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To increase knowledge and understanding within and without
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**THE
GREEN AND THE RED**

**The influence of the ultra left
on the situation in
Northern Ireland**

**by
A Special Correspondent**

No. 5

66.46

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Author has been a student of International affairs, for many years, with a special interest in terrorism and subversion.

John Biggs-Davison's death has deprived readers of an eloquent introduction and I shall not attempt to write one in its place.

However, I should like to commend this excellent study unreservedly and to ask all readers to promote it as widely as possible. Copies can be sent free of charge to individuals and organisations recommended by Friends of the Union. My father was most anxious it should be distributed in America, so any addresses there would be much appreciated.

Lisl Biggs-Davison
Secretary, Friends of the Union

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF
JOHN BIGGS-DAVISON
Staunch Friend of the Union

The Author's views are his own and not necessarily those of the Trustees of the Friends of the Union.

THE GREEN AND THE RED

JAMES CONNOLLY AND 'THE TWO-FOLD NATURE OF THE IRISH QUESTION'.

When spokesmen of the IRA's political wing Sinn Fein indicate, as they not infrequently do, that they regard themselves as the "heirs of Connolly" they probably do little to inform the vast majority of the inhabitants of the United Kingdom as to their movement's character. For Connolly has been dead for over 70 years and his fame outside Ireland remains strictly limited. Yet the influence of his teaching has indeed been an essential factor in the emergence of a very differently motivated IRA and Sinn Fein from those inspired by grievances and demands purely of a religious and simple nationalist nature, as in times past.

James Connolly, born in Edinburgh the son of poor Irish immigrants, first saw Ireland when he landed in that country as a young recruit in the King's Liverpool Regiment at the age of 17. This regiment started a tour of duty there not long after the murder of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Frederick Cavendish, and the Irish Permanent Under-Secretary, Thomas Burke, in Phoenix Park Dublin in 1882. For the next seven years it remained in Ireland, serving in such stations as Castlebar, The Curragh, and Dublin. Many of those in its ranks were of Irish origin, and it was consequently a particular target for Fenian propagandists. When the regiment was posted back to England in 1889 Connolly left the army and returned to Edinburgh. Here he soon became involved in socialist activity and an increasingly convinced follower of the teachings of Karl Marx.

While in exile in London 20 years before, Marx had paid very considerable attention to 'the Irish question', supporting the cause of Irish independence not only for its own sake, but even more strongly because he saw a revolution in Ireland as a key which would unlock the door to an eventual revolution in the rest of the British Isles.

In 1890 Connolly moved to Dublin and became full time organizer of the Dublin Socialist Club and founder of the Irish Republican Socialist Party, a party whose policy demanded the public ownership by the Irish people of the land, means of production, distribution, and exchange.

Connolly had by this time become a prolific writer on the themes of nationalism, 'socialism' and revolution. Probably the most important and lasting contribution he made to the theory of such subjects, in relation to Ireland, was the provision of an idea which over the years since the early

1970's, has become central to the thinking of the leaders of present day Sinn Fein. The essence of this idea was and remains that Ireland can never really be free until it has achieved complete economic as well as national political independence. It is maintained that this can only be achieved by the establishment of a revolutionary socialist state; this state embracing the whole island of Ireland and largely possessing ownership of its industrial, natural, and financial resources. The policies of such a government would be based upon a blend of the type of extreme socialism favoured by Karl Marx and the principles said to have been the basis of the communal way of life alleged to have existed in ancient Ireland.

Expounding upon this belief, which he summarized as the "two-fold nature of the Irish question", Connolly wrote in the Republican publication *Van Vocht* in 1907: 1907:

"If you remove the English Army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organization of the Socialist Republic your efforts would be in vain.

England would still rule you she would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole array of commercial and individualist institutions she has planted in this country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs.

England would still rule you to your ruin, even while your lips offered hypocritical homage at the shrine of that freedom whose cause you have betrayed.

Nationalism without Socialism – without a reorganization of society on the basis of a broader and more developed form of that common property which underlay the social structure of Ancient Erin – is only national recreancy".

EASTER: 1916.

From 1913 onwards Connolly increasingly began to think in terms of armed revolt, studying and writing upon such subjects as the tactics of guerrilla warfare and street fighting. He also now became involved in the formation of an armed group known as "The Irish Citizen Army", sometimes described as Europe's "First Red Guard". Its ostensible purpose was to protect striking workers from the police. Connolly, however, came to see it as the nucleus of a force which could be used to mount a revolt against British rule.

He saw the outbreak of the first world war in 1914 as the opportunity for widespread workers' revolts, and four days after its outbreak launched an appeal through the pages of the journal the *Irish Worker* for the Irish working class to:

"Set the torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last throne and the last capitalist bond and debenture will be shrivelled in the funeral pyre of the last war lord".

After becoming increasingly active with the forerunners of the IRA, the Irish Republican Brotherhood or IRB, in their preparation for a major rising, he was in January 1916 appointed as a member of its Military Council. Had the rising that Easter Monday been successful he would have been appointed Vice President of the intended Provisional Government of the Irish Republic and Comandant-General of the Dublin Division of its army. As it was he was dead within three weeks of the end of the outbreak, executed by a British Army firing squad together with other principal leaders of the revolt.

A MISSION TO MOSCOW: SAOR EIRE: THE NEW CONGRESS PARTY.

Some ultra-left elements within the Irish Republican movement, although never for many years as influential as they would probably have been had Connolly lived, survived both the latter's death, the armed struggle with Britain that resulted in Irish independence, and the civil war that followed.

During the early 1920's a small circle of left-wing members of the IRA was responsible for forming a number of foreign contracts, including some of a temporary nature with Soviet representatives in London.

The authoritative writer on the IRA Tim Pat Coogan records in his book *The IRA*,¹ that in 1925 IRA leaders decided to send a mission to Moscow in search of arms. If they were perhaps encouraged to embark on this quest by memory of the fact that Lenin had once said that a blow delivered against British Imperialist rule in the form of a rebellion in Ireland was of "a hundred times greater political significance" to the general revolutionary cause in Europe than a rebellion in a remote colony, they were soon to be disappointed.

When the three man IRA delegation arrived in Moscow and its leader was granted a short interview with Stalin it was discovered that the latter was very concerned that if the USSR granted the delegation's request, and arms of Soviet manufacture were subsequently discovered in Ireland this might form a pretext for renewed intervention in Soviet affairs by the Western powers. The Soviet leader's anxiety on this point was apparently all the greater because of his openly expressed doubts regarding the IRA's ability to keep any such supply of arms secret. As though to demonstrate his poor opinion of IRA security he is said to have 'rocked' the delegation's leader when sending him away empty handed, by producing a complete list of all the arms that had been seized from the IRA in the past by the Irish Free-State Government.

During the 1930's in Southern Ireland some of the IRA's left-wing members were involved in the formation of two organizations whose policies and aims embraced many of Connolly's theories and objectives. One of these named Saor Eire was formed in 1931. It set out to establish a Republican Workers Party which would aim at bringing to power a 'Peasants' Republic' controlled jointly by peasants and other workers. It had but a

short life before being banned by the government of President Cosgrave. The second, named The New Congress Party, was formed in 1934. Its aims were described in its policy manifesto as so revolutionary that their achievement would mean: "the overthrow of all the existing political and economic machinery which at present holds this country and our people in subjection". For a time it attracted considerable support from militant Republicans, some of whom transferred their allegiance to it from the IRA.

Government and Church pressure against ultra-left activity, however, had by the end of 1936 led to ultra-left groups for the time-being losing any significant influence. The leadership of the IRA passed into the hands of those with little interest in politics as against preparation for armed action to bring about the end of partition. It was to be 30 years before this position somewhat dramatically changed.

THE 1960's IRA RE-THINK AND THE MARXIST BREAK THROUGH

At the end of what the IRA styled "Operation Harvest" and is more generally known as the Border Campaign of 1956-62 the IRA Army Council issued a somewhat mournful statement. In this it complained that the lack of public support that the campaign had achieved both North and South of the border reflected the fact that the minds of the Irish people had been "distracted from the supreme issue of the unity of their country". At this time even the possibility of the complete disappearance of the IRA as a militant organization was being quite freely discussed. The present President of Sinn Fein, Gerry Adams, has recorded that in 1961 the total strength of the IRA in Belfast amounted to a mere 24 members armed with two revolvers between them.

It was also a time when relations between Catholic and Protestant communities were notably improving. Even Gerry Adams subsequently admitting that in the Ballymurphy district of Belfast where he lived the relationship between Protestants and Catholics was devoid of any sectarian difficulties. Young people he knew from the two communities, he has also recalled, never discussed politics or religion "except in a joking or bantering fashion", and he has remembered watching Protestant twelfth of July parades and bonfires with enjoyment.²

The main problem confronting the IRA's then Chief of Staff, Cathal Goulding, in this situation was how to rebuild a measure of popular support for his organization so that it could again become effective. In the course of a search for new policies with more appeal to the younger generation he turned for assistance to a small circle of Marxist-oriented intellectuals, mostly centred around Trinity College, Dublin. As a result a network of study groups named "Wolfe Tone Societies" was before long established.

The name was taken from the late 18th century Irish nationalist leader who attempted to launch revolt in Ireland with the assistance of revolutionary France. Veteran left-wing members of the IRA and Sinn Fein

were asked to address these groups on the theme of how Marxist and traditional nationalist policies could be combined in the future.

'THE STAGES PLAN'

An indication of the radical policy changes those in command of the IRA and Sinn Fein were now planning came from an "IRA discussion document" which fell into the hands of the RUC. This advised that a whole series of what in effect would be IRA/Sinn Fein front organizations should be set up to engage in agitation around such issues as pay demands, improved education services, and better housing. It was to be explained to recruits that in future armed action would take second place to the use of political action legally initiated.

Policies now put forward included two other radical departures from IRA tradition. The first of these was the decision that Sinn Fein candidates should stand at parliamentary elections in both Northern and Southern Ireland. The second was the introduction of a so-called "Stages Plan". Under this after a period of political agitation in both the North and the South, (with emphasis in the former being placed upon the establishment of 'civil rights' for the Catholic population) efforts would be made to bring about the unity of both Northern and Southern 'proletariat', Catholics and Protestants alike, in a common bond of opposition to their respective governments.

In the third and final stage co-ordinated militant action would take place throughout the island, with the aim of destroying the capitalist system within it and establishing a 'socialist' government for a united Ireland. All these proposals were to become the centre of disputes within the IRA that eventually resulted in the emergence of the Provisional Sinn Fein and IRA.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MARCHES AND PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY.

Gerry Adams has claimed that Sinn Fein and the IRA did not, as is sometimes said, merely infiltrate the Civil Rights marches in Northern Ireland which took place at the end of the 1960's, but were active participants in them from the very beginning.

The main element amongst the ranks of the marchers, however, whose militant behaviour assisted in transforming these occasions from peaceful demonstrations into the very violent clashes they often became were members of a small but for a time very active group known as "Peoples Democracy" (PD). This was formed in October 1967 by activists from a number of extreme left-wing groups and its committee was described by its leader Bernadette Devlin (now Mrs McAliskey) later as "the weirdest looking bunch of people you ever saw". To a large extent People's Democracy was student based and its tactics were evolved from those in general use in the tide of revolutionary student activity then sweeping much of the Western world.

The group announced its aim as being the establishment of a Workers' Socialist Republic throughout Ireland. The report of one official enquiry into the disturbances associated with the civil rights marching period described PD as a small but tightly knit group whose frankly admitted intentions were to use the Civil Rights movement for their own purposes, and who were prepared and ready, when and where it suited them, to invoke violence. The report also found that PD represented a threat to the stability and existence of the Northern Ireland constitution.

THE 'OFFICIAL-PROVISIONAL' SPLIT

The increasing disagreements within the ranks of the IRA over the new policies put forward by its leaders finally came to a head not long after the start of the continuing 'armed struggle' and resulted in the emergence of the Provisional IRA. The final break between those who formed the latter faction and those who supported the Official IRA leadership headed by Cathal Goulding came at the annual congresses of IRA and Sinn Fein in 1970.

The split has often been portrayed as being principally the result of ideological disagreements between the left-wing of the movement (as represented by the Goulding leadership) and the right-wing traditional nationalists. Some of the latter did object to the leadership's proposal for the movement to join a 'National Liberation Front' which seemed likely to be dominated by Marxist elements. It would seem, however, that the objection of most younger and more radically minded IRA and Sinn Fein members to the leadership's proposals came not nearly so much because of their Marxist flavour, but because these plans emphasized the importance of political rather than armed action and, as in the case of the 'Stages Plan', aimed at too distant goals.

There was also a suspicion amongst many such members that Cathal Goulding and his colleagues lacked determination to pursue the 'armed struggle', and intended as soon as possible to abandon it and in conjunction with various other small groups, including the Communist Party of Ireland, pursue a purely political and non-violent campaign. (This suspicion was largely born out two years later.) The fact that the leadership's policies seemed to be leading towards the adoption of an orthodox communist philosophy also offended those who found themselves much more in sympathy with a type of Trotskyist influenced extreme 'revolutionary socialism'.

In addition Sean Macstiofain, the Provisionals' first chief of Staff, has pointed out that the ideological disagreement between Marxist orientated members and others was only one cause of the split which also came about from four other equally important reasons. Namely, disagreements over whether or not Sinn Fein candidates should stand at parliamentary and local elections (a plan which those who were to become the Provisionals then opposed); the strategy to be followed by the IRA in the 'armed struggle'; the maintenance of discipline in the movement; and whether to call for the abolition or retention of Stormont.

Explaining the Official-Provisional split some time later in the light of subsequent events, the author of an article in the *New Statesman* said that it had been widely assumed that:

"The 1970 split at long last separated the right from the left. It did nothing of the kind. Many left-wingers who might have been expected to support the 'Officials' in fact joined the Provisionals believing that the new departure (Official IRA policy) would alienate mass support, and that recognition of 'partition parliaments' involved an unacceptable compromise with the institutions of both British and Irish capitalism. This was if anything, an ultra-left rather than a right-wing posture."³

The same article reminded its readers that from the first the Provisionals' Social and Economic Programme began with the statement that the movement not only advocated the complete overthrow of English rule in Ireland, but also the establishment of a 'Democratic Socialist Republic'.

'OFFICIALS INTO WORKER'S PARTY'

Early in 1972 the Official IRA issued a statement which showed very clearly just how far that particular segment of the Republican movement had moved from its traditional stance. This statement read:

"We are not a Catholic organization. We never said we were. If there is anyone in the community who has been giving us support in the belief that we are some sort of militant Catholic nationalist organization, then let them withdraw their support now. We are nothing of the sort. We are out to build a revolutionary socialist party of the Irish working class."⁴

Not very many weeks afterwards the 'Officials', increasingly haunted by the thought that the Provisionals' use of indiscriminate terrorism was ruining any chances of building the 'revolutionary unity' between Protestant and Catholic workers they sought to create, and fearful that 'the armed struggle' might turn into another fiasco like the border campaign, ceased support for further armed action (except for what were termed "defensive actions").

This decision embarked the movement upon a road that was to take it into a loose political alliance with the Communist Party of Ireland and an extreme-left faction of the Irish Labour Party.

In 1977 the movement adopted the name of Sinn Fein The Workers' Party (in the North Sinn Fein Republican Clubs). It renounced any thought of further armed action and denied any continuing connection with any armed group. This new party has subsequently pursued a policy generally similar to the "Stages Plan" put forward by Official Sinn Fein at the end of the 1960's, and consisting of political agitation in both the South and North of the country. This centres around ordinary domestic issues with Irish Unity presented only as a distant goal. Agitation in the North has been particularly aimed at the Protestant community.

“THE HEIRS OF CONNOLLY”

For some time after their emergence the Provisionals concentrated almost entirely upon pursuing the ‘armed struggle’ with little attention paid to the formulation of political policy, or the effective use of propaganda. But before very long the ‘young guard’ of the movement, typified by such figures as Gerry Adams, started to make known their concern over this lack of political policy apart from the demand for British withdrawal and abolition of the border.

Accordingly a period of intense discussion and political education commenced amongst leading members of the movement. Much of this took place inside internment centres and prisons. A Provisional IRA member recalled much later that those taking part in these discussions never suffered from any shortage of helpful reading material which might assist them plan the movement’s future. He explained that:

“We had books on all political struggles throughout the world. We had Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, James Connolly, Regis Debray. We certainly educated ourselves and educated around us our comrades.”⁵

It was after this period of discussion and education that the direction the Provisionals were taking in their political orientation became progressively clearer. By the summer of 1977 one who signed himself “Disgusted Student” was writing to the Provisional publication *An Phoblacht* complaining that it sickened him to see Republicanism mentioned in the context of Karl Marx’s writings, “a man who believed neither in God nor in nationalism”. The writer also said that he saw it as serving no useful purpose to compare Republican beliefs with those of Lenin. “Whose followers torture and crucify, daily, people who dare to express differences of opinion.”

Not very long afterwards *An Phoblacht*, in what was clearly intended to be a reply to such questioning, published a contribution by one of the Provisionals’ leading political theoreticians. In this it was stated that although the movement was not either Marxist or communist it “accepted the genius of Marx” and believed that there was “much of value in the Marxist tradition”. “Largely”, it continued, “we would accept Marx’s interpretation of the historical development of mankind”.⁶

Some leading Provisional spokesmen now began to speak of certain Marxist-inclined regimes in the Third World as being of the same general character as the Democratic Socialist Republic they openly announced to be their aim for a United Ireland. Whilst Stalinist policies and theories would not be considered suitable for the latter it was thought that much might be learnt from countries such as Allende’s Chile.

As the 1970’s drew to a close the emerging Provisional ‘prospectus’ was set out in considerable detail at one of the most important events of the Irish Republican calendar, the Bodenstown Commemoration Ceremony. On the 1979 occasion that by then rapidly rising Provisional Sinn Fein star Gerry Adams announced that the tasks the movement had set itself were

too complex to be satisfied merely by a British withdrawal, or by the establishment of a United Ireland in the form of a “32 county neo-colonial Free State”. “We are not” he explained, “merely a Brits out movement”. He went on: “We stand opposed to all forms and all manifestations of imperialism and capitalism. We stand for an Ireland free, united, socialist and Gaelic”. In the same speech he also stressed the need for building an “agitational struggle in the 26 counties, an economic resistance movement”, which would form a link between Republicans and “other sections of the working class in order to develop revolutionary politics and to build an alternative to so-called constitutional politics”.⁷

THE 1980’s

By 1981 the leftwards direction of Sinn Fein policy had become so apparent that the author of one article in *Magill* felt justified in writing that although Provisional Sinn Fein would abjure the characterization Marxist for “reasons of diplomacy” that in fact was what it had become. Its leaders analysed the situation in Northern Ireland in terms of economic and national exploitation, he wrote, and their rhetoric was “laced with reference to class conflicts”.

The extent of the changes that had taken place in the Provisional movement over the 13 years of its existence became clearer than ever before in 1983, the year that saw Gerry Adams elected as President of Sinn Fein. In an interview in the magazine *Tribune* in August that year the latter remarked that “in Ireland the nationalist and socialist dimension are two sides of one coin”. However the creation of a “socialist society” could only come after the achievement of “national independence”.

Reporting upon the Sinn Fein annual conference that followed in November, one far-left British journal stated:

“Issues however, were clear, was Sinn Fein to re-adopt the traditional vision of a decentralized federal Ireland or go further along the road to a Democratic Socialist Republic, Conference decisively chose the latter ... it used the opportunity to chart the objectives of the party along the lines of “Socialist Republican” rather than “Christian principles”.⁸

That such changes were not confined only to the political wing of the movement was also demonstrated when Tim Pat Coogan reported the following year that an IRA leader had told him on leaving prison that:

“... they found it nearly impossible in jails and camps nowadays to interest the young volunteers in traditionalist Republican indoctrination. Today a diet of socialism and Marxism is required”.⁹

FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

In his book *Politics of Freedom*, published in 1986, Gerry Adams concludes that whilst in the past the Republican movement merely had some radical tendencies, now for the first time a radical tendency was in control of the movement. A very important historic task, he expressed his

belief, had been accomplished in bringing this change about.

An important priority now, Sinn Fein's leader declared, was to extend the 'political struggle' to the whole of Ireland. With the ultimate aim of preparing for the launching of a "social revolution" covering the whole of the island's 32 counties, once a British withdrawal from the North had been enforced. The fact that methods of 'armed struggle' would be unlikely to obtain popular support in the South after such a withdrawal meant that this revolution would have to be planned to achieve its aims by means of political agitation alone.

The importance of the changes that had come about in the general outlook and aims of the IRA and Sinn Fein during the last five or six years were again stressed early in 1988 by Martin McGuinness, Deputy President of Sinn Fein. Speaking to a representative of the journal of the London based Revolutionary Communist Group, one of the most ardent bodies supporting Irish nationalist extremism on the British mainland, he said that there was now a very definite realization that Sinn Fein must not just be a 'Brits out' party, but that it must be a socialist movement. It was the duty of the leadership which was now in control to "make socialism in Ireland relevant". This had to be done even if it meant shedding some members of the movement who had been faithful to it for a long time, and could not grasp that life in Ireland in 1988 was no longer the same as it had been in previous decades.

The movement was trying to educate people in a "socialist philosophy" in the North, whilst at the same time attempting to achieve the major task of firmly establishing the party in the South. This it intended to do not only over the partition issue but also over such "bread and butter issues" as unemployment, bad housing, poverty, and capitalism.

THE PROBABLE SHAPE OF SINN FEIN'S IRELAND.

Sinn Fein leaders have also made it clear that the United Ireland Democratic Socialist Republic which it is their ultimate aim to establish would be of a type of 'socialism' having little in common with policies advocated by the present leadership of the British Labour Party, or major socialist parties to be found anywhere else in Western Europe. Instead it seems probable that it would be of a type having much more in common with the more extreme leftwards-leaning and Marxist inclined Third World countries.

Its general attitude towards the outside world would seem, from all that has been said and written, to be one of general opposition to so-called 'capitalist exploitation' and the alleged 'imperialism' of the Western powers. Whilst claiming a neutral position in the rivalry between the Eastern and Western power blocs it would apparently be generally supportive of all forces fighting for 'national liberation' and other left-wing revolutionary causes. It would be likely to be sympathetic to elements wishing to introduce 'real socialism' into the rest of the British Isles, and to

nationalism in Wales and Scotland, and other, in particular Celtic, areas of Western Europe.

At home there would be a large measure of state control of the economy and natural resources. An Ireland led by Sinn Fein would be a secular state with the role of the church strictly limited to spiritual affairs.

THE IRISH NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY.

In the late summer and early autumn of 1988 a series of sporadic terrorist attacks in Northern Ireland made it apparent that elements of the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), a movement which had been quiescent for some time were again becoming active.

The extreme left-wing Irish National Liberation Army originated as a splinter group of the Official IRA in 1974. It was founded by the late Seamus Costello, an IRA veteran, senior 'Official' operations officer, and ardent admirer of James Connolly. Its immediate aim was to gain outright Marxist control over the extremist Republican armed and political campaign at a time when the Official IRA was dropping out of the "armed struggle". One of its spokesmen later described the aim of forcing a British withdrawal from the Province as being but the: "first stage in the process for establishing a 32-county socialist state".

Although always smaller than the Provisional IRA it demonstrated considerable technical proficiency in the use of terrorist tactics and amassed a formidable armoury, probably mainly from Middle Eastern sources. Costello was shot in 1977 in the course of a feud between the movement and the Officials. Two years later INLA was responsible for the murder of the Conservative Party's shadow spokesman on Irish Affairs, Airy Neave M.P. at the House of Commons. It continued to carry out a series of attacks, including one on the School of Infantry on Salisbury Plain, up to the mid-1980's. It then however appeared to dissolve into several feuding factions. This feuding resulting in the death of at least nine persons.

The more recent attacks mentioned have been carried out in the name of two separate factions in the movement. One using the name of the Irish People's Liberation Organisation and the other that of INLA itself.

In its early days INLA claimed to be the armed wing of the Marxist-orientated Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), but the party always denied any such connection.



PART TWO

Mainland Groups Campaigning for British Withdrawal

THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT

"No Irish Revolutionist," wrote James Connolly, "worth his salt would refuse to lend a hand to the Social Democracy of England in the effort to uproot the social system of which the British Empire is the crown and apex, and in like manner no English Social Democrat fails to recognise clearly that the crash which would betoken the fall of the ruling classes in Ireland would sound the tocsin for the revolt of the disinherited in England".

At the time of the outbreak of the present troubles in Northern Ireland, organizations of the revolutionary left on the British mainland had been greatly encouraged by the wave of largely student-based unrest which at the same time was then sweeping continental Europe, and the highlight of which was the student revolt in Paris in May 1968. This latter these groups saw as a signal that even the governments of major Western capitalist states could be made vulnerable to "mass action" by 'the people'. The increasingly serious disorders which broke out in Northern Ireland the same year encouraged many of their members to believe that a 'revolutionary situation' was even now developing on their very doorstep. In these circumstances Connolly's words above suddenly seemed to have become unexpectedly relevant.

From the earliest months of its appearance on the rapidly darkening Northern Irish scene (at the end of the 1960's) the militant group People's Democracy, which made no secret of its own extreme aims, received important propaganda and other aid from groups of the mainland revolutionary left. At the same time, a vigorous campaign opposing British Government policy and demanding Britain's withdrawal from Northern Ireland started on the mainland. This involved many mass demonstrations in which groups of the revolutionary left took a prominent part.

Throughout the last 20 years Ireland has continued to play an important part in the campaigns of such elements. Today only rarely do the journals of some 10 small but active Trotskyist and 'revolutionary socialist' groups appear without including some attack upon British Government in Northern Ireland or upon the conduct of the security services, and calling for the ending of British rule in the province. In general the violence of the IRA is only criticized on tactical grounds. As when heavy civilian casualties caused by its attacks seems likely to result in "loss of working class support" for the Republican cause.

The support of mainland revolutionaries for this cause is far from entirely altruistic. For many of them frequently voice the belief that the 'struggle in Ireland' holds within it also the "key to the British revolution", a concept based upon the theory shared by both Marx and Lenin. Both of whom held that the establishment of a revolutionary state in Ireland would inevitably provide a powerful stimulus for the abolition of the capitalist system in the remainder of the United Kingdom.

DIFFERENT FRONTS, THE SAME ENEMY

Over the last few years a number of efforts have been made by leaders of militant ultra-left groups on the British mainland and Sinn Fein members and other extremist Irish Republicans to equate the alleged "oppression" suffered by the population of Republican areas in Northern Ireland with that of the lot of certain sections of the population on the mainland. In particular with members of ethnic minorities, other sections of the inhabitants of inner cities, trade union militants, etc. The aim is to form active links between those thought to be discontented or aggrieved on both sides of the Irish Channel.

This tendency first became apparent during the miners strike of 1984, when on a number of occasions extremist Irish Republican speakers made their appearance at meetings held by miners' support groups and revolutionary organizations. These speakers were presented to the audience as "fighting the same enemy" as the latter (i.e. the British Government) "but on a different front". More recently the same description has been given to Sinn Fein speakers appearing at meetings with coloured immigrant groups in a number of British cities.

Some of the engagements fulfilled by a delegation of Sinn Fein Councillors who visited England in late 1986 were interesting in this respect. They included visits to the Black Community Centre in Manchester, an Asian project named 'Red Star' in the same city and various black groups in Moss Side. They also visited the Indian Workers' Association Centre in Birmingham, black activists in Leicester and a black women's group in Leeds, the Black Workers' Group in Camden and Asian groups in Newham. Members of the delegation were also taken on a tour of the Broadwater Farm Estate, scene of the major riots of the autumn of 1985.

Some delegations of militant black organizations have also accom-

panied delegations visiting Northern Ireland. During one of these visits "Irish Freedom Fighters" were presented by a spokesman of the Black Liberation Front, a neo-Marxist organization with branches in London and several other cities, with a message of solidarity and support against: "our common enemy: the capitalist state of the ruling class".

A number of weekend visits are also said to have been organized by a body known as "The Black Delegation to the Irish Community". The chairman of the Equal Opportunities Committee of one London Borough reported to be involved in planning such visits has been quoted as saying that as Black people in England had to "face racialism" every day and people in Belfast were faced with "British neo-colonialism"; they shared much in common and consequently wanted to seek out ways of working closer together

In January 1988 it was announced that a special organization named the Black and Green Committee had been formed to organize meetings between Irish Republican groups and Black organizations on the British mainland. It also planned to co-ordinate demonstrations in support of Sinn Fein in Black areas and to raise funds.

SPECIAL ISSUE GROUPS

Over the years a number of radical groups have been formed to campaign for British withdrawal from Northern Ireland and British Government policy in that province. These include:

The Troops Out Movement. Founded in the early 1970's and the most extreme of the groups involved and claims to have some 50 branches in cities throughout Britain, including ten in London. It has been responsible for organizing a large number of demonstrations calling for British withdrawal in which it has drawn considerable support from groups of the revolutionary left.

Its journal *Troops Out* not only demands immediate British withdrawal but also campaigns against the so-called excesses of 'Western Imperialism' in general. Recent issues have linked the grievances of Republicans in Ireland with those of Palestinians and Aborigines in Australia under the heading of "International struggle for self-determination".

Its pages have also been used to advertise a panel exhibition available for hire entitled "Ireland-South-Africa One Struggle" which it is claimed illustrates striking similarities between "the colonial histories" of both countries. *Troops Out* also devotes considerable space to attempts to link opponents of the British Government both on the mainland and in Ireland and to report on such events as a meeting held in Tottenham to examine the alleged parallels between the claimed 'frame ups' of Irish people and persons sentenced for participation in the Broadwater Farm Riots.

In October 1988 the troops out movement planned to launch a special planned campaign of action which would run through to August 1989, the anniversary of the start of the deployment of British troops in the present Irish troubles. The aim of the campaign is "to build local and widespread

support for British withdrawal from Ireland".

Amongst other groups campaigning against government policy are:- **The Campaign for Civil Rights in Ireland, The Plastic Bullets Campaign, The Campaign against Strip Searches, Students Against Repression in Ireland, Information on Ireland.** During the autumn of 1987 the plastic bullet campaign organized a European tour to "increase awareness of the damage caused by plastic bullets in Northern Ireland". The party visited Italy, France, Holland, Norway and Sweden. As well as special literature it carried with it a specially made video film "Plastic Bullets, The Deadly Truth" translated into several different languages.

At the present time two pressure groups exist designed to attract support from members of the Labour Party and to influence the leadership of the party into adopting a firm commitment for British withdrawal from Northern Ireland after a Labour Government gains power. The first of these is **The Labour Committee on Ireland**, which calls for the start of an immediate withdrawal after a Labour victory. Closely associated with this group is **Labour Women for Ireland.**

In 1987 the Labour Committee on Ireland began a campaign aimed at attempting to ensure that the question of British withdrawal and the creation of Irish Unity was placed in the forefront of Labour Party policy. Sinn Fein sent a message of greeting to a fringe meeting at the Labour Party Conference organized by Labour Women for Ireland. Also involved in sponsoring this meeting was the **Irish in Britain Representation Group** which makes the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act as they may affect Irish people living in mainland Britain its particular target.

Whilst special issue groups involved in the campaign for British withdrawal stop short of supporting the IRA's use of violence they usually adopt the attitude that its root cause lies in the continued presence of the British Army and administration. Only the removal of both, it is declared, and the bringing about of Irish unification will cause its cessation. Typical of this attitude were comments in an editorial in **Labour and Ireland** (a journal closely associated with The Labour Committee on Ireland) at the close of 1987:

"Enniskillen was a senseless tragedy which has been near universally condemned the British Government has cynically attempted to milk the deaths for every ounce of political advantage Future Enniskillens can only be prevented if Britain gets out of Ireland".

SINN FEIN'S FOREIGN LINKS

Provisional Sinn Fein established a "Foreign Affairs Bureau" in 1977 (although it had had some foreign links earlier). There has been a considerable flow of representatives from the Bureau on trips to form contacts in European and some Third World countries, as well of course to the United States, and to attend international conferences.

Sinn Fein's main contacts in Western Europe are chiefly with special support groups, mostly of ultra-left political complexion, concentrating upon the Irish question. The most important of these include:-

France

Comité Irlande. A Paris based organization with branches in several provincial towns. Its leading members have included Roger Faligot, a left-wing journalist who worked for a time as Irish correspondent of the French daily paper *Liberation* and is author of a number of books supporting the cause of Irish unification and attacking the British security forces. His other particular interest would seem to lie in attempting to "investigate" the activities of the Western nation's intelligence services.

Another radical journalist who has figured prominently in the group is Alain Frillet. Whilst a correspondent in Belfast in the late 1970's, he was arrested on charges of belonging to the IRA but jumped bail. In 1983 he was arrested for his part in an alleged plot to smuggle arms from France via Le Havre and sentenced to a year's imprisonment.

West Germany

The German-Ireland Solidarity Committee (WISK). One of the oldest of the support groups, having been formed in 1972. It has its headquarters in Oberursel near Frankfurt-am-Main. It is linked to several other German-Irish support groups, including the **Ireland Komitee West Berlin**. Another group, the **Solidarity Committee Ireland-Informationen** organized a speaking tour in conjunction with Sinn Fein's Foreign Affairs Bureau in 1986 for Sinn Fein's Publicity Officer, Danny Morrison.

Netherlands

Here the most prominent groups are the **Ierland Komitee Nederland (IKN)** and **The Ireland Information Centre**. One female member of the IKN was arrested on suspicion of having links with the **Irish National Liberation Army** while visiting Ireland with a group of radical feminists in 1980. Several other members are reported to have been involved in charges connected with the handling of explosives, etc.

Scandinavia

Support groups are small and usually connected with extreme left-wing political groups. In Norway Sinn Fein has had some contact with the **Socialistisk Venstreparti (SV)** or **Socialist Left**, a Euro Communist organization, and a Maoist group known as the **Workers' Communist Party**.

In April 1987 Gerry Adams visited Norway, Sweden, and Denmark on a speaking tour at the invitation of a number of ultra-left groups including the **Danish Ireland Committee** which is said to make support for the IRA's 'armed struggle' a condition of membership.

Although Sinn Fein has denied any connection with or sympathy for European terrorist groups such as the French **Action Direct**, or the West German **Red Army Faction**, an American journalist who visited Sinn Fein headquarters in 1982 reported being struck even then by the number of posters advertising the activities of foreign groups engaged in 'armed struggle'.

Contact between Sinn Fein and **Herri Bakasuna**, the political wing of the Basque **ETA** is said to have existed for a considerable number of years. Representatives of **Herri Bakasuna** are reported to have attended all Sinn Fein annual conferences between 1981 and 1987, as early as 1974 a spokesman of **ETA** was reported in the West German magazine *Der Spiegel* as saying that **ETA** had "good, very good relations with the IRA".

There have been many visits by Sinn Fein officials to Basque areas of Spain. Two more recent events held in Spain which reportedly attracted Sinn Fein participation were the "**Conference of Western European Stateless Nations**", held in Barcelona in the December of 1985. This was attended by representatives of 60 nationalist and other groups from 16 Western European countries. The conference was organized by CIEMEN, a nationalist group based in Catalonia. In the spring of 1987 a Sinn Fein representative was also said to be present at an "**International Convention for Peace and Sovereignty**" held in Guernica. Attendance at this included a large number of representatives from both inside and outside Europe.

During the last two years representatives from Sinn Fein were also reported to have taken part in two conferences in Greece. The first of these was organized by the **Greek Communist Party of the Interior (KKE-ES)**. Described by *An Phoblacht/Republican News* as a: "festival of left-wing political parties, anti-imperial groupings and colonised peoples involved in armed and political struggle across the world". It was attended by representatives of such movements as **The African National Congress of South Africa (ANC)**, **The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)** and groups in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Eritrea.

Two months later Sinn Fein representatives were again reported to have been in Greece. This time to attend a conference in Athens organized by the **Lelio Basso Foundation for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples**. This was attended by representatives of organizations in Greece, Algeria, Syria, Burkino Faso, Nicaragua, and Eritrea, and from the ANC and the PLO.

Contacts between Sinn Fein and the PLO are of long standing. Formal expression of support for the PLO has been a regular feature of Sinn Fein annual conferences. More recently the ANC has also become an object of similar expressions of affinity. Other armed groups which have featured as

objects of Sinn Fein sympathy have included: **Polisario, The Sandanistas, The Chilean MIR**, and insurgent forces in El Salvador.

In August 1982 Sinn Fein was represented at an international conference organized by the **Consulta di i Cumitati Nazionalisti (CCN)**, the political wing of the Corsican terrorist nationalists. (Front de Liberation de la Corse).

THE SOVIET ATTITUDE

An interesting recently published report¹⁰ has indicated that despite the advent of the Gorbachev era there had by early 1988 been little significant change observable in the markedly equivocal attitude demonstrated by the Soviet propaganda machine towards the troubles in Northern Ireland ever since their outbreak.

In general the line has been to place virtually all the blame for the violence on the policies of the British Government and accusing its security forces of brutal behaviour, whilst at the same time usually avoiding outright overt approval of acts of terrorism. Some acts of terrorism involving the deaths of civilians have been attacked by Moscow Radio. Such criticism, however, has almost always been accompanied by the proviso that the real culprit is the British Government or British Army. Thus the massacre of civilians at Enniskillen was described by Moscow Radio's foreign news service as a "barbaric act", but it was also held to be the consequence of the British Forces alleged "shoot to kill policy", described by Moscow as a known fact.

Despite the fact that the use of terrorism of the type used by the Provisional IRA was condemned by Lenin as merely "playing at revolution", the IRA has on occasion been portrayed as "freedom fighters" defending an oppressed population by Moscow Radio.

Most expression of Soviet support has been reserved for, in the first place, the Official IRA and Official Sinn Fein and subsequently their descendants The Workers Party, whose policies have continued to follow the type of orthodox Marxist line most likely to win Soviet approval. Diplomats from the USSR's Dublin Embassy have been noticed paying considerable attention to representatives of the Workers' Party at diplomatic receptions. The steady turn to the left in the Provisional's political direction in recent years has, nevertheless, apparently caused Moscow to look on them with a more friendly eye than in the past.

Whilst the Soviet Government has been obviously cautious in opening itself to accusations of actually encouraging the use of terrorism in the territory of one of the leading Western powers, various international bodies long alleged to be under Soviet Bloc and Western ultra-left domination have a somewhat less inhibited record. As early as 1972, for instance, one of the most prominent of these bodies, the World Peace Council (WPC) started to organize such functions as 'days of international solidarity with the Northern Ireland people struggling for their rights and independence'. It

has continued in a pattern of the same kind of activity, making frequent accusations of British 'military oppression' and abuse of human rights. In the summer of 1987 it lodged complaints against British policy with the UN Commission on Human Rights.

Two bodies devoted to attempting to attract support from the younger generation, The World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) and The International Union of Students (IUS), are reported to have shown considerable sympathy for the IRA cause. Whilst their main contacts appear to have been with the Workers' Party they are also said to have had some contacts with younger members of Sinn Fein. Three Sinn Fein representatives are reported to have attended the World Youth Festival held in Moscow in 1987.

The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) which has its headquarters in Prague has issued a call to workers to "help smash England's hell-blocks, the prisons in Northern Ireland".

APPENDIX

NOTES ON 'THE LIBYAN CONNECTION'

The interception of the Panama-registered vessel "Eksund" carrying 120 tons of arms and ammunition apparently despatched from Libya for the use of the IRA in October 1987 marked the third proven incident of arms supply to the IRA involving Libyan sources. The first of these occurred in March 1973 when the Cypriot vessel "Claudia" was intercepted by the Irish Navy off the Irish coast and found to have on board 5 tons of Soviet made small arms and eight Irishmen, including Joe Cahill, former commander of the IRA's Belfast Brigade. The ship's West German owner and others later supplied evidence that the arms had been put aboard by members of the Libyan Army.

After a Provisional IRA bomb explosion at the boat show at the Olympia Exhibition Hall, London, in 1976 the Libyan paper *al-Fajr al-Jadid* claimed that the bombs which were "convulsing Britain and breaking its spirit" were "the bombs of the Libyan People". It explained that: "we have sent them to Irish revolutionaries so that the British will pay the price for their past deeds". After an Irish Parliamentary delegation visited Libya in the mid-1970's to make clear that the Republic had no wish to see Irish unification brought about by force, Libya seems to have ceased to be a source of arms supply for the IRA for some years.

Expressions of support for the IRA by Colonel Qadhafi, however, were quite quickly resumed. He told *Time* magazine in 1979, for instance, that he did not regard the latter as a terrorist organization. Very considerable sums of money may also have been provided during this period for the use of Irish Republicans extremists.

After Britain broke off diplomatic relations with Libya in 1984 following the shooting of a policewoman outside the Libyan Embassy in London a number of Libyan threats to retaliate, by supporting the IRA followed. That these had substance was indicated early in 1986 when police in the Irish Republic discovered two large caches of arms, one in County Sligo and the other in County Roscommon. These arms included 90 AK 47 automatic assault rifles of East German and Rumanian origin and a large amount of ammunition produced in Yugoslavia for the Libyan Army. The crates containing the arms were clearly marked 'Libyan Armed Forces'.

In the summer of the same year the government of the Irish Republic protested to the Libyan Government over reports that the latter intended to resume financial aid to the IRA. The Republic's then Foreign Minister Mr Barry described the IRA as: "the enemy of the Irish State and of the democratically elected institutions of this state". Despite this protest Colonel Qadhafi in the course of an interview on television which appeared only three months later, described the cause of the IRA as "just" and urged young people in both parts of Ireland to take part in "the struggle for liberation".

Early in 1987 the Libyan leader was quoted as saying that he had stepped up arms supplies to the IRA in retaliation for Britain's involvement for the U.S. air raid on Tripoli. That spring two senior members of Sinn Fein were reported to have visited Libya at the time of the anniversary of the raid. In October Sinn Fein representatives were also present at a special reception held in Dublin by Libyan, Palestinian, and other Arab students to mark the anniversary of Libya's independence.

Three members of the crew found aboard the "Eksund" were subsequently found to be members of the IRA. They included Gabriel Clery, said to be head of the IRA's Engineering Department. The massive amount of arms aboard (amounting to approximately 30 truckloads) included a large number of AK.47 rifles, some rocket propelled grenade launchers, machine guns, explosives, and detonators. Of particular concern to the security authorities was the discovery of a number of Soviet-made SAM-7 ground-to-air missiles, a type of weapon which the IRA is known to have been making particularly strenuous efforts to acquire over a long period, in order to have the capacity to carry out attacks on British Army helicopters in Northern Ireland.

French authorities responsible for the seizure and examination of the "Eksund" have estimated the total value of its cargo at approximately \$50 million. It is not thought likely that the IRA would have been able to pay anything like that amount. If the consignment was a Libyan gift it would seem a particularly striking illustration of the strength of Colonel Qadhafi's commitment to support the IRA, bearing in mind the fact that Libya's main source of income, oil revenues, dwindled in 1987 from some \$20 billion to around \$4 billion a year.

Both British and Southern Irish specialists have been reported to believe that three other consignments of arms supplied by Libya, quite pro-

bably of much the same size, were safely landed in Ireland during the years 1985 and 1986.

A very formidable armoury indeed to be put into the hands of a force which probably does not number more than 300-400 active members.

SOUTHERN GOVERNMENT CONCERN

Despite the fact that the IRA has stated that it has no intention of carrying out attacks in the Irish Republic, the apparent arrival of such very large quantities of arms in the hands of an illegal revolutionary organization largely based within its own territory is clearly as much a matter for concern by the Dublin as by the British Government. This concern would seem likely to be all the greater in view of the fact that for economy reasons the manpower levels of the Republic's forces have been allowed to fall very considerably below establishment within the last two or three years. With defence expenditure due to fall by another 6.5% in real terms in 1988-89, the prospects for these forces fully making up their strength or obtaining sufficient much needed new equipment in the foreseeable future, would currently seem remote.

NOTES

1. Tim Pat Coogan, *The IRA*, Fontana Books Ltd., Ninth Impression, London 1984. pp.125-126.
2. Gerry Adams, *The Politics of Irish Freedom*, Brandon Book Publishers, Dingle, Co Kerry, 1986. pp.15 & 29.
3. *New Statesman*, 19 November 1972.
4. Quoted by Kevin Kelly, *The Longest War*, Zed Books, London, 1982. p.177.
5. *Panorama*, BBC Television, 9 August 1982.
6. *An Phoblacht*, 3 July 1977.
7. Quoted by Kevin Kelly, *The Longest War*, Zed Books Ltd., London, 1982. p.303.
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9. Tim Pat Coogan, *The IRA*, Fontana Books Ltd., Ninth Impression, London, 1984. p.544.
10. *The Foreign Friends of the IRA*, Common Cause Report No.5, May 1988.



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