

## Northern Ireland: A republican view

*(It has been in the British interest to identify the Irish Republican movement with the 'Provisional IRA'. Lest any of our readers should suffer from this confusion it seemed useful to print some extracts from a recent speech by Thomas Mac Giolla, President of Official Sinn Fein.)*

Our repeated call has been for peace. It is the most revolutionary demand at this time. . . . We do not want the false peace of total surrender. We do not want peace between exploiter and exploited. We want peace between the poor and wretched. Peace that will lift, in the North, the daily burden of British, Loyalist and Provisional terror that has been loaded on top of the daily burden of wage-robbery. Peace that will give the Catholic working man a pause and a chance to identify the parasites that feed on him. Peace that will allow the Protestant working man a pause to identify the real causes of his present misery. Peace, not in the woolly hope that Protestant and Catholic will come together by supernatural dispensation. Peace, not in the sick fantasies of the ultra-left, where the Protestant is beaten by Nationalists on a Monday and told to behave like a Socialist by the same people on a Tuesday. The peace they need . . . is the peace to think and plan how to lift the burden of bigotry, sectarianism and terror, both of the Catholic and Protestant middle class once and for all from their backs. We want a peace that removes the British jackboot, the Hibernian gunman and the Orange bomber, so that all our people can join in the struggle for the reconquest of Ireland from the Bankers, the Profiteers and the exploiters. . . .

We said in our election literature at the last election that the first priority was the guaranteeing of Civil Rights to all citizens and the abolition of repressive laws, repressive judiciary and repressive police forces and the implementation of democratic reforms—all summed up in the demand for a Bill of Rights. If such were granted and firmly implemented then, we stated clearly, any new assembly to be elected should be on the basis of majority rule. Such a situation would open up great possibilities for the growth of real politics—class politics—in Northern Ireland and nothing could deal a greater blow to sectarianism, bigotry and reaction than the growth of class politics in the North.

It was this demand (in 1969) for democratic rights and civil liberties which motivated tens of thousands of people in one of the greatest and most democratic mass struggles that Ireland has seen. Within the course of one momentous year that struggle had almost achieved total victory and changed the whole course of Irish history North and South with hardly a shot being fired. But the British government and all their apparatus of repression in Northern Ireland were rescued from a humiliating defeat when the struggle was diverted into militarism and sectarian terror by the newly formed Provisional Alliance of right wing reactionaries and ultra-leftists.