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THE KILLING of the seven building workers in January marks the most bloody episode in an IRA campaign against those who work for the 'security forces', a campaign which has been going on since 1985. There has been a massive wave of condemnation from bishops, politicians and media figures.

Most of it is hypocritical cant. In all wars people who assist or work for the enemy are targetted. During the War of Independence the 'old IRA' shot people it suspected of collaboration. Today it is a criminal offence to collaborate with the IRA. Anyone allowing them to use their house or car, anyone minding weapons or giving information can be sentenced to long terms in jail. In the North their name may be leaked to a loyalist death squad.

The Workers Solidarity Movement, as an anarchist and anti-imperialist organisation, agrees with the Provos that workers should not collaborate with the forces of imperialism. It is not in the interest of any worker to collaborate with imperialism, in Ireland or anywhere else.

This does not mean we agree with killing building workers. We don't. The IRA threats to workers who service or deliver to Army bases and RUC & UDR barracks tell us much about the Provos. For all their left-wing slogans, they remain an authoritarian nationalist movement. They decide what is good for us, they decide what methods to use. The role of everyone else is to passively cheer them on and preserve some sort of nationalist solidarity.

A genuinely socialist and revolutionary movement would have appealed to workers to black these bases because it is in their own interest to fight imperialism. It is undeniable that such an appeal would have been ignored by most. However in areas such as Newry, Derry and Strabane there was a very good chance that it would have been heeded if worked for. A campaign of this sort would consist of raising the issue within the unions, holding meetings at depot gates, producing leaflets, taking up the arguments and fighting for official union backing for anyone disciplined or sacked for refusing to help the state's war effort.

It would be a start in bringing workers — as workers — to the head of the anti-imperialist struggle. It has been done before. At the time of the War of Independence there was an anti-conscription strike, the "Limerick Soviet", the refusal of train drivers to carry British troops or war materials.

Activity like this can give workers a sense of the potential power they possess. And by being based on the methods of mass struggle it can give workers the confidence to start getting involved in political activity themselves instead of leaving it to a few rulers and would-be rulers. This is very important if we are to build a real socialist society where there is no division into rulers and ruled.

We must also look at the objective result of the threats and killings. It does not matter a lot what the intentions of the Provos are, the fact is that killing labourers and other workers drives Protestants of our class further into the arms of bigots like Paisley. It is not enough to denounce such workers as supporters of imperialism — the question is how to win them away from that.

Death threats certainly cannot do it. Whether we like it or not many Protestants believe that such workers are shot because they are Protestants and that the Provos' stated reasons are not the real ones. Therefore we call for the threats to be lifted and replaced by a workplace campaign based on arguments about working class self-interest.