Ireland

Time to change direction

- Debate - Building new parties of the left -

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This contribution was submitted to the IC meeting of February 2014 by Socialist Democracy, the sympathising group in Ireland.

Build a new movement of resistance, revolution

Ireland has turned the corner! Cry the pundits. We will exit the rule of the Troika and a new economic recovery is on the way.

No one has told the workers. Croke Park III is devastating the public sector and another austerity budget of â‚¬2.5 billion has been announced. The re-election of Angela Merkel tells of continuing austerity across Europe.

To add insult to injury, we are told that, even when bankers openly confess to conspiracy against the Irish working class, as they did in the Anglo-Irish tapes, the issue is to be dismissed â€œthey may have been slightly boorish but there is no evidence of wrongdoing â€œ and we are to keep paying into the next generation no matter how criminal the means by which the debt was placed on the shoulders of the workers.

Our stalwart defenders in the Labour party and trade union bureaucracy claim to have restricted the new round of cuts to â‚¬2.5 billion. These restrictions are the result of creative accounting. In return they support a budget that oppresses the poor, squeezes everyone else, featherbeds industry, guarantees the profits of transnational capital and openly invites Irish youth to climb on the emigration boat or starve here.

"People's Assembly"

The response by socialist groups to this on-going litany of catastrophe and betrayal was a "People's Assembly" at the opening of the Dail. The assembly strategy, imported by the Socialist Workers Party from its senior organization in Britain, was based on the idea that only a broad movement could mount a fight back and that any explicit political position would alienate workers and limit the size of the movement.

The falsity of this position was shown by the turnout in the hundreds. Even if it was much larger it would have been ineffective because few had anything clear to say. Denunciations of austerity â€œ while the majority of the platform accepts the need to bail out the banks. Calls for mass mobilization â€œ while the routine "left" union bureaucrats bring only themselves. Calls for "people power" while the charities and NGOs spend their lives around the Dail committees, lobbying for favours.

This simple-minded opportunism becomes criminal when it seeks alliances with right wing labourites and with Sinn Fein - the very people looking for coalition deals and likely to prop up the next version of austerity government when the voters finally have their revenge on this one. In fact one outcome of the latest budget was that Sinn Fein dropped much of its fake left cover to advance its own austerity budget that matched exactly the sums demanded by the coalition government.
The failure of the assembly was not the organizational failure of one meeting. It marked the failure of a unity policy applied in slightly different forms by the vast majority of the Irish socialist movement from the bank bailout and before. It has ended with the socialists isolated, demoralised and fragmented.

Retreat

In our view the pressures of the capitalist onslaught, combined with the collapse of traditional leadership organizations within the working class has led to a headlong political retreat of the socialists. Where once they would have advanced socialist policies, they now embrace reformist proposals that simply don't make sense as an alternative to austerity.

This political retreat is most marked in the trade union movement. It is a long time since opposition to social partnership was a guide to action in the trade union movement. Rather socialists have applied a programme of left reformism, seeking to unite with the left of the bureaucracy and build as a loyal opposition confined within the largely moribund structures of the union branches. Other activists in the republican and anarchist movements ignored the trade unions and engaged in relatively apolitical community work.

When social partnership was exposed, via the Croke Park deals, as a mechanism for enforcing austerity, the socialists lack of political opposition left them simply tailing after the bureaucracy. On the November 2012 budget march, the bureaucracy openly accepted the â£3.1 billion figure for cuts, lobbying in these narrow confines for a contribution from the rich. The activists were silent. Ordinary workers heckled the ICTU speaker. The activists were silent. A protest was proposed as ICTU moved to endorse Croke Park II. The socialists voted the proposals down.

Electoralism

The socialists took up electoral politics within the same reformist framework. The United Left Alliance adopted the same better fairer way politics as the trade unions. Adjustments within capitalism to increase the tax take from the rich would solve the crisis. The place to get things done was in the Dail committees.

Although the leaders of the various groups were well aware of Marxist theory indicating the limits of the Dail as a mechanism for opposing capitalism and the role of parliamentary structures in subverting socialist representatives, they operated in the Dail in the same way as the capitalist politicians.

In the absence of a revolutionary perspective there was little to distinguish the ULA from other political groups and independent TDs. As support fell groups and TDs began to fight amongst themselves to secure the vote. The ULA disintegrated in an orgy of sectarian backbiting, with different factions planning to stand against each other for the same seat in the local and European elections.

The third and most successful element of socialist activity was the Campaign Against Household and Water Taxes. It drew in much more diverse and combative groups from outside Dublin, but it was constrained by the leadership group based on the Dublin activists and by the reformist perspective that informed their strategy.

In the case of the CAHWT the reformist ideology expressed itself as an exclusion of politics. The policy was to ignore as far as possible the broader issues of the bail out and austerity and focus on non-payment. The strategy was
改革派：它是改革派的，因为它专注于取得登记人数的多数，相信这将迫使政府做出政策上的转变。这种信念觉得存在一个不依赖紧缩政策的替代方案，政府可以应用而不会危及资本主义。

改革派失败的原因通常归咎于教派和缺乏民主。这一想法被2012年INTO大会上的一个运动所推翻。该运动从ICTU政策文件中抽取了一项动议，意在绕开执行支持Croke Park II的部长支持，并支持房产税。这项投票可以根据与工会官僚主义共享的改革政策和对国家的依赖来解释。

改革派的失败还在于对左翼团体的运作。第一种解释是，非常严格的限制避免了与工会官僚的冲突。另一种解释是，从SP和SWP的立场来看，这些运动的成功在于扩大其选民基础。

这种解释解释了为什么在许多计划失败后，团体相对没有意识到失败的严重程度或需要重新审视其政治和策略。相反，两者都加强了其选民运动。

事实是，少数议员或TDs，尤其是当他们为改革主义的解决方案为危机辩护时，不可能代表工人阶级的反抗策略。

复兴

我们必须建立一个复兴的运动，旨在提出一个工人阶级为工人作为他们进入斗争的资源的广泛大纲。这个运动将完全否决任何基于支付银行债务的方案，呼吁工人自我组织起来，提高工人共和国和国际革命的旗帜。

这种运动将以：
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â€œ Contain a description of capitalist crisis and an introduction to the ideas of Karl Marx to explain the contradictions within capitalism.

â€œ Describe the Irish economy and the role of imperialism.

â€œ Allow workers to speak: provide a platform for struggle, inter-views with workers and expressions of solidarity.

â€œ Provide a discussion forum to evaluate competing ideas in the socialist movement and the outcome of struggles locally and internationally.

The Irish working class, in common with workers movements in many of the capitalist economies, has suffered a number of stunning defeats. The socialist and activist movement is now in rout, partly because it has little faith in its own policies and has tried to take short cuts. It is time to regroup in defence of the heroic history of the Irish working class, a history summed up by the battles of 1913, a history turned to pantomime by the current leaderships of the working class.

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