

THE REPUBLICAN CONGRESS AND IRELAND'S FIGHT

By J. SHIELDS.

THE struggle of the Irish masses for a free, united and independent Ireland is rising to a new level. Under the leadership of the Irish working class, the only class which is capable of leading the revolutionary national struggle to success, the mass movement for Irish national freedom is being mobilised for vigorous assault against the stranglehold exercised by British imperialism.

Time and again the revolutionary national liberation fight in Ireland has risen to great heights, and time and again it has undergone betrayal at the hands of Irish capitalist leadership. To-day, however, a new force—the Irish proletariat—is placing itself at the head of the movement, a force which, in alliance with the farming masses, can and will victoriously carry the struggle for the Irish Republic to its end.

As the Manifesto of the Communist Party of Ireland, issued by its inaugural congress in June, 1933, points out, the national liberation of Ireland is an inevitable task which the proletariat will carry out on its way to socialism. As this Manifesto puts it:—

The Irish working class will carry on the national independence struggle to the end, attaching to itself the mass of peasant farmers, so as to crush the power of resistance of the English imperialists and overcome the unreliability of the Irish capitalist class.

The Irish proletariat will bring about a socialist revolution attaching to itself the masses of semi-proletarians in the population, so as to break the power of resistance of the capitalists and render harmless the unreliability of the peasants and the petty-bourgeoisie.

At the head of the peasants for an independent Ireland, at the head of all the toilers and exploited for a Workers and Farmers Irish Republic, for the dictatorship of the Proletariat—such is the historic task given to the Irish working class by the whole of the present alignment of class forces in Ireland and the position of the Irish national independence movement as an integral part of the international revolution.

An important step directed towards the building up of the united fighting front against the imperialists and the enemies of the Irish people on a nation-wide scale, was registered in Dublin on September 29 and 30, when the Irish Republican Congress assembled in the Free State capital.

From all parts of Ireland, delegates representing republican and working-class organisations on both sides of the imperialist border which separates the North from the South, attended this Congress. All told, 186 delegates were present. These came from many Republican groups, Trade Union organisations, Tenants' Leagues, the Communist Party, the Irish Citizen Army, the Unemployed Workers' Movement, and various other bodies, and they were widely representative of the working and farming masses.

They had come together in order to plan out how to develop and carry forward that struggle which Jim Connolly and innumerable other Irish martyrs had given up their lives for—the struggle for complete Irish independence.

The Irish Republican Congress demonstrated the growing disillusionment which is seizing hold of increasing masses of the Irish people with regard to the reactionary rôle of the De Valera Government and the latter's betrayal of the national fight.

It embodied a recognition of the fact that not only is De Valera failing to conduct a struggle against British imperialism, but that he is actually, under cover of empty nationalist phrases and gestures, devoting himself to the strengthening of the power of Irish capitalism. On the one hand, De Valera's Government is striving to make use of the national feeling in order to induce the imperialists to grant Irish capitalism certain concessions, whilst at the same time he is proceeding to impose an added yoke on the shoulders of the great mass of the Irish people for the benefit of a handful of Irish capitalists.

From their own experience, the delegates to the Republican Congress have learned that the glib promises made by Fianna Fail at the last general election are merely so much moonshine. They have witnessed how while the big exporters and suchlike elements are waxing fat, the suffering and mass impoverishment of the Irish toilers is becoming more and more unbearable.

At the same time they have also been taught by experience that the petty-bourgeois leadership of the Irish Republican Army is unable and unwilling to conduct a fight. They see the latter dragging along in the tail of De Valera, and the necessity for energetic measures being taken if the national liberation struggle is to advance.

All these factors were responsible for a meeting being held by a number of well-known republican fighters last April at Athlone. In view of the situation the Athlone Conference decided to issue a call in which it was declared that owing to the failure and betrayal on the part of leadership tethered to capitalism,

A Congress of Republican opinion must be assembled to make the Republic a main issue dominating the whole political field and to outline what are the forms of activity that move to its support.

It was in response to this call that the Irish Republican Congress took place in Dublin, evidencing the determination of the Irish workers to take the leadership and conduct of the struggle into their own hands and to go forward in alliance with the masses of the rural areas to carry it through to a finish.

At the outset of the Congress proceedings it became evident that the main issue confronting the delegates turned on the question of the policy to be adopted. In this connection two opposing viewpoints had been brought forward in resolutions submitted by the Congress Organising Bureau.

One of these resolutions, known as *Majority Resolution A*, advocated that the main slogan of action which should go out from the Congress should be that of direct struggle for a Workers' Republic. According to this resolution it was stated that :

only by establishing a new political and economic system of society can we assure ourselves of Freedom from English domination.

It thus presented the question in such a way that the path of struggle was depicted as leading through the socialist revolution to national independence from British imperialism.

This resolution had been brought forward by the Army Council of the Irish Citizen Army and had been adopted by a majority of the Organising Bureau which included Michael Price, R. J. Connolly and Nora Connolly O'Brien. The majority also presented a further resolution on future Congress organisation which proposed that a new political party be set up.

As an amendment to the Majority line, three members of the Organising Bureau (George Gilmore, Peadar O'Donnell and Frank Ryan), brought forward a *Minority Resolution* which urged that "the Republican Congress become the rallying centre for the mass movement expressing all the forces for complete national independence," and declared that "the dominating political task is the realisation of the Republic."

The line of struggle presented by the Minority group was therefore the line of driving forward for the smashing of the imperialist hold and securing national liberation as opening up the way for social emancipation.

The Minority also advocated in regard to the question of organisation that instead of forming a new political party, the Republican Congress should be constituted a broad united front organisation on a mass basis.

A very keen discussion took place on the two opposing policy resolutions.

The principal spokesmen who supported the Majority resolution based their arguments on the fact that the leading rôle in the struggle must be in the hands of the working class and therefore they argued, the slogan

of Workers' Republic could alone typify the revolutionary struggle in Ireland. They further argued that only with such a slogan would it be possible to bring the workers in the North into the fight, and the view was also advanced by Michael Price that it was due to the lack of such a slogan that the national struggle in the past had failed to emerge triumphant.

That there can be no achieving of national independence unless struggle against Irish capitalism is conducted and developed is of course true. But to deduce from this as did the sponsors of the Majority resolution that the issue must be treated as though Ireland were like an ordinary capitalist country in which the purely social revolution must be begun straightaway, is entirely incorrect and extremely dangerous.

It means attempting to jump over an essential stage of the fight, a failure to take into account the vital fact of foreign imperialist domination and the unbearable exploitation which this entails for the poor farmers, that the problem of the agrarian question cannot be ignored and the immediate character of the national liberation struggle left out of the picture altogether. The national factor exercises very big influence on the whole course of the struggle. Because of national oppression the discontent of the masses of workers and peasants becomes enormously intensified, revolutionary ripening is thereby quickened and accelerated, and this facilitates and strengthens the revolutionary tide of mass revolt.

Failure to understand this can result in playing into De Valera's hands, can retard instead of assist the exposure of Fianna Fail in the eyes of the masses who have to be detached from its influence, and thus instead of making possible the speedy bursting of the shackles which De Valera is imposing on the fight, give the representatives of the Irish capitalists further opportunities for holding back the revolutionary struggle.

Unquestionably the fight for the smashing of the imperialist stranglehold necessitates the waging of a revolutionary class struggle against the entire Irish capitalist class, but one must know how, by what means and methods, the real character of Irish capitalism can be thoroughly unmasked, and that struggle correctly conducted.

A correct lead is given in this respect by the Minority resolution whose chief speakers dwelt on the points outlined above. As Peadar O'Donnell stated, they must avoid the mistake of misinterpreting the stage at which the struggle in Ireland now stood otherwise there would be failure to carry out the prerequisites which would enable the going forward to the victory of an Irish Workers' and Farmers' Republic.

Various speakers in support of the Minority viewpoint, including Sean Murray, George Gilmore, Frank Ryan and others outlined how without the leading of the drive to smash imperialism there could be no possibility of undermining the influence of De Valera and developing

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successful attack against Irish capitalism, and showed how so far as the question of bringing in the workers of the North was concerned, the Minority resolution alone specifically outline those basic demands which were essential to the masses of workers and poor farmers, demands affecting questions of wages, working hours, unemployment, housing, abolition of annuities payment, struggles of landless men, etc., upon which the revolutionary classes could be rallied in action.

When the vote was finally taken, the Minority resolution was declared adopted by 99 votes to 84. Shortly after this it was then intimated that the majority resolution on organisation advocating the formation of a new political party had been withdrawn.

The rejection of the line of the Majority resolution resulted in the leading supporters of the Majority Group, Michael Price, R. J. Connolly and Nora Connolly O'Brien declining to accept nomination at a later stage for the new Executive which the Congress elected.

It was also evident both from the character of a number of contributions made in the discussion and the large vote which the majority line received that many of the delegates still lack clarity on the importance of the task of building up the united front struggle around the fight for a united and independent Ireland, and how that fight requires to be carried through.

This is partly to be attributed to the fact that the Organising Bureau resolutions on the question were only brought to the delegates' attention almost on the eve of the Congress itself. It is obvious, however, that energetic steps should now be taken immediately in order to make thoroughly known the full meaning and significance of the decisions arrived at amongst the rank and file, and to develop a vigorous campaign throughout the length and breadth of Ireland, in the Free State and Northern Ireland alike, to have them translated into action without delay.

The situation is extremely favourable for winning the broad masses of workers and peasants to the support of the Republican Congress campaign against British imperialism and its allies in Ireland and for the basic demands of the toiling masses at whom the imperialist repressive measures and the policies of the Craigavon and De Valera Governments are striking heavily.

There is not a single factory, trade union organisation or rural area, but should be penetrated with the aim of rousing and winning over the broad masses for the fight along the lines which the Republic Congress has agreed upon, without loss of time.

If this is done quickly and decisively very big strides forward are certain to be made, and the revolutionary upsurge of the national independence movement will gather a mighty momentum for the snapping of the claims which have held down Ireland under the heel of the oppressor and exploiter for generations.

Every strengthening of the revolutionary united mass fight for national emancipation and the needs of the toilers now, is at the same time preparing the way for the complete overthrow of capitalism in Ireland and bringing nearer the day when the victory of the Workers' and Farmers' Republic can be assured.

To lead, guide and direct the struggle successfully towards this end, however, a firm, strong and resolute class leadership in the form of a mass Communist Party is a vital necessity. Ireland already has its own Communist Party in being, but as yet it is far from being sufficiently strong and powerful for the great tasks which lie ahead.

It is necessary that the Communist Party of Ireland should be immediately strengthened. The stronger the Party becomes, the stronger will be the growth and mass activities of the united front movement, and the more rapidly will the way be opened for the complete national and social liberation of the Irish people.

And let the working class of Britain note ! As long as British Imperialism is able to exercise its ruthless reign of oppression on Ireland, the more will it be able to keep riveted the claims of wage slavery on the limbs of the British workers themselves. Therefore, in their own interests, the workers of Britain must do all in their power to assist the Irish masses in their struggle against the common enemy. In support of the demand of complete independence for Ireland, the struggle of the British working class must be intensified against its own capitalist class, and insistence made that not only shall the economic blockade be ended, but that all British forces be withdrawn from Ireland immediately.

“A blow delivered against the British imperialist bourgeoisie by a rebellion in Ireland,” Lenin once stated, “has a hundred times more political significance than a blow of equal weight would have in Asia and in Africa.”

Let the working class of Britain do all it can to assist the masses in Ireland for the purpose of enabling that blow to be delivered.

DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM AND COMMUNISM—A POSTSCRIPT

[The LABOUR MONTHLY has received the following reply from Edward Conze ("E.C.") to Rudas' article, published in September, criticising his review of "Dialectical Materialism and Communism" that was inserted in the "Plebs" magazine for June last; as he wishes to make certain points of personal explanation, we are printing it, although the greater part of it would not ordinarily justify the space taken, and is adequately treated by the short comment of Comrade Rudas at the end.]

I. A Reply to Rudas

By EDWARD CONZE

1. **S**INCE Mr. Rudas, without any visible necessity, dragged me personally into the discussion, I must begin my reply with two personal remarks. All shorter reviews in "Plebs" are regularly signed only with the initials of the authors. Therefore I cannot be accused of "hiding behind the initials E.C.," especially since the full name frequently appeared in "Plebs" during the last months. Mr. Rudas further takes great delight in contemplating the complete ignorance of an author about whom he pretends to know nothing at all. I therefore must refer him to my German book on dialectical materialism ("Der Satz vom Widerspruch" 1932) from which he may see that however much I may, in his view, have misunderstood the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin, I have thrown more than a casual glance at their writings. I am glad to see that my short review has induced Mr. Rudas to go considerably beyond his original article in the exposition of the exact nature of the difference between contradictions and antagonisms. He, incidentally, will find the same exposition in his copy of my German book. But Mr. Rudas and I profoundly disagree in the question of the "holy fathers" and of the inevitability of socialism.

2. The postscript of Mr. Rudas must be very convincing to everybody who does not compare my review which, by the way, recommended his pamphlet to the readers of "Plebs." From the context it is quite obvious that, when speaking of "sacred texts" of the "fathers of the church" I did not want to "discredit" the classics of Marxism but the attitude of the Russian communists towards them. In Russia, dialectical materialists have all facilities at their disposal; vast numbers of research workers, all economical facilities for research and protection from rival philosophical schools by the administrative measures of the police. Marx, Engels and Lenin have laid the basis of dialectical materialism. Nobody can doubt, however, that their remarks are essentially