

A PEOPLES DEMOCRACY PUBLICATION



**FASCISM
AND THE
SIX COUNTRIES**

30

INTRODUCTION

Capitalist society is divided into 3 main classes, the big bourgeoisie or employing class, the petty bourgeoisie or lower middle class and the working class. Modern capitalism with its take-over bids, monopolies, multi-national companies and the EEC, tends to squeeze out the petty bourgeoisie who are left without money or power, a disgruntled group. The basic conflict in society is between the working-class and the employing class who exploit them. Normally the employers can keep the workers under control by brainwashing half of them through the press and television and using their police and army to put down the other half. But in times of crisis when capitalism is under serious attack the bosses have to turn to the petty-bourgeoisie for help as well. That's where Fascism comes in.

The traditional conservative parties are too identified with the upper class to appeal to the petty-bourgeoisie who resent and envy the bosses. So they have to turn to crude violent para-military parties who can mobilise the masses of petty officials, shop-keepers, factory managers, foremen, policemen etc., by a combination of racialism or sectarianism with denunciation of capitalism and a pseudo-radical programme. In fact the radicalism quickly disappears if the Fascists get

into power while their violent anti-Communism and pro-imperialism continues.

Fascism has a further advantage as well. Its violence, radicalism, demagogery (extravagant oratory) and sheer thuggery attracts the lumpen-proletariat: the touts, informers, petty criminals, bully-boys and punch-drunk ex-soldiers on the fringes of the working class. They in turn become its shock-troops for attacking and breaking up socialist and working class organisations.

The upper class despise the Fascists and only let them seize power as a last resort. But as a crisis approaches they have to let Fascist parties organise, drill and beat up their opponents and the Army and police have to collaborate with them and give them tacit support – exactly what's happening in Britain at the moment, as the authorities tolerate and protect the National Front. Thus there are 2 phases in the development of Fascism. In the first the Fascists are out on the streets attacking socialists and denouncing and even clashing with the Govt. In the second big business and the Government openly back the fascists and hand over power to them, as they did in Italy and Germany. And Fascism in power is a serious business. The para-military thugs are turned into a Govt-armed and paid

militia to crush all opposition. Hitler's Brownshirts or stormtroopers became the shock-troops of the S.S. All the democratic rights – freedom to organise, hold meetings, produce papers – which the working-class have won in a normal capitalist state, are swept aside by Fascism. It took the 2nd World War to get rid of Hitler and Mussolini.

Continental and 6 Co. Fascism

The parallels between continental fascism and the situation in the 6 Counties are obvious. British Imperialism is in a serious crisis in the North. They have tolerated, even encouraged, the growth of Loyalist para-military organisations (a British officer recently revealed in the Monday Club magazine that the Army had acted mid-wife at the birth of the U.D.A.) and are now conceding their every demand. The U.D.A., U.V.F., Red Hand, U.F.F. etc. with their violent sectarianism, thuggery and occasional outbursts against the old Unionist "fur-coat brigade" are almost a carbon copy of the Brownshirts in Germany or the Blackshirts in Italy. At the moment the imperialists hope to hand over power to the Parliamentary right-wingers like Paisley and West and are only using the Loyalist para-military groups as shock-troops to beat the Catholics into submission. If that doesn't work however they will hand over to a fully-fledged Fascist regime if necessary. William Craig with his lurches from parliamentarianism to Fascist

demagoguery, is keeping open the possibility of becoming the new Fuhrer. If Fascism does come to power in the North the Loyalist murder-gangs will be institutionalised into a 50–60,000 strong B-Special force and will launch a reign of terror against all opposition elements.

Meanwhile because of their weak and muddled politics Provisional and Official Republicans and almost all socialist groups have been thrown into utter confusion by the rise of the U.D.A., U.V.F. etc. They have been fooled by the Loyalists' 'working-class' image and phony radicalism, into seeing their deadliest enemies as friends. The Officials called for joint patrols with the U.D.A. and Daithi O'Conaill praised the "discipline" of the U.W.C. Lockout in May. P.D. alone has for 4 years warned consistently of the danger of Fascism in the 6 Cos. and argued that there can be no compromise or alliances with Loyalist para-military groups.

Two arguments are produced by by groups like the Revolutionary Marxist group to prove that Loyalist groups aren't Fascist: (A) 'Classical' Fascism (i.e. Hitler & Mussolini's brand) had its base in the petty bourgeoisie, the Loyalists have theirs among the 'Labour Aristocracy', the Protestant skilled workers; (B) 'Classical' Fascism was linked with and financed by heavy industry and finance capital. Trotsky writing about Fascism in 1932, described the 'Labour aristocracy as the new petty bourgeoisie' (Leon

Trotsky: Fascism, What it is and How to Fight it).

Italian big business didn't back Mussolini until after the workers' risings of 1920 and that big business in Germany didn't back Hitler until 1927-8. British Imperialism in Ireland backed Sunningdale until May. They have wavered since then and now seem more and more likely to back the Loyalists.

In general it is true that the U.D.A. and U.V.F. show some differences from 'classical' fascism but even in the 1930's there were fascist movements in a dozen countries all of them. Most importantly the European Fascist movements were in metropolitan countries where there was a fairly straightforward conflict between capital and labour and the Fascists' main targets were the trade unions and working-class organisations. The North is under British Rule and the conflict here is between British Imperialism and its

local agents and anti-imperialist forces. The Fascists here devote their energies to smashing Republican and Socialist groups and terrorising the Catholic population rather than destroying the trade unions – though they are attempting that too. The parallel is closer with the OAS in Algeria. Even the R.M.G. would hardly deny that the OAS were Fascist.

The P.D. have characterised the Loyalist para-military groups as Fascist for good reasons. It helps to clear away the confusion caused in the revolutionary movement by the Loyalists' pseudo-radicalism; it alerts the anti-Unionist population to the tragic seriousness of a Loyalist take-over and the need to resist to the length of civil war; and it helps to clarify the situation for the socialist movement in other countries confused by British propaganda about 'religious' war in N. Ireland.

THE RISE OF FASCISM IN EUROPE

PART 1

What is fascism?

'Fascist' has become an almost universal term of abuse today. But what does it really mean? And what relevance has it here in Northern Ireland? The best way to define fascism is to describe it in action. Italy under Mussolini and Germany under Hitler are the best examples of fascism in operation. This series of articles will examine fascism in Italy and Germany and then look at its relevance in the six counties today.

Before the 1st World War Benito Mussolini was a leading member of the Italian Socialist Party and editor of its paper 'Avanti'. He was a violent and unstable man and the war put his socialism to the test. The Italian Socialists, like Connolly in Ireland, held firm to the decision of the Socialist International to take no part in this war between two sets of imperialists over the division of their spoils. But Mussolini backed the War in the hope of gaining territory for Italy and re-capturing the greatness of the Roman Empire. Sooner he had become one of the

leading extreme nationalists or chauvinists in Italy.

Italy did badly in the war. Her armies suffered humiliating defeats. She got no colonies and even the Italian speaking city of Fiume was given to Yugoslavia. The country was full of bitter, discontented, unemployed ex-soldiers. Mussolini joined with some ex-members of the Arditi, the crack regiment of the Italian army – like the British paras – to form a violent right wing group called Fascists. But Mussolini had not completely forgotten his past and the first programme of the fascists was a weird mixture of violent militarism and expansionism and radical social demands. It called for a minimum wage, a tax on capital, nationalisation of the munitions industry, workers participation in management and the confiscation of church property. The fascists also attacked the upper class and the traditional conservative parties.

Mussolini seemed to be aiming for the support of the lower middle class who resented the wealthy upper class and the army who despised

the 'democratic' politicians and wanted a tough dictatorship. But both groups hated and fear the working class and socialist ideas and from the beginning the fascists launched violent attacks on the socialist movement.

The Italian ruling class didn't like Mussolini either. They disliked the violence and the vulgarity of the fascists and the bullies and criminals who filled their ranks. But unemployment was high in Italy and conditions were bad. The socialist movement grew in size and militancy. Early in 1920 the peasants began seizing estates. Then in August after a lock out, workers seized hundreds of factories, especially in the industrial cities of Milan and Turin and held them for three weeks. The employers were badly frightened. They saw the spectre of the Russian revolution hanging over them. The government seemed powerless to help, so they turned to the one force they thought could save them from Bolshevism — Mussolini and the fascists.

In the summer of 1919 Mussolini was still wavering between left and right. When rioting broke out over rising food prices he backed the rioters. The fascist paper suggested lynching profiteers and took as their slogan 'Squeeze the Rich' but by 1920 he had chosen sides. Armed bands of fascist Blackshirts burned down socialist and trade union halls, co-operative stores, left-wing newspaper offices, public buildings in socialist-run towns and cities. Socialist militants were

beaten up, murdered and had their homes burned down. All this was done with the tacit consent and often active support of the Police and Army.

The bosses were well pleased. During the War Mussolini had been backed by the Ansaldo munitions firm because of his aggressive policies. They continued to support him. But now Giovanni Agnelli, head of the Fiat company and Alberto Pirelli, head of the tyre firms backed him too as well as many other leading industrialists. In July 1922 the fascists, in Police lorries, burned much of Ravenna and the surrounding towns and villages. In August they quickly crushed a General Strike. By October the five main Italian banks and the Employers' Federation were openly backing Mussolini.

On October 27th 1922 the fascists seized police and army barracks all over Italy — in most cases they were welcomed by the occupants — and the next day they began to march on Rome. They were poorly armed and were not a very formidable force but there were five army Generals in their ranks and the army had no intention of stopping them. The Government resigned and Mussolini became Prime Minister. He spent the next few years consolidating his position. In 1924 the fascist private army became a Government paid militia and a law was passed giving whatever party won most votes in an election a two thirds majority in Parliament. It was fascists who gained naturally. In 1924 a socialist deputy who strongly attacked Mussolini was

murdered 10 days later and most of the Parliamentary Opposition walked out. In 1926 all opposition groups were banned and Special Military Tribunals introduced to deal with any resistance.

From 1926 on, Mussolini was completely in control and able to implement his own proposals. But the radical content of the early fascist programme had evaporated. He had tamed and muzzled his followers by disbanding the Blackshirts and enrolling the militants in an official Militia. He relied on the forces of the state rather than the party to enforce his will and discouraged — even suppressed — fascist violence. His real social attitudes were shown in 1926 when strikes were banned and all workers forced to form fascist syndicates whose top officials were appointed by the Government. The same year employers were allowed to increase the working day to 9 hours with no increase in wages. In 1927 a new Charter of Labour was adopted, stating that 'the direction of an economic enterprise belongs to the employer' and that employers were again to be 'masters in their own house'. And in 1929 the anti-clerical Mussolini signed the Lateran Treaty with the Pope exempting religious orders from tax and giving the Church considerable control over education.

Mussolini built in Italy a brutal totalitarian state where the employer, backed by the police and army, had total control over the

workers. Popular attention was distracted from poverty and oppression by grand pageantry recalling the glories of the Roman Empire and by an aggressive foreign policy which involved the invasion of Ethiopia and Albania, for the Italian working class it was a long and bitter agony which ended when Mussolini was caught fleeing Italy in 1945 and summarily shot by red partisans.

PART 2

Germany, defeated in the 1st World War, was in turmoil in 1919. The Empire had collapsed, the new Weimar Republic was weak and divided and had to accept the humiliating terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Unemployment and poverty were chronic and the Socialist Movement was growing in strength. But Germany was also thronged with thousands of bitter and jobless ex-soldiers who formed free-lance armed gangs called the Freikorps.

In January 1919 the revolutionary left, led by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg staged a rising in Berlin. It was ruthlessly put down by the Army and the Freikorps and Luxemburg and Liebknecht were murdered. In April a Soviet Republic was established in Bavaria. It too was brutally suppressed. But the risings badly scared the German middle class. They were haunted by the spectre of Red revolution, yet they didn't trust the Berlin government which included social democrats —

the equivalent of the British Labour Party. All over Germany small violent right wing groups were formed.

Adolf Hitler formed one of these groups in Munich in 1919 as an Army spy. He soon took it over, changing the name to the National Socialist German Workers Party (Nazis). The Nazi programme adopted in 1920 was an extraordinary mixture. It was racialist and imperialist. It demanded the repudiation of Versailles, a greater German super state uniting all German speakers, the acquisitions of colonies and an empire, and the restoration of citizen's rights to those of pure German origin. But the programme also called for the abolition of unearned income, the nationalisation of big trusts and monopolies, the break up of chain stores and the nationalisation of some land without compensation. The party was also violently anti-Jewish and anti-Communist and set up its own private army — the SA, composed of ex-soldiers and Freikorps men. The SA spent its time beating up Socialists and Communists and breaking up their meetings.

The Nazi programme appealed strongly to the lower middle class, the shop keepers, small industrialists, white collar workers etc. They feared communism, hated Jews, wanted law and order and wanted to go back to the days of imperial glory, but they also disliked and feared the chain stores, banks and big business controls which threatened to crush them out of existence. And they resented the aristocratic ruling class

which still monopolised power in the Army and the Government. The Nazi combination of imperialism, racialism and pseudo-socialism was very attractive to them.

In November 1923 Hitler tried to imitate Mussolini by seizing power in Munich as a preliminary to marching on Berlin. He relied on the co-operation of the already extremely right wing Bavarian Government and Army but they tricked him and the Police fired on the Nazis killing 15 of them. Hitler was arrested and jailed for a year in a very comfortable fortress where he wrote his hysterical racist anti-Jewish Bible, "Mein Kampf".

When Hitler was released Germany had settled down a lot. The economy had improved, unemployment was manageable, the Government had established its authority throughout Germany, there was a mild air of prosperity. Hitler spent his time building up his party and resolving some of the contradictions in it.

The Nazis in North Germany had become very radical in their attitudes. They were led by the brothers Gregor and Otto Strasser and Dr. Joseph Goebbels. Goebbels wrote in 1926 "In the final analysis it would be better for us to end our existence under Bolshevism than to endure slavery under capitalism" and he talked of co-operation with the Communists. The issue came to a head in February 1926. The Strassers formed forces with the communists and social democrats in demanding a

referendum to stop the payment of compensation to the former German princes. Hitler was furious. He declared that the rights of property must be protected and "the Jewish invention of Bolshevism must be crushed". He called an extra-ordinary conference of party leaders which backed him fully. So much for Nazi radicalism.

Shortly afterwards he got his reward. He was invited to address a private meeting of employers and industrialists at Hamburg. His speech was moderate — by Hitler's standards — and was well received. From then on he began to woo big business.

By 1929 prosperity was wearing off. In 1930 Germany was hit by the Great Depression. Unemployment rocketed until it reached a peak of 6,000,000 in 1932. The German currency collapsed, ruining small businessmen, wiping out the savings of the middle class and hitting white collar workers on fixed incomes very hard. The Nazi vote went from 2½% in 1928 to 18% in 1930 and 37% in 1932. The Nazis became the largest party in Parliament. Meanwhile the unemployed flocked into the SA until its membership reached 300,000. But the communist vote was increasing too and the communists were becoming bolder and more aggressive. The Nazis launched a violent campaign against the communists, attacking demonstrations and rallies, beating up left wing activists, burning socialist and trade union buildings.

Murder and arson were commonplace.

Big business was worried. The depression had hit them too and they needed a policy of wage and welfare cuts — backed up by the state — and massive re-armament to survive. They were frightened by the communists and saw that the Berlin Government, though moving further and further to the right was powerless without Nazi support. Hitler had long had the support of Baron Thyssen head of a major steel firm. Now he recruited Dr. Schacht, former head of the German Central Bank. Thyssen and Schacht began to convince their colleagues that only the Nazis could crush the communists, force through wage cuts and launch a programme of rearmament and expansion.

In January 1932 Hitler addressed a meeting of the Rhine/Ruhr industrialists at Dusseldorf. He won the support of Albert Voegler, Chairman of the Iron and Steel Mine-owners, Emil Kirdorf, head of the biggest coal firm in Germany, I.G. Fairber, the huge German Chemical combine, the Hamburg-Amerika Shipping Co. and most of the major banks and insurance companies. The Ruhr Employers Federation also backed him and finally, early in 1933 the giant Krupp firm, which had been hostile, serving behind him.

But the Army Officer class and the aristocratic old President still held out against giving power to the 'Austrian lance-corporal' and his violent brawling followers. In November 1932 the Nazi vote fell in the elections while the communists

gained. That decided the bosses. They were afraid of losing their chance. In January 1933 they persuaded Hindenburg to accept a coalition government headed by Hitler.

Hitler immediately called an election. The Reichstag (the parliament building) was burnt just before the vote — probably by the Nazis — giving Hitler an excuse to arrest thousands of leading socialists and communists and scaring the middle class into giving him a small majority. Once safely in power, Hitler set about crushing all opposition. All democratic rights were suspended, the S.A. became an armed militia and a secret Police force — the Gestapo was established. The communist party was banned and all opponents of the regime were arrested and either murdered or thrown into concentration camps. Even the Social Democratic Party was banned and all the other parties disbanded themselves. By July Germany was officially a one-party state with all opposition outlawed.

Hitler was quick to repay his financial backers. May Day 1933 was declared a National Holiday and Hitler addressed huge trade union rally in Berlin. The next day the Socialist trade unions were dissolved, their officials arrested and their premises seized. The right to strike was abolished and a month later the Christian unions were abolished as well. Workers and employers were enrolled in the German Labour Front controlled by the Nazis. In 1934 its boss declared that they "would restore absolute

leadership to the natural leader of a factory — that is the employer" . . . Only the employer can decide . . . now they are once again to be 'master in the house'. All wages were fixed by Nazi-appointed labour trustees with the result that wages sank below the depression level. In 1935 Workbooks — like S. African Passbooks were introduced for all employees, turning them into virtual serfs. The process was completed in 1938 when labour conscription was introduced and workers could be forced to work anywhere the government wanted them.

The bosses were well pleased. They had a cowed and captive work force and rearmament and foreign aggression meant a boon for heavy industry. But this was too much for some of the Nazis themselves. Early in 1934 the S.A. began to get restless and their leader Ernst Rohrn began to talk of a second revolution. What they wanted of course was not socialism but to replace the traditional ruling class with themselves. Hitler's new allies, the bosses and the Army demanded that the S.A. be curbed. On June 30th 1934 the S.A. leaders all over Germany including Rohrn and Strasser, and murdered them. That was the end of Nazi radicalism.

Hitler's rule, like Mussolini's meant miserable impoverished serfdom for the worker and fat profits for the bosses. The peoples attention was diverted from their misery by the hate campaign against the Jews and by Nazi imperialism and aggression abroad while all dissent or protest

was stifled with the greatest brutality. The people were so cowed by Nazi terror that no serious resistance movement ever developed.

PART 3

Fascism came to power in Germany and Italy between the Wars. Fascism also triumphed in Spain in 1939 and there were active fascist movements in most European countries in the 1930's including General O'Duffy's Blueshirts here in Ireland.

What had all these fascist groups in common? What was fascism historically? What is it today?

It was a movement of the extreme political right. It was ultra-nationalist or chauvinist. Nationalism is a progressive force in a country which is oppressed or exploited by an imperialist power — as Ireland is by Britain. But in a major power like Germany or Italy, Nationalism took the form of wanting to dominate other countries — of imperialism. And both Hitler and Mussolini talked of building Empires: Hitler of the 1,000 year Reich; Mussolini of a new Roman Empire.

Fascism was also racialist. The Nazis butchered 6 million Jews but they also persecuted Slavs and Gipsies and despised blacks while proclaiming the Germans as the Herrenvolk — the master race. Most other fascists, like the Hungarians and the Romanian Iron Cross were violently anti-Jewish and white supremacist though racialism was never strong in Italy,

a country with a long tradition of racial tolerance.

Closely connected with the Fascists' racialism and imperialism was their militarism, the cult of violence, war and armies. They declared that the supreme human virtue was brute force and war was a good thing in itself because it assured the triumph of the bully and the killer. Unlike socialist revolutionaries who believe in an Army without uniforms — an armed people — the fascists put enormous stress on marching, drilling, uniforms and military titles.

Fascism was also violently anti-democratic. Hitler and Mussolini, quite rightly, regarded Parliamentary democracy, free speech, fair trial etc., as concessions forced out of the ruling class by the people. They wanted to rule by sheer brute force with no concessions and regarded the conventional parties of the Right who had accepted the democratic system as weak-kneed compromisers.

The fascists were also violently anti-communist, anti-socialist and anti-trade union.

They hated the Communist belief in international solidarity of the workers because it opposed racialism and imperialism. They feared a socialist revolution and the take over of their businesses and factories by the workers and they dreaded a society which would care for the poor and weak and where brute force would get them nowhere. They saw the working class as the real enemy and unlike the old Conservatives

were determined to smash it by violence and terror in the streets.

This brutal, violent, selfish ideology found its main support among the lower middle classes — the petty bourgeoisie. This miserable class were chronically insecure. Spurned by the aristocracy and the upper class they vented their frustrations on the working class. A host of petty officials, policemen, factory managers, grasping shop keepers, despised, bullied and exploited the workers and at the same time feared them. They were loudest in their demands for 'Law and Order', strike breaking and repression. But while fascism found the bulk of its supporters among the lower middle class, it recruited its bully boys, the Blackshirts and the Brownshirts, from another group — the lumpen proletariat. This is a name of a motley collection of criminals, thugs, blacklegs and especially ex-soldiers who couldn't settle down to civilian life. They came from working class backgrounds but had lost all sense of solidarity with their class to become mere hirelings of the state and the employers

It was to keep the loyalty of these confused and violent men that the fascists adopted radical demands, denounced the decadent ruling classes and even supported occasional strikes. But the real loyalties of the fascist parties were shown by their constant brutal attacks on communists and trade union militants

while they never beat up bosses, landlords or Generals.

Fascist movements sprung up everywhere in the 1930's but they only reached mass proportions in a few countries. In Britain for instance Sir Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts never became more than a minor irritant. Fascism only became a mass movement where massive unemployment swelled the ranks of lumpen proletariat and bankrupted many of the lower middle classes threatening to force them down into the working class. Then desperate men looked for desperate solutions. But even then Fascism didn't always come to power. For all their talk of violence and revolution most fascist movements were very reluctant to come into conflict with the state. In Finland, Hungary and Romania they had to content themselves with uneasy alliances with ruling right-wing dictators. Only where there was a serious threat to the state from the left — Italy, Germany and Spain — did the fascists take power and then it was because the bosses, the army and the police turned to them as the last defence against revolution. When they got into power of course the fascists quickly jettisoned their former radicalism and 'anti-capitalism' and any of their followers who were foolish enough to believe in it.

It wasn't only the bosses who turned fascist in their hour of need, Despite the fact that both Hitler and Mussolini were aggressively anti-religious and that fascism was

the very antithesis of what Christianity was supposed to stand for both Protestant and Catholic churches in Germany and the Catholic church in Italy quickly came to terms with Hitler and Mussolini.

European fascism took both socialists and communists by surprise. At first they didn't take it seriously. They were confused by its rough lower class leadership and even rougher followers and its pseudo radical demands. The German Communist Party tried co-operating with the Nazis and holding joint meetings with them. They even pandered to their racialism and anti-semitism. But the Nazis knew their enemies even if the communists didn't. The Left couldn't believe that the Police, Army, big business and whole state apparatus would

collaborate with these gangsters and murderers. But they underestimated the sheer unscrupulousness of the bosses who know no principles where their profits are at stake.

Fascism today is weak in most countries: The idea of the British National Front of German Neo-Nazis in power seems a joke. It's not such a joke in Italy where fascism is growing again in response to the challenge from the Left. And the fascists don't have to come to power. A strong fascist party in any country is enough to push its government sharply to the Right. Then the government and police look on while the fascists beat up and murder their opponents. Fascism is the deadliest enemy of socialism and the working class. The Left should never let the fascists take it by surprise.

Fascism in N.I.

Part 3 concluded with the warning that in the past socialists were taken by surprise by the fascists, confused by their working class make-up. We stated that the existence of a strong fascist party in any country is in itself enough to push a government to the right. We believe that Fascism is the major aspect of the Irish struggle which must be considered by Socialists and Republicans today.

Since the end of the 2nd World War there has always been the tendency to equate fascism with Adolf Hitler, with its most obvious excesses in history. The British and American governments would claim to be anti-Fascist on the basis of their involvement in the war against the Nazis and their allies. Their anti-Fascism is supported by referring to the mass murders of which Hitler was guilty. But mass murders of Jews alone does not constitute fascism, no more than does mass murders committed by American bombing in Viet-nam or the cold-blooded slaughter of Irish civilians by British troops. Today there are fascist movements in all of the European countries which claim such anti-Fascism. In Italy there have been numerous bomb attacks on workers and socialists by fascists. But of most importance to us is the emergence of the Ulster fascists, the most serious threat yet to the ongoing struggle for National

Freedom. Ulster fascists have been on the political scene for some time now. They are represented by the Vanguard Party, the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Red Hand group and elements within the U.D.A.

Vanguard is a party of ex-Unionist party members. They are ultra-right wing, more imperialist than the imperialists themselves and more brutal than the British Army. They have been tireless in their demands for more repression, more curfews, shootings and hangings — of Republicans. They have close links with the Monday Club — on the extreme Right of the British Conservative Party, and some contact with the openly Fascist National Front. They have attracted the support of dozens of right-wing academics and cranks (like Professor Kennedy Lindsay). Vanguard's basic demand is for the return of Stormont with increased security powers i.e. a return to the Protestant Ascendancy. But they flirt also with the idea of an independent British Ulster along the lines of White Rhodesia's U.D.I. Vanguard is based on the traditional fascist class, the small businessmen and the lower middle class and they have complained about the takeover of local firms by big U.S. and British monopolies and the squeezing out of shopkeepers by supermarket or retail chains. They are violently opposed to the Common Market for the same reason. It is essentially a movement of frightened men, shopkeepers, small factory owners, foremen and Orange Order bosses. They are threatened by ordinary capitalist developments and they are scared

stiff of a socialist revolution.

Bill Craig may not have the charisma of Hitler or Mussolini, but he's got the same vicious ruthlessness. Always subtly anti-Catholic — attacking large families, Catholics' supposed lower education standards etc., he has threatened Catholic extermination:— "The people we shall strike at are the undemocratic belligerent minority in our midst" And of the anti-Catholic murder campaign he said:— "If it is impossible to win our democratic rights without this sort of thing happening then I am prepared to tolerate it". Finally his total contempt for democracy:— "My decision will not be in terms of ballots but bullets".

The Vanguard Party is no quiet observer of political events though. They were instrumental in setting up the highly select Ulster Worker's Council which brought down the Assembly. Their participation in that strike which began amid a spate of murders of Catholics, of bombing of Catholic-owned pubs in Belfast and bombing of crowded streets in Dublin.

Their reason for calling the strike was to stage a Loyalist takeover of the Northern State which would give them bargaining power with the British. The same idea — that of a Loyalist state and anihilation of all opposed to it, was clear in the 12th of July calls made by Vanguard for a 'Third Force' to wipe out the I.R.A. and re-institutionalise Protestant ascendancy.

The predecessor to the U.W.C. (Ulster Workers Council) was the Loyalist Association of Workers

and like the U.W.C., L.A.W. caused a lot of confusion because it was made up of workers. It was headed by Billy Hull, a convener of shop stewards in the Shipyard in Belfast and an ex-member of the N.I. Labour Party. But a cloth cap and dungarees doesn't make a socialist. And ex-socialists can change, Mussolini was once a socialist, Sir Oswald Moseley was a Labour M.P. — Anyway Hull was always on the extreme right of even the pro-Unionist NILP (Northern Ireland Labour Party). In the shipyard he was known as 'the fixer' or the 'little pope', an unscrupulous power-hungry union boss like Jimmy Hoffa of the U.S. Teamster's Union.

It was no accident that LAW was strongest in the shipyard, Mackie's engineering works, and the Sirocco Works, skilled engineering firms where almost all the Catholics have been driven out. L.A.W. represented the aristocrats of Labour, Protestant skilled workers with secure and well-paid jobs, anxious to preserve their privileges over the Catholics. The LAW like the UDA we judge by its deeds, and its importance to Ulster fascism lies in the fact that it was the forerunner to the Ulster Workers' Council. The LAW's first action was to march to Unionist party headquarters early in 1971 demanding internment. After that they ran a sustained campaign to oust Catholics, Socialists and Communists from Union Committees and replaced them with their own stooges, while LAW members played a major part in the mass intimidation of

Catholics out of factories in Belfast.

They are allied with John McKeague's group, the Red Hand Commandoes, the most vicious anti-Catholic murder squad until the appearance of the Ulster Freedom Fighters

The rise of the U.D.A. was remarkably similar to that of Hitler's Stormtroopers. Their rise has been accompanied by the same type of thuggery and violence that characterised the S.A. and the Fascists. Catholics have been beaten up at U.D.A. roadblocks or murdered behind U.D.A. barricades. Whole Catholic communities have been terrorised and driven out of U.D.A. controlled areas like East Belfast and Larne. Catholic homes have been petrol-bombed by U.D.A. men in Lenadoon in West Belfast and the whole terror campaign and the murders, the bombs in Catholic pubs and churches, has gone on on the fringes of the U.D.A., protected and tolerated if not organised by them.

The clearest involvement of the U.D.A. came with the U.W.C. strike when the anti-Catholic murder campaign was at a peak. Since that strike however, the U.D.A. has gone through much faction fighting and appears to be deeply confused in its aftermath. But the worst atrocities which were the work of the UFF working from within the UDA, stand as a clear monument to what it was. Indeed the butchery of the UFF was recently dismissed like teething troubles by its new chairman Andy Tyrrie!

The U.D.A.'s social make-up

is the same as that of the Storm Troopers. A high proportion of ex-servicement, veterans of Britain's other Imperialist wars and dedicated to the preservation of the Empire and the local Orange Ascendancy. They even ape the British with their grandiose military titles like Major, General and Lieut. Colonel. They have their lumpen proletariat thugs and petty criminals in their auxiliaries — the Tartan gangs. And the R.U.C. and British Army openly tolerate them and collaborate with them. The U.D.A. has something of the phoney radicalism of Roehm and Strasser in the Nazi Brownshirts. They attack 'the 50 years of misrule' of the Stormont Government. They have attacked the 'bourgeois type politicians' on the Unionist side and 'the fur coat brigade'. Like the Brownshirts they may be confused in some ways but they know who their enemy is — the I.R.A. and Revolutionary socialists. And that's how they must be judged — not on their rhetoric or on progressive statements from individual members, but on their objective role as shock troops for British imperialism.

Ulster's Fascists may never come to power. Fascism is the last resort of capitalism in crisis and though Northern Ireland is certainly in a state of crisis at the moment, big business and the imperialists, though willing to use the Loyalists to do their dirty work, have no intention of giving Craig etc. absolute power. But even so the Fascists are a serious threat. Their counter-terror campaign is an important part of British strategy, and is armed and

licensed by the Crown. They can obstruct any new settlement favourable to the anti-imperialist people — witness how the UWC strike forced the ending of the Assembly and how the pressure of calls for a Home Guard by the right wing have directly resulted in the drastic changing of the UDR and RUC to practically what they wanted. Worse still, as the crisis deepens and the anti-imperialist war continues, the imperialists may well turn to Orange Fascism as a last desperate bulwark against the

revolution. The present situation in the North, with all the signs of sectarian civil war launched by loyalists, is an ominous warning of this. Indeed the withdrawal of British troops from Loyalist areas and the continuing raids on Catholic areas indicate that this indeed would be the ultimate British policy.

Vanguard, the Ulster Volunteer Force and Red Hand Commandoes, are fascists. Fascism is the deadliest enemy to the success of the Irish struggle.

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