

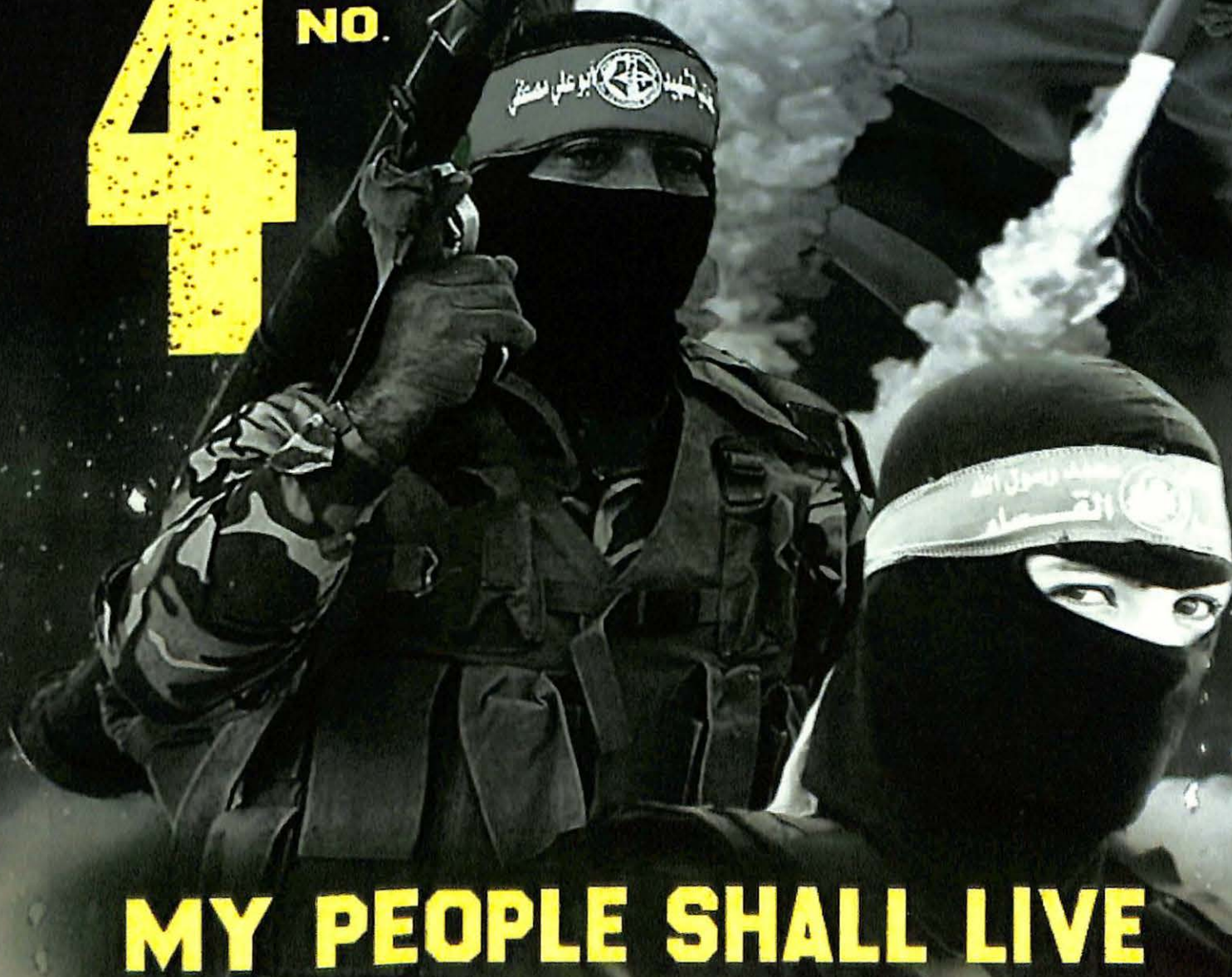
WORKERS OF THE WORD, UNITE

# AN CHRISTIAN DHEARG



4

ISSUE  
NO.



MY PEOPLE SHALL LIVE





# Editorial

It is often said that we live in a time of post-truth or post-facts politics, whereby conventional discourse is polluted by the deliberate concoction and propagation of rumours, emotionally manipulative lies, straw man arguments, conspiracy theories and so-called fake news. Naturally it is a phenomenon created for rational reasons involving the controlling of information to shape public perceptions and advance the political agendas of the ruling class. The West continues to self-identify as tolerant and having democratic values, but in the face of mounting crisis, the mask increasingly fails to conceal the monster beneath. In the face of obvious facts the post-truth strategy has its useful function, but it allows only evasion, as reality, red in tooth and claw, cannot be buried for long.

Paying homage to the sharp edge of imperialist aggression and power the monkeys that would be organ grinders of the Free State government move constantly in their attempts to coerce Southern Ireland into NATO. Understanding that this is deeply unpopular with the Irish people as a whole, the Free Staters claim that Ireland outside NATO is under foreign threat, urged on by the only country that has actually attacked Ireland, and in a consistent way, continues to militarily occupy part of its territory.

But discontent and aspirations for change in Ireland has met its obstacles, among which is the sudden rise of fascist sentiments that has absorbed so much working class anger and driven it down the cul-de-sac of racist persecution. As Assata Shakur reminds us, *"The media will tell you who your enemies are over and over until you begin to believe innocent people are a threat. Think and see for yourself."* Apparently unaware that refugees are often created by wars begun by NATO, a significant section of the Irish populace have allowed themselves to be mobilised by malign anti-Republican and fascist elements to target non-white migrants to the country as apparent scapegoats for the very real problems created by Ireland's ruling class.

It was never the case however, that Ireland was incapable of looking after its poor; rather, as in all capitalist countries, its economic system is just not able to satisfy the rich. While the shallow mantra of Ireland's racists, that "We should look after our own first" is never said within earshot of those that actually work among the homeless and disadvantaged, the stay-at-home racist can rest assured that the ruling class does look after its own, it just isn't them. As Fred Hampton said to those that would listen, *"No matter what colour you are, there are only two classes."*

But sometimes a crisis will appear within imperialism that brings all the hypocrisies of the dominant powers into sharp focus. The pro-Israel narrative in the face of an ongoing televised genocide and the fact that apologists for Israel can still be taken as 'having a legitimate point of view', is symptomatic of the deterioration of imperialism as it desperately picks up the crude tools of racism and islamophobia. Used as a means to drown out the reality of anti-genocide marches, claims that these are somehow anti-Semitic are presented by gaslight in the face of large Jewish blocs and numerous Jewish speakers. Jews then are being treated as though they have a hive mind, and those that do not sing the necessary song are often ignored or indeed arrested by police for anti-Semitism.

But the world is watching thanks to a social media that allows reality to side-step the many filters imposed by mainstream media and the class-interests of its controllers. Ideological lines are becoming increasingly clear and exposed fully to question. The obvious reality is set against the poorly constructed propaganda of Israel's genocidal regime. 'Words mean violence' the liberals would bleat, the right claiming this to be an aspect of 'cancel culture'. Now, the welfare of what they identify as 'Jews' is suddenly being discovered by the far-right and fascist

elements. The constant use of moral panic about certain placards on demonstrations, and about certain slogans and their apparent meanings attempt to drown out the very real outrage of racist slaughter as Israel attempts to widen the conflict to Iran, Lebanon and Syria, among other parts of the Middle-East. Israel plays the victim when clearly it is the aggressor and the people of Palestine are sacrificed on the altar of the European guilt for the Nazi Holocaust.

The representatives of the ruling class and their corporate controlled media, in the face of a televised genocide, South Africa's taking of Israel to the International Court of Justice and the court's initial findings saw mild words and muted action as Western imperialism tempered the harsh language that it had reserved for its rivals like Russia and Iran, and declared its bloody allegiance by continuing to send the weapons needed to carry out ethnic cleansing. The 6th century BC Scythian philosopher Anacharsis once said, *"Written laws are like spiders' webs; they will catch, it's true, the weak and poor, but would be torn to pieces by the rich and powerful."* Nowhere is this more clearly shown than in international law, where Israel, under the protection of US and Western imperialism, may casually break the most serious laws, including that of genocide.

## Contents

**NATO – Happy Birthday to the Beast  
.....3**

**Revolutionary Contributions of James  
Fintan Lalor.....5**

**Palestine Shakes the World.....6**

**Revolutionary Contributions of Jose  
Sison.....11**

**For A Proletarian Feminist Line.....12**

**Revolutionary Contributions of Peadar  
O'Donnell.....19**

**RAF to the Future: Ulrike Mein-  
hof.....20**

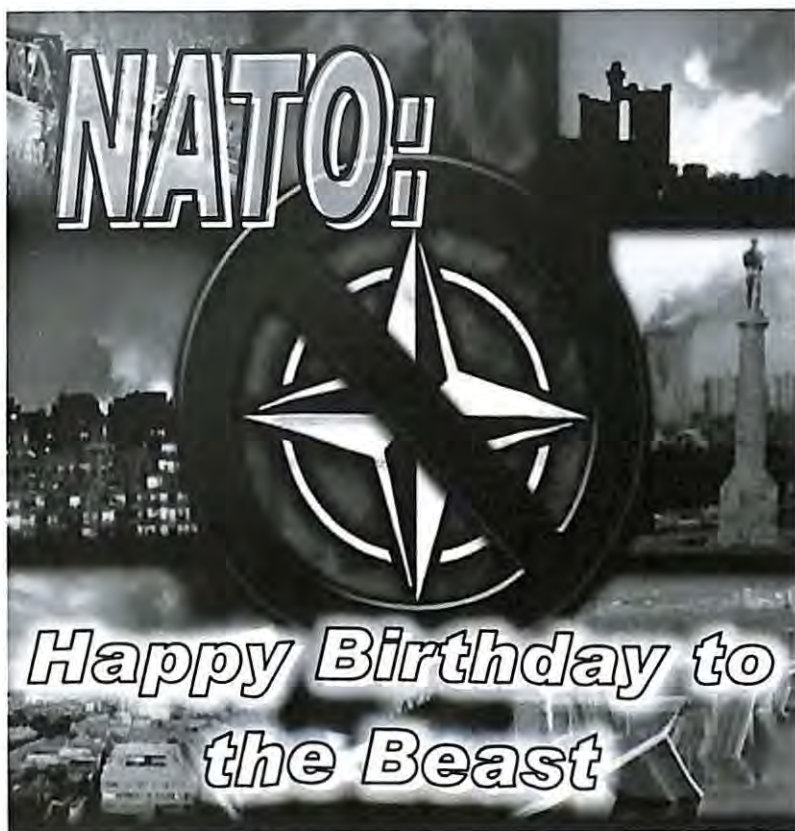
**The Immortal Contributions of Thomas  
Muir .....22**

**When the Andes Roared.....23**

**The Immortal Contributions of Jose  
Mariategui .....31**

**Send all correspondence and  
other materials to:  
[isrmedia@protonmail.com](mailto:isrmedia@protonmail.com)**





The 75th birthday of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) provides an incentive to reevaluate our analysis of this global structure serving US imperialism. Additionally we observe a militarisation of Europe we have not seen since the collapse of the Eastern bloc 30 years ago. Despite a long hesitation period Sweden joined the Treaty, and Germany increased its military spending to over two percent of its GDP on top of the 100 billion extra budget of its army. Military Exercises like "Steadfast Defender" are the biggest trials since the Cold War and are actively preparing for a Russian "invasion". Since the escalations of the war in Ukraine and the Zionist aggressions in occupied Palestine the media and the warmongering governments of Europe are trying to push the working classes of their nations into states of a mass hysteria which ultimately serves the ruling classes' interests.

But what will help us to understand the present state of NATO and especially the Free State's relation with it. Firstly one needs to outline the history of the organisation from its founding 75 years ago to the massive expansion eastwards towards Russia and its military campaigns after the end of the Cold War. It is important to outline the sharpening contradictions within so we can attempt to understand the developing dynamics we are observing now with its war preparations and the Free State's push to establish closer ties if not join the Treaty.

NATO's history begins with the defeat of the Third Reich in the Second World War. The Red Army provided the main power to bring this victory about, but the contradictions between the Soviets and the Anglo-Americans led to frictions in their alliance leading to a split, especially the Imperial bloc under the hegemony of the US that suppressing the international Communist movement at the top of its agenda. Because of that they helped to rebuild and re-arm the former axis power like it had Japan, and forced the German split under the guidance of the first West-German chancellor Adenauer who was known for his anti-communism. With the help of the US and Britain Germany was therefore divided so that it might provide a buffer to Eastern Europe and the communist threat. Following this logic West-Germany was economically and militarily aided to rebuild quickly to serve as a bulwark against the Soviet Union.

But in spite of this Germany was not one of the founding nations of the NATO-Treaty which officially formed in 1949 and consisted of twelve states including the US, Canada, the UK and other Western European states. During its formation, it actively aided former Nazi war criminals in evading justice. The so-called "Himmerod Memorandum" was a motion

put forward by former Wehrmacht generals whereby the re-arming of West-Germany would need to be accompanied by an amnesty for members of the Wehrmacht and a public declaration of the Allied forces that the Wehrmacht had not committed war crimes. The allies were willing and submitted to such terms, for example Eisenhower, commander of the NATO forces at this time, declared that the majority of the Wehrmacht acted honourably. Needless to say that such a statement spat in the face of all people, especially the people of Eastern Europe, who suffered at the hands of their German occupiers and endured the war of extermination against them.

But the allies would not stop there but would even adopt Hitlerites into their own ranks. The reason is of course obvious as these had acquired a vast range of knowledge about invading Eastern Europe and also, many other forms other colonial forms of combat. One of the most famous examples is General Adolf Heusinger, a German national who served in the German headquarter staff with the outbreak of WWII and helped to plan the invasions of Poland, Denmark, France, Norway and the low countries. In 1944 he was appointed by Adolf Hitler to be the Chief of the General Staff of the Army. A declassified CIA document states that Heusinger was most likely responsible for war crimes due to orders he signed concerning captured Soviet and Allied officers but because of his cooperation during the Nuremberg processes and the fact that he just initialled the orders that would determine the PoW's fate, no prosecution was undertaken. Rather, Heusinger was taken into service for the Office of the United States Chief of Counsel for War Crimes between 1945-48. In 1951 he was one of the almost 800.000 war criminals who benefited from the amnesty in West-Germany approved by the Allies. Heusinger was an integral part of the re-arming process and again rose through the ranks, finally serving from 1963-1964 as NATO's Chief-of-Staff. Other Nazis followed his example, to name just a few: General Hans Speidel who participated in the invasion of the Soviet Union became the Commander in Chief of the Allied Forces Central Europe; Sturmführer Dr. Eberhard Taubert who designed the Judenstern worked in the 1950s and 60s for NATO's "Psychological Warfare Department"; Ferdinand von Senger und Etterline was Lieutenant in the 24th Panzer Division and also became Commander in Chief of the Allied Forces in Europe from 1979-83. Those are just a few examples to highlight the level of cooperation with fascist forces.

Of course, other examples could be brought forward of wars of extermination being fought by NATO member states like the wars in Korea or Vietnam. We, as Irish Republicans also do not need to be reminded of the prominent role of the British Army in enforcing a violent occupation of six counties in Ireland. It is important to point out the similarities of the recent "Overseas Operations (Service Personnel and Veterans) Act" which was voted on in Westminster in 2021 and granted amnesty to war criminals who committed torture, rape and murder and that shows a similarity with the amnesty the German war criminals profited from. Both armies were engaged in a colonial conquest and maintaining oppressive rules. Both armies are now part of NATO.

It is then, clear to see, that an integral part of NATO is to safeguard war criminals and cover up their crimes. This is quite necessary considering, if we also look at other wars undertaken against international law like the bombardment of Yugoslavia in the late 90s which, it should be remembered, was the first war in Europe since WWII (not counting civil wars or wars of liberation like in Ireland). Sections of the media, however, now want to portray the current Russian regime as the warmonger who broke decades of peace by invading Ukraine.

Unfortunately, this article is insufficient to present a comprehensive history of NATO, although one could summarize it or at least the ideological justification of its existence nowadays, with the two symbols that flank the NATO headquarters in Brussels; one being a piece of the Berlin Wall and the other, a piece of the Twin Towers. The latter was the only incident whereby Article 5, "the NATO case of alliance", of the agreement was set into motion and enabled the rampage of Western imperialism across the Middle East. But one can observe the two ideological pillars of the whole construct; that of anti-communism and "liberal democracy peace keeping missions" and the "counter-terrorism" narrative. This could also be summed up as an imperialist broad front to prevent non-hegemonic nations to rise up and take control of their own resources.

But this ideology is crumbling and the contradictions within NATO are



*Adolf Heusinger: Hitler's Chief of Staff (1944)*



*Chairman of NATO (1961)*



sharpening which provides us with new opportunities.

The US is the main player, and indeed the main financier, but US-politicians are again questioning if the Treaty benefits their interests and we can observe a return of US-isolationism. The latter is also used as a threat to force other nations to militarise as the conflict between the US and Germany showed but this also leads to a separation of Europe from the US. Of course, it is needless to mention that the US still holds a tight grip over Europe through its nuclear weapons, military bases as well as ideologically. Despite a lot of talk by European leaders about moving away from NATO and the building of a "European Army" we have seen such attempts have been jeopardized by the escalation in Ukraine. The US takes notes of such dynamics, and it is unlikely that they will abandon Europe although one can already observe that the US is pulling out of the Ukrainian war and the pressure increases on the EU to fill the gaps. This has the effect that the EU and Russia are currently at a direct economic confrontation with no side taking the upper hand. This ultimately is benefiting the US which has been able to weaken main rivals like Russia, Germany and the UK.

Before the Ukrainian war, the Taliban dealt a severe blow to NATO and forced it to retreat after 20 years in Afghanistan. This not only proved that NATO could be defeated militarily but also that the peace building mission which is so often proclaimed as justification is only a sham. Thousands of people associated with the puppet regime were left abandoned by their Western allies. The "Western values" were left behind for everyone to see and it became obvious that the people of Afghanistan did not want foreign occupiers and for the working people in the imperial countries it became clear that you cannot bomb a country back to the stone age without retaliation. Indeed, the imperialists have not achieved one single goal that the ruling classes had announced before embarking on this mission of destruction.

This serious blow to the legitimacy of NATO could only be countered with the Russian threat which then materialized in Ukraine. But instead of protecting the people of Ukraine, the US and EU were inciting the war even further and escalating it as it served as the perfect reason to legitimize the Treaty and a further militarization of the Western countries, even drawing in new member states such as Sweden. But here we can also observe the sharpening of contradictions as it is almost only NATO countries that actively support Ukraine, providing over 90% of the war funding, while the rest of the world has become even more alienated from the so-called West.

The war in Ukraine is also in contradiction to the ongoing genocide in Palestine perpetrated by the Zionist entity. Just recently, after Iran's launch of rockets and drones, the G7 countries were at the forefront in preventing any further escalation. The G7 consists only of NATO countries and also Japan which is the focus of US foreign policy in Asia since the end of WWII. This highlights the fear NATO has of whether it could win or even sustain two such wars where vital puppet states like Ukraine and Israel are in danger. It has become obvious that NATO cannot defeat Russia, having as it does, only a fraction of the economic power of all NATO states. The same goes for the Palestinian resistance or Yemen which is showing that Imperialism really is a paper tiger. The US had offered Ansar Allah official recognition and economic support to

rebuild Yemen, if they would end the sea blockade in support of the Palestinian resistance. Ansar Allah ignored them.

Of course it is also known that despite NATO not being officially on the ground in either war, there is evidence of US and British personnel in Gaza and Ukraine. Just recently, in a discussion by high-ranking German officers leaked by the Russian intelligence service, they admitted that NATO personnel are on the ground and discussed whether the German Taurus rockets should be sent to Ukraine as these would provide the possibility to attack the Krim Bridge and even more crucial targets. But such revelations are often publicly dismissed in order to maintain some credibility in securing the peace.

Within such a context we have to analyse the Free State's policy and propaganda. Since the escalation in Ukraine and even before that we have observed a push by the Free State officials towards NATO, from openly cooperating with the Treaty to even considering joining it. The Free State army is compatible on a technical level with NATO forces. Regularly, we have seen NATO ships docked in our ports across the island, while Russian ships on the outskirts of our national waters have sparked hysteria incited by the media. This latter phenomenon is no accident, rather an artificial attempt to demonise Russia which never acted as a notable threat to Ireland, partly because of the geographical distance of the two nations. The absurdity and hypocrisy is obvious for every Irish Republican as we know that one NATO member state is occupying party of our island, harassing and murdering its people.

But of course this push towards NATO is only in the interest of the US and the British as both want to tie the Free State closer in to secure their direct foreign investment. Since the Celtic Tiger Era the Free State has functioned as a bridge-head for US capital into the EU. The erosion of the so-called neutrality of the Irish Free State is only securing that position.

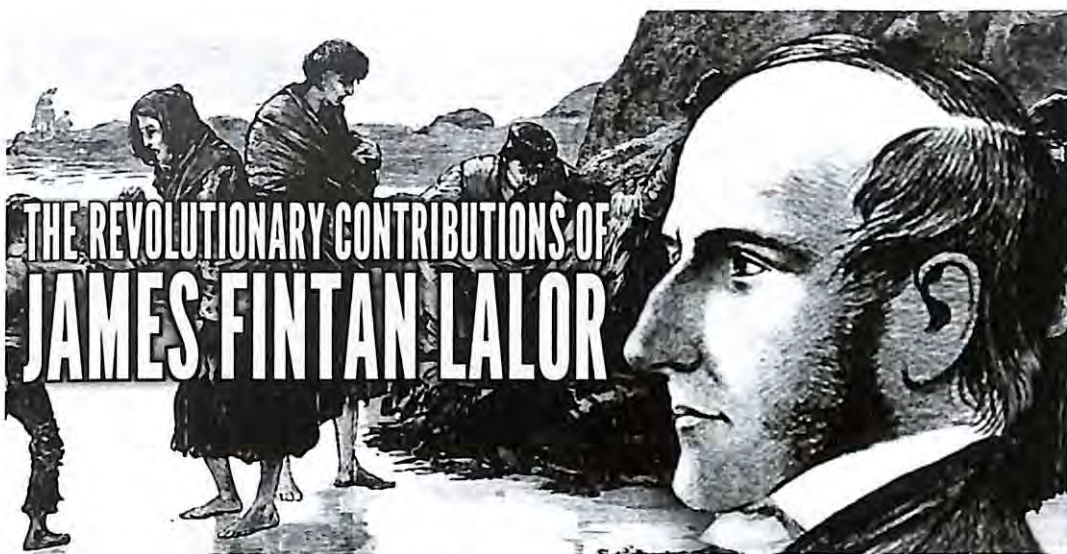
From many different thinkers we know that the militarisation against a "foreign threat" is always accompanied by an increase of repression against interior dissidents. We have already observed that in an increase of repression against Socialist Republicans as we saw house raids, internment or the new Hate Speech law implemented.

One of the most blatant examples of cooperation with NATO in Ireland is Shannon Airport in Co. Clare. Currently, daily flights are sustaining the genocidal attacks of the Zionist entity. Regular protests are being staged there and even an attempted blockade of the runway took place. This was similar to the incident in Dublin harbour, where recently three activists blocked a British warship bound for Palestine. Such divisions are the perfect opportunity for us to use against NATO propaganda as such cooperation prominently reveals the participation of the Irish Free State in perpetuating the genocide in Palestine. Such dynamics will be further increased if the Irish people submit to joining NATO or any further militarisation. We have to disclose such information through such outlets as An Phoblacht Abú or regular stalls in our towns and cities that can provide opportunities to agitate against such warmongering propaganda displayed daily by the biggest newspapers in our nation.

This struggle against NATO will also ultimately serve to further the struggle against the occupation of this island. Irish Republicans have to unite against the threat of a possible further NATO entry. It is our duty to take up the demands of the Palestinian resistance to end the genocide, apartheid and occupation; to demand an end to the war in Ukraine, in order to end the suffering of the Ukrainian and Russian people. To protect both countries national rights as this is a war between two Imperial blocs in which the Irish people and broader the working class of any nation has nothing to win except the suffering of their loved ones.

The contradictions are sharpening, the Irish working class are overwhelmingly already siding against NATO. In maintaining such attitudes and radicalizing these further we can ensure that Ireland not only breaks its connection with NATO and in broader sense US imperialism but also can kick out the British occupation forces in our lifetime. Ultimately, we will win.





*'The principle I state and mean to stand upon is this; that the entire ownership of Ireland, moral and material, up to the sun and down to the centre, is vested of right in the people of Ireland'.*

At a time when Marx and Engels had not yet finished the Communist Manifesto, James Fintan Lalor was espousing a revolutionary brand of Irish Socialist Republicanism as the guiding ideology for the Irish Revolution in the midst of England's genocidal campaign to depopulate the country by starving the Irish people to death through an artificially created 'famine'. For Lalor, the fight for freedom in Ireland was not about replacing one set of masters with another and he sought to link the demands of the people for land to the struggle for national liberation by advocating an agrarian revolution. Lalor was a committed Revolutionary Republican who believed the support of the Irish People could be won by republicanism if the Republican Movement became the engine for the reconquest of Ireland. In 1847 he asserted to John Mitchel that 'My object is to repeal the conquest- not any particular part or portion but the whole and entire conquest.' In other words, for Lalor the fight for freedom in Ireland was by necessity, the class struggle.

At the height of the genocide, Lalor was active in attempting to form tenants' rights associations across Ireland, to use rent strikes to break the back of the English Landlord system and end the starvation of the Irish People. The horrors of the genocide would lead Lalor to direct action to confront British Imperialism and he began to involve himself with the Young Ireland movement and its newspaper, The Nation. Later, he would become involved in the newspaper the Irish Felon which advocated a staunchly Irish Socialist Republican position. In its pages Lalor would write, 'the rights of property may be pleaded. No one has more respect for them than I have: but I do class among them the robber's right by which the lands of this country are now held in fee for the British Crown. I acknowledge no right of property in a small class which goes to abrogate the rights of a numerous people... I deny and

*challenge all such rights, howsoever founded or enforced. I challenge them as founded only on the code of the brigand, and enforced only by the sanction of the hangman'.*

But it was not alone with words that Lalor would fight to end British Rule in Ireland. 1848 was a year of armed revolutionary uprisings in Europe, and in Ireland it was no different. Using the pages of the Irish Felon as an organiser, something that would later be done by Lenin, Lalor began to establish a military organisation across Ireland, known as the Felon Clubs. Fintan Lalor showed himself to be a shrewd military strategist, arguing for the use of guerrilla warfare against the British Occupation, stating, 'the force of England is entrenched and fortified. You must draw it out of position; break up its mass; break its trained line of march and manoeuvre- its equal step and serried way.' With Revolution in the air, Fintan Lalor wrote an article in the Irish Felon on July 22 1848 that stated, 'Any man who objects to every plan of armed resistance that is proposed, while he produces none or no better of his own. Or any man who tells you that any armed act of resistance- even if made so soon as tomorrow- even if offered by ten men only- even if offered by ten men armed only with stones- any man that tells you that such an act of resistance would be premature, imprudent, or dangerous- any and every such man should at once be spurned and spat at. For remark you this and recollect it, that somewhere, somehow and by somebody a beginning must be made; and that the first act of resistance is always, and must ever be premature, imprudent, and dangerous.' He finished the article defiantly 'Who strikes first blow for Ireland? Who draws first blood for Ireland? Who wins a wreath that will be green forever?'

Six days later he was arrested and imprisoned under the suspension of habeas corpus by the British Government and would be in Gaol for the Young Ireland Uprising on July 29 1848 that he had greatly inspired and in many ways been the key architect of. Lalor was held in prison for a number of months but was released due to ill health. His revolutionary fervour was completely undiminished despite the toll prison had taken on his health and he immediately threw himself back into the work of organising a renewed uprising against British Rule in Ireland. To do so Lalor made use of the contacts

he had made in the embryonic military organisation established through the Felons Clubs, notably with leading Republicans including Michael Donaghy, John Savage, John O'Leary, Tom Clarke Luby, Philip Gray and Joseph Brennan. An immediate plan put into place by the Republicans now acting in a secret but unnamed military organisation, was to rescue the Young Ireland Prisoners including John Mitchel and William Smith O'Brien which was only unsuccessful due to the capture of a force of men under O'Leary at Clonmel by the British Army. Writing of the 1848/49 reorganisation, the great Fenian Charles Kickham said 'there were some spirits at the time whom neither defeat nor danger could subdue.' This was certainly true of Fintan Lalor. Recuperating after prison in a friends home in Dublin, this became the headquarters of the new revolutionary organisation. Funds were found for arms, men were trained and targets were picked for a new uprising. It was proposed that the visit to Dublin by queen Victoria would be appropriate for a symbolic insurrection. On the fateful night in August 150 armed men gathered close to James Street, but their plans came to a quick end when a police patrol arrived at their location, the plan likely betrayed by informers. Still undefeatable, Lalor called a convention for the organisation in Clonmel on Sept. 5 1849. It was agreed that the Republicans would hold simultaneous uprisings in Cork, Limerick, Clare, Killkenny, Cashel, Tipperary, Cappoquin and Dungarvan with a reserve force based in Carrick on Suir. Lalor was in charge at Cashel and was later captured in Clonmel and imprisoned for a period. Released once again he returned to Dublin where he planned the launch of a new Republican journal to rebuild the Revolutionary movement, but his revolutionary career had been taking a toll on his health and he died suddenly on December 27 1849, still planning for the next round of Revolution. As is fitting for a great Republican Revolutionary, Fintan Lalor's funeral on December 28 was a military display by 600 of his comrades marching four in a row through Dublin. The funeral was so large that it spanned the whole line of O'Connell Street.

While Lalor was dead, his revolutionary contributions would live to inspire the Fenians, Pearse, Connolly, Mellows, Costello and the Republicans of our own day. Chief among his important teachings that remain as relevant today as when he died in 1849 include, that Republicanism must be a movement of the working class people for their liberation, that a newspaper is a great Revolutionary organiser, that Armed Struggle is the only way to achieve Irish National Liberation and that despite the perceived failure of a battle, the war must always be reorganised as it will be protracted war. In many ways Fintan Lalor is the personification of Mao's famous maxim, 'Fight, fail, fight again, fail again, fight again... until their victory: that is the logic of the people, and they too will never go against this logic.'



# Palestine Shakes the World



The myth of Zionist invincibility was shattered on October 7th 2023. In the early hours of the morning, more than 5000 rockets were fired by the Palestinian Resistance in Gaza into Zionist occupied territory. "Israeli" early warning systems, apps and websites were hacked en masse to render them useless. Under cover of this rocket fire, thousands of Palestinian militants broke out of Gaza and advanced on the occupiers. The Zionist occupation forces were utterly routed as more and more fighters poured in, many of the soldiers being killed or captured before they had time to react. Ordinary citizens of Gaza broke out of their prison as well, many of them for the first time in their lives, cutting through fences, bulldozing walls, celebrating atop burning Merkava tanks. Over 240 hostages were taken by Palestinians. In the course of one morning, the national liberation struggle in Palestine had been raised to new heights.

The events of October 7th are by now well known. It is hard to do justice however to the sheer ingenuity, courage and careful planning involved. What became known as Operation Al Aqsa Flood was the result of months of preparation, training secretly in the vast network of tunnels beneath Gaza, developing communications that the sophisticated Zionist surveillance apparatus could not detect. It is almost certainly the greatest victory since the occupation began in 1948. Naturally the reaction from "Israel" and among the Western imperialist governments was abject shock and horror: how could this have happened? They were so desperate not to credit the Palestinian people for their success that some developed conspiracy theories of false flags or deliberate incompetence; anything to avoid the simple reality that they had been utterly humiliated.

It was several days before the Zionists retaliated in full, and the reaction was predictable as it was revolting. Brutal methods were deployed to recapture lost territory, including the mass slaughter of their own settlers in the border areas to eliminate small numbers of Palestinian fighters. The bombardment of Gaza was on a scale not seen in a decade began. By October 27th, a full scale ground invasion of Gaza was launched, supported by enormous military aid from the USA, Britain

and other allies. The response has been totally indiscriminate and genocidal. Alongside this military offensive, the propaganda offensive of the Zionists was raised to ever greater heights. Stories of mass rape by Palestinian fighters, of babies thrown in ovens, whole families massacred, teenagers butchered in their hundreds at a music festival were spread across the globe by Zionists and their allies in the western media. They worked hard to make the spectre of this violence the dominating discussion around Al Aqsa Flood.

Since then, the Zionist narrative of October 7th has been shredded beyond repair. Idiotic drivel about beheaded babies or people thrown in ovens has been debunked. The lies about mass rape and sexual assault have been exposed. Not a single hostage taken or survivor from the settlements has claimed that rape occurred. The supposed mass slaughter of Zionist settlers has been proven in large part to be the result of a trigger-happy Zionist military. The unremitting slaughter of Palestinians has torn down any illusion of "self-defence" for all to see. So brutal has the genocide been that the bodies buried in the rubble are beyond the capabilities of the Gazan administration to track. Attempts to situate the violence of October 7th as a brand new event as opposed to another link in a chain extending back to 1948 and before have crumbled in the face of this horror.

Over the course of the Gazan ground invasion however, resistance by all the Palestinian factions has been fierce. Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, our comrades in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and many more have been united in waging an unremitting struggle against the invasion, as well as against incursions in the West Bank. They have been united in the Joint Operations Room established in 2018 to coordinate military efforts against the occupation. While undoubtedly Hamas remains the largest faction within this united front, all factions have played a vital role. We have seen fighters armed only with explosives charging state-of-the-art tanks, placing the explosives and making their way to safety. The entire technological might of the West has been challenged by some of the most impoverished and



oppressed masses on earth.

There has been some handwringing from reformists and sections of the Left internationally on the nature of groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad. They're reactionary/Islamist/petty bourgeois, take your pick. Organisations and individuals who take this line, that only socialist forces can truly be supported, have little understanding of revolution, let alone the struggle against imperialism. These are the same cries we've heard in Ireland for over a century, particularly in response to the 1916 Rising. Lenin's reply to those cynics who denounced the Rising applies just as well to Palestine:



"To imagine that social revolution is conceivable without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices, without a movement of the politically non-conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against oppression by the landowners, the church, and the monarchy, against national oppression, etc.-to imagine all this is to repudiate social revolution. So one army lines up in one place and says, "We are for socialism", and another, somewhere else and says, "We are for imperialism", and that will be a social revolution! Only those who hold such a ridiculously pedantic view could vilify the Irish rebellion by calling it a "putsch".

*"Whoever expects a "pure" social revolution will never live to see it. Such a person pays lip-service to revolution without understanding what revolution is."*

"The Discussion On Self-Determination Summed Up", 1916.

As with all Zionist narratives, fantasies of a mythical "unity" between the Palestinian and Zionist settler working classes have been shredded. Every poll run by 'Israeli' media gives the same result: 'Israelis' are in complete support of the efforts in Gaza. Notions from those on the left that the anti-Netanyahu protests represent a positive trend are simply delusions: they oppose his restrictions on rights for settlers, or his prosecution of the genocide for being ineffective, they do not oppose Zionism. The genocidal settler-colonial entity that is 'Israel' is united top to bottom, across classes, gender and political, towards the destruction of the Palestinian people. The ideology of Zionism is

inescapable and undergirds even the most progressive settlers, whose very existence relies on the legitimacy of their state. The few 'Israelis' that have expressed any real dissent against the mass slaughter are irrelevant, ostracised and suppressed with broad approval. There can be no more pretending that there could ever be a kinder, more liberal or progressive Zionism.

As well as the enemy without however, the resistance forces have also had to contend with the enemy within. The Palestinian Authority led by Mahmoud Abbas was set up as a proxy state for the Zionists to control the occupied West Bank. It has always been a comprador regime, and yet they have taken their collaboration to disgusting new lows. Resistance fighters across the West Bank have been imprisoned and murdered. Abbas has met with American and Zionist dignitaries, and has even been involved in talks about taking over the administration of Gaza on behalf of the Occupation. The PA has no legitimacy whatsoever, and the overwhelming support for the Resistance factions in the West Bank is testament to that. Armed operations continue daily, as well as growing unrest against the Authority. There have been growing signs of discontent among the PA Security services, and it is hard to believe that this position of collaboration can be maintained indefinitely. The growing repression in the West Bank is only another sign of the desperation of Zionism to maintain its grip, and testament to how deeply the Resistance has shaken imperialism.

### The Arab World Awakens

That the struggle of the Palestinians for National Liberation is a great boost to the forces of revolution and anti-imperialism worldwide cannot be denied. The impact it has had on social movements in the West, in the Arab and Islamic world, in bringing out the contradictions between imperialists and between the third world and the first, shows the sheer impact of their struggle. How could it be otherwise, when the "Israeli" regime is such a lynchpin for American imperialism, key to their domination in the entire region? And we have seen that their malignant presence in the Middle East has only spurred resistance to greater heights.

While the initial wave of protests that shook the Arab and Muslim world have somewhat died down, they still continue with an energy and belligerence not seen since the Arab Spring. In Jordan in particular, hundreds have been arrested and the forces of order repeatedly scrambled to prevent the utter destruction of the Zionist embassy, with hundreds arrested. The normalisation project sponsored by NATO between "Israel" and the Arab dictatorships has been totally disrupted. Having only been opened in September of 2023, the Zionist Embassy in Bahrain was shut down by November following widespread protests. Egypt has been approached by both the Zionists and the US as part of a proposed plan to expel Palestinians from Gaza into the Sinai desert, but these plans have been thwarted by the popular solidarity movement in that country. Saudi Arabia has desperately attempted to find an end to the conflict to no avail. In Morocco, where the ruling monarchy has long been close to Zionism, protests have exploded. There are too many protests and mobilisations to cover here. What is clear is that the issue of Palestine brings the masses of the Middle East and North Africa in direct confrontation with the imperialists and the comprador regimes they sponsor.

The most important contribution in defence of Palestine however has come from what has been called the Axis of Resistance, an alliance of groups supported or directly armed by Iran. Hezbollah and their allies in Lebanon have been waging a war of attrition on the northern border of occupied Palestine since October 8th. This has included exchanges of missile and artillery fire, suicide drones and air strikes. Despite extreme provocation by the Zionist forces it has yet to escalate into full



scale war, but these efforts have tied up hundreds of thousands of Zionist troops defending the north frontier. At the time this article was written, nearly 300 Hezbollah fighters have been martyred in this conflict. There have also been continual attacks by pro-Iran Iraqi resistance groups against Western and Zionist targets. Missiles have been fired directly into 'Israeli' territory, particularly the port of Eilat. On the 28th of January the Islamic Resistance in Iraq umbrella group took credit for a drone attack on the American Tower 22 base in Jordan, killing two soldiers.

Most spectacularly of all has been the response of Yemen to the genocide, spearheaded by the ruling Ansarallah movement. Their blockade of the Red Sea has enormously disrupted global trade networks and particularly Zionist trade. They have achieved this despite seriously lacking in resources, relying on small boats, missiles and helicopters to divert capital flows that have incurred an incalculable financial cost to imperialism. To see one of the most impoverished and war-torn countries on earth, devastated by years of imperialist conflict and plunder, go toe to toe with NATO for months is astounding. The impact of these actions has rightfully elevated the Yemeni forces to hero status in the Arab world and among progressive across the planet. The Yemeni strategy has also been incredibly shrewd politically; by largely avoiding causing casualties among the workers on the boats, treating prisoners humanely and referring to international law that provides for the right of intervention to prevent genocide, they have cut through many of the attempts to smear them by Western media. The NATO response was predictable; missile strikes on Yemeni territory, political sanctions and threats. These have utterly failed to prevent the blockade, as much of the efforts to crush resistance have failed.

For months the Zionist regime has been attempting to draw the entire region into open warfare to destroy that resistance. Their apparent hope is to drag the United States directly into military confrontation with resistance forces in the region. An 'Israeli' strike on Beirut on January 2nd killed Hamas leader Saleh al-Arouri in the heart of a Hezbollah supporting area. Recently we appeared to be on the precipice of such a war when on April 1st 2024 the Zionists bombed the Iranian Embassy in Damascus, Syria. The Iranian response on April 13th was unprecedented: over 400 missiles and drones fired not only from groups in Iraq and Syria, but from Iranian territory itself. While the attack caused limited damage, it showed the enormous threat that the Iranian Republic represents for 'Israel'. It also exposed the entire chain of imperialism in the region; comprador Jordan intervened to shoot down drones, Britain and the US scrambled their fighter jets, all in a mad dash to protect the faltering Zionist entity. That the Zionists have utterly failed to respond in kind, despite the openly stated desire to do so from top Zionist figures, shows how terrified American imperialism

is of a regional war: who else could have restrained the settler fascists? A statement from the PFLP on the occasion of this action summarises it well: "The legitimate Iranian response has broken the prestige of the Zionist entity and revealed its fragility and in ability to defend itself." But it is not only in the region that Zionist interests have come under unprecedented attack.

### Solidarity in the West

For the past 6 months this conflict has triggered discussions by workers about the legitimacy of armed struggle, the right to resist, colonialism and imperialism not seen in decades. The role of Western imperialism in genocide is at the very forefront. It has led to a mass solidarity movement across the West not seen since the Iraq war, and perhaps even the Vietnam War. It could well lead to the defeat of Joe Biden in the next US election. It has mobilised millions in protests, boycott actions, occupations and more. We have seen tens of thousands march across Ireland to demand the expulsion of the ambassador, sanctions on the entity and a free Palestine. Even in America where support for 'Israel' was long thought to be unassailable we have seen the consensus collapse in the face of a mass protest movement. The imperialist states that have armed, funded and nurtured the Zionist monster for decades have finally faced consequences for their acts.

The despair of the ruling classes in the face of this movement has been plain. Predictably the response in many countries has been repression. In France and Germany protests have been banned outright, thousands arrested for flying the Palestinian national flag, for speaking Arabic, for wearing a Keffiyeh or simply attending a march. In Britain the new pernicious laws on "Hatred" and policing have led to widespread arrests. We have seen in Ireland also numerous protesters arrested for direct actions, including a number of members of Anti Imperialist Action and Saoirse don Phalaistin on trumped up charges. The media classes in particular appear to be having a collective nervous breakdown in the face of a collapsing Zionist consensus. They decry protesters as terrorist supporting extremists, anti-Semites, fascists, thugs etc. Countless thousands have been purged from their employment across Europe and North America for their support of Palestine. Unlike in the past however this has done nothing to blunt support and growing outrage at the genocide. Despite ebbs and flows the Palestine solidarity movement is here to stay, and if recent events such as vicious state response to the student camp in Columbia University in America are any indication, may yet intensify.

This solidarity movement however has been prevented from reaching its full potential by the constant interference and misleadership of reformists and reactionaries. More radical demands of Palestinian self-determination and armed struggle have been redirected towards more harmless calls for a ceasefire that shows no signs of being granted. In Ireland we have seen reformists in the Palestine movement balk at direct action by Socialist Republicans and Palestine activists, in Dublin especially preferring routine marches away from any "sensitive" targets. Since early October these marches have consisted of avoiding hot spots like the Zionist or American embassies and marching instead to safer (and more pointless) locations as the Department of Foreign Affairs or Leinster House before quickly dissipating in the wake of repetitive and tedious speechifying. In the face of genocide, it is absurd that there are still those who recoil at the idea of supporting the armed resistance of the Palestinian people, and yet there are many who openly do so who are considered genuine supporters of Palestine. Some no doubt were more comfortable with their notions of Palestinians as perpetual victims, their illusions shattered just as the Zionists' were. Even now they say the Resistance cannot win, or that any other path is even conceivable. It brings to mind James Connolly when he wrote that





“Revolution is never practical until the roar of revolution strikes. Then it alone is practical, and all the efforts of the conservatives and compromisers become the most futile and visionary of human language.” Workshop Talks (1909)

Despite sabotage efforts, the overwhelming support for Palestine among the Irish working class is undeniable. Boycott protests and actions have grown and 79% of people in an ‘Ireland Thinks’ poll in February agreed that “Israel” is committing genocide in Gaza. Despite poor organisation and less than inspiring tactics, marches have continued to draw great numbers.

Organisations like Sinn Féin have exposed themselves over and over on the Palestinian questions, being booed repeatedly by crowds in Belfast and Cork for their betrayals. Particularly in the Occupied 6 counties, SF has worked tirelessly to sabotage and undermine Palestine solidarity. Their decision to lick the boots of Joe Biden for St Patrick’s Day led to widespread anger. The response was typically arrogant: in one disgraceful case, Palestinians protesting against the Biden visit were physically thrown out of a SF Palestine meeting in Belfast for daring to disagree with the betrayal. This behaviour only demonstrates their insecurity. After initially refusing to call for the Zionist Ambassador to be expelled from Ireland, they were forced to reverse their position in early November following popular pressure. Their ties to the collaborationist Palestinian Authority have also come under fire from Palestinians and Republicans who rightfully denounce the murder, imprisonment and torture of Palestinian resistance fighters.

The Free State administration also has been under enormous pressure, and forced to adopt positions and give statements it would avoid under any other circumstance. The recent decision to support the South African case against “Israel” at the International Court of Justice would be unthinkable without this pressure. Nonetheless the Free State has still managed to ignore all the major demands of the movement. Weapons and troops continue to pass through Shannon Airport to the Middle East. There have been no sanctions, no expulsion of Zionist diplomatic staff. Nothing that would truly strike a blow against Zionism and upset their imperialist masters is permitted. While the repression of the Free State has been highly targeted against those engaged in direct action, it is nowhere near as widespread as repression in Europe and North America, precisely because the consensus in the working class is so overwhelmingly pro-Palestinian.



*Fighters of the PFLP*

Socialist Republicans have been at the forefront of Palestinian solidarity in terms of carrying out direct actions, of pushing support for the Palestinian National Resistance and being uncompromising in



*The taming of a paper tiger.*

opposition to Zionism and imperialism. The tone was set on October 9th, when a member of Anti Imperialist Action climbed the fence of the Zionist Embassy in Dublin and threw red paint over its door. Since then there have been boycott actions, occupations, a campaign against the landlord of the Embassy and more. There is much more to do however, particularly in terms of pushing back against liberal and reformist lines that continue to dominate.

## Conclusions

As Socialist Republicans and Communists, the importance of the struggle in Palestine cannot be understated. The lines drawn in Ireland and across the world have exposed opportunists, reformists and the entire imperialist system. The very right of an oppressed people to resist occupation is under constant attack from the imperialists, and given fierce reply by thousands of martyred Palestinian dead.

What lessons can Socialist Republicans take from this struggle? Perhaps the most important is the absolute necessity of an anti-imperialist broad front. The Palestinian national resistance has demonstrated its efficacy beyond any doubt. Islamists, communists and secular national liberation groups have united in the common goal of destroying Zionist occupation. They coordinate statements and political positions. Militarily they operate under a single Joint Operations Room and harmonise their efforts while still maintaining organisational independence. They recognise that the primary contradiction facing the Palestinian people is the destruction of the Zionist settler state. The divisions that have fractured the Republican movement in Ireland are minor compared with the differences between Hamas and the PFLP, and yet they have found unity. This should serve as a clarion call for mobilisation, discussions and debates around a unified struggle in Ireland as well.

Understanding the tactics and strategy of both the Palestinian Resistance and the Zionist entity is also vital for any Irish revolutionary project. The Resistance factions have learned a great deal from guerrilla struggles globally and have deployed every conceivable method to prosecute their war. Their technological innovations in the use of para-gliders, drones, tunnels, cyber warfare, amphibious assaults, propaganda films have been proven extremely effective. They have succeeded in preserving their forces and inflicting major losses on their occupiers even in the most densely populated urban environment on the planet. They have demonstrated powerfully that a people’s war can be waged in even the most unfavourable conditions. It cannot be ignored that they have expertly used Gaza’s position as a quasi “base area” to develop its capabilities.

The Zionist forces however have perfectly embodied the phrase “paper





tiger” in their blundering efforts to destroy the resistance. Nonetheless, the genocidal methods they’ve deployed against the people of Gaza must be noted as well. Mass starvation and blockades, the unrestricted use of drone warfare, the population control, artificial intelligence, facial recognition tech, the ritualised humiliation, all these methods will be noted and deployed by imperialism against ghettoised and oppressed populations going forward. British and American special forces are on the ground in Palestine encouraging and directing their use. Any Irish revolution will someday face the same methods.

The national liberation struggle in Palestine, as well as that of the Axis of Resistance, has also underscored the paramount importance of media and propaganda. By the use of clever and highly well produced propaganda, they have been able to take full advantage of the internet and social media to spread their message and savage the Zionist narrative. The red triangle has become a ubiquitous symbol of resistance as a result of the Al Qassam Brigades videos. Ansarallah’s videos from the captured ships as well of their spectacular helicopter in November last year became a sensation. Every Zionist atrocity is highlighted, broadcast and scrutinised with precision. The endless stream of tiktok videos, instagram reels, telegram posts and materials on so many more platforms have created a total saturation that the imperialist media simply cannot compete with. The agitprop has been perfectly tailored for maximum impact, and so should it be in Ireland as well.

International solidarity and building real, tangible links with revolutionary and progressive groups abroad is also vital. Calls from the Palestinian resistance groups to the people of the Arab world have been heeded. They have also provided them focus and targets for their anger, enlisting their support as well as giving them direction. The Palestinian Resistance has recognised the importance of the solidarity

movement in the West, even with its limitations, and encouraged it at every turn. The world has never been more closely interconnected, and imperialism continues to be largely united even with the rise of challengers and opposite poles. Resistance against imperialism must therefore also be united, and the Irish struggle for National Liberation and Socialism must work to be an integrated part of it. The international communist movement should also take the lesson to work openly with those struggling against imperialism.

There are many more lessons we can take from Palestine, far too many for a single article. Perhaps the most important message, however, is to take inspiration from the fearless sacrifice, dedication and unyielding spirit that the Palestinian people have demonstrated before the eyes of the world. No technological innovation or state of the art weaponry has broken them. They have risen out of their concentration camps and out of the most dire poverty and oppression imaginable to resist with everything they have. They are a people who truly have nothing to lose but their chains. The Palestinian people through their defiance have demonstrated that imperialism can be defeated. The only fitting tribute to their sacrifice is that we be just as uncompromising and dedicated in our pursuit of revolution, in our rejection of the imperialist status quo that is smothering our own country as they have been. We should firmly embrace that their struggle is our struggle. Our liberation is their liberation.

Palestine will be free, from the river to the sea.

Ireland will be free, from the plough to the stars.

### *Dublin: Birds of a feather...*







It is impossible to deny or overlook the accomplishments of the late Professor Jose Maria Canlas Sison, also affectionately known as "Ka Joma" and "Tito Jo", as a revolutionary and Filipino patriot.

Born in the medieval Filipino province of Ilocos Sur on the island of Luzon in 1939, Sison grew up during a period of war in the Philippines through the years 1941 to 1954. His childhood was marked by the Japanese occupation of the Philippines during the Second World War and the subsequent American counterinsurgency against the communist Hukbalahap who had resisted the Japanese. Sison, being from a landowning family, was able to take up third level studies in English and Political Studies. A good student, Sison did well in university and was hired as a literature professor. Sison's love for language, particularly literature, would continue into his revolutionary life where he would become both an award-winning poet and guerrilla leader.

When Sison joined and rose through the ranks of the Communist Party of the Philippines, it had been destroyed by the revisionism of its Khrushchevite leadership, which had degenerated into right-wing capitulationism following the decline of the Hukbalahap guerrilla. The Communist Party, under Jesus Lava, now supported co-operation with the US puppet government which had crushed it on the battlefield a decade prior. In 1965, Sison began using his influence to rally members of the party's youth wing Kabataang Makabayan and veterans of the Hukbalahap against the party's bankrupt leadership. Sison played an instrumental role in re-organising the large mass base, re-founding the Communist Party of the Philippines in 1968 and thus founding the revolutionary Maoist party which wages protracted people's war in the Philippines today.

This was known as the First Great Rectification Movement. Key documents published among party members at the time written by Sison include "Rectify Errors and Rebuild the Party" and the "Program for a People's Democratic Revolution" in which the theoretical vision for the rejuvenated Communist Party was laid out. Sison correctly analysed the semi-feudal and semi-colonial conditions in the Philippines and seized the moment during an upsurge of the people's wars in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Thailand by calling for the re-

organisation of the people's armed forces under the Communist Party and the beginning of a protracted people's war for people's democratic revolution.

This people's democratic revolution, Sison explained, would unite every class in the Philippines with a vested interest in destroying imperialism, semi-feudalism, and semi-colonialism under the leadership of the proletariat. Sison outlined three essential tasks for the party: "party building, armed struggle and the national united front." Sison's analysis blew the revisionist pacifism of Lava out of the water by explaining the only way to defend the gains (the "armed independent regime") of such a revolution would be using force against force. As such, Sison argued that alongside the mass political "legal struggle" of the united front and agrarian revolution, a key part of the revolution would be a "war of annihilation."

*"There is only one road which the working class under the leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines must take. It is the road of armed revolution to smash the armed counterrevolution that preserves foreign and feudal oppression in the Philippines."*

Sison's view was driven by his analysis of Filipino class history which held that the struggle for land was the primary turning point for revolution in the country. After the re-establishment of the CPP, Sison wrote his key work, "Philippine Society and Revolution" in which the development of the Philippines was scrutinised in its entirety on a materialist basis. Step-by-step, Sison understood the importance of the struggle for land in the Philippines, how it shaped the struggle against colonialism and later semi-feudalism, and how a "national democratic revolution" would be needed to resolve the national and class question by bringing about a sovereign Filipino state along the lines of Maoist new democracy.

And so, the National Democratic movement would be born. In 1969, the New People's Army was formed by the CPP, with an announcement declaring that "The universal truth of Mao Zedong Thought is now being consciously and thoroughly integrated with the concrete practice of the Philippine revolution." Followed up by the formation of the National Democratic Front, which encompasses both the party and people's army along with other wings of the revolutionary movement such as its women's wing Makibaka, the tasks Sison had set out to accomplish were completed and completed well. At the command of

the Filipino revolution were a capable party, people's army, and united front which had begun to wage war against the state.

The mass legal struggle in the National Democratic movement also grew exponentially during a period of unrest called the First Quarter Storm. It was Sison's initiative which allowed the revolutionary movement to promote the formation of hundreds of legal activist groups and trade unions which form the millions strong "NDMO" mass organisations which are seen in the Philippines today. As the New People's Army grew rapidly across the countryside, state repression under the martial law of Ferdinand Marcos increased. Sison directed the people's war from the ground, marching from camp to camp with gun in hand to direct the revolution. He was arrested in 1977, regularly tortured and placed in solitary confinement until his release after the liberal EDSA revolution in 1986. Despite the new liberal government's attempts to appease the CPP's leadership, once it became clear that it would not resolve the semi-feudal and semi-colonial contradictions of the country after the Mendiola Massacre, Sison opted against selling out and decided that the revolution would persist until victory.

For this, he was exiled in 1988, staying in the Netherlands and surviving assassination attempts and malicious lawfare. Sison continued to organise for the National Democratic Front from his exile, leading its negotiations panel in 2016 where he ultimately again chose the path of revolution and used peace talks as a strategy for the struggle rather than to capitulate. He formed the International League of People's Struggles in 2001 to organise legal national democratic mass organisations into a joint international body. His continued insights on Maoist theory and the global situation were incredibly valuable after his exile. For example, after the outbreak of the inter-imperialist war in Ukraine and Donbass, Sison put forward the correct political line and called for neutrality in the conflict. He also often stood against and criticised Chinese social imperialism and revisionism, exposing Chinese imperialism's role in the exploitation of the Philippines.

Sison often expressed his solidarity with and communicated with the Irish republican movement, clearly taking an active interest in it. The solidarity between the Filipino Maoists and Irish republicans goes back to the efforts of Ruairi Ó Brádaigh and his internationalist leadership of the provisional movement. In Ireland, there is much we can learn from Sison and how he creatively and originally chose to apply Maoist theory to the conditions of the Philippines, starting from its pre-colonial beginnings and analysing each major contradiction which led to its present-day state. His work paid off, as his party is now one of the most advanced communist revolutions ongoing in the world today, with a party of 150,000 and an advancing people's war, which, hearkening back to Sison's contributions, was able to persist through another Rectification Movement and build a steadfast and lasting democratic centralist organisation which has been able to survive the strains of revisionism and conspiracy for 55 years. We can also learn from some of his broader contributions to Maoist theory, such as the "unity-criticism-repudiation-unity" model which is applied in the CPP today.



# NÍ SAOIRSE GO SAOIRSE NA mBAN



## For a Proletarian Feminist Line

*'Without the participation of women, mother Ireland was going into battle with one arm tied behind her back' – Maud Gonne*

### Introduction: Half the Sky

**The question of women's emancipation is key to proletarian revolution. If women are not involved in the struggle, it is sure to fail. All the most advanced revolutions share in common a vital role of women; it is a question of political line. Maoism shows us that with the correct line, we advance, with an incorrect one we fall back. Proletarian feminism is not an appendage but the correct application of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism to the question of women's emancipation and that of all oppressed genders with socialist republicanism as its guiding thought in Ireland.**

The Communist Party of Peru (Shining Path) led the first guerrilla army where women outnumbered men. It was Augusta La Torre, better known as Comrade Norah, who orchestrated the first guerrilla actions before going underground. Some argue Chairman Gonzalo was the more 'theoretical leadership' and her the more 'practical leadership', key in beginning the People's War. The burning of ballot boxes in Ayacucho was done by a team of almost entirely women; their spark lit the Andes afire. Among the PCP's Great Leadership was a high number of women, Comrade Norah herself on the politburo. She co-authored with Catalina Adrianzen the seminal work 'Marxism, Mariategui and the Women's Movement' where the PCP lays out the theoretical basis for women's emancipation in Peru. High participation of women is owed to the strength of their political line on this question, producing great female commanders like Edith Lagos, who liberated 360 prisoners from Ayacucho prison. With the bend in the road of the Peru's People's War, women are still denied emancipation. The reactionary state recently set free Fujimori (who oversaw the mass sterilization of indigenous women).

At home the Irish Citizen's Army – alongside being the first Red Army in Europe – was ahead of its time in the roles women played in its operations. Connolly saw the importance of mobilising proletarian women:

*'In Ireland the women's cause is felt by all Labour men and women as their cause; the Labour cause has no more earnest and whole-hearted supporters than the militant women. Rebellion, even in thought, produces a mental atmosphere of its own; the mental atmosphere the women's rebellion produced, opened their eyes and trained their minds to an understanding of the effects upon their sex of a social system in which the weakest must inevitably go to the wall [ ] Thus the spread of industrialism makes for the awakening of a social consciousness, awakes in women a feeling of self-pity as the greatest sufferers under social and political injustice; the divine wrath aroused when that self-pity*

*is met with a sneer, and justice is denied, leads women to revolt, and revolt places women in comradeship and equality with all the finer souls whose life is given to warfare against established iniquities.'* [1]

Connolly does make one error in assuming a weaker nature of women. Back in 2013 the reactionary Indian State reported 60% of active Maoist militants to be women and admitted 'their fighting capabilities are as good as men' [2]. When their potential is realised, when they see they do not have to go to the wall if they defy it, proletarian women are among the most dangerous militants. Marxism-Leninism-Maoism continues to be the most advanced revolutionary science, lighting the path forward for women's emancipation from Peru to India. Anuradha Ghandy of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) is accredited by many as setting out proletarian feminism and her works are crucial.

To establish a proletarian feminist line in Ireland it is of key importance to study women's participation in the ongoing struggle against imperialism, to understand the oppression of Irish women on a historical materialist basis and to distinguish the class interests in the Irish women's movement.

### Women and the Irish Revolution

There's a rich history of revolutionary republican women which imperialism has done its utmost to suppress or blunt with shallow tokenisation. As long as there has been a struggle for national liberation, there have been women involved and their participation has only increased with time and the development of capitalism-imperialism.

The Ladies Land League was dissolved by Charles Parnell for being 'too militant' after surrendering with the Kilmainham treaty. After men were imprisoned, it was the Ladies Land League which took charge of the land war. But Anna Parnell saw a growing capitulationist trend: *'the land league wanted a perpetual petticoat screen, behind which they could shelter, not from the Government but from the people'* [3]. As her brother veered towards opportunism, abandoning the land war in favour of 'home rule', she saw that *'Ireland is a separate country by the act of nature, and therefore cannot be well-governed, except by herself'* [4], opting for full self-determination.

Inghinidhe na hÉireann, founded in 1900, was instrumental in building up the republican movement again for the 20th century. It opposed Home-Rulers, opting for *'complete separatism [from Britain], the rising cause of feminism and the interest of Irishwomen generally'* [5]. Over the years it engaged in meal programmes for schools, militant opposition to British recruitment and fought for cultural revival of the Irish language, literature, art, music, history. This work was done through classes and 'Bean na hÉireann' – a radical nationalist magazine which ran for three years, radicalising many women. Constance Markievicz



was one. Editor Helena Molony described the magazine as a 'mixture of guns and chiffon' [6]. A range of topics were covered from the national question, international politics, a labour section focusing on class struggle to things like fashion and gardening. It aimed to counteract both chauvinist views against women and weak solutions to the national question in the 'United Irishman' paper edited by Arthur Griffith, feeling that his:

*'Socially conservative views about women and the working class, and his proposed pathway to Irish Independence through the dual kingdom of nineteenth century Hungary, neither of these journals sufficiently attended to the Irish feminist and socialist movements'.* [7]

Inghinidhe was of a proletarian character, its first meeting reportedly all working class with the exception of Maud Gonne. They linked the national struggle, class struggle and women's struggle effectively. While the petit-bourgeois section of the suffragette movement were campaigning for the right to vote to be included in the home-rule bill, Inghinidhe held firm to the republican position, knowing women's emancipation would come with national liberation & socialism and not a vote in the British parliament. Inghinidhe cadre helped establish the Irish Women's Workers Union and were active around the 1913 lockout which included 1,000 proletarian women. This oriented many of them even further towards socialism and likely influenced Connolly's own views on women's emancipation. At one rally to great cheers he repudiated 'domination of nation over nation, of class over class, or of sex over sex'. As many as 30 women were involved in the ICA during the 1916 rising and once again, many came from Inghinidhe. Women trained alongside men and took part in military actions. Helena Molony (who became its secretary) said:

*'Connolly, staunch feminist that he was – was more than anxious to welcome women into the ranks on equal terms with men, and to promote them to such rank and position as they were suited for.'* [8]

The ICA's more militant role for women contrasts with Cumann na mBan which undertook almost entirely a support role to the Volunteers who did not allow women membership. They rarely got opportunity to take up arms with some notable exceptions like Linda Kearns, Eithne Coyle, Mae Burke. Many women resented this auxiliary role, opting to fight with the ICA instead. There is however some argument as to the extent of gender equality within the ICA given roles like first aid and food provision were seemingly still influenced by gender divisions. On this point Markiewicz said women were:

*'Absolutely on the same footing as the men. They took part in all marches, and even in the manoeuvres that lasted all night [...] Connolly made it quite clear to us that unless we women took our share in the drudgery of training and preparing, we should not be allowed to take any share in the fight. You may judge how fit we were when I tell you that sixteen miles was the length of the average route march.'* [9]

None of this is to downplay the important contributions of brave CnamB volunteers. Rather it is to say that besides the ICA, the republican movement tailed behind the women of Ireland, underestimating and underutilising them. Regardless, CnamB served important roles in first aid, gun-running, intelligence, famously supplying safe houses for the flying columns and undertaking various activities to fundraise and garner mass-support for the national struggle. British military reports admitted that 'women's clubs and committees have been formed in places and women are unfortunately the most active supporters' [10]. Cathal Brugha said: 'In the aftermath of 1916, while most male leaders were imprisoned, it was the women who kept the spirit alive [...] the flag flying.' [11]

Inghinidhe had united with CnamB in 1915 with clear influence, comprising a sort of socialist republican faction, carrying on the cultural revival project the organisation held Irish language classes and many dances and céilíthe which served dual-purpose as recruitment. By 1918 CnamB had 600 branches and close to 20,000 members nationwide and £253,463 had been raised for the cause. Inghinidhe laid many of these foundations, being the theoretically stronger of the two.

When Redmond called for Irish men to fight in World War I, CnamB opposed it, declaring that 'to urge or encourage Irish Volunteers to enlist in the British Army cannot [...] be regarded as consistent with the task we have set ourselves to do' [12]. This issue had split supposed communists, breaking apart the second international. CnamB took the principled anti-imperialist stance Connolly and Lenin stood for. In preventing conscription of Irish men they were instrumental, calling June 6th L.á na mBan where thousands of Irish women signed a pledge to not carry out the work of men if conscription occurred. CnamB was also among the first to oppose the Treaty, holding firm against counter-revolution. This caused the fringe Treatyite split Cumann na Saoirse. CnamB propaganda acts continued which were suppressed by the new-born reactionary Free State and it was CnamB who began the practice of selling and wearing the Easter Lily to support republican prisoners. Two of CnamB were martyred in the counter-revolution and thousands imprisoned. But even then they did not relent – forming prisoner councils, distributing food and soap, keeping the national spirit alive. Ninety-seven went on hunger strike.

While neglected in the military sphere, CnamB achieved important objectives in mass-work. MLM proves revolutionary struggle must combine militarism and mass politics, each thriving off the other. Throughout the war for national liberation, failure to train women as soldiers hindered the struggle. Too many nationalist leaders held misogynistic views on the inferiority of women fighters or feared being taken less seriously. Socialist republicans took the more advanced, correct position that women's place is in the revolutionary struggle and that tailing reactionary ideas about women does no good. CnamB politicised thousands of women and the Treatyites would've had a much harder time if their potential was fully realised.

Later CnamB would play a role in the Occupied Six Counties, aligning with the Provisionals. This time its role was more tightly linked with military operations. Oftentimes they would exploit gender stereotypes to ward off suspicion like appearing pregnant or pretending to be part of a couple with republican men. Tactical use of married women and women with children also occurred. Women were also allowed into the Provisional IRA itself where they could play a greater role. According to Sean MacStiofain:

*'In the early 1970s a selected number of women were taken into the [P]IRA and trained [...] on the basis of full equality with men [...] some of the best shots I ever knew were women. So were the smartest intelligence officers in Belfast. In support roles the Women's Action Committees were very effective organizers of demonstrations, early warning, and alarms.'* [13]

Women were trained on an equal basis inside the Provisional IRA despite making up a minority. Republican martyr Mairead Farrell said 'you got doing what the lads did but it depended to what extent you were committed, not measured by what sex you were' [14]. For the small number of women, a high number of bombings were done by women, often exploiting misogynistic underestimation.

Political struggle and the mass politics that CnamB & Inghinidhe had previously excelled at were neglected in favour of a more commandist military program. It was felt by some (P)IRA women that gender equality was taken more seriously in the military wing than the political wing. Women remaining a minority in the military wing may be attributed to these weaknesses of political line: failing to politicise the masses of women effectively. These issues culminated in the betrayal of the Provisional leadership where CnamB once again opposed capitulation.

These women defied gendered expectations by even daring to take up the fight. A Sinn Féin lecture from 1984 begs some important questions about unique obstacles that republican women faced:

*'Why do so many speakers refer to the "girls" in Armagh rather than "women"? Is it because girls can be allowed the wild impetuosity of becoming involved in military struggle whilst once they are women they must settle back into their appointed roles as wives, mothers and other, more subservient auxiliary roles which are dictated by the characteristic fashions of the male dominated society?'* [15]

Yet many revolutionary republican women persisted and rejected all compromise with imperialism, the republican struggle inextricably tied up their own struggle as women. Mairead Farrell states:

*'I am oppressed as a woman, and I'm also oppressed as an Irish person. Everyone in this country is oppressed and yet we can only end our oppression as women if we end the oppression of our nation as a whole. But, I don't think that alone is enough. This isn't the first time that women have been seen as secondary, but women today have been through so much that they won't just let things be. I hope I'm still alive when the British are driven out. Then the struggle begins anew.'* [16]

### Women's Oppression (Trigger Warnings for rape)

In the wake of the counter-revolution of 1922–23 British imperialism did its utmost to divide the Irish people – through partition, sectarianism and the strengthening of patriarchal institutions. In the Free State, women paid most, forever stained with their blood. A Marxist understanding of women's oppression using historical materialism is necessary. It is Engel's thesis that private property is the origin of women's oppression, giving rise to a patriarchal family-form. This first served the purpose of maintaining a line of inheritance through the male line ('father right') as opposed to the female line ('mother right') as it was previously. Famously becomes an institution of private property. Engels wrote:

*'[The patriarchal family] was the first form of family not based on natural but on economic conditions, and concretely on the triumph of private property over spontaneously originated, common primitive property [...]. Therefore, monoga-*



Mairead Farrell





Anuradha Ghandy

*my in no way appears in history as a reconciliation between man and woman, and even less as a higher form of marriage. Quite the contrary, it enters the scene under the form of the enslavement of one sex by the other, as the proclamation of a war between the sexes, up to then unknown in prehistory.*' [17]

Through this 'great historic defeat of the female sex' women themselves became property. Gendered division of labour was solidified into pre-existing class society but not yet as domination. Men were to be responsible for production, women for reproduction. By reproduction it did not just mean procreation but of everyday life – cooking, cleaning, nurturing and so on. What many feminists have called unpaid domestic labour.

Economic subordination sustains ideological oppression, and women were reduced to sexual objects or to domestic servants. The myth of the inferior female brain follows along with the exaggerations of biological differences, so that women were told that their purpose is in the home as wives and mothers. Anuradha Ghandy surmises: *'The woman is seen only in relation to her husband, her independent existence does not count'* [18]. Within the traitor De Valera's constitution there is no subtlety on this point, declaring: *'by her life in the home, the woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved'* and describes women working as *'neglect of their duties in the home'*. [19]

For most of the twentieth century women in the Free State were denied many rights, the bourgeois Catholic Church playing a large part in its numerous draconian laws. Even marital rape was legal and married women were barred from working in order to artificially strengthen this production/reproduction division. This marriage bar sharpened the economic dependence of women upon men. Dependence produces a power imbalance, the principal basis of domestic abuse. Even where proletarian women have entered production, the bulk of reproductive labour remains on them. Connolly recognising a double-exploitation: *'Marriage does not mean for her a rest from outside labour, it usually means that, to the outside labour, she has added the duty of a double domestic toil'* [20]. Bourgeois women can shift this responsibility by hiring out servants, but without private property there is less basis for the bourgeois family within the proletariat, although its institutions still exist among us. Connolly stated: *'The worker is the slave of capitalist society, the female worker is the slave of that slave'* [21]. Seeing that this exploitation persists among the proletariat, Connolly said that reproductive labour gives the proletarian man's labour-power greater value and diminishes the cost of his reproduction for the ruling class.

The PCP also recognised the pervasive myth of *'deficient feminine nature'* which *'has served to justify the oppression which up to now women experience in societies in which exploitation continues to prevail'* [22]. This myth disguises the gendered division of labour as essential natural differences. Much like the old myth of the savage Irish nature used to justify colonialism. The PCP analysed instead that:

*'For Marxism, women, as much as men, are but a set of social relations, historically adapted and changing as a function of the changes of society in its development process. Woman then is a social product, and her transformation demands the transformation of society.'* [23]

As more women by necessity enter production the myth of *'deficient feminine nature'* is also used to extract greater surplus value from their wage-labour. Women's jobs have hinged upon gendered divisions – as nurses, teachers, weavers and so on. Women entering production also gives bourgeois leverage to dilute the value of labour-power. Marx wrote it *'spreads the values of the man's labour-power over his whole family'* [24]. Whether the imperialist system benefits more from forcing women to remain in the home or allowing them into production depends upon the historical moment and stability of imperialism. This is the crux of the differences between the Free State and occupied six when it came to the position of women.

The Magdalene Laundries enslaved 10,000+ women (considered a serious underestimate), around 3,000 in the occupied six counties – forced to do labour under brutal conditions. Victims included *'promiscuous'* women, unmarried

mothers, transfers from prisons or psychiatric institutions, women who had been sexually abused – basically anyone considered deviant or a burden. Confinement could last decades and be lengthened by institutionalisation. Refusal to work brought food deprivation, solitary confinement and physical abuse. Many women died in such institutions. In the Occupied Six it was an *'alternative'* to prison, demonstrating how much it was a prison. Commercial relations and Gardaí involvement show facilitation by the Free State and both protestant and catholic churches co-operated on laundries on many occasions, putting their sectarianism aside to torture women. The laundries were not closed until October 1996.

Mother & Baby homes were closely linked institutions – taking roughly 85,000 unmarried mothers. Transfers to the laundries were frequent. Those in the Free State had exorbitant infant mortality rates. Most infamously a mass unmarked grave in Tuam with 796 baby remains was discovered. Health authorities at the time were well aware of the mortality rates. In the Occupied Six infant mortality rates were lower thus avoiding a similar level of controversy. A large redress scheme was undertaken to wash the Free State's image and they closed the records to prevent any further investigation. These institutions were founded by British imperialism two centuries prior, and were continued by its garrison class in consolidating semi-colonialism.

Bourgeois society punishes those who do not conform to rigid constraints of womanhood. Through the laundries and mother & baby homes women were robbed of autonomy, serving as an example to other women and making profits for the state. The Los Angeles research group explains the root of such institutions:

*'The history of civilization has been in part the ruling classes attempts to enforce the connection between sexuality and reproduction in order to preserve private property through the institution of inheritance. Repressive laws against adultery, pre-marital sex, illegitimacy and homosexuality [...] are examples of the repressive measures taken by the ruling class to punish those who rebel against its false unity of sexuality and reproduction.'* [25]

Existing in the shadow of the bourgeois family is the open sale of women in the sex trade. Coerced to sell access to their bodies to survive, in Ireland a report found 94% of those in prostitution to be migrants, many being the victims of trafficking. 6.3% were trans women, over-represented in the sex trade globally (especially in Thailand where they are sought by *'sex tourists'*). One in five of these reported being sexually exploited by Gardaí. Bourgeois society punishes women for being forced into a trade it created. Nevertheless, calls to reform the sex trade merely lead to expansion. Rather, the demands of proletarian feminists are for the right of exit and total abolition through People's War. So called *'socialists'* and *'feminists'* who propagandise for the sex trade are complicit in its exploitation. In recent times certain landlords are demanding *'sex for rent'* amidst the housing crisis. Consent cannot exist under economic coercion – this is an attack on women's bodily autonomy. Soviet revolutionary Kollontai said on this question:

*'A man who buys the favours of a woman does not see her as a comrade or a person with equal rights. He sees the woman as dependent upon himself and as an unequal creature of a lower order who is of less worth to the workers' state. The contempt he has for the prostitute, whose favours he has bought, affects his attitude to all women.'* [26]

The increasing hyper-sexualisation of women contributed to by the pornography and beauty industries is no better than puritanism, another side of the same violent coin, degrading women as objects and fostering disregard for consent. Studies find regular consumption of pornography can lead to greater aggression towards women and a greater degree of rape apologia. In recent years much attention has been drawn to image-based sexual assault in Ireland – where sexual footage of women is distributed without consent.

While Free State laws may seem harsher in many instances, women in the Occupied Six face the brutality of occupation and reactionary loyalist ideology. When paramilitaries murder republicans and massacre the masses, it is proletarian women who have to pick up the pieces. In recent years the Occupied Six have woefully disproportionate figures for domestic abuse and femicide. Last year 45,000 cases were reported in the Free State, 33,186 in the Occupied Six. Fifteen cases of femicide against Irish women were reported last year four of these were in the Occupied Six Counties. In 2017 there were eleven killings. Considering the smaller population of the Occupied Six these figures are shocking and demonstrate the sheer brutality settler colonialism fosters against women. Female republican prisoners face dire conditions, many placed in male prisons. The women in Armagh who went on to hunger strike and engaged in a no wash protest recounted being strip searched daily, as many as 40 times a day. Deliberate sexual humiliation like this intends to erode women's spirits. Similar tactics are used by imperialists of all stripes. In Peru many feminists denounced *'systematic use of torture and rape by government officials'* [27] against political prisoners. The British occupation flaunts its power over women:

*'Naked, told to bend over, to touch our toes, to spread our cheeks. If we've got*



our period we have to take the tampon out in front of them. It's degrading and humiliating. When we do urines it's even worse, we piss in a bottle in front of them. If we can't or won't we lose visits for three weeks.' [28]

Through the entire process of colonisation, Britain has had a vested interest in sustaining patriarchal ideology in Ireland. Before Britain's arrival in Ireland – although the transition from 'mother right' to 'father right' had already occurred – there were comparatively progressive rights for women well into the 12th Century. Women kept property in marriage, could inherit where there were no sons, could reclaim their dowry if ill-treated and had many grounds for divorce. The nascent Church was opposed but did not yet have control over civil laws. Though still patriarchal, it did not yet take on quite so vicious a character.

Today, after decades of struggle, Irish women have attained many of the rights counter-revolution denied them – divorce, contraception, abortion, work after marriage, among others. Re-induction into production at large reduced economic dependence and facilitated re-politicisation of women. Engels wrote of how 'industry has taken the wife out of the home onto the labour market and into the factory, and made her often the bread-winner of the family' and predicted this would reduce 'male supremacy [...] in the proletarian household—except, perhaps, for something of the brutality towards women that has spread since the introduction of monogamy'. [29]

Women still face rampant violence with little protection from the bourgeois state which stokes the fires of misogyny. For instance, the frequent ignorance of domestic violence calls by Gardaí. Religious fundamentalism has not died away and will resurge with a vengeance. It is rising across the world as Anuradha Ghandy could see in 2001:

*'Imperialism faced with its worst ever crisis since the inter-war years is encouraging and promoting fundamentalist forces and fascist organisations and propaganda [...] And one of the central points of fundamentalist propaganda is a conservative ideology of gender – all fundamentalist forces, be they of the Christian denominations in the US, or Hindu, or the New Religions in Japan or Islamic forces—they proclaim the specific agenda of restoring the centrality of the family and home in the life of women and patriarchal control over her sexuality.'* [30]

Even the rights won from capitalist dictatorship can swiftly be taken away as crises of imperialism intensify. The Free State does not honour the result of the 2018 Repeal referendum, maintaining scarce underfunded services which force women to still go abroad. Deep rooted misogynistic ideology spans the whole healthcare system, with health issues ignored on top of ruthless austerity. While contraception is given on informed consent in theory, in practice doctors can fabricate arbitrary reasons not to. And most glaringly the cervical check scandal of 2018 where 206 women developed cervical cancer after being given an initial negative result, 162 were not given an updated report. In the Occupied Six, imperialists laud the virtues of the NHS but that is being viciously defunded too with long waits that force individuals towards going private. Bourgeois women can of course buy their way out of all these issues.

The tide of proletarian women entering production (held back by the ruling class for a time) brought us one step closer to controlling our own destinies. Capitalist development advanced the status and freedom of women from feudal conditions. With the development of a socialist republic – when the Irish people collectively own everything from the plough to the stars – the basis for patriarchal domination will be uprooted. We can then speculate of a more communal form of family to emerge once more which does not lay all the responsibility of reproduction on proletarian women. For proletarian feminism, women's oppression is understood as an extra-class oppression with its solutions in class struggle – not merely in reform of gender roles and family.

## Base & Superstructure

An understanding of base and superstructure is important to demarcate proletarian feminism. The base comprises the economic arrangement of society: its production relations, property relations and so on. Superstructure comprises the political, legal and ideological systems determined by the base. It is the ruling classes who control the economic base and hence the political and ideological superstructure. Patriarchy is inseparable from capitalism. As Anuradha Ghandy puts it:

*'The same ruling classes, whether imperialists, capitalists, feudals and the State they control, are the enemies of women because they uphold and perpetuate the patriarchal family, gender discrimination and the patriarchal ideology within that society. They get the support of ordinary men undoubtedly who imbibe the patriarchal ideas, which are the ideas of the ruling classes and oppress women.'* [31]

For Ireland this means the Brit/US/EU imperialists and their subservient comprador bourgeoisie. This garrison class facilitates exploitation of the Irish nation, with patriarchy a core pillar of the system arising from property relations at the base. Gendered division of labour, the patriarchal family and 'deficient feminine nature' are superstructural expressions. The superstructure can influence the



base but the economic base is principal. In this way the patriarchal order is bent but not broken. Movement from feudalism to capitalism significantly altered the superstructure and socialism takes this further. Communism will end gender-oppression.

Mao teaches us that 'every kind of thinking, without exception, is stamped with the brand of a class.' [32] Bourgeois women give rise to class-collaborationist feminism, which is in essence bourgeois feminism, quickly becoming the most reactionary element of the women's movement. This is because they too become agents of patriarchy, most apparent with their exploitation of proletarian women and complicity in imperialism. While comparatively progressive to conservative factions of the ruling class, allegiance to capital will always outweigh any notions of 'sisterhood'. Calls for more women in the ruling class lead to the same demagoguery every time. Did republicans die kinder under Thatcher's rule? Anuradha Ghandy wrote on the inherent weakness of bourgeois liberal feminism:

*'It is restricted to changes in the law, educational and employment opportunities, welfare measures, etc. and does not question the economic and political structures of the society which give rise to patriarchal discrimination. Hence it is reformist in its orientation, both in theory and in practice. It believes that the state is neutral and can be made to intervene in favour of women when in fact the bourgeois state [...] will not support women's struggle for emancipation. The State is defending the interests of the ruling classes who benefit from the subordination and devalued status of women.'* [33]

Rights like abortion are concessions won from the ruling class, a pressure valve. While proletarian women were key to building repeal, the movement didn't surpass a reformist consciousness. A major purpose of the referendum was to sustain the illusion of bourgeois democracy, in reality remaining 'committees of the rich to manage the affairs of the capitalist class' [34] Large segments of the ruling class opposed repeal until the day of the vote, using the media apparatus for campaigns of reaction and misinformation under the guise of 'rational debate'. When it passed, they had a sudden enlightenment and declared they had handed these rights down to women out of good will.

In some cases, progressive reforms have been encouraged by the EU as part of its European Convention on Human Rights – e.g., ending the marriage bar. The EU and NATO were born as an alliance against the red threat and emergent national liberation movements as well as to prevent further inter-imperialist strife within the West. Social-democratic reforms through the EU served to placate against proletarian revolt within Europe. Part of this was the need to offer certain concessions to women and other minorities, after the fact, declaring the EU bastion of 'human rights' and 'western values' – fortifying the ideology of imperialism and forming the European Convention on Human Rights. Let it not be forgotten it was the USSR that enshrined universal women's suffrage in the first place.

With the imperialist plunder of Iraq and Afghanistan, women's rights were an ideological justification for NATO. Imperialist feminists fell right in line. The facetiousness of this pink-washing is at its most blatant with the Zionist project. In the beginning, proudly proclaiming itself a settler colonial project in the Euro-American tradition, now it washes the occupation of Palestine with every strategy imaginable – women's rights, gay rights, and indeed decolonization at its most absurd. Any supposed support for women's emancipation is purely symbolic and an expression of present self-interest. Imperialist institutions like the EU or NATO are no friends to proletarian women. By portraying themselves as this civilising force the EU justify their robbing of Irish resources and NATO its creeping attempts to drag the Irish people into its campaigns of imperialist terror.

The militancy of women's suffrage movements and the violence used to achieve their goals (in Ireland often tied to republicanism) is airbrushed out of history. Even the contingent of Irish suffragettes who had tied their hopes to Home Rule went on to smash British administration buildings when the constitutional road showed no results and refused to pay their fines. The ruling class assimilates feminism into bourgeois liberalism, robbing it of any radical edge. But in seeing that the enemy only grants women freedoms when its hand is forced – that it





**Irish republican women use dustbin lids to warn their communities and fighters of British Army incursions.**

fears their revolt – proletarian women attain revolutionary consciousness. A line of demarcation in the women's movement is necessary. The PCP wrote, citing Mariategui (their emphasis):

*'In this new period of politicization of the masses of women in which we now evolve, with its base in a greater economic participation by women in the country, it is indispensable to pay serious attention to the woman question as regards study and research, political incorporation and consistent organizing work. A task which demands keeping in mind Mariategui's thesis which teaches that: "WOMEN, LIKE MEN, ARE REACTIONARIES, CENTRISTS OR REVOLUTIONARIES. THEY CANNOT THEREFORE ALL FIGHT THE SAME BATTLE SIDE BY SIDE. IN TODAY'S HUMAN PANORAMA CLASS DIFFERENTIATES THE INDIVIDUAL MORE THAN SEX."*' [37]

In the Irish context liberal feminism served to move feminism away from a national consciousness, most blatantly in the Occupied Six where attempts to unite on gender alone favour the occupation. While CnamB had a number of bourgeois women among its ranks and was not elevated to socialist republicanism (at best taking from it eclectically), it remained a revolutionary organisation steadfast against capitulation. It was far from centrist or reactionary and stayed committed to republican revolution. Today the ruling class has successfully subordinated Irish feminism almost entirely to bourgeois class thought, away from revolutionary republicanism. Liberal feminism has become a useful tool for unionists, presenting republican resistance as 'patriarchal', only paying lip service to women who fought among its ranks. Imperialists cannot explain the presence of women militants. Anuradha Ghandy analyses 'women become the symbols and carriers of social honour of the community' [36] – helpless victims who must be 'saved' by the imperialists or terrorized.

Most Irish feminist organisations today are bourgeois in character. NGOs like the National Women's Council rely on funding from the Free State and EU directives. It is controlled opposition, the parameters of action set out by imperialism. In its campaigns it looks for more women in leadership and begs for more resources for women from a subordinate position to the state. Such programs hold back proletarian women. Lacking imagination, too many socialist organisations simply tail behind the bourgeois feminists.

ROSA, feminist wing of the Trotskyite Socialist Party, are quite silent on imperialism like their mother-organisation. In Ireland they call to connect the worker's struggle, women's struggle, queer struggle, but never the national, following the Haddenite two-nations theory here and two-state solution in Palestine. Founded in 2013 it was active in Repeal but failed to elevate it to a revolutionary consciousness due to movementism (relying on spontaneity and tailing social movements rather than providing leadership). These opportunist lines are why it peaked with repeal and couldn't orient feminism to socialism. Given that anti-imperialism is a core component of proletarian feminism ROSA has little in common with it.

Only upon seizure of power can the patriarchal superstructure be crushed. During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution strides were made in changing the superstructure:

*'Chinese women now work, study, rest and take part in political and cultural*

*activities along with the men. Many women have emerged as socialist-minded and professionally expert cadres. Instead of having their vision confined within the four walls of their homes as in the past, they now concern themselves with affairs of state and of the world. Enthusiastic, bold and devoted to the people, they are accomplishing feats China's women could not dream of before.'* [37]

Women attained a crucial place in political and social life and took many leading roles. Policies to reduce the burden of reproduction made this feasible. Things like laundry and tailoring were also collectivised. Equal pay, large campaigns of education and training, and free pre- & post-natal care allowed women to engage in production more than ever. The sex-trade was basically eliminated. These heights were rolled back by the capitalist roader counter-revolution with socialist construction sabotaged and women back in chains.

While the Irish People's Republic never attained near the same heights, our own counter-revolution was also the loss of political power. Or, as the PCP wrote of the French Revolution, 'once the revolutionary upsurge was fought and halted, reactionary ideas re-emerged about women'. [38] Women's freedom flows out of the barrel of a gun. Securing these freedoms necessitates proletarian cultural revolutions – tackling bourgeois ideology which lingers in the superstructure and securing revolution against capitalist restoration, dissolving gendered division of labour as Mao's China was working towards, challenging patriarchy on all levels of society. In Ireland this would also take the form of cultural revival, not to return to feudal values but to further cultivate a revolutionary national culture resistant to imperialism.

China's example must be built on, scaling new heights for women's emancipation. Mao rightly held the principle 'the emancipation of women is an integral part of the liberation of the proletariat'. [39] And this can only be achieved by correctly grasping the base and superstructure pertaining to women's oppression, as Anuradha Ghandy demonstrated.

### On the Queer Question

Among our teachers we do not find a clear answer to the queer question, but we have the scientific socialist method. Evidence suggests the birth of queer oppression coincides with the 'great historic defeat of the female sex' [40] and the birth of private property. The movement to 'father right' also requires that only heterosexual relationships can be accepted and that rigid gender roles are in place. Queer women face double oppression, as women and as queers.

Early versions of the oral tales of Cú Chulainn from Ulster portray a love between him and Ferdiad as lovers. Brutal cultural genocide and decimation of native populations by British colonialism complicates a historical materialist analysis of queer oppression but we do know that during the period of 'mother right' (better known as pre-Christian Ireland) – while marriage was strictly heterosexual, in other relationships homosexual love was accepted. What we now call queerness was not yet repressed to the same extent. In the 'father right' societies of the day like Rome or Greece, homosexuality was only accepted as domination of master over slave, not as love. As the influence of the Catholic Church developed in Ireland this would have begun to change and British colonialism consolidated the repression of Irish queers.

Up until 1993 homosexuality was criminalised in the Free State, 1982 in the Occupied Six Counties. During the '80s AIDS crisis queer communities were left to tackle the situation alone, imperialist powers using it to decimate their population. When the Free State addressed AIDS on national television it was only to proclaim 'promiscuity' the issue, a reification of bourgeois morals rather than providing any solutions. The Occupied Six was further subject to Thatcher's aggressive anti-queer antagonism. The Los Angeles Research Group in 'Towards a Scientific Analysis of the Gay Question' puts the purpose of anti-queer patriarchal ideology for the ruling class succinctly:

*'Likewise, women in rejecting definitions of inferiority can see themselves as workers and become militant fighters for socialist revolution. The bourgeoisie, terrified by the communist specter of the equality of women and men, labels sexual equality as unnatural. Gayness is also labelled "unnatural;" it is a threat to bourgeois dominance. Gayness is "unnatural," and therefore a threat to bourgeois dominance, precisely because it rejects the "natural" bourgeois society as reflected in the "natural" [...] nuclear family; it also implies that sexual relationships need not be tied to reproduction.'* [41]

Gay relationships, whether between proletarian men or proletarian women, no longer have an enforced gendered division of labour between them. As a result, queer women can often escape double-exploitation but face compensatory oppression in the form of 'corrective' violence. This can manifest in homophobic attacks, sexual assault and widespread discrimination. Conversion therapy continues to be legal, mostly practiced by religious fundamentalists. Gay men are subject to similar 'corrective' violence but not as gender oppression.

The LA research group however made an error in placing the patriarchal family in the base rather than the superstructure. As such, they were unable to predict gay marriage equality as even a possibility. Since 2015 it is legal for Irish gays to build their own nuclear family. Due to difficulty accessing adoption and cost



of other methods, it is mainly bourgeois gays who can raise children. Proletarian gays face the brunt of homophobic violence and are put into poverty by discrimination which deems them unnatural; partially informed by gendered divisions within production.

Oppression is more acute for transgender people. The Swiss organisation Red Star, providing an MLM perspective on the trans question, argues that transphobia is 'part of bourgeois-patriarchal ideology and the ideological oppression of queers, serving the ideological oppression of women'.<sup>[42]</sup> Bourgeois patriarchal ideology requires rigid gender / sex categories which trans people are in sharp contradiction with. On gender roles Anuradha Ghandy wrote that:

*'Masculinity and femininity are constructs of a patriarchal society and we have to struggle to change these rigid constructs. But it is linked to the overthrow of the entire exploitative society. In a society where patriarchal domination ceases to exist how men and women will be, what kind of traits they will adopt is impossible for us to say.'*<sup>[43]</sup>

The US based Proletarian Feminist Research Group wrote on how these rigid categories harm transgender people:

*'A key aspect of the ideological maintenance of gender and sexuality is a stable notion of sex and gender [...] These formations themselves structure and impose ostensibly immutable sex categories into which all people must fall. It is in this regard that transgender people find themselves in contradiction with the demands of patriarchal structures of gender and sexuality.'*<sup>[44]</sup>

Irish trans people are denied medical care which alters sex characteristics behind psychological interrogation and non-consensual 'corrective' surgeries are carried out on intersex children. Trans people are in sharp contradiction with gendered division of labour. It contributes to discrimination in production, lower wages and high unemployment rates. This is on top of ostracization and the costs of transition that contributes to their overwhelming proletarianization.

Trans women are deemed unfit for most reproductive labour, putting them in sharp contradiction with 'deficient feminine nature', simultaneously oppressed as women and deemed unable to fulfil the 'natural' role of a woman. For trans men portrayal as 'helpless confused girls' and of 'self-mutilation' demonstrates still facing aspects of misogyny regardless of identity. As a result, trans people are largely excluded from the reproductive sphere while also facing harsh discrimination in production – a major cause of many of their coercion into the sex trade.

Transphobic hatred is often stoked through cultural institutions, as with current moral panics around libraries and 'gender ideology' in schools. This results in fascist attacks like the one on Swords Library (which was facilitated by Gardaí) or those carried out by loyalists in the north. Pornography and media caricatures also contribute to dehumanisation of trans people, but of course, these are not the root of trans-oppression but reinforcers.

The 'social honour' afforded to many women is inverted with queer people – made out to be threats to women and children. Transphobia is a major element amidst the global growth of fascist and fundamentalist forces that Anuradha Ghandy spoke of. In the US, forceful detransition is occurring in many states and more recently criminalisation of practices like drag which serves to proscribe gender non-conformity as a whole. The British state is moving in the same vein and the Irish garrison class is sure to follow. This is done in the name of protecting the patriarchal family which queer people are seen as destabilising.

The birth of queer oppression comes with women's oppression and thus queer emancipation can only come hand in hand with women's emancipation. Proletarian feminism must unite these struggles, particularly on the basis of combatting gender-oppression. This question needs its own thorough examination – guided by a materialist basis and rooted in class struggle, not liberal identity politics.

### Cultural feminism and revisionism

Having sketched out the MLM perspective on women's emancipation – first set out by Marx & Engels, and advanced by the PCP and CPI (Maoist) – it is necessary to combat the reactionary thesis of cultural feminism. Anuradha Ghandy describes:

*'Cultural feminism begins with the assumption that men and women are basically different. It focused on the cultural features of patriarchal oppression and primarily aimed for reforms in this area [...] it adamantly rejects any critique of capitalism and emphasises patriarchy as the roots of women's oppression and veers towards separatism.'*<sup>[45]</sup>

Cultural feminism often places the root of women's oppression in nature, usually in biological differences. When it accounts for socialisation it is in a mechanical way that is but a rebranding of this biological determinism. This belief does not have a historical materialist basis, as Anuradha Ghandy demonstrates:

*'For in all the thousands of years that people lived in the first stages of human*

*existence women were not subordinated to men. In fact her reproductive role was celebrated and given importance because the survival of the species and the group depended on reproduction. The importance given to fertility and the fertility rituals surviving in most tribal societies are testimony of this fact. Marxism understands that some material conditions had to arise due to which the position of women changed and she was subordinated.'*<sup>[46]</sup>

Beginning with the tenet of essential natural differences between men and women, cultural feminism quickly degenerated from struggling against patriarchy. In glorifying women's nature, a bourgeois ideal, it comes to glorify women's subjugation. Ghandy says cultural feminism 'opposed the idea of women becoming a militant force because they emphasise the non-violent nature of the female'.<sup>[47]</sup> This is how the imperialists view women so it comes as no surprise that it finds its roots among petit bourgeois academics in the imperial core. Today it manifests in the so called 'gender critical' movement, propagating anti-trans chauvinism. In Ireland such groups include Radicaalin, the natural women's council. The Countess. Often astroturfed by similar British organisations but with disproportionate presence in the media class, collaboration with fascist groups like the National Party and Irish Freedom Party should dispel any notion they believe in women's emancipation. By 'biological males' they mean not chauvinist men but a call to violence against trans women. Their rhetoric against trans men also reveals plain misogyny, depicted these as 'little girls' who can't be trusted with autonomy. Growing segments of this movement veer towards opposing abortion rights and there is a pipeline to fascism. It is mainly comprised of the most reactionary elements of the petit bourgeois and the lumpen.

When they deploy the 'what is a woman?' as a trick question, it is because they can't imagine an answer which doesn't naturalise the oppression of women. To this question, proletarian feminists can simply answer 'Woman [...] is a social product and her transformation demands the transformation of society'. The liberals and postmodernists are correct when they say gender is a social construct. Where they go wrong however is in placing language and appearances as cause rather than as symptoms of the ideological oppression of women.

There are attempts to smuggle cultural feminism into the International Communist Movement through pretensions of 'dialectical materialism'. They declare biology the material basis of women's oppression rather than property relations. This is revisionism, rejecting Engel's thesis. What they are doing is mechanical materialism. The PCP wrote that mechanical materialism was 'incapable of understanding the historical social character of the human being as a transformer of reality'.<sup>[48]</sup> Making biology the crux of women's oppression denies the possibility of emancipation, of the power to transform society. Some go as far as to present this as 'proletarian feminism' but it is in reality cultural feminist and anti-Marxist.

Mao wrote 'Contradiction is present in the process of development of all things: it permeates the process of development of each thing from beginning to end'<sup>[49]</sup> – dialectics leads us not to take biology not as a static thing but driven by the universal law of contradiction. Lenin held the view 'all boundaries in nature and society are conventional and mobile'.<sup>[50]</sup> While biological sex is not what produces patriarchy, it remains necessary to point out that it too exists on a continuum. This is proven by intersex conditions, endocrine conditions, things like birth control and hormone replacement therapy which consciously intervene in the



**Breaking the Chains: Red fighter of the CPI (Maoist)**



biological process. To talk of 'immutable' biological sex is to deny the law of contradiction in all things.

Alongside the fallacy of false materialism these revisionists also claim that the masses do not understand that they are fundamentally misogynistic. This is nothing but tailism. To assume the masses to be reactionary and facilitate bourgeois attempts to divide them is counter-revolutionary. These fools distort the Marxist position on women's emancipation. Cultural feminism represents the reactionary white line on the women's question and it has no place in the ICM.

### Conclusion: Proletarian Feminism and Two-Line Struggle

Declaring women's emancipation from patriarchy can only come with the defeat of capitalism-imperialism is not calling for women to wait. Rather it is a call for further action. The taking of political power demands rigorous two-line struggle. In a previous issue of *An Ghrian Dhearg*, Parvati of the CPN's observation of the high consciousness of women militants was linked to the staunch opposition of Cumann na mBan to partition:

*'[R]evolutionary communist women have always been on the offensive when they are fighting against the revisionists... painfully aware that revisionism breeds bureaucratization, which in turn strengthens patriarchal values, ultimately negating women in politics.'* [51]

Both right opportunist lines and "left" opportunist lines strengthen patriarchal values, in each case where women's struggles become negated by failure of mass line. This is not to say women are incapable of opportunism. See Markiewicz's capitulation behind De Valera's Fianna Fáil, the Cumann na Saoirse split or Parvati herself succumbing to reformism. But in the unity of revolutionary women, we see steadfast opposition to opportunism. Study of the Ladies' Land League, Inghinidhe na hEireann and Cumann na mBan further proves this. When the ruling class cannot convert revolutionary female leaders to opportunism it annihilates them as with the brutal extra-judicial executions of Edith Lagos, Mairead Farrell or Miriam Daly. It is a rare sight to see proletarian women at the negotiating table where the people are sold out. Chairman Prachanda also of the CPN wrote (ironically the counter-revolution coming from himself):

*'The sacrifice and commitment shown by the Nepalese working women during the ten years of great People's War has compelled the Party to arrive at new syntheses whereby women's leadership needs to be developed not only to complete revolution but also to prevent counter-revolution in near future.'* [52]

Marxism-Leninism-Maoism understands internal contradiction to be the principal force of movement rather than external conditions. How these contradictions are handled will determine political line on the whole as Mao explains:

*'In battle, one army is victorious and the other is defeated, both the victory and the defeat are determined by internal causes [...] In China in 1927, the defeat of the proletariat by the big bourgeoisie came about through the opportunism then to be found within the Chinese proletariat itself (inside the Chinese Communist Party). When we liquidated this opportunism, the Chinese revolution resumed its advance [...] Thus it can be seen that to lead the revolution to victory, a political party must depend on the correctness of its own political line and the solidity of its own organization.'* [53]

Principally the contradiction is between the revolutionary line and the revisionist line, the gender contradiction delineating from, but firmly rooted in, that two-line struggle. Proletarian feminism must be united with the revolutionary red line, the struggle against revisionism hand in hand with that against patriarchal ideology. If socialists are to lead class struggle, patriarchal chauvinism cannot fester among their ranks. This necessitates ongoing criticism and self-criticism. Arundhati Roy interviewed female Naxal militants, discussing this internal struggle:

*'Rupi and Maase [...] tell me about the long years of struggle of women within the Party, not just for their rights, but also to make the Party see that equality between men and women is central to a dream of a just society. We talk about the '70s and the stories of women within the Naxalite movement who were disillusioned by male comrades who thought themselves great revolutionaries but were hobbled by the same old patriarchy, the same old chauvinism. Maase says things have changed a lot since then, though they still have a way to go.'* [54]

Failure can turn the gender contradiction antagonistic, alienate women militants and damage proletarian unity. The degree of women's involvement depends on establishing the correct political line. Anuradha Ghandy recognised *'wherever the party is working systematically, we can see that the participation of women is more in all political activities and movements'*. Women's development as militants and leaders in the class struggle has to be fully realised. Proletarian feminist organs and mass organisations can serve this crucial task. Lenin spoke on this point in an interview with Clara Zetkin:

*'Nevertheless, we must not close our eyes to the fact that the Party must have bodies, working groups, commissions, committees, bureaus or whatever you like,*

*whose particular duty it is to arouse the masses of women workers, to bring them into contact with the Party, and to keep them under its influence. That, of course, involves systematic work among them. We must train those whom we arouse and win, and equip them for the proletarian class struggle under the leadership of the Communist Party.'* [55]

An example of this can be found in the Krantikari Adivasi Mahila Sangathan founded by CPI (Maoist), the largest feminist organisation in India with 90,000+ members despite its being banned. It works on issues like forced marriage, polygyny, domestic violence, abduction, police brutality and in combatting patriarchal ideology. This work, following on from Anuradha Ghandy's development of a proletarian feminist line, contributes to the huge number of women militants in the Indian Maoist cause today. For the PCP, the MFP was crucial to building the struggle from the beginning despite naysayers as the book *'When Women Rebel: Rise of Popular Feminism in Peru'* recounts:

*'The senderistas picked up on the ideas of Mariategui and organized a Movimiento Femenino Popular. They began working among miner's wives to help establish cottage industries so that women could improve the conditions of their lives in the mining towns. They emphasized the problems women faced because of economic dependence on men. Members of the movement engaged in public debates challenging other Maoists who insisted that the "woman question" did not merit the attention the senderistas were giving it. As early as 1973, the senderistas published a program on women's rights.'* [56]

The time is past for a rupture in the Irish women's movement. 'Ní Saoirse go Saoirse na mBan' can no longer be an empty platitude. It signifies the principle of never relenting until everyone is free, in opposition to all forms of gender oppression, class oppression, and national oppression. The crimes of imperialism are not to be left as a footnote; no redress scheme will make up for the brutality inflicted on Irish women. Only by tearing down the blood-stained walls of the reactionary old state will justice be served, north and south, colonial and semi-colonial. Like Anuradha Ghandy declared, *'the struggle for women's liberation cannot be successful in isolation from the struggle to overthrow the imperialist system itself'* [57].

Unleash the fury of women! Ní saoirse go saoirse na mban!

### Sources

- [1] James Connolly, *The Re-Conquest of Ireland*, 1915.
- [2] <https://www.daily-mail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2375352/Women-flock-Naxal-cause-Government-figures-reveal-60-cent-active-Maoists-female.html>
- [3] Anna Parnell, *The Tale of a Great Sham*, 1907.
- [4] *IBID*.
- [5] Karen Steele, *Women, Press, and Politics during the Irish Revival*, 2007.
- [6] *IBID*.
- [7] *IBID*.
- [8] <https://anti-imperialist-action-ireland.com/blog/2022/03/30/the-life-of-helena-molony/>
- [9] *IBID*.
- [10] Cal McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan and the Irish Revolution*, 2007.
- [11] *IBID*.
- [12] *IBID*.
- [13] Sean MacStiofáin, *Revolutionary in Ireland*, 1975.
- [14] *Íosláidh ar Mna: Women in the Provisional Irish Republican Army*, doi:10.1080/19434472.2011.631345
- [15] <https://anti-imperialist-action-ireland.com/blog/2022/01/18/education-women-in-ireland-republican-lecture-series-no-8-1984/>
- [16] <https://www.oocities.org/starry.plough/MaireadFarrell.htm>
- [17] Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, 1884.
- [18] Anuradha Ghandy, *Fascism, Fundamentalism, and Patriarchy*, 2001.
- [19] *Free State, Bunreacht na hEireann*, 1937.
- [20] *IBID*.
- [21] *IBID*.
- [22] PCP, *Marxism, Mariategui and the Women Movement*, 1975.
- [23] *IBID*.
- [24] *IBID*.
- [25] Los Angeles Research Group, *Towards a Scientific Analysis of the Gay Question*, 1975.
- [26] Alexandra Kollontai, *Prostitution and Ways of Fighting It*, 1921.
- [27] Carol Andreas, *When Women Rebel: The Rise of Popular Feminism in Peru*, 1985.
- [28] *IBID*.
- [29] *IBID*.
- [30] Anuradha Ghandy, *Philosophical Trends in the Feminist Movement*, 2016.
- [31] Mao Zedong, *On Practice*, 1937.
- [32] *IBID*.
- [33] James Connolly, *The War upon the German Nation*, 1914.
- [34] *IBID*.
- [35] *IBID*.
- [36] *IBID*.
- [37] Peking Review, *New Women in New China*, 1972.
- [38] *IBID*.
- [39] *IBID*.
- [40] *IBID*.
- [41] *IBID*.
- [42] <https://srserss.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/marxism-and-queer-emancipation.pdf>
- [43] *IBID*.
- [44] <https://proletarianfeministresearchgroup.wordpress.com/2022/05/07/ideology-and-the-gender-question/>
- [45] *IBID*.
- [46] *IBID*.
- [47] *IBID*.
- [48] *IBID*.
- [49] Mao Zedong, *On Contradiction*, 1937.
- [50] Vladimir Lenin, *The Junius Pamphlet*, 1916.
- [51] Parvati, *Women's Leadership and the Revolution in Nepal*, 2007.
- [52] *IBID*.
- [53] *IBID*.
- [54] [https://www.marxists.org/subject/india/kasama\\_2010\\_walking.pdf](https://www.marxists.org/subject/india/kasama_2010_walking.pdf)
- [55] Clara Zetkin, *Lenin on the Women's Question*.
- [56] Carol Andreas, *When Women Rebel: The Rise of Popular Feminism in Peru*, 1985.
- [57] Anuradha Ghandy, *Philosophical Trends in the Feminist Movement*, 2016.





# THE REVOLUTIONARY CONTRIBUTIONS OF PEADAR O'DONNELL

Peadar O'Donnell was among the most clear-sighted of Ireland's revolutionary leaders, particularly in the years following the 1922 counter-revolution. Hailing from Donegal, he rose to prominence during the Tan War, leading one of the IRA's first attacks on an RIC barracks with a raid in Monaghan, and becoming commandant of the 2nd brigade of the Northern Division. From this period O'Donnell was a committed socialist. He understood that an independent democratic republic could only be built and maintained with the mass support and participation of the working people. He was attuned to the conditions and needs of the rural poor, seeing the failure to mobilise this key section of Irish society as the major failing of the republican movement:

'It rouses a rage against the leadership, which shut out this wealth of revolutionary feeling and thought from the national fight. Had the rural masses been released in the midst of the Tan struggle; had ranches been handed over and landlordism smashed, the basis mobilised to force the Treaty of '22 would have been, instead, an impregnable fortress for the defence of the Republic.'

Instead the national leadership sought 'to hold the land struggle in check', discouraging and even repressing the widespread agrarian agitation. They tried their best to force the multi-faceted struggle of the Irish people into the narrow bounds of a 'pure', 'clean' nationalist movement. O'Donnell attempted to subvert such decisions by the Dáil courts in Ulster.

The powerful wave of labour militancy was likewise left largely untapped, this tendency being promoted by a reformist Labour leadership who 'did not want a clear stance on the national movement in the interest of 'unity'. Recognising the revolutionary importance of the workers' movement, O'Donnell led a labour struggle known as the Monaghan Soviet, an occupation of an asylum, with the workers struggling for better conditions.

When the national forces split over the Treaty, O'Donnell unhesitatingly sided with the Republic. A student of Connolly and Marx, such treachery by the middle classes was little surprise to him. His shock came with the abdication of the Labour movement from taking on a leading role in defence of the Republic:

'... the real fight would begin when the middle class tried to duck the republican struggle on terms that would suit them, but betray the revolution. When that time came, the labour movement would be the point of rally for the independence movement in its second hour of crisis. I never doubted for a moment but it was on watch waiting its turn, and that all of us who went out from it, and held commands in the IRA, would one day rest ourselves on it. It would have been blasphemy to suggest that men like O'Brien and Foran would desert the independence movement in the wake of the treacherous middle

class.'

Imprisoned after the British-backed assault on the Four Courts, in June 1922, upon his release, O'Donnell sought to find a new way forward for the republican movement following the catastrophe left in the wake of the counter-revolution. By what means this could be achieved was yet to be seen but the basic principle was shared by his executed comrade Liam Mellows, that the republican movement must embrace the masses and be rooted in their struggles:

*'the stubborn splendour of the big mass of the people must be involved in the tactics of the Revolution: this heresy of the cult of armed men that brought Collins to Imperialism and us to defeat must be overcome.'*

In 1926 an issue emerged which O'Donnell saw as capable of re-developing the people's forces for the republican struggle. Land annuity payments to London, owed since the purchase of land under the Land Acts, remained outstanding. Farmers were being threatened with eviction, cattle seizures and imprisonment if their arrears, built up since at least 1919, were not paid. O'Donnell recognised the immense potential of this struggle when farmers in Donegal approached him with their plight:

*'Here was what Loror sighed for: a tax directly payable to Britain: a tax devoid of any vestige of moral sanction. Refuse this tax, have the people take their stand on that refusal, and you faced the government with a challenge it could not refuse and a fight it could not win. Republicans could roast the Treaty in the fire from this kindling. ... This skirmish we were conducting could lead into a land war which could restore the independence movement that the Treaty had wrecked.'*

Soon the struggle spread across the Free State, particularly across other parts of the West such as Clare and Galway. A seemingly minor issue had, within a few years, become a key national issue. With the international economic crisis of 1929 broader layers were drawn into the struggle against this feudal hangover. Unfortunately, despite O'Donnell's efforts, the republican movement failed to take up this struggle:

'the IRA must... make its way into vital association with the people by giving itself a role in struggles on concrete issues, which would alone could expose the interests with which the Treaty corresponded and create the forces for their overthrow. ... Fenian Ireland, the Ireland of the poor, came to the very doorstep of a struggle for power twice in ten years; in 1922 and again in 1931. In each case it failed to achieve a leadership to correspond with its needs and was driven back in confusion.'

O'Donnell saw the land struggle as the principal contradiction during this period and he saw how the republican forces 'could have put itself at the head of the whole republican movement, pushing past Fianna Fáil, De Valera and all, to reach the 1919 position at one stride, by releasing its members into the land annuity

agitation.' In 1932 he wrote:

*'The thinning down of rural life and the organised dependence on the British, of what persists, was the economic organising for our national enslavement. It is the national issue that is in the forefront in breaking down that dependence.'*

The mass potential of the land struggle was recognised by Fianna Fáil, the recent constitutional-nationalist split from the republican movement, and they promised to resolve the issue when in power. Instead of a resurgence of the republican movement, the land annuity struggle saw another gang of political opportunists rise to power on the backs of the people and modify the forms of imperialist rule in Ireland in order to dupe the masses. The former Free State Minister for Agriculture jeered Eamonn De Valera 'for buying off the communists who carried him to office.' The 'economic war' with Britain broke out over the issue, with the masses patriotically shouldering the burden. But the necessary agrarian revolution was by no means carried out.

In 1931 Saor Éire was founded by the republican movement at O'Donnell's initiative to organise such social struggles and to put forward a radical republican programme to the masses. However it was mainly conceived of as a concession to the left and the movement offered little support. By 1933 it was dissolved. O'Donnell was the editor of *An Phoblacht* during these key years, providing a class analysis of the people's struggles and supporting numerous progressives movements, until a right-wing turn in the movement rendered this more difficult.

Disillusioned with the failure of the republican movement to seize this historic moment, in 1934 alongside other left republicans O'Donnell split from the IRA to form the Republican Congress. This was an attempt to re-build the republican movement through organising the masses in their ordinary struggles, and providing republican leadership to such struggles. It soon enjoyed a number of successes across social and anti-fascist struggles, including winning support among the northern Protestant workers. The Congress unfortunately split at its first convention. O'Donnell sided against the ultra-left position that the Congress should become a socialist party to principally advocate for socialism - O'Donnell, alongside Frank Ryan and George Gilmore, recognised that republican objectives remained the immediate need of the Irish people and these demands should be front and centre, and thus the Congress ought to remain a united front based on radical republican principles.

In 1936 O'Donnell was a leading figure in promoting solidarity with the Spanish anti-fascist movement, spending months in Spain at the height of the anti-fascist revolution. He was sympathetic to the anarchists but very critical of their hasty land policies of immediate collectivisation. He saw the struggle in Spain as essentially the same as the Irish civil war in which he had played a leading part - the struggle of the working masses against the big bourgeoisie and semi-feudal forces: *'I am not writing merely because I happened to be in the neighbourhood of Barcelona when the fighting commenced... but because of the uproar which the news from Spain caused in my own country where it rekindled the antagonism of our own Civil War.'*

In his later years O'Donnell continued to agitate on the land issue, disdaining *'the paralysing whisper that since small farmers are property owners, "socialists" should not entangle themselves in an agitation on that level.'* His dynamic vision of the Irish revolution, a republican united front rooted in the masses and their struggles, is of immense importance to those still struggling against imperialism and capitalism today.



# RAF to the Future!

## The Life and "Crimes" of Ulrike Meinhof as a Lesson For Today

Ulrike Meinhof was born in 1934 in Oldenburg, North Western Germany. This was the year after Hitler had taken power in Germany with a mix of elections, force and elite appointment. The Nazis had attained this power in the society Ulrike grew up in through the failure of the German communist movement.

In the year of her birth, German communists were the first group targeted for mass internment by the tens of thousands, and a whole concentration camp infrastructure was being built to hold them. Ulrike was too young to know, but this German communist movement had to shift rapidly from its own attempt to seize state power from the Weimar Republic, to forming an underground resistance that would last until the end of the Nazi regime in 1945. In many ways this German communist resistance in both its heroism and its tragedy would be reflected in the experiences of the RAF 40 years later, as well as in Ulrike Meinhof's own political writings.

Ulrike Meinhof came from a middle class family. Her father was a museum historian and her mother was an art historian and a teacher. Both her parents died when she was young however. Thus orphaned herself, in her later career as a journalist and then as a revolutionary Ulrike worked consistently with other young women institutionalised through orphanage and other reasons.

In university she went to study philosophy and sociology, among other subjects. She was also involved in student socialist politics, campaigning against nuclear weapons in the 1950s. As one could tell through her interviews and writings, she was very academically gifted.

She came of age in the post-Nazi Germany which had been defeated, then absorbed and regurgitated by US Imperialism. As she later wrote, West Germany was both a colony of US Imperialism and a Nazi successor state with fascists in many ways more deeply embedded and normalized in the security apparatus and industry than they had been under Hitler.

After university she became a journalist. She empathized with young women who had been institutionalised due to class, poverty mental health and other circumstances. Through her investigative journalism she exposed many of the scandals in those notorious institutes, still infamous in whatever place or form they exist.

Her innovative approach was illustrated when she had the opportunity to teach film studies for a year in a German university. Breaking with old ideas, she brought in "borstal girls" and other institutionalised people to work with the film students.

In 1970 she wrote the script to a film called *Bambule* (an African drum style used as prison slang to refer to banging on the bars) about incarcerated women's resistance to institutional abuse. In the week the film was due to screen on German television, Ulrike went on the run as a revolutionary. Just 5 years later, Ulrike and other revolutionary women would find themselves in German prison - abused, tortured and ultimately murdered. Her film was finally shown on German television 30 years after her death.

She soon gravitated to the influential German radical magazine *Konkret*. This had a circulation of 250,000 weekly although it was shared and passed around and therefore read by many more, and its quality posters were used as propaganda by the revolutionary youth.

Women dealing with the chauvinist men of the 60s/70s New Left were known to

use Ulrike's political slogans from Ulrike's writing to defend their positions. Crystallizing Marxist analysis down into simple slogans or demands in the hands of the proletariat is the task of a socialist intellectual, and Ulrike fulfilled her role and served the people this way.

She soon became the editor of the magazine and married the founder, with whom she had twin daughters. This man soon revealed himself to be both an anti-communist revisionist and a child rapist, using his magazine to promote both of these counter-revolutionary practices amongst the German radical left. This realisation hastened Ulrike's rupture with the legal left and her crossing into the realm of armed revolutionary struggle.

The year before she left *Konkret*, she was writing articles 'against columnism', which was a self-criticism of her own role as a petty bourgeois micro-celebrity columnist (similar to social media influencers today). In one of her final articles for the magazine, she exhorted readers that: "Protest is when I say this does not please me. Resistance is when I ensure what does not please me occurs no more."

She was soon putting theory into practice: Leaving *Konkret* she organised an occupation of their offices, and later with the RAF she and other female guerrillas freed her children from her paedophile ex-husband. Ulrike had already been part of the underground left support network, offering her apartment as a safe house for Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin who were performing arson attacks on commercial and political targets.

She had known intellectually for a long time the frustrating limits of the legal left, however at a certain point she took the decision to break from this and cross the threshold into revolutionary struggle.

She and others created a daring plan to spring Andreas Baader from prison. They used Ulrike's professional journalist credentials to organise an interview under armed guard with the imprisoned Andreas in a library. Once the interview was underway, armed comrades broke into the library and liberated Andreas with all escaping.

Over the next 2 years Ulrike participated in actions by the RAF such as bank robberies and bombings. The RAF at the time (there were ultimately 3 generations of the group persisting from 1971 until the 1990s) consisted of 8 autonomous units spread across 6 cities.

They had developed their military capacity from planting simple homemade incendiary devices, to purchasing weapons from local criminals, to travelling to Jordan to get military training from Palestinian liberation fighters.

They recruited mostly from the countercultural movement and from leftist students. In German cities like Berlin, multiple urban communities developed in the 60s and 70s which facilitated music and artistic expression as well as liberated schooling and squatted living arrangements.

Petit bourgeois students and radicals (including some of the RAF's own lawyers) were given a pathway to join an armed struggle with either the RAF or the more anarchist-leaning June 2 Movement (which itself eventually merged with the RAF). However there were also RAF volunteers from working class and declassed backgrounds who came via the borstals and institutions which Ulrike developed links with.

One interesting group in this mix was the Socialist Patients Collective which had been started by a university professor working at a psychiatric hospital. This collective itself became a multi-generational radical project where sufferers of mental illness understood their situation in terms of capitalism. Multiple RAF members joined from the Socialist Patients Collective.

The autonomous RAF units were sustained by an underground of the radical left and countercultural movement which provided them an infrastructure and safe-houses. RAF volunteers preference for commandeering high-end sports cars for revolutionary purposes soon led to the ironic renaming of BMW to 'Baader-Meinhof Wagons'!

Remarkably, whilst engaging in these activities, Ulrike was also active in line struggle with multiple factions of the German radical left. During one 'teach-in' festival in 1972 she recorded an audio response to the criticism by various 'Maoist' (although by the end of the decade many of these supposed Maoists would have dropped the ideology and migrated to form the right wing of the Green party) groups that the RAF's actions were adventurist and were alienating workers. Irish Republicans will recognise the same criticism was being levelled at the same time by British socialists and their Irish subsidiaries against the IRA.

Ulrike engaged in comradely line struggle against such German communist groups, chastising them for their flightism, while criticising other sections of the left such as the 'spontaneous' anarchists and autonomists for other reasons. However she and the RAF were able to consistently build practical cooperation with these various factions despite ideological differences and debate.

'The Urban Guerrilla Concept' and 'Serve the People' were the two main ideological works published in this time, with Ulrike Meinhof as the primary



theorist.

The underground which sustained the RAF members could sometimes be their undoing. One day in 1972 a German trade unionist who had been offering his flat to Ulrike and a Comrade as a safe-house decided he didn't want to help the RAF anymore and turned them in to the police. Andreas Baader and others were captured a few years later by way of a police informant (who posed as a "militant" supplying the group with defective bombs and the subculture with potent narcotics).

Once captured, the state made a severe effort was made to break the will of the RAF leadership. All political prisoners were held in isolation. Ulrike was moved to the 'dead wing' of Stammheim prison and kept in social isolation with sensory deprivation/overload (no sound was allowed into her cell but artificial lights were kept on continuously). State psychiatrists attempted to have her labelled insane. She described her conditions in poetry: "Ears buzzing. Waking up, one feels as if one has been beaten. The feeling, one moves in slow motion. The feeling, finding yourself in a vacuum, as if you're encased in lead. Afterwards: Shock. As if an iron plate had fallen on your head."

In Ireland at this same time, British imperialism was testing out similar sensory deprivation and stress positions on internees - known as the 'hooded men'. Both of these cases were taken to the European Court of Human Rights simultaneously. US imperialism meanwhile was putting its political prisoners/POWs into their first years of solitary confinement (which they would remain in for 30, 40 and 50+ years later) as well as beginning to roll out SHU Secure Housing Units mass solitary confinement for its mass incarcerated prisoners. These experiments with new forms of torture would soon be fully implemented on facilities like Guantanamo Bay, occupied Cuba and in US vassal states like Turkey with their F-Type prisons.

Despite these conditions, Ulrike and the other RAF leaders managed to write another substantial theoretical publication from prison. In their response to the Black September attack at the Munich Olympics, they took the opportunity to use this as a jump off point to expand on the global strategy of imperialism and engage with the subject of the working class in the first world. This is still being debated by communists 50 years later.

The RAF prisoners organised resistance to the prison regime. This ultimately culminated in rolling hunger strikes by the 40 German communist political prisoners for most of the year of 1974. The prison regime responded with brutal forced feeding. They alternated this with denying water to the prisoners in the middle of their hunger strikes.

One RAF prisoner, Holger Meins who in 1974 died on hunger strike described the process as follows: "A red stomach pipe (not a tube) is used, about the thickness of a middle finger... The slightest irritation when the pipe is introduced causes gagging and nausea and the cramping of the chest and stomach muscles, setting off a chain reaction of extremely intense convulsions throughout the body, causing one to buck against the pipe..."

Another RAF prisoner put it this way: "I was force-fed every day for a month. Each time was like a rape. Each time, I felt totally humiliated and destroyed."

During that same year of 1974 in British prisons Irish Republican prisoners were on hunger strike for their political rights, with one of them being killed by the violent force feeding by British prison authorities.

Forced feeding had also been used by the British Imperialists in response to the prison hunger strikes by both Suffragettes and Irish Republicans in the 1920s. Forced feeding is used by the US imperialists in Guantanamo bay today since its installation.

On the outside a large solidarity campaign with the prisoners grew. "Red Aid Committees" with support from the wider left and trades unions gave the RAF the largest mass support they had enjoyed so far and forced the prison regime to make concessions to the prisoners.

International solidarity links between RAF and BLA political prisoner campaigns were sabotaged by the workings of a prominent German "Cultural Marxist" professor who had positioned himself onto the Free Angela Davis Committee but foiled any attempts to link Black Liberation Movement with the German revolutionaries. Such celebrity "Cultural Marxists" hold similar prominent positions on the "left" today.

After 4 years in prison and having failed to break Ulrike Meinhof or any other RAF leaders' spirits, the prison authorities resorted to political assassination. On May 9 1976, the 31st anniversary of the first day of the official end of the 3rd Reich, the German prison authorities announced that Ulrike Meinhof had been found dead hanging in her cell. The authorities wasted no time in destroying evidence of her death. The prison cell was sterilised and repainted. Her autopsy was performed by a former SS doctor who removed her brain and took a mask of her face for his own private collection. An independent inquiry concluded that Ulrike was strangled after being raped and her body hung afterwards to cover it

up. The state determined it was suicide.

Out on the street, protests and actions were increasing on behalf of the prisoners. The RAF - and other groups internationally in solidarity such as the PFLP - took hostages in order to try to free the remaining RAF prisoners. A year later the German state had 3 more of the 1st generation RAF leadership murdered in prison with one more surviving her wounds, again declaring it a "suicide pact".

These assassinations were attempts to silence Ulrike and the other RAF pioneers, but they failed. A second-generation unit of the RAF took up the name Ulrike Meinhof Brigade to continue their actions. Ulrike's writing, decades on, is starting to be collected and made available to read in other languages. There have been films and plays and a great many songs written about her, half a century after her death.

What are some of the lessons we can take from Ulrike Meinhof's life? What are some useful questions?

Firstly anyone - even a middle class person in an imperialist country - can take steps towards becoming a revolutionary, from joining student radical groups, to becoming a legal influencer for political causes, to actively assisting the revolutionary underground, to forming and leading guerrilla cells. Even a small petty bourgeois mass base can sustain a guerrilla movement. Such a guerrilla movement, even without deep and wide links to the local masses can inflict wildly disproportionate damage upon an Imperialist state, illustrated by the 150,000 police participating in the manhunt for Ulrike and some dozen of her Comrades.

The failure to break through to a wide and deep mass base by the RAF in the 1970s is probably comparable to the failure by the German Communist party to lead mass popular revolts against the Nazi regime in the 30s and 40s. The consequences of failing to seize power when in a much stronger position in the 20s and early 30s, is instructive.

The RAF were to prove more durable and effective than comparable urban guerrilla movements such as the Weather Underground or Black Liberation Army operating in the imperialist USA, but less so than the Provisional IRA which was able to generate mass support, liberate territory and develop its own deep revolutionary infrastructure, but which itself was ultimately not as durable or effective as the National Liberation Front in Vietnam - to choose some examples from many. Is it possible to map these revolutionary experiments in order to see which ones achieved certain qualitative leaps of developments?

In the 60s to the 80s all across the Imperialist Metropole and the semi-periphery there were focist guerrilla groups comparable to the RAF. What are some of the ways these groups operated and evolved and can or should they be integrated into the 3 revolutionary instruments of a socialist movement? The Danish "Blekingegade Group", RAFs contemporary Revolutionary Cells, Animal and Earth Liberation groups as well as Nazi and Islamic Fascist counter-gangs are some derivations on this template.

Ulrike was emblematic of a rich and vibrant revolutionary moment manifesting globally, in her case in a powerful imperialist nation. Her life story encompasses a variety of lessons we can learn from, which included advances, errors and novel developments. The imperialist state innovated and adapted its reactionary repressive approach in response to the movement she was part of, the core of which remains today in an expanded form.

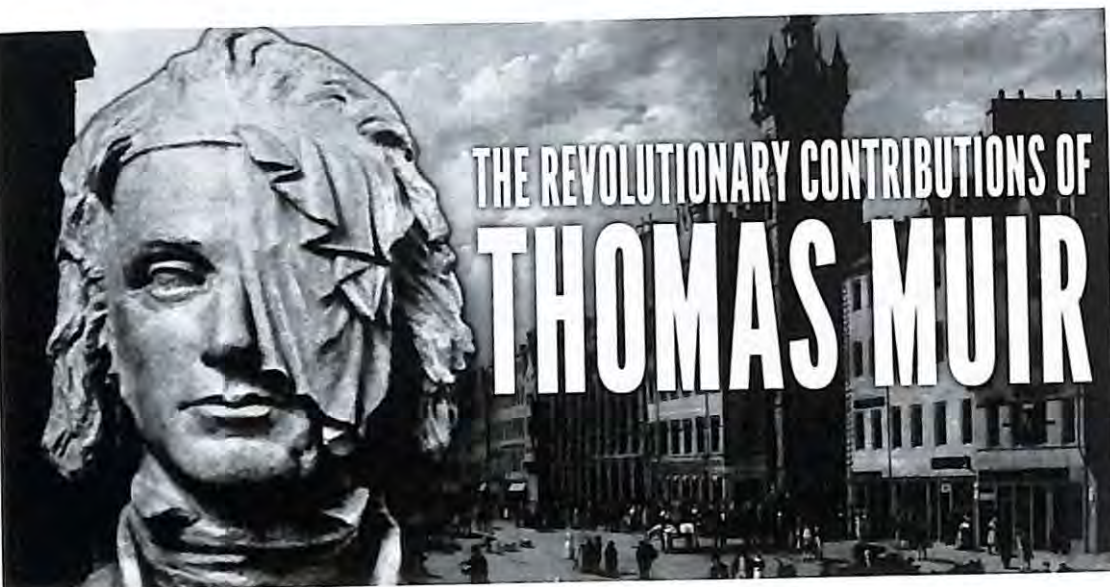
Ulrike was integral in opening paths for professional types (she as a journalist and public intellectual) as well as institutionalised groups like the mentally ill and orphans into becoming revolutionaries. However the movement Ulrike was part of never succeeded in building a support base in the German working class itself. As a result it was never more than an irritant for the German imperialist state, rather than challenging for power as the communist party had done there 50 years prior.

Related to the failure to build a working class base and challenge for power was the issue of ideological eclecticism within Ulrike and her movement. The RAF was a derivation from the German student movement from the 60s rather than from a communist party. Hence they started from a loose ideological base. On top of this Ulrike and her comrades were of petty bourgeois background and had interests reflecting this, exemplified by the psychoanalytic theory of the Socialist Patients Collective.

By contrast the internationalist solidarity which Ulrike and the RAF manifested in support of causes like the Palestinian struggle were a good example of a small revolutionary movement in a critical location punching above their weight in order to deal painful blows to imperialism while giving inspiration to the struggling peoples of the world.

The life of Ulrike and her comrades of that era worldwide at their best, their worst, their novel and their standard practices provide for us a rich vein of lessons that we can apply and learn from in our work today.





The late 18th century saw a marked rise in agitation for improved political rights, better working conditions, opposition to slavery, and the right for every adult to vote. The American War and the French Revolution further provided inspiration to rebels in Ireland, and in Scotland there was a growing spirit of resentment against an English-dominated establishment in London which regularly dismissed and derided Scottish aspirations and rights, sometimes expressed in overtly ethnic language. Against this backdrop emerged the Scottish revolutionary, Thomas Muir. A product of the Scottish Enlightenment, Muir was a leader of Scotland's 'The Friends of the People,' and its successor, the 'United Scotsmen,' and was also in his time, a member of the 'United Irishmen'.

Born in 1765, Muir's upbringing was very much within the moral and social ethics of 'Auld Licht' Calvinism. His family were from Kirkintilloch and he was an Elder of the Church of Scotland in the parish of Cadder. Expelled from Glasgow University for organising a petition against the suspension of a professor, the lecturer John Miller, Britain's first sociologist and a republican, helped him finish his studies at Edinburgh University. Recognised as a man of principle by other advocates who nicknamed him 'The Chancellor', he had a reputation as a lawyer willing to appear in court on behalf of poor clients who could not afford the fees. He was also critical of a legal system that favoured the rich.

In 1792, the London Association of the Friends of the People, led by Scots Lords Lauderdale and Buchan enjoyed widespread initial support from leading whigs throughout Britain. In June of that year, the Scottish societies, in particular those in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Perth began a correspondence with a view to establishing a Scottish counterpart. By the end of June, a plan of organisation, principally drawn up by Muir and William Skirving established the Scottish Association of the Friends of the People, setting up branches across Scotland. While the London society was deliber-

ately exclusive, the Scottish clubs offered membership to all classes. It was around this time that Muir began a correspondence with Archibald Hamilton Rowen, Dublin Secretary of the Society of United Irishmen.

Muir suggested a clear unity of action for the Friends of the People, and in November, having been elected vice-president of the movement at the Edinburgh monthly meeting, called for a General Convention of the Societies to be held in December. An Address of Fraternity was sent by the United Irishmen, drawn up by Dr William Drennan of Belfast that appealed to the republican and independent spirit of the Scottish people. This chimed with Muir's sentiments. Having circulated the letter to the delegates, many objected to the 'intemperate and dangerous nationalistic language.' As Muir rose during the first session to give the Address, he was opposed by unionist elements among the delegates, led by Colonel William Dalrymple, Lord Daer and Richard Fowler who stated that the Address conceived 'Treason or Misprision of Treason against the Union with England.' This attempt to silence the Address was overwhelmingly opposed, and although rejected in its original form, it was read out, Muir declaring to the convention, 'We do not, we cannot, consider ourselves as mowed and melted down into another country.' Four weeks later, in correspondence with Charles Grey of the London Friends of the People, Muir admitted that *'the Friends of Liberty in Scotland have almost unanimously been enemies to the Union with England. Such is the fact, whether the reason be good or bad.'*

Robert Dundas, the Lord Advocate for Scotland at this time had initiated an investigation into Muir's movements and on the morning of 2 January 1793, Muir was arrested on a charge of sedition and taken to Edinburgh. Refusing to answer questions before the sheriff, he was released on bail. In 8<sup>th</sup> January, while in France he met numerous influential personalities including Thomas Paine. When war broke out with France, Muir, facing difficulties in returning for his trial, was pronounced a 'fugitive from justice'. The following March, he was struck from the registry of the Faculty of Advocates.

At the end of June, Muir left Havre de Grace aboard a US ship. The Hope of Boston, disembarking in Belfast and making his way to Dublin, where

he was sworn in as a member of the United Irishmen, attending their meetings and discussing the political situation not just in Scotland but across both Britain and Ireland. Unrest was far greater in Ireland and would flare up at the end of the decade. The United Irishmen were more clandestine in their activities and more revolutionary than their Scottish counterpart. It was a few more years before they became openly insurrectionary, seeking armed resistance, if not revolt. After spending a week with Hamilton Rowan at Rathcoffey, Muir returned to Scotland armed with a large amount of literature and letters to Scottish Republicans.

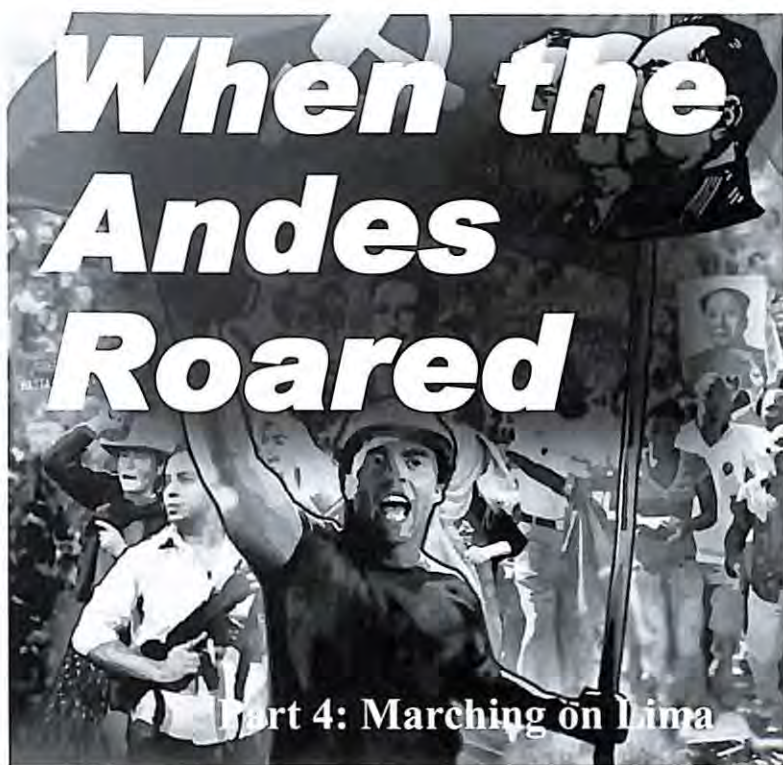
Irish members of the Scottish movement also pushed a more radical agenda although it still had a pan-British element and was in decline.

A spy was recruited to gather evidence on Muir that led to his arrest for sedition, and Muir was sentenced with four others to fourteen years transportation to Botany Bay. In August he declared, *'I have devoted myself to the cause of the people. It is a good cause - it shall ultimately prevail - it shall finally triumph.'* Muir and others were in prison hulks by night and labouring on a chain gang along the banks of the Thames by day, before eventually being shipped off to Botany Bay on 24 May 1794. The French Admiralty, on order of the Comité du Salut Public, sent out frigates to attempt a rescue, but they failed and Muir landed in Sydney on 25 October. Early in 1796, assisted by a French sailor, Muir succeeded in arranging an escape aboard the American ship, the Otter, of Boston, making the journey across the largely uncharted Pacific Ocean to Vancouver Island on June 22 1796. Aware of a British sloop-of-war in the bay, Muir, facing execution as a fugitive from transportation, sailed down the coast of California on a Spanish ship, the Sunil, to the port of Monterey, California. Under suspicion due to his revolutionary ideology he was persuaded to make the difficult journey across the mountains to Mexico City, where, under arrest by the Spanish authorities it was decided to ship him to Spain, as a suspected spy. In October he was shipped out to Havana, Cuba to await a convoy.

Taken aboard the Ninfa, the ship was attacked on the way to Cadiz by a British warship. During the battle Muir was hit by the blast from a cannon ball that smashed his left cheek bone and seriously damaged both eyes. Expected to die, the French government intervened to persuade the Spanish to release Muir and he arrived in Bordeaux in November 1797, where he was hailed as a 'Hero of the French Republic'. Muir joined Thomas Paine in Paris, where they continued to struggle. He had not however, recovered fully from his wounds and his health deteriorated. He died in 1799.

Shortly before his death Muir was to write, *'We have achieved a great duty in these critical times. After the destruction of so many years, we have been the first to revive the spirit of our country and give it a National Existence.'*





# When the Andes Roared

## Part 4: Marching on Lima

In the second half of the decade that was the 80s, the rural base areas of the Partido Comunista del Peru (PCP) flourished in the valleys and plateaus of the Andean mountains and along the rivers as they descended to the jungle in the east and the Pacific coast to the west. Part or all of eight of the country's 24 Departments (making up around a quarter to a third of the country's land mass), were under the PCP's control so that the military had been given a free-hand across Peru, 37 of the country's 170 provinces being run by them. In some areas however, the army had withdrawn to barracks, abandoning active patrols and 40 percent of conscripts and 5 percent of the officers sent to the "emergency zones" under military rule were likely to desert. Important roads linking the mountains to the coast were cut and in the provincial capitals, the party showed its strength through a series of armed strikes. In Lima, strikes and demonstrations supporting the PCP were increasing and in the wake of the PCP's First Congress, Chairman Gonzalo gave an interview to *El Diario* setting out the party's programme to the country and beyond.

The Peoples Committees in the base areas that made up the developing New Democratic People's Republic were increasing and Chairman Gonzalo pointed out that these, "are the essence of People's War; which was being fought in the city as well as the countryside being principal." Gonzalo explained, "We are establishing new relations of production, an outstanding example of which is the way we carry out our land policy, with collective work on the land, and the concrete reorganisation of social life, under a joint dictatorship, where for the first time the workers, peasants and progressive forces rule." Gonzalo goes on, "This situation obliges us to take up the question of how to prepare the city or cities to generalise it. This has to do with our mass work, but more work in the context of and for the purpose of people's war. We have been carrying out this work all along; now we are beginning to develop it further. We believe that our work in the cities is indispensable and must be stepped up more and more, because it is in the cities that the proletariat is concentrated and we cannot leave it in the hands of revisionism or opportunism." [1]

"Our line has been to take the working class districts and shanty-towns as the base of the proletariat as the leading force," he said, "and we are continuing to carry out this line under conditions of increased people's strength. Which masses should we go to? From what was just said, it follows that we should turn the immense working class districts and shantytowns which surround Lima and other cities "into belts of iron to enclose and trap the reactionary forces." Gonzalo explains, "Our work is still developing within the stage of the strategic defensive of the revolutionary forces in relation to the enemy... and guerrilla warfare is still the principal form of struggle. It has spread throughout the country, in the city as well as the countryside, and we are fighting in almost all parts of the country." [2]

The centre of economic and political power, containing a third of Peru's population, Lima was a crucial area for propaganda, sabotage, recruitment and the consolidation of a support network. Gonzalo himself, said of Lima, "As the capital, Lima allows for actions of great impact because they produce an immediate sharpening of contradictions in the heart of the reaction." [3]

The PCP committee for Lima was one of the most powerful regional committees. Known as the 'Metropolitan Committee', it was set up before the initiation of the People's War. Divided into six sub-committees in charge of different zones, it was also responsible for intelligence gathering and the infiltration of ministries, left-wing parties, labour unions and the military. The committee used 'Action groups' that carried out bombings, arson, sabotage, graffiti, etc. and used 'special squads' for assassinations and more technical sabotage.

Known among the masses as Tutapureq (night walkers), PCP fighters sabotaged the country's energy and transport infrastructure as well as mines, factories, research stations, agricultural co-operatives and other commercial or production centres. Blowing up electricity pylons demonstrated to the masses the priorities of the government with what repairs were to follow. Vehicles that ignored strike decrees were dynamited and, in preparation for the revolution ahead, the PCP worked to develop self-sufficient local economies. Party pamphlets and radio stations carried the message across the country. The PCP bombed the tourist train to the Machu Picchu Ruins in June 1986 killing seven passengers. It proved to be an effective blow against tourism.

The country however, remained in the hands of the big bourgeoisie, with its comprador and bureaucrat factions, the bankers, industrialists, merchants and real estate tycoons that controlled the means of production. These operated under the direction of the biggest imperialist interests, much of it concentrated in Lima where children sniffed glue in the shanty towns or smoked cocaine paste. In order to qualify for economic and indeed military aid, recipient countries like Peru had to adhere to 'sound economic policies,' a clause that ensured that they followed IMF guidelines and kept markets open to US exports. Having a drug addicted economy, corrupt local authorities and the military made the cocaine trade difficult to displace. In the country's largely unsettled eastern lowlands, extraction industries exploited the rubber, lumber, gold, oil and the fauna in Peru's tropical forests known as the ceja de salvo, 'the eyebrows of the jungle'.

The Peruvian state however, was not above outsourcing its propaganda. Cue the 'Senderologists', a definite clique of so-called intellectuals, whose function it was to control the narrative that journalists and historians would faithfully follow. Citing each other's work as well as their own as a way of conveying legitimacy, these were not above adding falsehood and suggestive language in pursuit of their conclusions, attempting to sell the idea that the peasants preferred the normality of rule by Lima and local feudal tyrants to the so-called 'terror campaign' of those that led them on land seizures.

Orin Starn fell at the first hurdle of credibility when he defined PCP ideology as 'Leninist-Marxist-Maoist Thought,' a sloppy error that was the norm rather than the exception that flopped his expensive to buy books lower than a bad Wikipedia entry. [4]

Others like Billie Jean Isbell sought to attack the PCP's aspirations for a "future without distinctions", imagining that it "must have been an unfathomable mystery to Andean people who move in a world filled with distinctions. Racial hierarchies and gender biases persist throughout Peru. For many, these aspects of their identity are probably more relevant to daily life than class." [5]

As always it seems, an academic was available to explain the folly of active revolutionaries and the people that they recruited their members from; attempting to create the idea that Indian culture was incompatible with communism, as though capitalism and imperialism was somehow in tune.

Foremost among the Senderologists however, was anthropologist Carlos Degregori, who compiled and sold his essays as books in a way that ensured much repetition. Tending not to feel the need to analyse the subject at hand, Degregori never utilised quotes from PCP documents or statements to back up his casually made claims. Refusing to acknowledge that the ronderos were military created death squads, Degregori would



## Revolution in the countryside



rather portray them as the peasant rejection of the PCP programme, a programme he made no attempt to explain that somehow forced the revolutionaries to move their campaign to the cities. Such an extreme delusion did not explain who the guerrillas were or why it was that an apparently hated and unsupported guerrilla movement could muster the forces to take on an imperialist-backed military and that was marching on Lima. [6]

There was however, one fly in the Senderologist ointment; that of Simon Strong, who made contact with PCP members in his study, and in spite of not being sympathetic, deigned to be sufficiently hostile, initiating a somewhat surly reference by Steve Stern, who stated that, "a foreign author produced the most sensationalist – intellectually crude and politically irresponsible work: Simon Strong, *Shining Path: Terror and Revolution in Peru*." [7] The use of the term 'foreign' is somewhat petulant, ignoring the reality that most of the Senderologists themselves are expats.

The willingness for the bourgeois commentators to believe that the rondas were successful in defeating the PCP represents the inability of their class viewpoint to grasp reality. While such notions are likely to be comforting, the idea that cannon-fodder, made up of the dross of rural communities could provide an effective 'resistance' makes no sense. That the peasantry would find communism hard to stomach against a backdrop of extreme oppression from government, traffickers, landlords and an army ever on the lookout for subversion against the system was a difficult sell.

But the bourgeoisie could not see things from the point of view of the peasant or worker. Its ideologues, then as now, preferred to psychoanalyse communists rather than analyse the social and political conditions that gave rise to them. Furthermore, a troublingly large section of the West European left appeared to be quite happy to believe this bluster, putting them in tune with imperialist propaganda but into contradiction with military and imperialist sources that had at least the need to tell each other the truth. The CIA and the US military, at least living in the real world, conducted intense analysis of the PCP with a view to defeating them, and it is their declassified documents that blow away the Senderologist's crude propaganda.

According to the *Military Review*, the professional journal of the US Army, published by the Army University Press, "Sendero Luminoso did not need to build bonds with the population: they were the population." [8]

Daniel Masterson, a Professor at the US Naval Academy, when analysing the People's War, repeated the propaganda of the US in Vietnam et al. about indoctrination and rule by terror of the forces of resistance. Faced with reality however, he was to find, in a personal interview with an armed forces officer who commanded units in Ayacucho in 1983 and 1988 that, "Still, eyewitness accounts by armed forces personnel underscored the fanaticism of young Senderistas and is a strong testament to the strength of their commitment to their cause. In some cases, mortally wounded prisoners died rather than give information with a promise of medical aid." [9]

According to a PCP document, Alfonso Barrantes, of the United Left Party (IU) by his own words showed where his own allegiances lay, "The battle has not ended, we shall continue with greater strength against

imperialism, terrorism and the enemies of the people." Here the key word was that of "terrorism", a term whose usage was popularised by Reagan to fight against revolution, a term promoted by all who thrive and prosper with the system. Here the role played by opportunist electoralism and its divisive efforts showed that, without fighting parliamentary cretinism it is impossible to get power, just as imperialism cannot be swept away without fighting revisionism. The IU had facilitated APRA's road to power, Barrantes justifying his position saying that "the people voted for change by electing the left". When Barrantes congratulated Garcia on his victory, the PCP asked, "What purpose, then, have the IU served; simply and plainly to facilitate the triumph of APRA." [10]

The extensive power of Peru's three armed forces, which each had their own cabinet minister, was weakened in October 1987 when individual ministers were replaced by a single minister of defence and a unified command was established. The slashed funding for the military by the APRA government affected morale, which was still concerned with the supposed external threats from Chile and Ecuador. Around 60 percent of the approximately 120,000 members were two-year conscripts, receiving hardly anything in exchange for labour, beyond food and barracks. Most of the conscripts came from the coastal towns and cities and the level of troop desertion at the end of the decade was running at 30-40 percent according to military analysts. Many soldiers abandoned the ranks at the urging of the PCP. APRA however, greatly strengthened the police and the increasingly efficient anti-terrorist detective squad, the Office against Terrorism (DIRCOTE) was bolstered. [11]

Some of the large-scale fighting against the PCP at this time took place in the upper valley of the Huallaga River which led from the Andes into the jungle. In the town of Uchiza, on a tributary of the Huallaga, according to a government communique, a 300 strong guerrilla column overwhelmed a 50-man elite police unit at the end of March, the guerrillas taking over the whole town and airport. The police station surrendered after a six-hour battle. Several officers were executed, the rest released. [12]

At a private speech made by Alan Garcia to young APRA members in Ayacucho in May 1988, Garcia revealed: "Mistakes or not, criminal or not, the Senderista has what we do not have: mystique and self-surrender... They are people who deserve our respect and my personal admiration because they are, like it or not, militants. Fanatics, they say, I believe they have mystique and it is part of our self-criticism, comrades, to know we must recognise he who, subordinated or not, delivers himself to death, gives his life, has mystique." [13]

In Ayacucho, in spite of Senderologist claims, red banners hung from trees and crags between the peaks, and revolutionary slogans were painted on boulders. These areas had suffered some of the worst repression; including aerial bombardment. The military frequently killed journalists to keep their areas of operations sealed off, sometimes encouraging collaborators and rondas to do their dirty work. Visiting human rights groups were also routinely ejected from the emergency zones. José Navarrete, a wealthy agricultural merchant in Huanta, was denounced by a jealous neighbour and detained. "The marines kept me blindfolded without food and water for fourteen days, hanging me up by my hands tied behind my back until my eyes were popping out," he said, "I was punched and half-drowned. Eventually they decided I was not guilty and freed me. I was lucky – a prisoner accused of blowing up a bridge had his head cut



PCP Liberated Zone



off with an axe in front of me." Navarrete still confessed. [14]

The military had obliged peasant communities in northern Ayacucho to form these 'self-defence groups' or Rondas. Germán Medina, a doctor that became a left-wing congressman for Ayacucho, fled the city after receiving threats from both the PCP and the rondas said, "In some places, the formations of the rondas involved transferring communities from the higher areas to the valleys, acting as cushions to protect the military bases. With the soldiers following, they were forced to comb the area for the Senderistas. Anybody who did not take part was considered suspect." He went on, "The creation of the rondas exacerbated inter-community fights and brought old hatreds to the surface. These stem from the extermination of the Huari/wari tribe by the Incas, who moved the survivors elsewhere and repopulated much of the region with other groups. The peasants try to take advantage of the rondas to settle scores, or just to gain general political ascendancy. But whole villages have disappeared, either through massacres or emigration, which is what the army wants because it leaves the senderistas with nowhere to hide and no one to feed them." [15]

The ronderos were treated without mercy, the earliest of the PCP's responses to these counter-gangs having occurred in April 1983. Encouraged by military slaughters of guerrillas in the region with the help of informers, peasants from Santiago de Lucanamarca and Huancasancos, Ayacucho attacked and brutally killed a number of PCP militants. Much would later be made of the so-called Lucanamarca Massacre, but José Carlos Mariátegui had warned, "Revolutionaries from all parts of the world must choose between being the victims of violence or using it." [16] Against the backdrop of the state's white terror in its unrestricted forms, the PCP went into these villages, slaughtering around 80 in reprisal. In his interview, Gonzalo explained,

"In the face of reactionary military actions and the use of mesnadas, we responded with a devastating action: Lucanamarca. Neither they nor we have forgotten it, to be sure, because they got an answer that they didn't imagine possible. More than 80 were annihilated, that is the truth. And we say openly that there were excesses, as was analysed in 1983. But everything in life has two aspects. Our task was to deal a devastating blow in order to put them in check, to make them understand that it was not going to be so easy... In that case, the principal thing is that we dealt them a devastating blow, and we checked them and they understood that they were dealing with a different kind of people's fighters, that we weren't the same as those they had fought before. This is what they understood... It's like an angle; it can be opened up to a certain point and no further. If we were to give the masses a lot of restrictions, requirements and prohibitions, it would mean that deep down we didn't want the waters to overflow. And what we needed was for the waters to overflow, to let the flood rage, because we know that when a river floods its banks it causes devastation, but then it returns to its riverbed. I repeat, this was explained clearly by Lenin, and this is how we understand those excesses. But, I insist, the main point was to make them understand that we were a hard nut to crack, and that we were ready for anything, anything." [17]

But other methods of coercion were being attempted. General Clemente Noel had been replaced in 1983 by General Adrián Huamén, a Quechua-speaking Indian, who declared his intention to replace slaughter with building compliance between troops and the peasants. "My strategy was to give protection to the population so they could produce, travel, have animals, sow seeds and stop others killing them," he said. "For them, Peru does not exist. They care nothing about senators, the police above them and the judges jail them because they have not got the cash to defend themselves. Meanwhile, Shining Path has killed off all the cattle thieves and promised a better future. The state has to protect the people. When I arrived, the time for bullets was over... development plans were made and the politicians promised a large sum of money but it never came. The local development authorities helped themselves, not the communities - that is why Shining Path kills them. When I denounced the corruption, I was booted out." [18] Mass graves however, continued to be discovered. Huamén felt betrayed by the government and cracked down in frustration.

On the eve of the Catholic Pope's May 1988 visit, a bomb was deactivated when he was due to attend a bishop's seminar, and along his route into Lima, naval infantry arrested two PCP members disguised as police and carrying submachine guns. [19] The visit was brief and controlled by the ultra-conservatives, his speech dealing only in religious

dogma. Chairman Gonzalo observed, "He [the Pope] has even called on us to put down our arms while he blesses the weapons of genocide." [20]

While the pope addressed his conservative clergy, General José Valdivia and his troops showed the realities of state power and initiated a massacre and cover-up in Cayara.

"It was around ten o'clock on the night of Friday, 13 May 1988 as the pair of army trucks trundled along the dirt-track mountain road near the hamlet of Erusco high above the Pampas River Valley in the department of Ayacucho... The trucks were carrying food - cattle and swine - and medical supplies, as well as about twenty soldiers, to a military base in the town of Huancapi... The first lorry had already entered the curve when the mines exploded. The dynamite blew the second truck into the fresh, mountain air: rocks and more dynamite, enclosed in milk and coffee tins, rained down from above. Figures in ponchos emerged on the edge of the cliff and opened up a barrage of fire at the soldiers as they spilled from the wreckage." [21]

After the ambush, troops, many with their faces hidden by balaclavas and mostly led by a Special Forces group called, 'the lynxes', went to Cayara, a large village of low mud huts with earthen floors and roofs of wood and straw. Army helicopters and lorries arrived. The men of the village were placed face down on the ground. "A bearded gringo was the leader. The soldiers had been ordered to ransack the village and set fire to the teachers' houses. They raided the shops and took away alcohol and soft drinks. Houses were burned. At midday, the soldiers were walking around with axes, machetes and hammers which they had stolen. They kept asking us about the Terrucos [slang for 'terrorists'], that we had attacked the army lorry and killed the captain and soldiers." [22]

Village resident, Fernandina Palomino said, "They cracked open my husband's head with a hammer and then with an axe they took out his brains. He died crying, my husband, and without protesting. The corpses which were piled under a tree were later hurled into a gully. A man who survived and the elderly woman that gave him shelter were taken away and disappeared." [23]

### Rondas Campesonas: Fodder for the Class Enemy



On 14<sup>th</sup> December, Fernandina was stabbed several times, and finished off with submachine gun fire when the truck she was travelling in was stopped by troops near the village of Toccto. The mayor of Cayara, who had been absent on the day of the initial massacre, was also killed in the same incident. The military had been systematically killing off witnesses to the massacre, but in spite of this, the Cayara massacre was unusually well documented. [24]

An investigation commission headed by an APRA senator lasted months seeking to discredit rumours of the massacre. Even after the bodies were discovered, Garcia issued a statement backing the military, saying that "they are expected to produce results." [25]

In Peru, the military applied methods of anti-subversion imported from the US whereby the military aspect dominates the economic, political and psychological elements. It did however tend to imitate the Argentinian counter-insurgency model that was in turn based on the French approach



that acted as an occupation, engaging in indiscriminate killing. Rather than maintaining a rural presence, it preferred short operations. Brigadier-General Arciniego, citing an Argentinian military book on ethics and repression stated, "Subversive violence destroys order, the surgeon's violence restores it." [26]

According to the UN, more people were detained and then disappeared in Peru than in any other country each year between 1987 and 1990. The UN's official figure was 884. More had been taken to military bases in the military zones. Judges and state prosecutors were forbidden from military detention centres as were the Red Cross (which was forced to close its Ayacucho office that had been in situ between 1987 and 1989).

A secret document leaked from the Armed Forces Joint Command stated, "Anti-Subversive operations that are executed on the basis of information provided by the Intelligence Detachments will be of a highly aggressive and offensive character, not forgetting that the best subversive is the dead subversive; therefore, no prisoners will be taken." [27] In the province of Huanta in Ayacucho, those civilians that refused to collaborate with the rondas had their heads blown off with dynamite. According to notices left by the corpses, this was due to their not knowing 'how to think.' [28]



PCP: Swimming like fish in friendly water

The widow of Hugo Bustíos, a reporter for a leading Peruvian magazine who was shot and blown up by soldiers said, "People are more scared of the army than Shining Path. Hugo was killed because he wanted to publicise the army's atrocities and they thought he was a leader of the subversives. The army steals and rapes, but the marines are the worst of all and the bloodiest are those from the aristocratic families – they think they are superior, they do not know how to treat people." [29]

The PCP continued to develop, adopting mobile warfare involving larger units in its march towards the strategic equilibrium and onwards to the taking of the cities and preparing for the strategic offensive. In July 1988 the first general strike in a dozen years was called by the dominant trade union confederation, the revisionist-affiliated Confederación General de los Trabajadores (CGTP). In response, the PCP called for a 'fighting strike' in Lima; in Ayacucho, Huancavelica and in Apurímac. Shutdowns had been occurring in the city of Ayacucho, the department capital, since early in the people's war. These included a combination of workers strikes, the closing of small businesses, mass actions and guerrilla attacks. Now, workers with faces covered shouted the PCP slogan 'Fight and Resist' in Lima as they carried out street actions. The CGTP leadership were not happy.

At the end of September 1988, a three-day shut-down was called by the Carratera Central Class-Conscious Worker's Struggle Committee, a legal organisation formed by workers from factories and workshops along the road's industrial strip. These organised strikes in textile and car parts factories, refrigerator plants, brickyards, etc., organised mass mobilisations, set up burning roadblocks and fought the police. Groups emerging from the nearby shantytowns belonged to this committee, as did similar organisations of municipal workers, hotel workers, university workers and street vendors among others. PCP armed militias also took part in agitation and fighting.

Also in September, another El Diario report provided an eyewitness account of an armed shutdown in the jungle hills of the Upper Huallaga Valley. On a night of struggle that was to begin at 6.00pm, villagers were assembling along the Carretera Marginal – the road that runs the whole

length of the foothills connecting them to the west of the country. The reporter said that, "a robust housewife, about 40 years old and known only as 'Micaela', led us off the main road through a rock-strewn path that wound up into the mountains. With our cameras, tape recorder, light luggage and an indescribable excitement, we were headed towards our meeting with the illegal People's Guerrilla Army." [30]

Later the report described, "As we left the hut a lantern's light surprised us. There were two youths, whose faces, which we could barely see, showed they were unmistakably from the countryside. He seemed to be about 23 years old; she was no more than 16. Still, there was something that clearly marked them from all the others present: each carried a rifle over the shoulder. In the midst of the immense jungle, we found ourselves face to face with two guerrillas of the clandestine PCP." Led to the Carratera Marginal, the journalists continued, "When we got to the road, a lorry was waiting for us with the motor running. Three people were in it. As we climbed in, accompanied by our inseparable guide, 10 others emerged from where they had been hiding, camouflaged in the thick brush. Most of them wore uniforms consisting of thick green pants, a dark polo shirt, rubber boots and a knapsack. Only six or seven wore caps, but all were armed with a rifle or large-calibre shotgun. Hand-grenades, a machete and a lantern completed their equipment... at the edge of the district around Aucayacu, a town located on the last asphalted section of the roadway; a veritable army of villagers had already begun work in the darkness to completely block the road. About 5,000 people appeared before our eyes, working like ants. Peasant axes felled giant coconut trees across the roadway... at dawn, when the villagers completed their prodigious efforts, trucks, whole trees and tons of stone completely cut off the 300 kilometres of roadway. We were there for almost eight hours, recording the peasants' hard night's work, lightened with great quantities of lemon soda and songs vigorously sung into our tape recorder. All this took place under the watchful eyes of a strong guerrilla unit, who stood ready to fight in case of an attack." [31]

On the 26 September, a fighting shutdown in Lima began at midnight. Called by the powerful Carretera General Class-Conscious Workers' Struggle Committee, the 72 hour action was part of the struggle for the taking of political power rather than the participation in a vicious circle of economic struggle. During these three days of direct class confrontation, such revolutionary struggle was different from strikes in the past. [32]

The following day, El Diario described how the shutdown was marked by armed confrontations, road blocks, sabotage, and demonstrations, armed militias of the PCP once more coming onto the streets. "Starting at dawn hundreds of workers from the big factories of the area strew tree trunks and stones across the roads, raising banners reading, 'Fight and Resist! It's Right to Rebel!' showing the full support of the people for this 72-hour stoppage, groups of shantytown dwellers also participated alongside the wage workers pulling tree trunks across the streets and amassing piles of tyres on the asphalt, dousing them with petrol, so that the anti-riot police found themselves amid thick smoke." The military, using armoured vehicles to cordon off areas, was out in force, meeting home-made bombs with tear gas and live ammunition. At one point, demonstrators took over the Fiestas petrol station, setting it on fire. [33]

Sabotage, road blocks and lightning demonstrations continued into the second day of the shutdown so that the Armed Forces were instructed to occupy the whole industrial belt, raiding numerous addresses in the shanty towns. Although the area was brought under control, the army failed to halt the continuation of the shutdown and road blocks and agitation among workers continued. Most of the workers remained on strike and many factories remained paralysed. Schools and markets were also closed. [34]

Elsewhere, the PCP dominated the mountain department of Junín, the red flag flying over its villages and revolutionary slogans painted on walls. Mayors and governors fled, resigned or were killed. Foreign aid projects, part of the low-intensity operations of imperialism were also destroyed or driven out. The Mantara River came under military rule in October. The bread basket of Lima was the Montero Valley in Junín, producing a third of its vegetables, half of its maize and most of its potatoes. It was also the conduit from the jungle for a third of Lima's fruit and the bulk of the agricultural products from the General Andes. Junín provided a fifth of the wool fibre for the textile industry and was a significant producer of meat and dairy.

From October to December, 70,000 workers from an open-pit and the



underground installations in the mountains east of Lima went on strikes for wages and over retirement issues. While miners took part in a 300km 'march of sacrifice' to Lima, the PCP carried out armed actions in support. Saul Cantorel, head of the mineworkers union and United Left reformist, refused to condemn the PCP actions and was later to be murdered by a government death squad in February 1989.

Government-linked death squads first appeared in 1986. One of these, a paramilitary death squad with direct links to APRA and the Ministry of the Interior, began operations in October 1987 when two APRA members were killed with their own car bomb that they were attempting to plant outside the offices of El Diario. This group also made several failed attempts on El Diario staff. Its national campaign of bombings, intimidation, assassination in which journalists, human rights workers, trade unionists and left politicians were among its targets, its activities had greatly increased in 1988. Naming themselves Comando Rodrigo Franco (CRF), after an APRA official believed killed by the PCP, their first public communique announced the murder of lawyer Manuel Febres, who had just won an acquittal in the trial of Osman Morote - although Morote was kept in prison on other charges. Febres was also El Diario's legal councillor. Only the week before the murder, El Diario had printed Chairman Gonzalo's interview. By way of explanation, the CRF communique stated that 'terrorists' would no longer be able to use the legal system.

A young APRA member who had declined to join the CRF told Simon Strong, "the Rodrigo Franco Comando initiated a national campaign of intimidation, bombings, and assassinations in which journalists, human rights workers, trade unionists, and left-wing politicians were among the targets." He added, "They have groups in all the emergency zones and a large central office which, incidentally, is very close to where you live." [35]

There were extensive links between CRF, APRA and the government in general. Garcia's Presidential Minister Agustin Mantilla was also head of a secret terrorist organisation within DIRCOTE (Peru's 'anti-terrorist' police), used to assassinate those suspected of PCP sympathies. They also killed enemies of APRA, including an Ayacucho reporter for a rightist magazine in January 1989. Some victims were first arrested by DIRCOTE before being found dead, the Comando claiming responsibility. The Comando also bombed the grave of PCP martyr Edith Lagos.

After a police raid on El Diario offices, the editor and publisher Luis Arce was arrested and charged with PCP links, the charges later being dropped



due to lack of evidence. The newspaper continued in small weekly editions until October. Subsequently the offices were bombed as were the houses of staff. In December Arce was again arrested for violation of a new decree that outlawed 'apologists for terrorism'. Again he was released and he left the country for Europe. After five months, on March 8<sup>th</sup>, El Diario reappeared in a weekly edition primarily being sold in the factories and surrounding quarters and shantytowns.

In the wake of the 1986 prison massacres, revolutionary prisoners were largely gathered in the Lima prison at Canto Grande where they continued their disciplined lifestyles. Electricity was cut off in early 1989, making cooking very difficult. An article in El Diario said that they were, "combatants of the people's guerrilla army led by the PCP who, even while prisoners, maintain such a role and carry out three tasks...

*PCP prisoners murdered in their beds by the military*



*combatting: They have developed successive struggles to conquer and defend their rights... producing: The prisoners of war... make handicrafts... mobilising: They carry out work of the masses, politicising, mobilising, and organising their relatives, neutralising the common prisoners; and, what is fundamental, [they] develop their own ideological, political, and organisational work... In this way the black dungeons of the reaction [are transformed] into shining trenches of combat."* [36]

An armed shutdown in January 1989 in the factory district along Argentina Avenue in Lima resulted in marine units occupying the whole area. February saw the first call for a seven-day shutdown in Ayacucho City in what was an escalation. Leaflets that went out in a power blackout, called for people to come out in support. Army and police vehicles patrolled the deserted streets calling for people to abandon the action. Other towns in the region were almost totally closed down and country roads were blocked. Trucks that defied the shutdown were painted with graffiti or blown up. Guerrilla units attacked army and police positions and ambushed patrols and military convoys. At this time there were massive peasant strikes in Huancavelica, Apurimac and the jungle around the city of Pucallpa.

Guillermo Lopez, an alderman and reporter in Tingo Maria who was suspected of PCP sympathies also said in January, "Government here is now completely centralised. All the villages are in the hands of Shining Path. The police and army are more and more desperate and the DEA help them go after the guerrillas. I have been told the DEA want to make me disappear before I defend the peasants against the corrupt CORAH workers." López house had been dynamited the previous year. In April he was tortured and murdered by either police or the military. [37]

A power blackout and guerrilla attacks broke out simultaneously in Lima, public employees repeatedly marching and clashing with police on into March. In the Altiplano (high Plateau) department of Puno, bordering Bolivia, the PCP held the city of Azangaro and the neighbouring villages for three days. Land seizures in Puno by thousands of peasants in February and March continued to rage, peasants occupying land belonging to around six SAIS (former feudal estates taken over by the government).

The actions however were coming ever nearer to the PCP's sixth zone, that of metropolitan Lima. In the capital, instead of People's Committees, it operated through a network of specialised local movements. In the first public action of the People's Revolutionary Defence Movement (PRDM), a PCP mass organisation designed to serve as the united front in the cities and waging, "a relentless struggle against revisionism and opportunism," it was reported that, "... on March 8<sup>th</sup>, International Women's Day, 1989, when to the great surprise of passers-by and police, thousands of men and women marched through the downtown streets of Lima in the early evening chanting, "For Women's Liberation. Develop People's War! Down with Bourgeois and Revisionist Feminism! March 8<sup>th</sup>, a Day to Fight! Long Live Chairman Gonzalo, Long Live the PCP, Long Live the People's War!" Police barracks near the route of the march were dynamited as the quick-stepping demonstrators passed near-by. Rifle-toting police who cordoned off the area found that the marchers had suddenly disappeared." [38]



It was now widely believed that the government was losing the war, inflation having hit 2000 percent. This fostered sharp contradictions and political infighting within the ruling class against a background of acute economic crisis. The most reactionary elements within Peruvian society were in agreement that the state was in retreat. According to PCP Congress documents, *"A coup d'état could take place, and furthermore, Garcia himself could arrange his exit through a phoney coup, to save himself for the future."*<sup>[39]</sup> However, rumblings for a military coup were discouraged by direct US diplomatic intervention.

Gonzalo explained the situation, *"Thus, keeping in mind what Chairman Mao has said, all of this is leading to what he called a high tide of struggle, or what Lenin termed a revolutionary crisis. When we reach that point the insurrection takes place. This is the theory of people's war, and this is what we are taking up, and the basis upon which we are developing. Therefore, because the process of our people's war must bring us to a high tide, we must prepare the insurrection that in synthesis comes down to the seizure of the cities. We are thinking about and preparing for this insurrection because it is a necessity. Without it we cannot win country-wide victory."*<sup>[40]</sup>



Gonzalo goes on, *"We think that our activity in the cities is indispensable and it must be pushed forward more and more, because that is where the proletariat is concentrated and we cannot leave it in the hands of revisionism or opportunism... Take barrios and barriadas as the foundation and the proletariat as the leading force. This is our policy and we will continue to apply it, now, under conditions of people's war... The barrios and barriadas are a belt of steel that will encircle the enemy."*<sup>[41]</sup>

A major threat and indeed distraction to the revolution however was the Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru (MRTA) that sought to present itself as a rival to the revolution. Deriving from a complex network of army, leftist and APRA factions, it was formed to offer an alternative to the PCP, providing a path to insurrection for the legal left in the event of a military coup. Invoking the struggles of the indigenous rebels Manco Inca, Juan Santos Atahualpa and Tupac Amaru II, it saw itself as kindred to the pro-Cuban groups and the Sandinistas, etc. The MRTA however, also had weapons links with the APRA death squad CRF.

After lengthy in-fighting within its ranks, Victor Poley, whose father was a founder of APRA, emerged as MRTA commander-in-chief. He was captured in February 1989 while sleeping in a government-run tourist hotel in Huancayo. He declared to a court tribunal, *"The revolution had to be the work of the organised people, with their vanguard formed by popular leaders, the progressive sectors of the Catholic Church and*

*patriotic members of the armed forces."*<sup>[42]</sup> A former leading young Aprista, Poley had been a close friend of Garcia, sharing a flat with him at university in Madrid.

The MRTA's first action was a Lima bank raid in 1982, the group emerging fully in 1984, bombing the US embassy, KFC restaurants, department stores, and political and government offices. Radio and television stations were occupied and forced to broadcast communiques and there were also attempts to sabotage general elections. Cells were established in several department capitals, especially Tarapoto in the Central Huallaga Valley.

Carrying out ransom-kidnappings, extortion, the killing of police, soldiers and civilians, and a small number of car bombings, the MRTA called a temporary truce with Garcia when the latter declared his anti-imperialism, although this broke down when it was clear that he would not keep his word.

*"Our differences with the Senderistas have different dimensions,"* explained an MRTA leader in 1986, *"with respect to tactics, we think that the enemy that has to be defeated is militarisation and the government, whereas the Senderistas believe that the main enemies are apristas."*<sup>[43]</sup>

Fully-armed and uniformed, the MRTA battalions pushed into Huallaga Valley, blocking the PCP's northern advance, entering into a tacit agreement with the military. As an MRTA leader in Terapoto in February 1988 announced, *"Shining Path was not only a threat to the zone, but is to the whole country... If we do not rise up now, who will stop them later? No one... Our rising up impedes Shining Path from advancing in the zone and trips them up on a national level."*<sup>[44]</sup>

The PCP proved to be easily the stronger force. The MRTA however, was believed to be in secret contact with Garcia throughout this period. According to APRA senator Javier Valle Riestra, *"APRA bases have always sympathised with MRTA. We have revolutionary roots."*<sup>[45]</sup>

However, reports of PCP units in Bolivian provinces bordering Peru north of Lake Titicaca grew during the late 80s as the revolutionaries had striven to push a corridor from Cuzco across the top of the Lake in the department of Puno. Bolivia's Committee to Support the Revolution in Peru (CSRPE) worked in support of this drive.

August 1988 saw a bomb attack on the US Secretary of State George Schultz, in Bolivia to drum up support against the Sandinistas, on his route from the centre of La Paz to the airport. The remote-controlled bomb damaged four cars in Schultz's motorcade. The US claimed the attack was by drug traffickers as a justification for its war on drugs but a group calling itself the Armed Forces of National Liberation, Zárate Willke (named after an Indian peasant leader at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) claimed responsibility.

In December that year, the Peruvian naval attaché in La Paz, Captain Juan Vega Llona was gunned down near his embassy by a group claiming to be called the Revolutionary Workers Movement. Significantly, Vega Llona had been involved in the El Fronton massacre. Zárate Willke also bombed the congress building in conjunction with the RWM. Elsewhere in Bolivia, mines were being raided by guerrilla columns, unclaimed bodies were appearing, and around 40 PCP took over the village of Ulla Ulla and assassinated the mayor.

There was also evidence that Bolivians had joined the PCP columns in Peru and a national deputy for La Paz, Walter Alvaro, said that the PCP was making regular incursions. *"They buy animals, vanish and appear at night... sometimes there are three, or four, or two of them; they want the peasants to organise themselves."* In the area of Athacachi, Puerto Acosta and Sorata, locals were reported to be turning *"silent and hostile to the authorities"* and according to a Bolivian journalist in June 1989, *"Nobody speaks of that group PCP expressly, but it is obvious that the peasants there have a unique respect for them."*<sup>[46]</sup>

El Diario reported that, *"The reactionary press is blocking information coming from the Southern Zone of the country but it is not able to hide the Maoist drive that is extending into Bolivia."*<sup>[47]</sup> The Peruvian government, reluctant to acknowledge the PCP's advance, claimed that one clash between the PCP and the Bolivian police was carried out by the MRTA.



## Educating the masses



Anti-US feeling in Bolivia increased with the arrival of US troops that came to train and equip two light infantry battalions including one from the Manchego Battalion that had been responsible for the capture and murder of Che Guevara. Peasants and miners called strikes and threw up road blocks calling for the US troops to be expelled. In late June, an army intelligence source said, "*Bolivian territory is not only being used for provisions and recuperation by Peruvian subversive groups, it is known that in some parts of the country they are carrying out philosophical indoctrination and military training as part of the formation of ... the Committee of Support to the Peruvian Revolution.*" A week later, two electricity pylons were dynamited in El Alto and the town of Cochabamba. The first time such attacks had occurred in Bolivia. A group calling itself Túpac Katari Guerrilla Army claimed responsibility. A PCP spokesman also said that the party was extending into Ecuador to "*avoid being surrounded.*" [48]

The PCP was also pushing to transform its guerrilla groups into platoons, companies and battalions, particularly in the Huallaga Valley. In July 1989, hundreds of guerrillas attacked the Madre Mia army barracks, killing 39 soldiers, the PCP giving at least 25 wounded soldiers medical treatment. This marked the emergence of the PCP's capacity to marshal large forces against the military directly. The guerrillas relied on the river routes for transport and had pushed through to the coast in the north of the Arequipa department. A senior police official in the department capital of Huancayo, admitted that only a tenth of departmental officials remained. "*We are all being threatened that we will be murdered if we do not resign; he said in April. The subversives say they have a thousand eyes, a thousand ears and its true. They have infiltrated everywhere.*" [49]

The PCP's fifth military plan, 'Developing Bases in Order to Conquer Power,' was launched in August and by the end of the year had carried out 23,090 actions. The PCP now sought to boost the number of People's Committees operating openly, its campaigns now centred on boycotts of municipal and general elections while attempting to move the war into the phase of overall political and military 'strategic equilibrium'.

In the run-up to the 1989 municipal elections, the PCP had killed around 60 mayors and mayoral candidates and around 500 municipal candidates resigned. Voting was suspended in some areas where the candidates were no more. In some areas, the elections descended into farce. In at least one

case, the elected candidate had been assassinated before the ballot. Despite massive deployment of police and troops, PCP strike decrees paralysed the central Andes. "*Official figures showed that nearly sixty per cent of registered voters either spoiled their ballot papers or, despite heavy fines, failed to turn up (this compared to thirty-six per cent in the 1986 municipal elections). In only eight out of the twenty-four departments (including Huancavelica, where the figures were probably a cover-up) was abstentionism less than forty per cent; in Ayacucho it was eighty-five per cent.*" [50]

A similar situation occurred in the 1990 General Election in which several congressional candidates were killed. In a series of car bombs, industrial sabotage and strike decrees, power blackouts caused by the bombing of electricity pylons allowed the hillsides around Lima to be lit up by burning hammer and sickles.

The PCP now claimed to have 24 support bases, comprising hundreds of peoples committees, in five zones corresponding to regional committees. These five regional committees were in Ayacucho, Huancavelica and Apurimac; Junin, Huánuco and Cerro de Pasco; the Huallaga Valley; northern Puno; and the mountains of Ancash and La Libertad.

In December 1990, about 180 rebels destroyed a camp belonging to sub-contractors of Mobil Oil in the Huallaga Valley, fire-bombing and dynamiting equipment, including the computers that stored the seismographic results gathered since prospecting began six months previously. Before destroying the Berranca camp, a small group of PCP arrived and forced the camp's helicopters to airlift guerrilla reinforcements into the area. The PCP occupied Barranca for ten days, giving lectures to the hundreds of workers, and celebrating Gonzalo's birthday before razing the camp to the ground and escaping by helicopter. "*Until 1988 the rebels manifested themselves by staging sabotage attacks from outside the factories. Since then,*" said Gabriel Ferrer, the National Society of Industries (NSI) Vice-president, "*Shining Path has built up cells within the factories and challenged the power of the unions. Union leaders and senior staff are being assassinated. Workers and executives are terrorised,*" said Ferrer. "*The unions are losing their influence and executives are resigning. Sabotage is being replaced by boycotts: they are not interested in salary or labour claims. It is as if the terrorists are installing themselves in readiness for destruction at a later stage.*" [51]









Mariátegui was and remains one of the most influential Marxists in Latin America, upholding Marxism-Leninism as the 'Shining Path to revolution' in Peru. The PCP emphasised the importance of 'retaking Mariátegui's road'.

Mariátegui understood Marxism-Leninism as a rupture from the opportunism of the Second International:

*'Marxism-Leninism, a doctrine which we wholly and unreservedly adhere to in its philosophical, political and socio-economic aspects. The methods we uphold are those of orthodox revolutionary socialism. We not only rebuke in all their forms the methods and tendencies of the Second International, but oppose them actively'.*

In applying Marxism-Leninism to the conditions of Peru he recognised the existence of semi-colonialism, where independence was only nominal with deep imperialist penetration (much like the Free State):

*'The economic condition of these republics is undoubtedly semi-colonial, and this characteristic of their economies tends to be accentuated as capitalism, and therefore imperialist penetration, develops. But the national bourgeoisies, who see cooperation with imperialism as their best source of profits, feel themselves secure enough as mistresses of power not to be too greatly preoccupied with national sovereignty [...] The revolution for independence is relatively too near, its myths and symbols too alive in the consciousness of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. The illusion of national sovereignty still lives on. It would be a serious mistake to claim that this social layer still has a sense of revolutionary nationalism, as in those places where it does represent a factor for anti-imperialist struggle in semi-colonial countries enslaved by imperialism, for example, in Asia in recent decades.'*

His assessment here of the national bourgeoisie does not distinguish the comprador

bourgeoisie, though Peru had very underdeveloped national capital regardless. He criticized the forms of shallow bourgeois nationalism which did not truly have an interest in combatting imperialism, something that could only be achieved under proletarian leadership:

*'Without ruling out the use of any type of anti-imperialist agitation or any action to mobilize those social sectors that might eventually join the struggle, our mission is to explain to and show the masses that only the socialist revolution can stand as a definitive and real barrier to the advance of imperialism [...] we are anti-imperialists because we are Marxists, because we are revolutionaries, because we oppose capitalism with socialism, an antagonistic system called upon to transcend it'.*

Here there are echoes of Connolly's thesis that 'the working class remain the incorruptible inheritors of the struggle for Irish freedom' – the necessity that national liberation is led by the revolutionary proletariat. Mariátegui recognised the same truth for the feminist struggle in 'Feminist Demands'. On the question of indigenous peoples Mariátegui held that their struggle was inextricably tied up with the economic, semi-feudal condition:

*'ANY TREATMENT OF THE PROBLEM of the Indian—written or verbal—that fails or refuses to recognize it as a socio-economic problem is but a sterile, theoretical exercise destined to be completely discredited. [...] Almost all such treatments have served merely to mask or distort the reality of the problem. The socialist critic exposes and defines the problem because he looks for its causes in the country's economy and not in its administrative, legal, or ecclesiastic machinery, its racial dualism or pluralism, or its cultural or moral conditions. The problem of the Indian is rooted in the land tenure system of our economy. Any attempt to solve it with administrative or police measures, through education or by a road building program, is superficial and secondary as long as the feudalism of the gamonales continues to exist.'*

The PCP took this thesis to its conclusion, carrying out radical land redistribution during

People's War. Mariátegui recognised that semi-feudalism emerged from the penetration of imperialism into society before capitalist development following bourgeois revolution. As it served the imperialist powers and the nascent bourgeoisie, these feudal vestiges remained largely intact.

Like our Connolly, Mariátegui is claimed by all kinds of opportunists and distorters. The 'Socialist Party' here in Ireland went as far as to write that he held 'very similar conclusions to those of Trotsky as worked out and distilled in the theory of the permanent revolution.' If only he had written something on this subject!

*'Trotskyism tastes of a theoretical radicalism that has not been condensed into concrete and precise formulas. On this terrain, Stalin and the majority, along with having the responsibility for administration, have a more real sense of the possibilities [...] The Russian revolution is in a period of national organization. It is not a matter, at the moment, of establishing socialism internationally, but of realizing it in a nation of 130 million inhabitants who overflow onto two continents [...] It is logical that in this stage, the Russian revolution is represented by men who more deeply sense its national character and problems.'*

Mariátegui's assessment of semi-feudalism and semi-colonialism remains highly relevant for the toiling masses of Latin America and beyond. His critique of shallow bourgeois nationalism which only diverts the masses from revolution remains sage too. So-called Marxists too often fall for this trick, running cover for bureaucrat-capitalists who bring nothing but more counter-revolution. In Ireland Provisional Sinn Féin exemplify this false consciousness, running imperialist collaboration in the name of our patriot dead. Mariátegui's influence on the Peruvian revolution also cannot be understated. In Chairman Gonzalo's words:

*'Unfortunately there are many revolutionaries out there who know Mariátegui's thought and still fear it, a justified fear, because it is a good touching stone to find out who are genuine revolutionaries or not. That's the reason why they fear Mariátegui.'*



VICTORY TO THE PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE!

فلسطين سوف تنتصر مهما طال الزمن

