imprisoned. At every stage of the struggle the movement was involved, from participation in the Relatives Action Committees in support of the retention of Political Status for Political Prisoners in the Six Counties - through to the formation of the National H Block Committee, the formation of the Relatives for Justice to campaign against the Paid Perjuror System. Its members in jail while escaping on two occasions - 1975 and 1976, also embarked on the blanket protest and were involved in both the major Hunger Strikes of 1980-81 in which three of them died.

SEAMUS COSTELLO

All members of the movement who have been killed in confronting imperialism, who have been assassinated and who have died on Hunger Strike are all worthy equals, their loss equally regretted and mourned by all, and while not trying to draw a distinction between them, it must be said that the assassination of Seamus Costello was a body blow not only to the I.R.S.P. but to the whole anti-imperialist movement and the struggle for a Socialist Republic in Ireland. The sheer stature of the revolutionary Seamus Costello is far too great for what can possibly be expressed in feeble words - yet words are the only way to express and convey this stature albeit in a feeble way. In finishing this section we quote the following:-

"Seamus was the greatest follower of my father's teachings in this generation and I hope that his example shall be followed and that his vision for Ireland will be realised in this generation" - Nora Connelly O'Brien.

"Seamus was in fact the most sincere person I have ever had the pleasure to know" - Father Piaras O'Duill.

"Without doubt he was the greatest threat to the capitalist establishment since James Connolly." - Sean Doyle.

"Seamus spoke for the I.R.S.P. and gave a scintillating display of good humour, history, politics and hard facts. No one who listened to his three hours in the afternoon and by unanimous demand two hours additional repeat in the evening now doubts but that they will have to shoot him or jail him or get out of his way, but they certainly won't stop him. Costello the Revolutionary Marxist Socialist, whose

the Republican Movement in the 1960's; we have seen the historical conditions and the needs that gave birth to it i.e. on the one hand the one-sided concentration on the National Question and the abandonment of the National Question on the other; the need arising to forge both the national struggle and class struggle together; we have seen the role it has played in promoting the Broad Front policy; confronting imperialism, participating in all stages of the struggle in jail as well as outside, and finally we have seen the outstanding role which Seamus Costello played. We now come to the final section what role has it still to play?

Firstly: "We must make no secret of the fact that we're a Revolutionary Socialist Party, prepared to give leadership on the streets and in the elected chambers, and that we're out for a Revolutionary Socialist State". What we must do is examine this statement by Seamus Costello and draw all the necessary implications from it. A Revolutionary Socialist Party must have a revolutionary ideology, an ideology that enables us to analyse the world, the motive forces at work in the world and plan a campaign based on this analysis, a campaign that is consistent, principled and bold in its implementation. Marxism, as a guide to action, is such an ideology, it represents the historical interests in the working class which, through the medium of a Revolutionary Party, aims to overthrow the Capitalist Order and begin the construction of communism.

We must make no secret of the fact that we are such a Party - must make no secret of what we stand and aim for. We cannot try and fool the Irish people. We must recognise that it is 'fatal' to confuse and deceive them. We must define our Socialist Republic, explain exactly what it entails, innuendos, vagueness, and good intentions is not enough, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. We must define all this with the utmost clarity so that the Irish people are under no illusions of what we're fighting for.

A Revolutionary Socialist Party means that we must engage in Revolutionary politics throughout all of Ireland, both on the streets and in the elected chambers. It means that we must first identify the major contradiction in Ireland today which is the continued British occupation of the six counties and the resulting denial of our right to self-determination and sovereignty, the resolution of the National Question, Partition and all the evils and divisions that spring from it entails a struggle against imperialism, it entails mobilising the mass of the Irish people in the struggle for National Liberation. But it doesn't mean confining ourselves solely to the National Question - as was said before, there are many strands to the anti-imperialist struggle, it means involvement in campaigns against unemployment, emigration, repression etc., involvement in Trade Unions, Action Groups - everything! in turn relating all these issues to the class struggle, to capitalism, to the National Question and imperialism - of how they're tied inextricably to these; poverty, social misery, welfare cuts, foreign debt, neutrality - everything! We must agitate, propagandise and organise around all these issues. There is no easy road to a Socialist Republic - no short cuts - we must strive towards uniting and politicising the working class, no matter what obstacles confront us in this task. For we cannot win our struggle without the working class; we cannot make the revolution without them; without their active participation in a united and politically conscious manner. We need to be able to bring to expression their deeply felt social needs and aspirations, to bring to the fore their underlying anti-imperialist sentiment, showing up the class nature of the Irish state, establishment parties etc. in acting to repress, jail and crush their own people in order to protect British rule in Ireland.

We must be able to inject the struggle or rather to call forth from the people the values and ideals of solidarity, self-sacrifice, non-sectarianism, unity, internationalism etc. - values that transcend our own individual existence, that lead to greater awareness, greater participation and greater aliveness in oneself, we must somehow be able to grip the mass of the people if we are all to change the world. But let's get matters exactly right here: We cannot get this across to the working class unless we - now! - are actually living and acting upon these values and ideals. The working class know who are phoney, who are hypocrites, self-seekers, self-promoters, careerists etc. - none of these have a place in any revolutionary Party. We must show by our actions that we are true to these values. It does not matter in the least if people or organisations etc. of whatever persuasion don't

ambition is a secular, pluralist united Socialist Republic, won't go away until he gets it." - Dr. Noel Browne.

From 1964 to 1974 he held the position of ADJ, General, Chief of Staff and Director of Operations in the Official IRA and the position of Vice-President of Official Sinn Fein. From 1974 to his assassination on 5th October 1977 he held the positions of Chief of Staff and Director of Operations in the I.N.L.A. At the time of his death he was a member of the following bodies: Wicklow County Council, County Wicklow Committee of Agriculture, General Council of Committees of Agriculture, Eastern Regional Development Committee, Bray Urban District Council, Bray Branch of the I.T.G.W.U., Bray and District Trades Union Council - of which he was President 1976-77; the Cualann Historical Society; and Chairman of the Irish Republican Socialist Party.

As can be seen, he personified within himself what he ardently expounded and pursued throughout his life, the unity of the National Liberation Struggle and the Class Struggle, and how they must go forward together. Founder of the I.R.S.P. and the I.N.L.A. Costello left no doubt, even when launching the Broad Front policy, of where his allegiance, priority and aims lay when he stated "I owe my allegiance only to the working class." Following in the direct revolutionary tradition of James Connolly himself who expressed his own position in the same words. This is the example he set all of us to emulate.

FUTURE DIRECTION

So far we have seen the roots from which the IRSP arose i.e. the leftward direction taken by

or cannot reciprocate the same behaviour and attitudes - so be it! - we must maintain our position regardless, we must be vigilant that we don't sink into the morass of sectarianism, mixing, pettiness etc., we must not get involved in unprincipled slanging matches etc into positions that are sectarian, anti-revolutionary, morally damaging, that give succour to the enemy and that confuse and divide the working class. We must maintain our criticism of anybody or any organisation on principled grounds, and likewise must have the courage of our convictions not to bow to official public opinion, with all its prejudices, carefully manufactured and promoted by those poisoners of the people's minds - the Press, priests, apologists etc.

We must also present our vision of what a Revolutionary Socialist State means. When we say in our Programme that we want to establish a 32 County Socialist Republic with the working class in control of the means of production, distribution and exchange, we must be able to take this and decipher it for the working class to understand exactly what it means - they must be able to relate directly to it. We must be able to get it across that a new independent Ireland is only possible through a revolutionary change in the ownership of our wealth and resources, that it must be rebuilt on a totally new basis, that it means expropriating the capitalists, allied to imperialism, of their control and ownership of the means of production etc., of organising our economy to produce not for the profit of the capitalist class but for the needs of the Irish people, of promoting values by which we can build a new life on a truly human basis. We need to explain everything else that springs from this - in simple language and not in academic jargonised phrases - about planning, democracy, the all round development of every individual etc.

WORKING CLASS IN THE LEAD

There also exists at this stage of the struggle the need to ask the question: **What forces can bring the National Question to a successful conclusion? Only the working class through playing the leading role in the struggle, can bring about a successful conclusion.** Those capitalist parties in the 6 and 26 Counties have no interest in solving the National Question but rather in crushing those trying to resolve it. Both maintain their rule through Partition and in turn permit imperialism to dominate all aspects of our life. Connolly likewise realised that only the working class could bring about a victorious conclusion to the age-old struggle for National independence and sovereignty - for besides predicting that the capitalist class in Ireland would always compromise with imperialism, he also expanded on the concept that the working class were the only class who possessed an "ideal" involving the complete overthrow and reversal of the political, economic and social consequences of the conquest of Ireland - thereby meaning the overthrow of the capitalist system. The ideal which the working class alone possess being the ideal of a communist way of life.

To quote Costello again: **"British policy must be viewed in the light of their attitude towards Ireland as a whole - not just towards the 6 counties. What Britain wants is to maintain her influence here over the whole island. Her military and political intervention in the North is simply a means of maintaining this influence and this control. Britain knows that if she is compelled to withdraw from the North, she loses all control over the economy, the wealth and the resources of this country. She knows that there is a good possibility of the creation of a Socialist state. Britain and the E.E.C. countries also would be conscious of the effect of a Socialist state in Ireland on the Western European working class. A Socialist revolution in Ireland would be an inspiration to people all over Western Europe. The EEC countries have a vested interest, as well as Britain, in ensuring that there is no change in the status quo in Ireland."** And again: **"It is still Britain's objective to find and impose a political solution which will guarantee the continued protection of Britain's economic and strategic interests in both parts of Ireland. Britain also acts as the local protector of the other imperial powers in Ireland i.e. the EEC countries, USA and Canada, all of which have a powerful vested interest in supporting a British imposed solution in Ireland. Finally of course Britain's strategic interests must also be protected through the imposition of a solution which will ensure that Ireland continues its present policy of pro-imperialist 'neutrality.'" Both of these were written in 1975 and 1976 respectively.**

When we see this basic unity of the

imperialist powers with their capitalist allies in Ireland, when we view it in the light of the Anglo-Irish deal and the enthusiastic support which these imperialist countries gave to it. When we now see just today, 15th August, the chief of Staff of the Irish Army publicly condemning the whole struggle - it doesn't take much foresight to know that a concerted attack on the whole struggle is on the cards. Thus again we must repeat the question: "What forces can bring the National Question to a successful conclusion?" And also how can we thwart these imperialist plans and manoeuvres?

THE BROAD FRONT

This leads us to the Broad Front Policy. At the moment we have a pro-imperialist unity of forces - the basis of the Broad Front policy is to maximise the support for the anti-imperialist struggle. Its aim is to constantly strengthen and enlarge the ranks of the people, of those opposed to all aspects of imperialist rule - while constantly weakening dividing and isolating the ranks of the imperialists and their allies in Ireland. **The working class being the only class which will not sell out and compromise with imperialism, must therefore play the leading role in the struggle.** The petty bourgeois, the small farmers and whatever other groups which are potentially hostile to imperialism cannot play the leading role in this struggle. We must try and unite them all under the banner of the Broad Front.

When outlined earlier on, the Broad Front for a Constitutional Conference etc., we don't see this as a so-called "stages" process - in which for example, once we have got rid of the Brits we will go through a period of capitalist rule, democratisation etc etc. - if we see the working class as the only class capable of resolving the National Question if we see the working class as playing the leading role in a Broad Front through the medium of a Revolutionary Party, and if we see the Broad Front meaning the mass of the Irish people - then the scenario arises of the question of "Power" being on the order of the day - for the working class to seize power.

The whole question of a constitutional conference will be to decide the question of power anyhow - this will depend on the correlation of forces within and outside the country - it will open up a period of intense struggle between the two fundamental camps: Ireland continuing as a dependant capitalist, controlled and dominated by imperialism or firmly establishing our sovereignty and building a revolutionary socialist state. There is no middle road between these two, there cannot be any middle road, the battle may be delayed, postponed etc. but it must be fought. We must be under no illusions about this, we must realise this with the utmost clarity if we are to confront it and be successful. In Connolly's words: **"We cannot conceive of a Free Ireland with a subject Working Class - we cannot conceive of a subject Ireland with a Free working class."**

We come once more to the role of a Revolutionary Party, which is absolutely essential if we are to be successful. Without that clear guiding role, without a revolutionary ideology, without an analysis of the forces ranged against us, without the application of the correct tactics and strategy, then the struggle will fail, it will be side-tracked into compromise, if not defeated, by failing to appraise the overall situation correctly and becoming isolated from the mass of the people. **We must build a Revolutionary Party!**

CONCLUSION

All of the above is what must be done, it is the basis of what we still fight for, for the role we still have to play. This is what a Revolutionary Party must be, what it must engage in, what it must do if it is to help make the revolution. The tasks that confront us will not be easy, it entails a long struggle, set-backs, disappointments and possible, at times maybe probable, death. We should again be under no illusions of what lies ahead. It is only by strengthening ourselves ideologically, inculcating in ourselves the values and ideals of the struggle and building up the ranks of a Revolutionary Party, that we will make it. Finally, we must constantly review, criticise and self-criticise all aspects of our actions, policies, tactics etc.; keep appraising the whole situation; and keep striving to raise the class consciousness, spirit and capacity to fight and win of the working class.

PAST CONTRADICTIONS

Marxism tells us that before we can properly solve any problem, before we can work out a plan of action etc., that we must first analyse the given process i.e. that we must identify the

'basic contradiction' which is inherent in it and which gives rise to its development, and from which everything else springs. It is the basic contradiction which determines the whole process, other, secondary contradictions arise on top of this - these in turn give expression to particular trends, characteristics, interests, etc. **BUT** everything is ultimately determined and conditioned by the basic contradiction. These secondary contradictions can be tackled, reformed, changed **BUT** again they will effect no fundamental change in the given process. The only way fundamental change can be achieved is by changing the basic contradiction which immediately sets in motion a change in all the secondary contradictions which are dependent upon it.

We'll take for our example the process whereby A and B have entered into a dialectical relationship. A is by its nature: democratic, open structures, working openly, has its own priorities, tasks etc. B is by its nature: undemocratic, closed structures, working secretly, has its own priorities, tasks etc. In their unity, the question obviously arises of who directs who? of who predominates over who? Inherent results flow from whether A or B is the predominate aspect of this relationship. This is the starting point from which we new briefly analyse this process.

PREDOMINANCE OF B OVER A

Firstly, a definite strategy arises from this - ie. the need to confront imperialism - **BUT** with the added proviso that everything else is subordinated to this end therefore secondly: definite needs arise from this, ie. to make the fullest use of the human and material resources at their disposal.

When it's asked: What is the imperialists and their Irish allies policy and how do we aim to thwart this? - we get the same old answer ie. that it's necessary to confront them, that the struggle goes on; we get no analysis, we get no strategy outside the basic confrontation - it eventually becomes an end in itself due simply to the fact that they don't know of any other strategy; other trends manifest themselves due to this for eg. psychological traits: there arised the condition of elitism, superiority etc. that we're the lads, that this is the real macho way to do things, that those in A are wankers, bluffers etc. who always harp on about 'meaningless' things. Therefore there arises a definite trend of spurning A type work as being beneath their 'style', standing etc.; there arised a contempt for those involved in A type work etc. Another trend arises of prestige building, of wanting to be seen and known as being the 'lad' etc. this in

turn attracts the ambitious power seeking individual who in turn begins to consolidate his position, to build a power base etc. - these being manifested in the 1979-81 and from 1982-87. A lowering of standard eventually comes into being - where criminal type elements, unsavoury characters, inept individuals are allowed entrance and rise to prominence - the result is constant crises, factions, instability, discredit.

It must be asked, why this total failure? What you sow you reap! What you plant, you harvest! If you predominantly plant seeds of B, you harvest an M crop. If you sow a few seeds of A amongst this - then due to their inferior position they'll lose out in the struggle for life, for space to grow, breathe, develop and reproduce. Every single attempt to change this in the past failed yet highly intelligent individuals were involved during this period. Why did they all fail?

Simple because they failed to confront the basic contradiction - which as we've pointed out above is that between A and B. They would only tackle the secondary contradictions etc. by changing individuals, by launching a political initiative here and there, making some resources a bit more available etc. All these did was to give it a brief further lease of life before the basic contradiction reasserted itself once more.

It is like revolution. The basic contradiction in society is between the productive forces and the relations of production ie. socialised production by the working class and private appropriation by the capitalist class. Everything springs from this. Poverty, unemployment, alienation etc. To try and change poverty by more welfare benefits; unemployed by more state investment etc. - will likewise as above give a brief lease of life to ease this crisis. But these are only changes in the secondary contradictions. **NO** "fundamental change" is achieved as the basic contradiction has not been tackled. It is impossible to bring about "fundamental change" unless the basic contradiction is tackled. Unemployment, poverty etc. will immediately be changed once this is tackled and changed.

Therefore we have to ask now: **Why if we're Marxist do we neglect this? This is a fundamental of Marxism! Why do we fail to confront it? Why do we fail to act accordingly? Marx, Lenin etc. confronted all fundamentals in a courageous, merciless, ruthless manner. Why do we fail to do this? Is it inherent in us? Are we up to this task? Do we lack the courage and maturity to do this? Are we amateurs - and not professionals? We know the lessons of history, we know the mistakes, we either act accordingly or collapse - salvation lies in clarity and the courage to implement change!**

We come now to our new starting point which is the predominance of A over B.

Again a definite strategy arises from this plus the need to make the fullest use of the human material resources at our disposal. The need to confront imperialism is again reasserted but this time subordinated to the need to build A - to build structures which for once will ensure stability, to inculcate in everyone a revolutionary ideology etc. Recognising past errors etc. we must consciously strive to avoid factionalism, power bases etc.

Out of the predominance of A over B - definite psychological traits will emerge: of discipline, unity, work, theoretical strength, comradeship, solidarity, confidence - these entail the sharing of experience, the raising of political consciousness, the formation of political agitators, organisers, propagandists etc. until a solid base is created with continuity at all levels.

It is absolutely obvious that this cannot be done on the old basis with all the old traits predominating etc. It entails "completely" subordinating B to A - of salvaging the most promising elements in B etc. this is what is meant by changing the basic contradiction. Everything flows from this. It ensures that in the future that all will have gone through the training school of building A; they will all have this background, with revolutionary politics uppermost, with allegiances to A; with being familiar with all the trends in A, with all its problems, personalities, policies - and never 'divorced' from these. A common bond must be forged around these - a bond which will create the qualities of awareness, capability, resilience, consistency etc. in everyone.

If we recognise that the starting point of anything is the most important thing - for this is what we sow, what we plant - then this point of departure is the ground from which we must launch ourselves.

Those who would cling to the past, to the outworn, put forth the line that we will change but that it doesn't have to be so drastic etc. this is sheer pretence! They are usually agreed about what must be done - yet not doing it! That it can be done in stages - yet not following the logic of going to the heart of it and acting resolutely! They end up maintaining, supporting that which is the very problem. Their so called good intentions is not enough - the road to hell is paved with good intentions. The burning question - the priority for us is to build a revolutionary Party - as Lenin said about the social revolutionaries: **"Their terrorism is not connected in any way with work AMONG the masses, FOR the masses, or TOGETHER with the masses. It distracts our VERY SCANTY organisational forces from their difficult and by no means completed task of organising a Revolutionary Party"**.

In his essay 'An Historical Analysis of the IRSP; its past role, root cause of its problems and proposals for the future', Ta Power set about in a correct manner to achieve the resolution of problems, by going back to the origins of the movement and tracing developments from there. He never pretended that this essay was anything but an outline, and in his discussions with comrades he capably demonstrated his ability to go into various aspects of the essay in greater depth. 'Contradictions,' his second essay, and his 'Analysis' were intended by Ta to encourage other comrades to contribute to a debate as an alternative to proceeding "too rapidly from thought to action."

Ta's 'Analysis,' with its brief background of the Republican Movement in the '60s and early '70s, is extremely useful to those who seek to understand how and why the IRSM evolved. However, because of the nature of his essay, his background material is brief and therefore limits a proper analysis. It is necessary therefore to expand the readers insight into the historical roots of recent Irish republicanism in general, and its attitude towards communism in particular. Much mythology attends developments within the Republican Movement over the past 20/30 years and

because it has been repeated ad nauseum by many it has, to a certain extent, been accepted as fact even by many republicans. What follows is an attempt to set the record straight and demolish some of the well-cherished myths about the "left-wing drift" of the '60s.

The late 1940s and the 1950s was a period of great hardship in the lives of the working class and small farmers of Ireland. Mass unemployment gave rise to poverty, hunger and emigration. It was the era of the Cold War when pulpit and press gave forth on the "evils of communism." Parliamentary politicians ignored the plight of the people. With all attempts to build an 'independent' Irish capitalism behind tariffs failing, they now concerned themselves with promoting an Anti-Partition campaign and with declaring the 26 counties a republic. With the IRA declaring "the aim of the Army is simply to drive the invader from the soil of Ireland," and Sinn Fein stating that it was not "and never was a political party," workers had no reason to expect help from that quarter. When McCarthyite witch hunts were being conducted by the Catholic Standard newspaper, the IRA took care to distance themselves from communists who had earlier been interned with them in the Curragh. They charged, in fact, that the interning of communists with republicans was part of a Fianna Fail plot to influence the IRA with materialist ideas! An editorial in the 1949 July/August issue of the *United Irishman* stated, "the IRA have as constantly opposed communism as they have opposed British domination and have ever denied to communists and imperialists alike a voice in their councils or a plank on their platforms....even if communists were sincere in their advocacy of Irish independence, we could never accept their Marxian creed. Communism is a foreign ideology just as unsuited to Irish character and temperament as British imperialism." In the October issue we learn in an editorial how limited is the following for Ireland's cause - "Every Irish leader has asserted that in order to gain the Republic we must maintain our spirituality as it is the very quality that has kept our movement the shrine of our National heritage. Ireland's cause is essentially one which appeals to saints and martyrs." No room for materialistic communists here, even if they be advocates of Irish independence.

By 1957 unemployed workers under the banner 'Emigrate, starve or fight', had begun to make their presence felt, despite witch-hunts and a lack of support from the unions. In Dublin, in an effort to bring their protest into the Dail chambers they succeeded in getting one of their leaders, Jack Murphy, elected. In Cork, Sinn Fein reaction was to order any of its members who were involved with the Unemployed Protest Movement to leave. It was contended that the UPM was a Free State political organisation because it had a member in Leinster House. The reaction of the unemployed Sinn Feiners was to leave the Republican Movement rather than the Unemployed movement. One man who defied the order was given a show-trial, as an example to others, and dismissed. Before the UPM became "contaminated" by using Leinster House as a platform to air their grievances, a group of about 40 unemployed, locked out of Cork's Carpenters' Hall due to a mistake in booking arrangements, proceeded down the street expecting to be facilitated in the Sinn Fein hall - they were refused, however, because Sinn Fein leaders claimed that they were communist inspired. When a member of Sinn Fein, Norman Latchford, wrote and published a pamphlet, *Lives, loves and liberties of a Protestant Republican*, he was dismissed, ostensibly for not having sought permission to publish. In fact he had submitted a manuscript to his local Comhairle Ceanntair. At his unsuccessful appeal hearing he was condemned for criticising the role of the catholic clergy during the Great Famine. To back up his dismissal, members were later informed that he was a communist infiltrator and a former member of the Connolly Association. The trials and tribulations of the working class people of Ireland found no place in the considerations of Irish republicans in the 1950's; they were too busy being "saints and martyrs".

This then is the Republican Movement in which the future 'left-wingers' cut their political teeth. This is the movement that they joined and the movement whose policies they never fundamentally disagreed with until the failure of the border campaign necessitated an internal rethink. Even while they were supposedly undergoing a process of radicalisation in the prisons the bourgeois

Thomas MacGiolla



politics frequently shone through. MacGiolla, for example, while in prison in the early '60s spent some time defending Franco's Spain against the verba 1 attacks of his more enlightened comrades!

Following the failure of the 1956-62 armed campaign in the 6 counties, the leadership of the Republican Movement was deposed and a new leadership installed. Cathal Goulding assumed the leadership of the IRA and Thomas MacGiolla was installed as acting president of Sinn Fein. Goulding's involvement with the IRA reached back to the 1940s and he was held in high esteem by his peers. MacGiolla came to Sinn Fein in 1954 from the Anti-Partition League. From a Free State background, he was a nephew of T.P. Gill an Irish parliamentary member at Westminster. He had served on the Ard Comhairle (National Executive) previously in 1956. Goulding and MacGiolla were released from Mountjoy Jail on April 20, 1962. Sean Garland, destined to play a major role in the coming years, was released from Belfast Jail in July. These men along with others in the new leadership have been credited with leading the Republican Movement to socialism. It is held that the failure of the armed struggle to win appreciable support, brought about the realisation of the need for republicans to involve themselves in agitational activity, associated with the struggle of the exploited people. We are told by republican historians that this realisation started within the prisons. But what is never explained is that the reason why republicans decided to involve themselves in agitational activity, had all to do with amassing support which they hoped would aid the rebuilding of the Republican Movement and hold solid when they again launched an armed campaign. It had nothing to do with ideological change in their thinking in regard to the working class. It was simply a change in tactics. Offering little or no threat to the capitalist system, it found favour with most republicans. This tactic of republican involvement in social protest in order to win support for their petit bourgeois anti-partitionist objectives, needs to be understood by all who strive for socialism and national liberation. The working class is not there to be used, and it has shown on countless occasions that it resents being used and is pretty astute at identifying users. That there was no fundamental change in the Republican Movement's ideological stand was evidenced later in 1962, when MacGiolla gave his presidential address at the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis (National Conference). He declared that "in so far as the communist menace is a battle for mens minds, we should undoubtedly be playing a leading part in the fight against it, as we should be in the fight against materialism of every blend. Our greatest weapon in the fight against all material philosophies is our essential spiritual nature." He then went on to outline a six point programme to "fight communism or any other social or political ill of our day." Sinn Fein presidential addresses reflect the political position of the Republican Movement's leadership. Obviously spiritual Ireland was alive and well, and communism existed to be fought. The *United Irishman* commented, "the president of Sinn Fein has dealt with our place in the struggle against communism in his presidential address. It is the only honourable and reasonable contribution which we as a small Christian nation can make towards the progress of civilisation and the cause of peace." The movement's anti-communism was given further expression in an article (*United Irishman* November 1962) reviewing the position of communism in Europe - "Poland has recently thrown off Soviet domination, has drawn away from doctrinaire communism and has adopted a more conservative system. For example,

ten years ago there were 80,000 collective farms in the country. Through lack of co-operation from the people, this number has been reduced to 1,800. The Hungarian revolution has resulted in a severe setback for communism in that country. There is a serious shortage of food and labour in East Germany, while the Albanian government is at loggerheads with all other communist governments except China. With so much internal trouble and unrest these countries in Eastern Europe are a danger to nobody, except themselves." Years later when asked by a journalist if "the policy adopted in 1962/3 was explicitly a socialist revolutionary policy," Cathal Goulding replied that it was (*This Week* 31/7/70).

Despite the Republican Movements commitment to fighting communism, a small group of people formerly associated with the CPGB, the Connolly Association and the Irish Workers Party found its way into the movement or into its front organisations, at this time. They were in time to exert a major influence on the thinking of some of the republican leadership. That they could survive in such an anti-communist movement only goes to show the extent of their reformism. Most of this group, in later years, left and joined the Irish Labour Party.

In pursuance of its policy of agitation, republicans began to involve themselves in the everyday struggles of the workers and small farmers. IRA volunteers were instructed to join trade unions, but by 1965 it was admitted that Sinn Fein had failed to develop an active local organisational structure. There was much dissatisfaction with Sinn Fein and the IRA wished its role to be confined "to publicity and election work." Whatever about the IRA curbing Sinn Fein, its president, Tomas MacGiolla was still given free rein to deliberate on communism, "communism....as it has manifested itself in many countries....is not an ideology which would commend itself to the Irish people." The ambiguity of this statement is apparent. Was he issuing a blanket condemnation of communism? Or was he merely condemning the form of communism that manifests itself in some socialist countries? Coupled with the ritual condemnation of capitalism, the Republican Movement in rejecting communism, seemed to want something suspended between both. They sought economic in-betweenism and frequently used James Connolly as a basis for their utopian concept. The economic policy promoted by Sinn Fein was immeasurably removed from any stand James Connolly ever took. It was nothing more than a bizarre mixture of re-hashed Proudhonism and Social Credit theories.

In 1965, what MacGiolla described as the "essential spiritual nature" of the Republican Movement was greatly in evidence, when they spearheaded opposition to the use of English in the Roman Catholic Mass. In a front page leading article, entitled 'Demonstrations in Churches?', we read, "A chapter is likely to be added to the history of republicanism and Roman Catholic church relations when the change to the vernacular in the Mass comes into force....for the first time since the coming of St. Patrick to Ireland the English Language is not only to be given an official status in the very heart of Church affairs, the Mass, but also, over most of the country, a position of complete dominance. This, in the eyes of many, is the consummation of the conquest and the end of hopes for spiritual and intellectual independence, the first facet of republicanism." (*United Irishman*, March 1965).

In the event, good sense took over and except for some more articles in subsequent months, we were spared the demonstrations.

Going into 1966 with MacGiolla defending a free enterprise economy and suggesting the co-operative movement as an alternative "to either capitalism or communism" (*United Irishman*, January 1966), it was understandable that Ruairi O Bradaigh could state emphatically during the Westminster election campaign, that the Republican Movement was "not socialist." At the Easter commemoration in Cork city that year MacGiolla launched into an attack on communism, emphasizing that it was "an alien ideology." In May an editorial in the *United Irishman*, contemplating who republicans should support in the Free State presidential election, said of candidate T.F. O'Higgins, that he had "very little to condemn him personally." Supporting fascism as a member of the Blueshirts in the 1930s was not to be held against him - such liberalism!

Cathal Goulding, in an interview in the *This*

Week magazine (13/7/70), revealed that "by 1967 the movement was dormant. It wasn't active in any political sense or even in any revolutionary sense. Membership was falling off. People had gone away. Units of the IRA and the cumainn of Sinn Fein had become almost non-existent. We felt that something dynamic was needed or the movement was going to break up and splinter into pieces. We called a meeting of the Republican Army's local leadership at the end of August 1967....at that conference of 1967 we started on a Friday night and finished on a Sunday evening....they suddenly realised that they had no movement at all. They only thought they had a movement. Out of this conference there came a number of recommendations. The first was that we should openly declare for a Socialist Republic. That was now the objective of the Republican Movement: to establish a Socialist Republic as envisaged by Connolly and in keeping with the sentiments of the Proclamation of 1916. We felt that with this resolution passed, we had got away from the claptrap and cliches that we had allowed ourselves to be caught in over the years."

With a dormant movement, the IRA and Sinn Fein almost non-existent, badly in need of a dynamic shot in the arm, the tattered remnants got together for one weekend and came up with the good old Socialist Republic. By November, Sinn Fein followed the IRA and amended the party constitution to read that the aim of the party was to work for "the establishment of a Socialist Republic." The Army had decided the matter and the party had followed. Truly indicative of a socialist vanguard party. The Republican Movement now had that "something dynamic," their own brand of utopian socialism, economic in-betweenism. "Socialism has nothing to do with either atheism or totalitarianism as is evident from a superficial reading of Connolly" MacGiolla told the faithful in January 1969 "Neither is it..." he continued "....a philosophy which must be imported. It is part of the Republican tradition since the founding of the *United Irishmen*, was deeply rooted among the Fenians, and was the driving force behind the 1916 Rebellion." And in July socialism became even more acceptable when he claimed that "the revolutionary movements of the past all recognised that socialism was a native growth on Irish soil." This nonsense hardly deserves comment, but it helps the reader to understand the level of mumbo-jumbo prevalent in the Republican Movement during a period that the mythology has us believe was a time that advanced Marxist leaders were guiding the movement. But when the heady days of armed conflict arrived people like MacGiolla lost their heads altogether. The following little gem is hilarious, coming as it did from the notorious anti-communist MacGiolla. In an interview with the *Daily Mirror* (11/7/70), we are told that MacGiolla said that if things happened as he hoped, he would be the Fidel Castro of Ireland. "Yes!" he said, "we have the same revolutionary style and objective. Mind you, not that I have any personal ambitions to be an Irish Castro. As a man I regard him as overemotional." I wonder did Castro, like 'Ice Cool' MacGiolla, regard socialism as a native growth of Cuban soil.

Simply put, the movement that Seamus Costello and his comrades split from, by this time the Officials, was not a revolutionary socialist organisation. It was not a revolutionary socialist movement gone wrong. That is not to say that there were not some genuine Marxist-Leninists in it struggling for a way forward. The IRSP was, as Ta said, formed by republicans, socialists and trade unionists, not by revolutionary communists. The values of the movement that they emerged from were brought with them, to a large extent, including the prejudices, habits and traditions. Ta Power's essay on 'Contradictions' highlights the problems we have encountered because of this legacy.

The essential message that Ta gave us through his essays was that it is time to leave behind bourgeois nationalism. It is time to climb to a new level by setting about the construction of a genuine revolutionary socialist movement - a movement which firmly recognises the primacy of class politics. If Ta had not been struck down as he was he would be to the forefront in building this movement. His death itself serves as an indictment of bourgeois nationalism, as those who gunned him down were practitioners of this ideology. They proved the necessity for solid revolutionary theory to direct the revolutionary practice.