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Direct Action Against Drugs

Murder and Thuggery

Workers Solidarity Movement

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MEN SHOT DEAD, many more beaten up. Attacks in Armagh, Belfast, Derry, Dublin, Dundalk and Kerry. In most cases the reason given was that the people being punished were ecstasy dealers. The murders in the six counties were claimed by Direct Action Against Drugs. This organisation does not exist in any real sense, it is widely believed to be nothing more than a cover name for the IRA. That is why the Sinn Fein *does not condone the killings but will not condemn them either.*

Ecstasy use, like using any drug, is not to be encouraged. It is dangerous. But there has been a lot of nonsense talked about 'E'. It is a lot less likely to kill regular users than tobacco. Just as many smoked dope in the 1970s, the 1990s generation takes ecstasy. When asked by the 'Sunday Tribune' (January 7th) why the IRA was not doing anything about tobacco or alcohol abuse Noel Sheridan, a Sinn Fein councillor in Armagh, replied that they were *not illegal*. So now you know, republicans' primary concern is for upholding the law!

The biggest – though not the only – risks come from cutting the drug with dangerous substances, from there being no way

of knowing the strength of an illegal drug, and from club owners turning off taps to force dehydrated dancers to buy bottled water.

So why did the IRA start to kill alleged ecstasy dealer when they didn't kill heroin bosses like Larry Dunne and Ma Baker a decade ago? The IRA may have a concern that overconfident criminals might eventually start dealing in hard drugs, or that *criminal gangs will dominate working class communities* ('AP/RN' editorial, January 11th).

More likely is that it was a way of demonstrating, to the Mitchell Commission and the British government, that an armed campaign can be resumed; that the IRA has not gone away. By targeting alleged drug dealers at a time of great concern and a lot of media hype about drug abuse there was far less chance of a public outcry. More importantly, they can not be accused of breaking the ceasefire as they are not shooting RUC or soldiers.

The campaign of murders and beatings is authoritarian thuggery. The IRA/DADD have no mandate to make the rules about drug use and abuse. They certainly have no right to set themselves up as judge, jury and executioner. What would the IRA's reaction be if the RUC went around executing alleged drug dealers? Or have they already forgotten all they used to say about torture, non-jury courts and shoot-to-kill?