

1992-02-10

There is an Alternative : Defend the Party, Defeat the Liquidators

The Workers Party

Follow this and additional works at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/workerpmat>



Part of the [Political History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

The Workers Party, "There is an Alternative : Defend the Party, Defeat the Liquidators" (1992). *Materials*. 136.

<https://arrow.tudublin.ie/workerpmat/136>

This Other is brought to you for free and open access by the Workers' Party of Ireland at ARROW@TU Dublin. It has been accepted for inclusion in Materials by an authorized administrator of ARROW@TU Dublin. For more information, please contact arrow.admin@tudublin.ie, aisling.coyne@tudublin.ie, vera.kilshaw@tudublin.ie.

THE WORKERS PARTY



PAIRTÍ NA NOIBRÍ

10th February 1992

Dear Comrades

The proposal by Proinsias De Rossa, Seamus Lynch and their supporters to liquidate the Party has caused considerable damage to the Party's standing and influence among the working class. Indeed, we know that this proposal to liquidate the Party has caused great distress among the vast majority of members and supporters.

We know that there is an alternative to this incredible surrender, to this betrayal of all that we have struggled to achieve. First and last our concern is to safeguard the integrity, the unity and future of the Workers' Party. To do this we must defeat the aims of the liquidators and the following pages will give you some information concerning the aims and actions of those who wish to liquidate the party. It refutes the lies and rumours that have been spread about members integrity. It points out that the only ones to gain from the liquidation of the Workers' Party will be capitalism, and its allies, and it states clearly that the only losers will be the Irish working class.

We show that this is no sudden decision but a plan of action that has been in preparation for sometime.

There are it must be admitted serious differences within the Party. Nevertheless we state here and now that as democrats we will accept the democratic decision of the Ard Fheis, unlike our opponents who have made it clear they will leave the Party if they do not get their way.

We have no difficulty accepting the Party Programme and the Party Constitution adopted at the 1991 Ard Fheis and within that structure working with comrades who may differ from us on some issues, but working in a spirit of trust and honesty.

Our Party has travelled a long road, we have overcome many many problems including two bitter splits, we have no wish or desire to experience anything of a similar nature. We appeal to the proposers and their supporters of this negative and divisive motion to draw back now and preserve the unity of the Party.

United we have achieved much. We can achieve much more in the years ahead with a united Party. Let us defeat the proposal to liquidate the party and continue with our task of building the party throughout the country.

Sean Garland

John Lowry

Members of Executive Political Committee

THE WORKERS PARTY

30 GARDINER PLACE, DUBLIN 1, IRELAND

FACSIMILE: 787921 TELEPHONE: 740716/741045 TELEX: 31490

THE WORKERS PARTY



PAIRTÍ NA NOIBRÍ

There is an Alternative

Defend the Party - Defeat the Liquidators

Dear Comrades

By now you are aware of the very serious situation confronting the party. Over recent weeks there has been a widespread and intensive media campaign of vilification and distortion of comrades political principles and commitment. Some comrades of longstanding in the party have been singled out for special attack during this time. It has been difficult to combat this campaign in the media for the people who were issuing statements and making these attacks preferred to remain anonymous and the media assisted them in this. We had to wait until it was clear what their motives and aims were and are. It was necessary to wait and have them expose themselves.

This finally happened at the Ard Comhairle meeting held on the Friday and Saturday 24th and 25th January, when Proinsias De Rossa presented a document outlining his political position and proposing that the Ard Comhairle should convene a special Ard Fheis to as he stated "Reconstitute the Party". Contrary to misleading reports this document was not endorsed by the CEC. A motion to convene a special Ard Fheis was passed by the CEC. **What in effect P De Rossa and his supporters want to do is TO LIQUIDATE THE PARTY.** We will return to this issue later, for now, we would believe it is important to give all members an overview and trace the development of this crisis.

The first attempt in recent times to divert the party was initiated by E. Harris at a party school in Belfast in Summer of 1988. Harris's main thesis was that Socialism had failed therefore the future lay in adopting Social Democracy. For some months in late 1988 and early 1989 Harris, who had over some years built a

clique around himself, circulated this pernicious doctrine through the party. It is clear now that E Harris exercised considerable influence over P. De Rossa so much so that in De Rossa's first address to the Ard Fheis as party president E. Harris made the major contribution with P De Rossa acting as virtual spokesman for E.Harris's ideas.

It was also clear from party members reaction to this speech that they rejected any attempt to divert the party into Social Democracy. Harris and his clique refused to see and accept this fact (where De Rossa and his supporters did) and Harris continued his attempt to impose this new trend on the party. They published a document 'Necessity for Social Democracy' and the manner of its publication combined with its content resulted in they being overwhelmingly rejected by the party at the 1990 Ard Fheis. At that time it must be stated the members defending the Socialist principles and ideals of the party were under no illusions, we knew that some of the leading members who were ostensibly opposed to Harris and his ideas were acting not out of principled opposition but because of personality conflicts. It now transpires they actually accepted his main thesis "Socialism was Dead" but did not wish to be associated with him or his group for apart from their personal dislike of Harris they were able to gauge the reaction of members to E Harris's proposals.

P De Rossa's first speech in 1989 caused a great deal of dissension and turmoil. Even so the party entered the June Election of 1989 in the Republic, as a united, disciplined, determined and enthusiastic party. The result of the election for the Dail and European Parliament gave us as you know seven T.D.s and one European Member. This result we believe fairly reflected the rising influence and strength of the party.

THE WORKERS PARTY

30 GARDINER PLACE, DUBLIN 1, IRELAND

FACSIMILE: 787921 TELEPHONE: 740716/741045 TELEX: 31490

Who Gains?

How is it one then, one must ask the question, after such a stunning victory that the Party could now be on the verge of a bitter division. Who gains from this? Who is it that has been fomenting and organising this dreadful situation in which the only losers will be the working class who over the past ten years were coming to recognise that at last they had a party to represent their interests.

As a new and young party only developing socialist consciousness with a growing number of parliamentarians and with little experience of integrating and directing a parliamentary group it soon became clear that elements of the parliamentary group were taking on a life of their own and resented, in the main, any direction or control from the democratically elected leadership of the party.

Soon after the election results of 1989 it became apparent that a major breach had developed between P De Rossa and E Harris. Up to that time Harris had as stated considerable influence and even control in some areas on P De Rossa, claiming in effect to have masterminded the Euro election campaign and being primarily responsible for the victory. This is of course typical of Harris's exaggerations but nevertheless it is a fact that Harris did have great influence on De Rossa to the point where De Rossa had accepted many of Harris's ideas and also it would now seem his arrogance and contempt for people. At the 1990 Ard Fheis, Harris's supporters attempted to have the Ard Fheis endorse their viewpoint using the suspension of Eamon Smullen as the main issue, they failed and about 20 members, a couple in leadership positions, resigned.

At this same Ard Fheis P De Rossa repudiated many aspects of his previous years speech, relating to Social Democracy and the "Death of Socialism".

In his statement accompanying his motion calling for a special Ard Fheis, P De Rossa covered a lot of ground with emphasis on political objectives and activity. In this statement which one presumes is his and his supporters main political programme/manifesto, and objectives there is a total absence of any class content, nothing about the end aim or objective of the party, nothing about the fundamentals, the principles from which the party derives its existence, its whole basis for organising. Such a speech could have been given by Dick Spring or indeed by John Bruton as advised by E Harris for that matter.

In his statement P De Rossa tries to convey the impression that it is only since his election as Party President that the Party has had any significant success that he is the sole initiator and supporter of change. In fact he makes a most startling admission in that he says since 1988 "he has dedicated himself to reform the party's organisation and politics" whatever about

organisational reform this is the first time politics has been mentioned. The spirit of E Harris lives on.

The victories of 1989 did not come out of the blue but were the result of hard work and considerable investment in members time commitment and our financial resources. Any member who was involved or indeed aware of our history must know that we have never been afraid to adapt or change. From the sixties through the seventies we have demonstrated our commitment to and our ability to change. In 1982 we adopted a major organisation document which laid the basis for the party's advances over the following years. Nothing in this document was sacrosanct and indeed as far as organisation principles and methods go nothing should be sacred. A person and a party can change position on any and every issue but when they change direction that is another matter. This is what is proposed now.

In the Autumn of last year Dep. P Rabbitte invited a fulltime party employee, Noel McFarlane, to the Dail Bar for a discussion. The member was amazed to hear Dep. Rabbitte say he intended to defect to the Labour Party and would the member join him. Dep. Rabbitte went on to say that there would be a split in the party before the Ard Fheis, that John and Cllr. Liz McManus were resigning, in fact all the Wicklow organisation were resigning, that Tony Heffernan, PRO, intended to quit and that the party was going nowhere. A report on this discussion was made to the Political Committee in the Autumn. Unfortunately the Political Committee did not take this matter up, indeed in order to avoid a bitter dispute it went on to recommend to the CEC to co-opt Dep. Pat Rabbitte on to the Political Committee.

A Hidden Agenda

For some considerable time Dep. P Rabbitte has been engaged in a campaign of disinformation to sap party morale and seek to justify a move to a Social Democratic Parliamentary party and/or defect or merge with the Labour Party. This hidden agenda also had of course its hidden supporters who have now come out in the open with their declared aims to "reconstitute the Party". "To stand down all party members and have them Re-register with the new caretaker executive of 11 members." Also part of this agenda is the intention as soon as it is politically expedient to separate from the Party in Northern Ireland and to rename the Party as the Democratic Socialist Party of Ireland, or as the Party of Democratic Socialists. The entire concentration is and will be on electoral politics to ensure that the T.D.s who accept this line have secure seats, nothing must be allowed interfere with this goal. It is laudable in some respects that party seats in Parliament should be secure but when it becomes the-be-all and end-all of party activity then we must question what kind of party we are, what kind of party do we want?

It is clear that P De Rossa, and his supporters are intent on following the example and practice of the old Italian Communist Party. The steady erosion and decline of the Italian C.P. principles and integrity as a C.P. took some years to accomplish. Their recognition of NATO. Their acceptance without question of the Single European Act, their acceptance of the 'Democratic Deficit' in the European Community structures, their willingness to accommodate themselves in every possible way to the 'Socialist' Party of Craxi in order to get a seat at Cabinet level, and finally to reconstitute the Italian CP as the Partito Democratico della Sinistra (PDS Party of Democratic Left). It would seem now that P De Rossa and his group would want to accomplish the same aim in weeks rather than years.

What we are dealing with is the rotten and putrid legacy of E Harris. People who have been infected with the disease of pessimism and which has now degenerated into hostility to the aims and principles of Socialism. We are faced with a unprincipled alliance ranging from a virulent Anti-Communism to academics who wish to indulge themselves, with no relationship to the need and concerns of the working class struggle for a better life, to opportunistic individuals intent on securing seats in Parliament at any cost and who have no regard for the collective views and rights of party members.

Their contempt for the party members is represented by the statement of Deputies De Rossa and Gilmore at the Ard Comhairle meeting on Saturday 25th January. When P De Rossa was asked early on Saturday morning would he accept the democratic decision of the meeting concerning his motion for a special Ard Fheis, he refused to answer this question, even when pressed a number of times he refused to answer. It was not until late in the afternoon towards the close of the meeting, obviously when he had been advised by his supporters that he was causing them problems did he say yes, he would accept the decision but then went on to say, quote "*If the motion is defeated I will accept the decision, but reserve the freedom to take a personal decision as to my future*". At a party meeting in Dublin North West on Thursday, 30th January he again stated that if his motion was not accepted by the Ard Fheis he would not stay in the party.

Deputy Gilmore stated quite frankly and openly that he would not stay in the party with people he did not trust. He did not elaborate on this statement. He obviously recognises that many many party members are in doubt as to his integrity on the issue of the future of the Party.

Our opponents have attempted to capture the word and concept of democracy. We are proud to stand on our record as Democrats. Many decisions, made by the party at Ard Fheiseanna, Ard Comhairle, constituency and branch level, on various issues have gone against us. We have accepted these decisions and have worked to implement these decisions. So it is today and

tomorrow we will accept the democratic decision of the members. Unlike our opponents, P De Rossa and E Gilmore who stated clearly on a number of occasions that if the motion to reconstitute the Party is defeated they will not stay in the Party. Are these the words and actions of democrats? No. They are holding the Party to ransom. They are saying if you don't accept their view then they will leave. This surely is a clear demonstration of their intentions. Do not allow them to blackmail the Party, reject their arrogance and indeed their contempt for members.

In a situation such as we are in now it is essential that the real issues are brought out. The De Rossa group have put forward what on the surface appear to be good reasons for their actions.

What they fail to mention are the real reasons

1. Their aim to create a Social Democratic Parliamentary Party.
2. To defect or merge with Labour Party.
3. To break with the Party in Northern Ireland which they see as an albatross around their electoral necks.

TO ACHIEVE THESE AIMS THEY MUST LIQUIDATE OR SPLIT THE WORKERS' PARTY.

For those of us who have experienced the bitterness and indeed tragedy of division on other occasions we know that those seeking to split or divert the party usually advance what can be considered good reasons for their actions, it takes considerable time and effort to get splitters to admit to the real reasons for their actions. We can recall how the Provisionals used many and varied reasons for their split, as indeed did Costello's gang. We now know at a terrible cost to the Party and the Irish people what these groups real agenda was.

The Truth About the 1991 Ard Fheis

We now have allegations that the 1991 Ard Fheis was rigged, no evidence has been presented to substantiate this, yet the smear has been peddled through the party. Northern Ireland and Waterford have been singled out for attention. It is alleged they were accredited with more delegates than their membership warranted and that one delegate from Northern Ireland wasn't a member. The record of attendance and voting is what counts if this 'rigging' is to mean anything. Northern Ireland had 106 delegates listed, one of whom resigned from the Party and didn't attend the Ard Fheis. The record shows that fifty-six attended on Saturday and sixty on Sunday. The Lagan Valley constituency is particularly singled out. This constituency has three branches with ten attending on Saturday, and eight on Sunday. Waterford city had three affiliated branches and were accredited with 11 delegates with six attending on Saturday and fewer on Sunday.

But what of the rest of the country? The practice for over a decade has been to encourage attendance from every area providing members are registered and branches affiliated. In many cases branches fell beneath the required number of 5 so rather than disenfranchise activists, delegations are facilitated. At last years Ard Fheis a sample of areas facilitated are Dungarvan, Athy, Naas, Prosperous and at least one delegation from the Dublin area. Delegate cards are issued subject to the member being registered and branch affiliated. No member who was not registered or whose branch was not affiliated attended last years Ard Fheis, nor any previous Ard Fheis as a delegate.

Again, our opponents through the media have made much of a so-called plot to replace P De Rossa as Party President. What actually happened was that the Editor of the party paper, Noel McFarlane, who returned from the U.S. last year and enthusiastically agreed to edit the relaunched party paper found after some months working as editor that he had fundamental political disagreements with P De Rossa. He had become disillusioned with P De Rossa as Party President. Being, frankly somewhat naive/foolish he approached Dep. P Rabbitte openly and honestly and asked him would he stand for party President against P De Rossa. He told Dep Rabbitte that some people in Belfast had stated they would work with him but not P De Rossa.

Dep. Rabbitte's response to this request was to say 3 or 4 other people had also asked him to do the same but he had declined. This was the total extent of the so-called plot to replace P De Rossa. Dep. Rabbitte true to form couldn't settle for the truth, but as usual had to embellish it, adding to the story that the person who approached him was an emissary for a group of people and that if he accepted this offer money would flow from Belfast.

The Party Debt - The Facts

The issue of the party debt has/is being used to smear people opposed to P De Rossa's action of liquidating the party. A comprehensive financial report was given to the Ard Comhairle meeting of 3 years ago in Dun Laoghaire which was accepted. We give some financial details so that people can judge for themselves how the debt built up over the years.

Subsidies by Repsol to Publications and Elections:

Workers Life/Making Sense, 13 years (incl. wages, typesetting/printing)	£195,000
Irish/Northern People for 15 years (incl. wages, typesetting, printing)	£156,000

It must be emphasised and indeed has been recognised for many years now that there was never

sufficient income from any of these publications to cover a fraction of their costs.

Elections Dail

1977, 1981, 1982, 1982	£167,000
Some constituencies which received assistance and had election debts written off: Wicklow, Galway, Waterford, Cork East., Limerick, Kerry South/North, Donegal, Monaghan.	

Elections Euro

1979, 1984	£50,000
Includes deposits and printing	
TOTAL	£568,000

If one adds international travel, foreign guests, plus the upkeep of party premises, rates/insurance, light, heat, telephones, office administration etc. over these same years one could add another £10,000 per year which for 13 years is £130,000, making a grand total of £698,000.

Again the matter of a £75,000 loan being raised in Belfast recently has been distorted. The facts are some months ago the CEC/EPC agreed and instructed the EMC to attempt to reschedule loans. The Belfast chairman of the EMC, Seamus Harrison, undertook this task in Northern Ireland. He finally succeeded in achieving this some weeks ago. At all times the EMC were kept informed of the progress and the terms of this loan re-scheduling.

Over the past ten years and more the party in Northern Ireland has contributed enormously in terms of money and personnel to the party in the Republic. The party in Belfast has borrowed money to help finance elections and pay wages and costs of publications over that period of time. The fact that they have been unable over the past year to contribute to wages and expenses in the Republic is now being used against the party in Belfast. Twisted minds have twisted a difficult financial situation to suit their own particular and indeed peculiar political ideology and have smeared and maligned the party in Belfast. There is no crock of gold in Belfast or anywhere else for that matter.

Much is/has been made of the financial contribution being made by the party in the Dail. The party by having 7 members in the Dail qualifies for group status, and the party, through the party president, is then entitled to approximately £8,500 per month. It is surely only logical and fair that this money should be used to pay wages and help to clear off the debt which was incurred in getting T.D.s elected in the first place.

Let us put on record the contribution of T.D.s to the party centre. From his election as T.D. Tomas

MacGiolla paid in to the party his full Dail monthly salary from which he received a weekly wage. Recently this changed and Tomas MacGiolla now makes a contribution of £250 per month.

P De Rossa makes a contribution of £250 per month which repays a loan he took out for the party some years ago, since his election as TD he has made a contribution of £50 a month. He has, since being elected MEP transferred considerable money to the party centre from Europe, details of this were given to CEC meeting in August 1991.

Of the remaining T.D.s despite making promises to Sean Garland some years ago to make regular contributions to the centre it was not until late last year that Deputies Byrne and Rabbitte made a commitment to contribute a monthly sum of £75 each to the centre, that is £17.30 per week, less than the attendance allowance for one day. Deputy Sherlock has made a once-off yearly contribution of £600 which is £11.54 per week. Deputies McCartan and Gilmore despite making promises have not contributed anything to date.

The Use of the Mass Media to Distort

We have already mentioned the question of change and adapting to new situations. In recent times there has been much talk of reform within the Party. This is welcomed by all sincere members and supporters. Any party seriously concerned to advance and improve itself must all the time be examining structures and organisation. But let the debate be conducted in a fair and open manner, recognising the rights and responsibilities of the Party members to hear all sides of the arguments, through party structures and not through the mass media. At the 1991 Ard Fheis a commission was established to review party rules and organisation. This Commission had completed its report and the party was about to consider the report and convene a special delegate conference on 14th March to debate and democratically decide on the report. Members will be aware that the media have in recent weeks been told that this report would provoke controversy, would force the so called hardliners - Marxists/Leninists - to quit the party, that these people who were contemptuously referred to as "yesterdays men" would not/could not accept the proposed reforms of the commission. This even before members had received the report.

Members will be aware by now that the Irish Times, Saturday 8th February, carried a comprehensive report concerning the Party Commission on rules and organisation. Once again we would draw members attention to the fact that the Commission report may have been in the post but was not received by many members before being published in the Irish Times. Coupled with this blatant use of the mass media to manipulate members we have the extraordinary situation where the Chairman of the Commission, Dep. Eamon Gilmore, gives his introduction to the report to the

media. It is worthwhile informing members that Dep. Gilmore had promised members of the Commission on two occasions that he would show them his introduction and that it would not attempt to make any political points, it would be concerned solely with the content of the report. Members can judge for themselves what image is projected in the Irish Times by the slanted and inaccurate report and analysis of the Commission report.

All the time as we have said before the stage is being set for confrontation and a split. This is the aim, liquidate or if not, split the party. If this objective cannot be achieved then the media campaign will give the splitters a cloak to cover their aim not to accept the democratic decision of the members when it goes against them. The ground already is being set for this, some of the splitters/liquidators are now suggesting standing orders must be suspended as they apply at present, it should not take a 2/3 majority they say to liquidate the party, it should they now say be done by simple majority.

Some weeks ago the Sunday Tribune, vehicle of Vincent Browne, carried an editorial consistent with his long established campaign of hate and slander to destroy the Workers' party, which called for the party to be dissolved- this is precisely what the De Rossa group propose to do.

Quote, Sunday Tribune, 5th January 1992 "By far the best solution would be if the Workers' Party dissolves itself and if the democratic socialist element within it joined the Labour Party. The next best outcome would be if the liberal element within the party broke away and joined the Labour Party, leaving the old 'Stalinist' rump to its machinations."

So much for independent thinking. These then are some of the influences and pressures which are motivating and supporting the liquidation of the Workers' Party.

Much has been made of the damage that the BBC Spotlight programme is reputed to have caused in Dublin in the Local Elections of June 1991. It is of course true that the Spotlight programme damaged the party, this is precisely what it was intended to do, as indeed it was the same motives inspired the RTE Today Tonight programme of some years ago. The reality is this programme was broadcast at 8.30pm on polling day. There had been a great deal of media hype concerning this programme for weeks before it was transmitted. This media hype affected all the party, all the country. How is it then that the party could win an extra seat in Cork City, a seat in Limerick, a seat in Kildare, a seat in Meath, extra seats in Dublin County, lose a seat in Dublin and Galway and substantially increase its share of the vote in Waterford. Like most of the so-called issues in this struggle Spotlight, has

become a convenient stick with which to beat opponents and justify the action of the liquidators.

The reality is and this is known but ignored, that the party organisation in Dublin suffered a drastic decline from the high point of June 1989. The records are there to prove that activity, membership, paper sales, contact with people were being neglected and in decline, the party identity as an independent, socialist party began to be fudged and clouded. Little distinction could be made by many people between the Labour and Workers' Party. All of the emphasis and spotlight began to shift onto the T.D.s, CABs. Press statements from TDs began to replace party activity on the ground among the people. Every effort was made to undermine the role and authority of the fulltime Dublin Regional Secretary. Funds were withheld, meetings were ignored, the emphasis was on building an organisation around some of the TDs, not to build a strong party centre in Dublin.

International Solidarity

At various meetings strong attacks by a few vocal individuals have been made on the party's international contact and relations. In particular our relations with the Workers' Party of Korea, Chinese Communist Party, Cuban Communist Party and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Whatever about the various internal practices and attitudes of these parties it has always been a basic principle in international relations that one party does not interfere in the internal matters of another party. Differences exist and on many occasions our members abroad have made it clear to other fraternal parties that we were an Independent Socialist Party and that we had on some international questions very different opinions, for instance China and Cambodia (Pol Pot), China and Vietnam, Cuban attitude to the Provos. Much has been made of the personality cult leadership of the DPRK. We certainly do not subscribe to this concept but we do not and cannot tell the Korean party and people how to order their affairs.

The Ard Comhairle has decided to break off relations with anti-democratic parties. As yet no names of any such parties have been decided. On the issue of international relations there have been many debates and motions concerning our international contacts in recent years. As yet neither the Ard Fheis or the Ard Comhairle have decided as we said to break off relations with any named parties. If and when the Ard Fheis or Ard Comhairle democratically decide on such action then as with all decisions whether one agrees with them or not, we will abide by the democratic wishes of the party. This is in contrast to P De Rossa's statement that he will not accept the democratic decision of the Ard Fheis if his motion is defeated.

In all these matters concerning party relations there is the fundamental question of international solidarity. Capitalism, imperialism led by United States has sought for decades to undermine and destroy these

countries. Some people accept without question capitalism's attacks and condemnation of these countries and allow the capitalist mass media to influence and colour their judgement of the situation. The liquidators see everything in terms of millstones around their electoral necks.

In order to make it clear for members to assess the situation we would like to give some information concerning in particular our relations with the C.P.S.U. It was in December 1983 that we established fraternal links with the C.P.S.U. This was at the beginning of the period in which Yuri Andropov had initiated the policy of reforms which M Gorbachev developed as Perestroika and Glasnost. From the beginning of our relationship we made it clear that we recognised the need for and fully supported the reform process. Combined with this we made it clear on many occasions that we had serious disagreement with the C.P.S.U. on such matters as Northern Ireland and also the activity of Peace movements. As with other parties and countries we did not interfere with the internal affairs or policy of the C.P.S.U. We were critical in private of some of their ideas and their methods as indeed were many millions of communists in the Soviet Union. Indeed it is now recognised that a great deal of the corruption and distortion of socialist principles maintained by a stifling bureaucracy was not known to the majority of C.P.S.U. party members.

It was clear for many years that the Party in the USSR had become divorced from the people, that the party lost touch, were not in contact with the people, this in fact has happened in regard to some constituencies with the Workers' Party.

There is no simple explanation for the failure of the East European 'Socialist' countries. It was not because of any concept of a vanguard party or democratic centralism. It was the abuse of these concepts combined with many other factors - cold war pressures, corruption, bureaucracy, isolation of the party to name the most obvious, which caused the collapse. In our case, as we said we had no hesitation in fully supporting the reforms of Gorbachov and his leading supporters Yakolev and Shevardnadze.

In line with our view of International solidarity we never did or would join the capitalist press or Trotskyist groups in attacking the then Soviet Union.

No Kitchen Cabinet

The use of the liquidators of alleged links between the Official I.R.A. and the Workers' Party and also alleged receipt of 'Moscow Gold' has been a major part of their campaign in some parts of the country to distort the debate and smear comrades opposed to them. This is, as you know, a consistent theme in the Capitalist press. Vincent Browne of the Sunday Tribune has devoted his paper, indeed his life to proving this alleged link. It is a sad reflection on some erstwhile comrades' objectivity

that they are prepared to accept the word of a person such as Vincent Browne a sworn enemy of the Workers' Party.

Let us put it on record again, we do not know of any secret group or kitchen cabinet within the Workers' Party conspiring to influence/control or direct the party. We have been among those who proposed/introduced and fought for the right to give members full control and access to all levels of the party, who brought about the expansion of the Ard Comhairle to include regional delegates, to broaden its composition in order that the Ard Comhairle would truly reflect the party's membership views and opinions.

In regard to the many rumour/lies that have been peddled about members political standpoint and actions we would only state that every member on hearing any story from whatever person should demand that the person give chapter and verse. Do not accept on face value what you hear, you have a right to demand that if a member/s is being accused of anything that the accuser should be named and evidence of any alleged wrongdoing produced.

As with the story being pushed in the Sunday Tribune of Vincent Browne and other capitalist newspapers concerning the alleged receipt of 'Moscow Gold'. We repeat once again for the benefit of all members. There was no Moscow Gold, there is no Moscow Gold and more importantly there will be no Moscow Gold. To put this story in context members should realise that at the present moment there is a vicious and widespread witchhunt of Soviet Communists. Any person or organisation that had any contact or connection with the old C.P.S.U. is fair game for the turncoat Yeltsin's gang who will receive all possible assistance from the papers of Rupert Murdoch and Vincent Browne. A leading newspaper correspondent based in Moscow has stated, quote "For 500 US dollars you can get an authentic K.G.B. document stating that Mother Teresa was a K.G.B. agent". Enough said.

The 1990 and 1991 Ard Fheis passed resolutions by a large majority endorsing the concept of Democratic Centralism. The motion of 1991 whilst not directly mentioning Democratic Centralism, according to P De Rossa speaking on a number of occasions during the past year, embodied the principle and concept of democratic centralism. He was in favour of it then - so what has changed that he now adopts an entirely different attitude or perhaps this is another sign of opportunism.

The words and the concept of democratic centralism have become much abused over recent years. It is regrettable but true to say, that democratic centralism was abused particularly by E Harris and his cohorts. We attempted for many years to have people who at one time were mesmerized by E Harris and who later broke from him, to come forward and give evidence as to the

actions and behaviour of Harris and his clique. These people never did come forward to confront Harris.

Democratic centralism means simply and solely that members discuss and decide any issue democratically, at Branch, Constituency, Ard Comhairle and Ard Fheis and then having voted by majority vote that this decision becomes binding and must be implemented by all members. It is open to any member to raise any or the same question at any other time if they disagree with the majority decision. In essence the majority decides and the minority accept this decision. This is democracy. If as we said some individuals have over the years abused the centralist concept of the process this does not negate the concept or the basic integrity and effectiveness of democratic centralism in building a revolutionary party.

What is proposed in its place we do not know. Obviously some loose arrangement which will allow parliamentarians to ride roughshod over members rights and give them free rein to do their thing as a parliamentary party. Of course it is logical for this group to oppose and denigrate democratic centralism because they recognise that it provides an effective organisational means of providing members with the ultimate decision as to what the party does and what direction it goes. Let us state clearly that the party is only a vehicle for us to achieve our aims and that if any member can provide/propose any organisational alternative which will achieve our goal, which will be more effective in developing class consciousness and organising the working class then it is to be welcomed. So far we have not seen any such proposals.

Panic or Threachery

It has long been recognised that amongst all the difficulties and dangers that a revolutionary party faces the threat of the party degenerating into social democracy was always present and is one of the gravest. Many other parties in other countries have experienced this problem. Since the beginning of the Socialist Working class movement it has had to face the issue of defectors and splitters. In almost all cases this betrayal was initiated and carried through by people who have been trusted by the party, by party leaders many who had, up to their betrayal on occasions suffered imprisonment and great hardship in their personal lives. It is indeed difficult to explain such defections but it is impossible to condone their betrayal no matter how close we are to the individuals involved.

Obviously there comes a time in any personal life of revolutionary activity that some people become tired, depressed with the long hard road of struggle and that they are at that time susceptible to the most malign and destructive tendencies of opportunism. We must accept that this has now happened to some of our own members, people who we once regarded with affection and respect because of their previous commitment and work in building the Party.

The sum total of what P De Rossa and his group propose is nothing more nor less than the LIQUIDATION OF THE WORKERS' PARTY. We appeal to all those members and supporters who have the interest of the working class at heart to resist and deny this group their aim. Too much sweat and indeed blood and tears have been shed to establish and build a Workers' Party for it to be destroyed now for the ambitions of a few individuals. The Party is the members and is not the property of any individual or clique. It was the members who over twenty years of struggle developed and brought into existence an independent democratic socialist party committed to establishing a secular socialist Republic of Ireland.

In their determined, even on occasions frenzied campaign to liquidate the party our opponents have through the capitalist mass media by innuendo and by using the the Fianna Fail trick of a nod and wink, tried to smear members of the Party in Northern Ireland as reactionary, unthinking bully boys. It is clear that they have no knowledge and indeed no understanding of the situation that the vast bulk of party members have faced in Northern Ireland for decades now. Yes, there have been incidents where people defended the party and themselves against the thugs of the Provisional I.R.A./I.P.L.O. We believe that on the issue of the right and wrongs concerning particular incidents in Belfast or anywhere else that members have an unqualified right to defend their party, their homes and their lives. We will never accept the word of the Provisionals/I.P.L.O. gangs their supporters or their fellow travellers in the media against that of our comrades in Northern Ireland who have to face these fascist gangs everyday.

The party in Northern Ireland has been and is the most outspoken, the most courageous in the fight against

sectarianism and terrorism. Members in Northern Ireland, as you know, have been murdered, many more injured, their homes broken up, they and their families have often had to face daily intimidation from terrorists and indeed state forces. They have refused to take the easy option and go with the sectarian forces, instead they have said clearly and unambiguously the terrorists shall not pass. Are we to forget this struggle, to desert our comrades who have given this party an honoured place in Irish political history. The easy option is, as some of our opponents want to do, is to build a cosy Social Democratic Parliamentary Party in the 26 counties. Some of them may deny this claim, and perhaps some are genuine in their denials, but many more of them have the hidden agenda and the break with the party in Northern Ireland is a major part of their agenda.

It has always been our view that the Workers Party was and is the legitimate heir to all the democratic revolutionary movements of the Irish people. Some of our opponents sneer at this belief and tradition and would want to rewrite Irish and Party history.

Ours is a party which draws its principles and ideals from the French Revolution, Wolfe Tone and the Society of United Irishmen, down through the Fenians, from Davitt, Connolly, from 1916 and 1917, from Mellows, to our own comrades like Billy McMillen and Malachy McGurran. This is our heritage and through our activity over the past twenty years we had begun to make a reality of our party slogan, Peace, Work, Democracy and Class Politics. We cannot and must not surrender now to those who would betray our party's history and its future. Stand with us and give the opportunists and pessimists their answer - we stand for Socialism, for Peace, for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. For the working class through its own party to achieve its liberation and freedom.