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Ireland in Rebellion

by
Gerry Foley

Including Interviews with Cathal Goulding,
Chief of Staff, Irish Republican Army, and
Tomas Mac Giolla, President, Sinn Féin



Introduction

In Derry City on August 12, 1970, I watched young Irish boys and girls—some of them certainly no more than eleven or twelve years old—fighting the British troops who have ringed the nationalist ghetto since the explosions of 1969. All around the area there were barbed-wire barriers and sandbagged emplacements, sentry posts, and tanks. Hundreds of troops in ponderous battle dress and carrying heavy weapons were drawn up in ranks blocking the main street out of the ghetto. Giant searchlights stabbed into the crowd of youths. Gas grenades exploded here and there ineffectively, the fumes blown away by the wind. Again and again the youth charged the military lines with seeming fearlessness, heaving rocks right into the facial armor of the troops.

Looming over the battleground of half-demolished slums was the medieval wall that surrounds the center of Derry, carefully preserved for centuries as a symbol of British dominance. Barbed wire was strung along the old battlements of the wall and reinforced sentry posts were spotted along it.

Three centuries ago this wall was built to protect a British commercial settlement from the dispossessed Celtic tribesmen of the area, the ancestors of the youths I was watching fight the British troops. The wall is a low and unimpressive structure compared with the relics of other feudal walled towns. It was not built to withstand feudal or bourgeois-feudal armies but tribal levies. It was meant to defend the British invaders and settlers against a people who were not organized to wage warfare on a large scale or in a sustained way; who were backward in the culture of killing, destruction, and oppression; who had no regular army—no state; who lived in a society based essentially on communal landholding and without social classes as we know them.

Three hundred years later the wall around Derry was again under siege.

At one point in the skirmish, the youths began to sing the national anthem of the Irish Republic: "In valley green or towering crag, our fathers fought before us, and conquered 'neath the same old flag that's proudly floating o'er us. We're children of a fighting race that never yet has known disgrace. And as we march the foe to face, we'll chant a soldier's song. . . . Our camp fires now are burning low; see in the east of a silv'ry glow, out yonder waits the Saxon foe."

Centuries ago the ancestors of these youths fought against a bourgeois society planted in their midst by foreign conquest and genocide. Taking various and widely differing forms, in essence this struggle has never ceased. It is probably the oldest continuous struggle against oppression in the history of mankind. For

Gerry Foley became a supporter of the Celtic nationalist movements at the age of fourteen, learning all the Celtic languages. He joined the Young Socialist Alliance in 1961. Since 1966, he has been a writer for *Intercontinental Press*, a weekly international Marxist news service.

In the summer of 1970, Foley spent a month in Ireland and obtained a series of interviews from revolutionary nationalist leaders, including Cathal Goulding, the man known as chief of staff of the Irish Republican Army, and Tomás Mac Giolla, the president of Sinn Féin, the political arm of the republican movement.

The essay by Gerry Foley and his interviews with Goulding and Mac Giolla all appeared in *Intercontinental Press* in 1970 on July 27, September 14, and November 16 respectively, copyright © 1970, and are reprinted by permission.

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leadership, these oppressed descendants of free clansmen now looked to socialists like Bernadette Devlin and the revolutionary nationalists of the Irish Republican Army, who oppose class society not just in Ireland but throughout the world.

As I watched these thin, small slum youngsters standing their ground against charge after charge by heavily armed soldiers, never breaking, always reforming their line and resuming the attack with a kind of joyfulness, I remembered what Friedrich Engels, one of the fathers of scientific socialism, said about the Irish of his day:

"What people. They haven't a penny to lose, more than half of them have not a shirt to their back, they are real proletarians and sansculottes—and Irish besides—wild, ungovernable, fanatical Gaels. Nobody knows what the Irish are like unless he has seen them. If I had two hundred thousand Irish, I could overthrow the whole British Monarchy."

Despite the antiquity of the struggle against oppression in Ireland, it seems to reemerge with greater power every time the status quo in the world is shaken. The wave of revolutions touched off by World War I began in Dublin in 1916. It was organized by a revolutionary organization founded fifty-nine years before, when the power of the British empire seemed unassailable—the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Ireland, England's oldest colony, was the first in modern times to defeat British imperialism in armed conflict.

Less than a year after Western Europe's first revolutionary crisis since World War II, May-June 1968 in France, the nationalist ghettos of Northern Ireland exploded in rebellion. But in Ireland the rebellion did not recede. For more than two years the people of the nationalist ghettos have gone into the streets again and again to fight the British troops and pro-imperialist forces. In the battles across Northern Ireland on August 9, 1971, which were provoked by the arbitrary jailing of hundreds of nationalist, democratic, and socialist fighters, the oppressed people of Northern Ireland showed that their fighting capacity has not only remained intact but is on the rise.

Slowly, but surely, the militancy of the nationalist ghettos in the British fortress state of Northern Ireland seems to be preparing the way for a new and decisive battle against British imperialism, which, in today's context, would threaten to set off powerful explosions in the heartland of the imperialist world. At the very least, it would be likely to destroy forever the stability of the United Kingdom, which has been the most stable and peaceful of all capitalist countries. This battle might, in fact, be the first of the series of revolutions that will end the reign of capitalism—"the English system" as John Mitchel, the fiercest of the Irish rebels of 1848, called it.

G. F.

Why Socialism Is Coming to the Fore in Ireland

By Gerry Foley

The present conflict in Ireland has its roots in the final wars of the English conquest in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Although English involvement in Ireland began very early, feudal England was unable to subdue the country effectively. Only the incipient bourgeois system of the Tudor absolute monarchy and the revolutionary bourgeois dictatorship of Cromwell were able to marshal the resources to extirpate the decayed but persistent Irish tribal system. The ideology of these regimes took a religious form—Protestantism.

In order to uproot the last vestiges of tribalism in Ireland, the English bourgeois regimes had to wage virtual genocide. Crimes of such magnitude required a religious justification. The native population was massacred and driven off its land in the name of Protestantism. They were regarded as "heathen Canaanites."

Protestant colonies, loyal to the English crown both because of their religion and their social and economic character, were planted on confiscated lands. The purpose of these colonies was to guarantee the pacification and economic transformation of the country.

The largest Protestant colony was planted in the northern part of Ireland, where the resistance of the chiefs had been strongest. The descendants of these settlers form the basic stock of the Unionist population of Northern Ireland, which represents the largest area in the country where a safe Protestant majority can be assembled. It is impossible, however, to create any viable enclave that would not contain a substantial minority of Catholics.

The only institution in any way representing the native population that survived the conquest was the Catholic church. Even the language of the conquered people, and the traditions and mentality it expressed, began to recede quickly after the last wars of the seventeenth century.

The only potential allies of the despoiled people were the reactionary Catholic powers of Europe, and it was primarily to these countries that ambitious Irishmen looked for careers.

Irish priests and the sprinkling of Catholics that escaped serfdom were educated in Europe in the spirit of the counterreformation. In this way, the doubly oppressed, uprooted Catholic population became the prisoners of a reactionary ideology and leadership in complete contradiction to their real needs.

The clergy and the weak privileged layers of the Catholic population wanted nothing of the deepgoing social revolution that would be required to eliminate the effects of the conquest and to restore the Irish nation. Their objective was to use the Catholic community as a base for improving their situation within the British system. They sought varying measures of home rule at different times in order to win government patronage and increase the careers open to them.

Out of this intermediate position of the Catholic leadership a kind of communalism developed. Although in deference to the aspirations of the Catholic peasantry this communalism had some superficial nationalist trappings, it differed from true nationalism in that its objective was not to unite and free Ireland but only to enhance the position of the Catholic community within an alien system.

Against Catholic communalism, a Protestant communalism emerged, based on direct association with British overlordship. Although based on an economically and socially more advanced community, Protestant communalism assumed a more reactionary character because of its dependence on British rule. It took on a racist-like virulence, despite the lack of any significant ethnic differences between the two religious communities as they exist now.

Radical separatism is endemic in the Catholic population, both because of its social position and its history. Every expression of this tendency comes into conflict with the communalist establishment, in particular with its ecclesiastic underpinning. As a result of this conflict and the fact that the major forms of private property originated in the conquest, radical separatism tends toward socialist revolution.

This revolutionary tendency has never become fully crystallized. The historic peasant character of the country, its isolation, the reactionary climate, the forced emigration of the most energetic elements of the population, and a hard crust of repression have prevented the emergence of a homogeneous and effective leadership which could give full expression to the underlying aspirations of the people. This tendency, however, is the most powerful force in Irish history and no development can be understood apart from it.

The Catholic communalist leadership has traditionally been most reactionary in Northern Ireland, where the presence of a large

Protestant population made the communal antagonism especially acute. The political instrument of the Catholic establishment in Northern Ireland is the Nationalist party, the last surviving remnant of the old Home Rule party that was wiped out in the rest of Ireland during the independence struggle of 1916-22.

The major political effect of the development of the civil-rights movement in Northern Ireland was the virtual destruction of the Nationalist party. Mobilized in a direct struggle for democratic rights, the masses of Catholics, especially the youth, moved toward radical leadership and threatened to break out of the old communalist framework.

The Nationalist party is an essential link in the communalist political structure that diverts and dissipates the energies of the Irish people. It is, in the existing system, the Northern satellite of Fianna Fáil.

The eclipse of the Nationalist party put the leadership of a sizable section of the Irish people into the hands of secular and radical forces for the first time since 1916 at least, and perhaps even since the revolution of 1798. If revolutionists could consolidate their position in this pivotal area, with an oppressed nationalist minority of more than 500,000 (Eire's population is under 3,000,000), it could expose the essentially antinational character of the Catholic establishment in Eire.

By mobilizing the masses of the oppressed population in action, revolutionists could wreck the balancing game of the communalists and open up the way for an all-Ireland struggle that could easily sweep away the weak, parasitic, provincial, and obscurantist Irish bourgeoisie (or petty bourgeoisie) and bring intolerable pressure to bear on the Unionist establishment and its British backers.

The introduction of British troops into Northern Ireland in August-September, ostensibly to defend the Catholic ghettos, limited the crisis of the neocolonialist system to some extent. It gave renewed credibility to the communalist tactic of maneuvering to win concessions from the British government. However, as guardians of the status quo, the troops have tended increasingly to come into conflict with the nationalist population, thus stepping up the pressure again on the Catholic establishment North and South.

The response of the Irish bourgeoisie, as a whole, to this situation was twofold. On the one hand, there were militant gestures by McAteer and Blaney. On the other, the Dublin regime and the northern nationalist spokesmen began to project the concept of a federal solution to the Irish question, a union of the two Irish states within the context of some sort of federation of the British isles. McAteer called it a "little United Nations of these islands."

While a federal union would probably be sweetened by some democratic reforms in the North and modernization in the South, it would have the effect of establishing direct control throughout

Ireland by the powerful British bourgeoisie. Of all the neocolonialist regimes that have emerged in this century, only Eire seems willing to abandon even formal sovereignty. This is the index of the weakness of the Irish "national bourgeoisie."

The betrayal of the aims of the 1916-22 independence struggle by the main bourgeois nationalist forces—consummated by the adoption of the clericalist constitution of 1937 in Eire—provided the basis for the maintenance of a radical nationalist movement of a very violent character and vague program—Irish republicanism.

Once the Irish bourgeoisie clearly and definitively abandoned all national aspirations, it was not clear what would become of this rear guard of the 1916-22 struggle.

Republicanism generally had a vaguely radical and populist character but at times attracted very right-wing elements. Its predominant themes were moralistic—loyalty to the republic proclaimed in 1916 and ratified by the revolutionary government of 1918, advocacy of violent struggle to complete the Irish national revolution, and willingness to sacrifice life and property to achieve this objective.

The republican movement played a special role in the life of the country. In the minds of a large part of the population, the republicans continued to represent the historic ideals and aspirations of Irish nationalism which the revolution had failed to achieve. They were the remnant "who have never submitted," the last incorruptible and uncompromising "soldiers of Ireland" in a nation whose life was dominated by disillusion, hypocrisy, and guilt.

Some Irish journalists have estimated that the republicans have the sympathy of up to 25 percent of the population. The hostility of nearly a quarter of the people to the foundations of the Irish state is an index of the latent crisis that has persisted in Ireland since 1922. However, while a considerable percentage of the people were unwilling to renounce the vision of the martyrs, they did not see clearly how these ideals could be achieved either. As a result, the support for the republicans became increasingly passive and sentimental in character. The existence of a romantic paramilitary organization may even have served, to some extent, as a safety valve for the national frustrations.

By the end of the 1950s, a series of unsuccessful attempts to resume armed struggle against British imperialism and an inability to combat the pseudo-nationalist, reformist demagoguery of Fianna Fáil and the Nationalist party had resulted in a serious decline and isolation of the republican movement.

The leadership of the republican movement realized that at this point their organizations needed to develop a program of social

action and a clearer political ideology in order to survive and renew itself. Anti-Communism began to be eliminated from the movement.

A certain convergence occurred, in fact, between Irish Stalinism and the republican movement. Fianna Fáil had dropped its last nationalist vestiges and was orienting toward the reincorporation of Eire in the United Kingdom, and thus inclusion in NATO and in the Common Market. Only the republicans still stood for the policy of economic independence and political neutrality desired by Kremlin diplomacy . . . for capitalist states.

The cooperation of the Irish Stalinists may have helped the republicans develop their program of social action. The ending of anti-Communism was certainly to the advantage of any movement seeking radical change. If the republican leadership, or any element of it, shares the Stalinists' reformist attitude, this will be demonstrated clearly in the coming period. There is little likelihood that a policy based on such an attitude could have any success in the Irish situation.

While the Kremlin is enthusiastically playing up the Irish unrest in order to embarrass British imperialism, it is unlikely that it will favor any upsets in the heart of the British sphere of influence. Such an attitude would run contrary to the most fundamental tendencies in the forty-year history of Stalinism. If there were, moreover, any illusions about the possibility of Stalinist parties developing independent policies in the present period, the progress of the Soviet crackdown since the invasion of Czechoslovakia should have dispelled them by now, or soon will.

Moreover, while the Soviet press has publicized moderate civil-rights leaders like Paddy Doherty in Derry and given considerable publicity to the recent reunification of the two Irish CPs, there has been no mention of the Republican movement in *Pravda* or *Za Rubezhom*, the Soviet foreign news digest.

The development of events in Ireland since the August-September explosions has made it clear that the revolutionary nationalist movement is at present the key factor in the Irish situation. First of all, it is the only all-Ireland radical organization. This fact assumed critical importance after the confrontations of late summer 1969 showed that the struggle of the northern minority could go forward only if the radicalization spread to Eire.

Even People's Democracy (PD), which in the early phase of the civil-rights movement de-emphasized the national aspect of the struggle, shifted its stance after the pogroms. In an interview in the January 1970 issue of *The Young Socialist*, PD representative Eilish McDermott said: "The main point that I would like American socialists to understand . . . is that the new long-term policy of the People's Democracy is for a thirty-two county so-

cialist workers and small farmers republic. . . . We must be able to rely on some kind of support from the South should another pogrom arrive. . . ."

It was this obvious need for material support from the South that Blaney and McAteer tried to exploit in order to restore the potency of the Nationalist party.

Secondly, the republican movement appears to be the largest and most disciplined body of radical activists working within the common framework. However, it is clear that the movement is not politically homogeneous, and it remains to be seen whether the republican leadership will be able to achieve effective political unity within their organizations.

But the most important aspect of republicanism is that it is the only radical force in Ireland which seems to understand the revolutionary potential of Irish nationalism and to be trying to realize it.

This fact alone distinguishes the republicans from traditional reformists. In a country as totally dominated by British capital as Ireland, the inevitable tendency of Social Democratic reformism must be to favor integration of the country into the richer British economy and more democratic social system. In the present situation, this might seem to be the only way of winning significant reforms. On the other hand, economic development in the context of preserving and strengthening Irish nationhood can be won only by revolutionary means. The defense of Irish nationality requires international revolutionary alliances. The "socialist internationalism" of the reformists means capitulation to British capital.

After the August-September explosions, the republican movement was impelled more rapidly toward defining the political and social nature of the Irish national struggle and toward developing a liberation strategy based on this analysis. It appears to have been largely to counter this evolution that the Blaney-Haughey group tried to woo the militants in the North with promises of guns and money. It now seems clear that the Catholic establishment (Fianna Fáil and the Nationalists) sought to promote and foster a split in republican ranks in order to halt or divert this politicalization.

A split occurred in the Northern IRA (Irish Republican Army) at the time of the August-September fighting, based on accusations that the organization had failed to provide adequate military protection to the nationalist ghettos. This split resulted in the dissidents setting up an independent "Northern Command." A split in the organization as a whole followed.

The dissidents formed a "Provisional Army Council," which claimed the authority of the Irish Republic. (According to the traditional principles of the IRA, the Army Council can claim to be the "provisional government of the Irish Republic" in its capacity as the only legitimate descendant of the antitreaty leadership.

The IRA split was followed by a split in Sinn Féin, the political arm of the movement. About a third of the delegates to the Sinn Féin *Ard-Fheis* in January of this year walked out.

The dissidents opposed the line contained in the official Army Council's message to the convention. After the unsuccessful guerrilla campaign in Northern Ireland of 1956-62, the IRA message said, a reassessment was made by the majority. The following weaknesses were discovered:

"1. The Army had no political base among the people.

"2. The Movement [i.e., the republican movement] had no clear-cut ideology which could define to the people what the struggle was about.

"3. The Army had concentrated its attacks on the British Military Occupation of the Six Counties to the exclusion of direct assault on:

"a. The British political administration in the Six and the Twenty-Six Counties.

"b. The British economic and cultural penetration of both the Six and Twenty Counties.

"4. Free Statism [Catholic communalism] had been left free of both military, political and economic assaults and was merely attacked for its failure to take the Six Counties and its coercion of republicans. . . .

"Following the acceptance of this analysis of our failures it was decided not to organize for a campaign in the Six Counties against the British occupation forces alone, but to organize for a revolution in the whole country against all the forces of British imperialism and native gombeenism.* Our objective was to be the reconquest of Ireland, not simply to place an Irish government in political control of the geographical entity of Ireland but to place the mass of the Irish people in actual control of the wealth and resources of the Irish nation and to give them a cultural identity.

"Our methods were to be:

"Economic and cultural resistance by the people to British imperialist penetration and exploitation and to the enslavement of the gombeen men. Political action by the people to defend their rights, to achieve specific objectives or simply to demonstrate their strength and power.

"Military action to back up the people's demands, to defend the people's gains and eventually to carry through a successful national liberation struggle."

The IRA message recommended abandoning the traditional policy of boycotting parliament: "The last number of years has seen the movement engage in all aspects of the struggle and has seen the

* From the Irish word *gaimbin*, meaning both "usury" and a "rag." The term was used for rural moneylenders and is now generally applied to the petty shysters who constitute the Irish "national bourgeoisie."

movement become once more a revolutionary force in Ireland. In order to continue to progress, the Army Council of Oglai na h-Eireann [the IRA] feels that nobody should bind the movement to any one form of struggle. We, as the revolutionary movement, must recognize that it is suicidal for us to adopt abstract formulas or doctrinaire recipes. We must recognize all forms of struggle and not confine ourselves to the form of struggle inherited, or possible, or in existence at a given moment. As new social, political, economic, and other crises arise, so also will other forms of struggle."

The statement stressed that participating in elections or taking seats in parliament did not mean recognizing the institutions of British overlordship:

"The Westminster parliament has no shred of authority, and never had to legislate for any part of this country. The Stormont [Northern Irish] and Leinster House [Eire] parliaments are both puppets of Westminster, set up by the Act of Westminster and not by the will of the Irish people, North or South. Both these parliaments protect the British imperial interest and the interest of the Tory ascendancy class, the Castle Catholics [collaborators], the Horse [well-to-do] Protestants, and the native gombeen men.

"It is our task to subvert the authority of all three parliaments and to establish the authority of the common people in a united socialist republic of Ireland in which the brotherhood of man will make religious differences irrelevant."

The statement reaffirmed the perspective of armed insurrection: "The war against Britain has never been halted and never will be halted so long as Britain claims a right to legislate for Ireland. Every decade has seen an armed struggle against Britain by republicans.

"The fight for the establishment of the republic ended in the early twenties but before the thirties had closed another struggle had begun which ended in the mid-forties. Toward the end of the fifties the fight had been resumed and was halted in the early sixties. It is inevitable that before the seventies ends Britain's claim to a right to interfere in Irish affairs will again be challenged in arms.

"This time we must win.

"This time we can win—because this time it will be a revolutionary struggle of the Irish people and not a military challenge by a small heroic minority."

Controversy at the Sinn Féin *Ard-Fheis* centered around the so-called national liberation front resolution as well as the question of electoral action.

The resolution contained five points: (1) that a "freedom charter" be drafted; (2) that the principle of a national liberation front to carry on the struggle be accepted; (3) that the National Libera-

tion Front be allowed to develop naturally on the basis of local cooperation on specific objectives between potential organizations; (4) that this work be given high priority; (5) that any amalgamation between the republican movement and other movements be excluded since what is involved is coordination.

What was presumably the freedom charter called for by the resolution was published in the February issue of the *United Irishman* under the title "A Freedom Manifesto."

This document declared: "We stand for an independent all-Ireland Republic with the whole wealth of the nation under the democratic control of the people; the use of State power to dispossess all foreign financiers, monopolists, landlords and their native collaborators; the transfer of all large-scale productive units in industry, commerce and finance to democratic councils representative of the people concerned, whether as workers, suppliers, or consumers, in proportion appropriate to their interests. . . ."

The focus was nationalist and anti-imperialist: "The need to reunify the nation dominates the immediate horizon. No demand should be formulated without this in mind.

"Any reforms sought by agitation within these structures must be such as (a) to weaken imperial control (whether direct or socio-economic), (b) to strengthen the organisations of the people, (c) to develop all-Ireland linkages at basic level.

"Such reforms are in essence revolutionary because they open up the option of sweeping away, at a later date, the foreign-imposed State structures and replacing them with revolutionary-democratic State structures based on the peoples' organizations. [Emphasis in the original.]

"We hold that the English imposed State structure should be dismantled and a new one built closer to the people's needs, the lowest level being easily accessible to everyone, with federation into regional authorities with substantial resources and real governmental powers such as to be able to react sympathetically and rapidly to local needs; central government to be concerned with security, defense and long term coordination of the regional budgets."

To achieve these aims, the Freedom Manifesto said, would require a "political structure of a new type; for example, a Republican Regional Executive could extend itself by inviting affiliation from housing, unemployed, language [Gaelic revivalist], etc., action groups. The integrity of each would be maintained; the unifying basis for meeting periodically in the extended form would be the adoption of an agreed list of demands, possibly along the lines indicated above. The name 'Comhdhail na Saoirse' [Freedom Council] has been suggested for such a structure."

The Provisional Army Council did not differentiate itself from the official movement on a clear left-right basis. Writing in the

February issue of the liberal Irish language magazine *Comhar*, Seán O Brádaigh, the press officer of the Provisionals, listed five specific differences:

1. The kind of socialism advocated by the official leadership was undemocratic, as shown by their organizational methods.
2. The official movement had failed to defend the people of Belfast and Derry adequately in August.
3. The official leadership defended the autonomy of Northern Ireland while the Provisionals favored direct rule from Westminster.
4. Over a period of years the leadership had been undemocratically driving its opponents out of the movement.
5. The Provisionals regarded boycotting parliament as an inviolable principle.

On the anniversary of the rebellion of Easter 1916, the Provisionals and the official republican movement held rival rallies in Northern Ireland. Press accounts indicated that speakers representing the Provisional Council concentrated on threats of military action.

Speaking at the grave of Seamus Robinson, an IRA martyr, Sean Caughey said: "When Irish families were burned and bombed out of their homes in Belfast and other places, realistic Irishmen realised that in order to get freedom there was a need for a military policy. Irishmen in Belfast and other places were now being trained in the use of arms in order to defend their homes and families." Caughey quoted Patrick Pearse to the effect that "an Irishman without arms is like a clergyman without religion or a woman without virtue."

At a later Provisional rally in Derry, Sean McSteven, a leader of the Provisional Council, said: "If Ireland's freedom is to be won, it won't be won by slick talk or words but through the man's way—the only way anything has been won."

The lead story in the Easter week edition of the *Voice of the North* contained this crude smear: "When the Rising came in 1916, James Connolly had but fifty men who stayed faithful to him in the Irish Citizen Army . . . the doctrinaire Socialists had abandoned the Republic.

"They abandoned the Republic in 1916 . . . and the doctrinaire socialists of 1970 are prepared to abandon it today whenever it suits their alien purpose."

The official republican speakers stressed the political aspect of the struggle. In Derry, Tomás Mac Giolla, the president of Sinn Féin, said: "The interests of all workers are identical irrespective of their creed or colour. Those interests are best served by uniting to gain control of the wealth and wealth producing processes of the Nation—in this case the Irish Nation. Labour in Ireland must overcome capital in Ireland and the power of capital is enormously strengthened by the union with Britain. It is therefore in the in-

terests of all workers, small farmers and men of no property to smash the union with Britain and to break the grip of British imperial rule in Ireland."

The revelations of the gun-plot scandal and the kind of polemics that have been developing between the official republican movement and the Provisionals indicate a conscious attempt by Fianna Fáil and right-wing Catholics to exploit the backward aspects of the republican tradition.

A belief in armed force as a magic solution to free Ireland has tended to serve as a safety valve for national frustration since the partial defeat of 1922.

The roots of this attitude go far back into Irish history. It is a way of overcoming, in a subjective sense, the contradiction between the revolutionary aspirations of the people and the reactionary ideology deeply ingrained in them, guns being socially neutral. This attitude stems, moreover, from the underdeveloped character of the country, the violence and isolation of peasant life, and the brutality of the backward industrial conditions.

The conclusion by the core of the republican movement that a many-sided campaign to achieve socialism is necessary to free Ireland represents an important shift in Irish politics, one which opens up a whole new perspective.

If Irish Marxists can develop a strategy effectively linking national and social demands, they can tap enormous latent revolutionary energies. If they fail to do this, on the other hand, they will be threatened with isolation and repression.

The events of the past year and a half have shown that the explosive potential built up by the frustrated national aspirations of the Irish people is undiminished. The struggle in the North and its impact in the rest of the country have also shown that, despite considerable purely economic unrest, the national contradiction remains the most powerful and offers the greatest immediate revolutionary potential. In fact, because of the political and social structure of the country, increasing economic discontent seems likely to promote nationalist feeling rather than overshadow it.

The gun-plot case and the republican split indicate that the bourgeoisie's main objective is to discredit the radical forces from a nationalist standpoint. The Irish capitalists are desperately trying to prove that socialists are not really dedicated to the national aims of the Irish people, that they have some "alien purpose."

In their pseudonationalist campaign, the Irish conservatives have the advantage of the reactionary traditions and provincialism of the country. But they suffer from a fundamental weakness in that the Irish bourgeoisie cannot lead even the most limited national struggle. If the revolutionists can develop agitation around objectives that are socialist in essence but that are clearly neces-

sary to advance the national struggle, they should be able not only to defeat the bourgeoisie's maneuvers but to make a decisive political breakthrough.

Since there is no significant nationalist bourgeoisie, it is obvious that the national struggle and the struggle for socialism are inseparably linked in Ireland. On the one hand, it is clear that socialist demands must arise naturally out of the needs of the national struggle, because the necessity of unity against the imperialist oppressor and his native allies is acutely felt. On the other hand, it is unlikely that the masses of the Irish people can be convinced that their nationalist aspirations are really attainable unless they can be educated to think in terms of radical social and economic change not only in Ireland but worldwide.

In a country as demoralized and drained as Ireland, the people must be convinced of the possibility of winning a fundamental improvement in their material conditions before they will be ready to fight. Such changes obviously cannot be won within the limits of one small island with few natural resources.

Now that the republican movement has assumed a clearly socialist position, the entire weight of bourgeois society will be turned against it. The period ahead will determine whether it is able to withstand such pressures.

A series of political problems do not seem to have been solved. The official policy of the republican movement is still parliamentary abstentionism. Sincere and capable republican leaders are still convinced that there is a contradiction between holding revolutionary objectives and participating in electoral activity.

Traditionally the radical current of Irish nationalism has disdained parliamentary action and left this field to the reformists and opportunists. The Fenian predecessors of the present-day Irish republicans made the mistake of leaving the parliamentary front to bourgeois figures like Parnell. Irish political life still suffers from the consequences of this error.

The antipolitical attitude of the republicans has been reinforced by the example of groups that left the republican movement to enter parliament. All of these groups have degenerated into rank opportunism. Moreover, there have been accusations that the objective of the Irish Stalinists active in the republican movement is to transform it into a reformist electoral formation to fill the role previously filled by Fianna Fáil.

It is true that the parliamentary arena is enemy territory. In fact, parliament and capitalist-type elections are among the major instruments by which a tiny minority of capitalists maintain their sway over the exploited masses of society. But no revolutionary movement can take the reins of power unless it can successfully compete with the ruling class in the key area of the political arena.

As long as the masses have any faith in the bourgeois electoral process, they will not consider any movement that abstains from

parliament as a serious contender for power—even if they admire its incorruptibility.

Moreover, extraparliamentary formations can fall into the role of acting as mere pressure groups and be relatively easily tolerated and even reabsorbed by capitalist society, if they have no political focus. Revolutionary movements must offer a complete alternative, a radically different way of organizing society.

Electoral activity offers an opportunity to explain broad alternatives to the people, to test programmatic points, to give a focus to varied direct actions and popular initiatives. Furthermore, elections can be a test of the revolutionary character of a movement. Even an organization which engages in very militant direct actions on a local basis may still be under the spell of reformism when it comes to broad questions. That is, it may hope to exercise pressure on bourgeois politicians rather than to oust them and build a new type of state.

The ability of a radical movement to develop effective revolutionary electoral campaigns is one of the indexes of how thoroughly it understands its society, how deep its critique of bourgeois institutions goes. It is a vital task of socialist movements to make revolutionary objectives seem real and practical to the masses, who have been conditioned to regard the structure of bourgeois society as natural, just as they have been conditioned to consider bourgeois elections a fair test of "the will of the people."

The Russian Revolution ushered in a period when socialism is no longer a remote goal but an urgent necessity. One of the main lessons of the Russian Revolution for this period is the need for a "transitional program," that is, a set of demands corresponding to immediately felt needs that seem and are reasonable but challenge the basic premises of capitalism. Examples of such demands are a sliding scale of wages based on a fair price index in a period of inflation or cutting the workweek with no reduction in pay when unemployment rises.

Transitional demands offer a basis for challenging bourgeois dominance in every strategic area of social life.

The preamble to the Sinn Féin Freedom Manifesto suggests that the republican movement has developed a concept similar to that of transitional demands. The preamble says that the demands to be raised by the Comhdhail na Saoirse are "in essence revolutionary because they open up the option of sweeping away, at a later date, the foreign-imposed State structures and replacing them with revolutionary-democratic State structures based on the people's organizations."

Most of the points listed are general, such as "defense of living standards and job security" and "support for all national cultural efforts such as to strengthen resistance to degradation of nationality by commercial pressures."

A list of democratic demands are given for the Six Counties, in-

cluding abolition of repressive legislation, disbanding the Protestant militias, ending discrimination, granting equal voting rights and proportional representation in all elections. The one potentially transitional demand is "maintenance of the people's defense organizations."

In the past, the IRA has attempted to tie commando actions to social agitation. For example, IRA commandos destroyed buses used to transport scabs in the 1969 electrical workers strike and the organization then issued a statement that it had done this "in its capacity as the revolutionary army of the Irish people."

The statement that the demands of the national liberation front are intended to "open up the option for sweeping away, at a later date, the foreign imposed State structures" has a certain ambiguity. Transitional demands educate the people to think in terms of radical change, thus preparing the way for revolution. Is this what the authors of the Freedom Manifesto intended? On the other hand, the theory of "structural demands" has been fairly widely held in the European left. The purpose of "structural demands," as opposed to transitional ones, is to win islands of people's power on a piecemeal basis.

The fallacy of this approach lies in the fact that only during great popular mobilizations can organs of counterpower be built up within capitalism. When the mobilization recedes, such alien bodies wither away or are isolated and destroyed. Under capitalist conditions, popular mobilizations cannot be maintained for long periods.

If the republicans can solve these political problems, they will probably be able to develop the necessary organizational forms. History has cast the republican movement in a unique form; it includes scout groups and cultural organizations, as well as a political party and secret commando force. The Comhdhail na Saoirse would be an even broader front. There is little indication so far how the nucleus of this front is to be constituted, how it is to operate.

It is hard to see how a loose front could take the kind of political initiatives the situation in Ireland is likely to require in the future. A well-integrated and trained political leadership, a revolutionary party, has proven to be the most effective form of organization in social crises. Revolutions have occurred under exceptional circumstances in some colonial societies like Cuba without a party. But the more complex the society, the greater the need for a sharp political cutting instrument. Ireland is dominated by imperialism, but it is an intricate society with a large working class and a considerable degree of industrialization.

Bold political initiatives are necessary in particular to harness the energies of the Catholic youth in the North. Numerous signs indicate that a sizable section of the nationalist population is at the end of its patience with the system that exists.

After more than a year of recurring outbreaks, the struggle in the North seems to require something further reaching than democratic demands. Some real perspective for radical social and economic change must be offered at least to the most militant section of the population. The only way this can be done is to raise transitional demands based on the needs of the struggle in progress. Without such perspectives the rage of the oppressed population will offer a fertile field for Dublin-inspired provocations aimed at splitting and disrupting the struggle.

As long as the state structures remain intact in Ireland, it will be difficult for the IRA to compete with the Provisionals on a material basis. This breakaway is not like the other split-offs from the IRA; it has the force of the bourgeoisie behind it. Whether or not the bourgeois patrons of the Provisional leaders deliver any guns, they will probably provide material support far superior to what any radical organization could muster.

And as long as the social system seems stable, as long as there is no basic change in the attitudes of the people, the illusion that support may be forthcoming from Dublin or from powerful circles in Eire will give the Provisionals an important psychological advantage.

The pseudonationalists, however, cannot offer any solution for the economic problems of the Irish people. The experience of fifty years has shown that the Irish bourgeoisie cannot develop the country. But perhaps even more important, they cannot offer any perspective for achieving the deepest national aspirations of the Irish people, aspirations that have been formed and deepened by centuries of struggle for independence.

The history of modern Ireland shows that the Irish nation cannot be finally restored except within the context of a totally different world order in which the great economic forces serve humanity instead of dominating it. Whatever the subjective political beliefs of the martyrs of Irish freedom, their vision of an Irish Ireland can only be fulfilled within the framework of a world socialist revolution.

For centuries the Irish people fought an essentially defensive struggle against ever more oppressive centralizing forces. The momentum of history was against them. Now the wheel of history is beginning to turn in favor of the ideals of this struggle.

Interview with Cathal Goulding

The following interview was given on August 19, 1970, in Dublin. It has been shortened for reasons of space. Mr. Goulding is known as chief of staff of the Irish Republican Army.

Question. Do you see any similarity between the struggle of the Vietnamese people to win control of their own country and the present fight of the Irish people to expel foreign occupiers and defeat or win over their native allies?

Answer. I certainly do. The first similarity is that when the French empire was weakening and the French were being forced out of Vietnam, the American imperialists came in to replace them.

That is, imperialism is international. International financiers and international speculators have developed interests in all the colonies, whether British, French, or any other. The same thing has happened in Ireland.

The same thing might happen to us here in Ireland as happened in Vietnam, The British empire is disintegrating and it is not so fantastic to imagine that if the British were driven out that the Americans might move in to replace them.

The Americans already have bases in Derry and other places in the Six Counties and I believe that they would support imperialist rule here if we were strong enough to beat the British.

Therefore, we have to take the proper attitude toward the Vietnamese struggle. We have to publicize the reasons why America went into Vietnam, to explain that it went to protect the vested interests of the American establishment and other imperialists all over the world. We have to do this to protect ourselves from American intervention here.

Q. Do you believe that there are any sections of the native capitalist class that are capable of resisting imperialist domination, any capitalists with whom you could ally yourselves in the struggle to liberate the country?

A. Yes. The main forces of native capitalism are in favor of

maintaining British rule in Northern Ireland and British influence in the South. They understand that if the Irish people ever become the rulers of their own country that they will move forward to take control of their own destiny as well.

The main forces of native capitalism know that the objective of the Irish people is to establish themselves in full control of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, and that this means we are going to establish a socialist republic in Ireland.

However, there are small family businesses that are going to be completely annihilated by the Common Market, and these people see no future for themselves except in a free Ireland. When we try to force the evacuation of the British imperial troops from Ireland and establish an independent Irish economy, the majority of these people will be on our side. To some extent, they are already.

Q. Will there be any separation in time between the national and social revolutions?

A. I think that in the future the revolution, or the fight to establish national independence, must develop toward a fight to establish the ordinary people in the ownership of Ireland.

If we don't have a program and a policy to bring about such a development, we are only wasting our time. We don't intend to exchange foreign capitalist exploitation for native gomben capitalist exploitation. Therefore, at some stage the struggle for national liberation must develop toward the establishment of the people in the ownership of Ireland, that is, toward a struggle to establish a socialist republic.

Q. Have you developed a program for linking the struggle for national liberation with the struggle for socialism, that is, some means of convincing the workers that by fighting for national freedom they are also fighting to better their own conditions?

A. We have tried to make the ordinary people understand, that is, the people who are on the housing list, who have not been provided with houses, who have no jobs, who may have very small landholdings, that they have to depend on the largesse of the foreign lords, or the lords of the conquest, to earn their own living in their own country.

We have to develop an awareness among these people that the fight for freedom is not only a fight for national liberation but a fight for social justice as well, that it would be a waste of time for them to throw in their lot with the small capitalists or other exploiters simply to establish national independence, which would mean that these small capitalists would then become big capitalists.

But if we can beat British imperialism and force evacuation of British imperialist forces from Ireland with the help of small businessmen, then our development towards a socialist republic will be much easier. The opposing forces will be much weaker.

At the present moment we are showing the people by taking them into the streets, by making them lobby the people who represent them in national and local government, that this system is not geared to provide people with the things they need. By our agitational campaign we are showing the people that the present system is geared instead to make profits for the exploiters and the speculators. We have been very successful in this campaign.

People are beginning to realize that the material and manpower in the building industry, for instance, is being used to provide a very small number of people with huge profits by constructing luxury hotels, office blocks, and deluxe flats.

Much less money is being spent in providing the homes that ordinary people need. The people are beginning to realize that if they want to get these houses, then the building industry must be nationalized and industry must be run by the people.

The same thing applies to the land. The landless people and the people on small farms realize that as long as British imperialism remains here, there is no hope of their being allowed to use the natural resources of this country for their own benefit, that they will always be in a position where they can be exploited by the bigger man.

We are showing the people that it is not the government of this country or any capitalist country which determines policy in industry or agricultural production. We are teaching the people that the ones who establish these policies are those who will profit from them, that is, the vested interests. The people who control vested interests are the ones who control and make government policy.

Q. Which social class do you think will play the leading role in liberating the country from British imperialism?

A. The class that always plays the leading role in any national liberation struggle is the working class, the people of no property, the landless people, the industrial workers in the city, and the very small peasant farmer.

These are the people who have traditionally supported the national liberation movements in Ireland all through the centuries.

Rich people were never interested in national liberation. They are already liberated. They have theirs. Only the ordinary people, the people of no property are incorruptible. They have nothing to lose.

Q. Do you see any similarities between the struggle of the na-

tionalist population in Northern Ireland and that of the American Black people?

A. The fight of the nationalist people in the Six Counties is very much like that of the American Negroes. For instance, the Negro is a second-class citizen in the United States; so also is the nationalist in the Six Counties. If a nationalist and a Unionist go forward for a job, no matter what qualifications the nationalist has, the Unionist will get the job.

The same sort of thing happens in the United States. Segregated schools are second-class schools. The best teachers go to the best schools and the best schools are given to whites. The same sort of thing is happening in the Six Counties.

Q. What lessons do you think that nationalists of Northern Ireland can draw from the struggle of the American Black people?

A. The first lesson that the people of the Six Counties learned from the American Negro was that they could not get anything unless they organized and demonstrated to demand their rights. When we helped to initiate the civil-rights movement in Northern Ireland we copied to a great extent the approach and activities of the Negro people in America.

On the other hand, I think the Negro people in America, those militant groups which have now moved beyond civil rights, could have learned something from us. We always had a military organization, a movement that could use physical force against the establishment.

So, the Negroes in America and we in Ireland could have learned lessons from each other. But the main lesson we learned from the American movement was that physical force and struggle couldn't come first, that we first had to try to inject some militancy into ordinary people who wouldn't join a violent struggle but would support a peaceful one, people whom you could organize to march, to demonstrate, sit-in, and things like that. It was this peaceful activity that really brought the situation to a head in the Six Counties.

Q. How do you propose to approach the problem of the military occupation of Northern Ireland, within the context of Ireland as a whole, and internationally? Do you favor a worldwide campaign for the withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland?

A. We do favor such a campaign and we are trying to develop one particularly through our allies in America, the people who are organizing the different Irish emigrant groups in America. We are trying to get these people to do as much work as possible to publicize why the British troops are in Ireland, what they are doing and what they are protecting. We have Irish organizations

in Australia, New Zealand, America, and England. We have also established contact with other countries where there are socialist groups and we are trying to work with these people to arouse worldwide feeling against the occupation of Ireland by England.

But I believe the job of pushing the British troops out of Ireland will eventually have to be done by ourselves. I think that when we have developed a certain awareness in the people as to what is best for them, the need for controlling the resources of the country and developing them to meet their own needs instead of for the profits of the few, that we will have sufficient support here to be able to make the position of the British occupation forces intolerable.

Our agitational and other political activity is geared to producing an awareness among the Irish people that if they want freedom they must have a workers' army and that this workers' army will have to be armed and will have to drive the British occupation forces out.

Q. What forces in America do you think can be enlisted in support of the struggle in Ireland? Do you think that any elements in the American establishment or national and local government can be depended on to support the struggle in Ireland?

A. I don't think that any of the political bosses or the people who are associated with these types in America can be made to honestly support the evacuation of British troops from Ireland. These people are basically imperialists. They support an imperialist regime in America. The majority of them support the war in Vietnam and other imperialist ventures that America has engaged in.

I am glad to see American politicians come out on the side of the struggle in Ireland. But I always remember that these people have done nothing basically to support the civil-rights campaign or the fight for human rights of the Negro population in America, and they haven't done anything really sound in forcing the administration in America to evacuate their troops from Vietnam.

I believe that these politicians, whether they're of Irish origin or descent, are just using the emotions of Irish exiles in America to gain political support for themselves. I think there are very few we can depend on in any shape or form to give us any support here for our cause. . . .

Q. Do you think that the military organization of your movement is compatible with full internal democracy, democratic discussion of policy?

A. Yes. Our movement is basically a revolutionary movement. We are not organized like, say, the American army or the British army. Our military organization has annual conferences which

set the basic policy. Resolutions come from units all over the country and from ordinary members. The officers appointed to run the headquarters staff of the Irish Republican Army are elected by the members. So our military organization is basically a workers' army.

It is an army in which the working class and the small farmers have a say in the policy. They have a say in what our tactic or strategy is going to be for each year, and they also have a say in who should lead the army. The man who may be chief of staff one year could be an ordinary soldier the next.

Q. Are there any special guarantees for the rights of political minorities within the IRA and Sinn Féin?

A. There have always been dissident groups at our conferences and conventions who don't accept the policy put forward or want to offer some other line of policy. The provision that's made for these people is this: They can be and often are elected to the executive of the army or to the headquarters staff, but they must accept the ruling of the majority for the coming year.

Discussions are held regularly, almost once a month. We can see that a decision taken at the convention might not be relevant in a month or two. And we have the power to change these decisions when they're not related to the political or military situation. A special convention can be called at any time if the ordinary members demand it. The local meetings can put forward ideas about how these resolutions or policy decisions should be changed or dropped.

Q. Are there any circumstances in which you think physical force is justified in dealing with opponent political groups on the left or opposition groups within your own movement?

A. We do not intend to use any military means or physical force against other groups on the left. We believe that these groups will learn that their policies are wrong when they try to put them into practice and that they will move closer to us.

I do believe that we should attack such groups publicly by telling the people by every means that we have what our differences are with them and why their policies are wrong.

We do advocate physical force against the establishment. I don't see any establishment giving the majority what they want. I can't see them handing the wealth over to the ordinary people unless the people have the necessary physical force to support their political ideas. The examples of Spain, Greece, Portugal, Guatemala, and Vietnam prove this. The people are only safe when they have the armed force to resist a dictatorship by the right. If they have no armed force, they'll end up like Greece.

Interview with Tomas Mac Giolla

The following interview was granted on July 29, 1970, in Dublin. The text has been shortened for reasons of space. Mr. Mac Giolla is the president of Sinn Féin.

Question. What strategy does the republican movement have for overcoming the sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland?

Answer. We continually emphasize the fact that there are three basic elements of republicanism: It's separatist. It's socialist. And it's nonsectarian. The nonsectarianism of the republican philosophy is essential to its progress and essential to the success of the republican cause in Ireland.

The primary enemy is Britain—British imperialism in Ireland. Before the twelfth of July parades, held this year on the thirteenth, there was built up through the news media, etc., tensions and the feeling there was going to be great strife between Catholic and Protestant. We took special measures to be sure there wouldn't.

I myself paid a visit to Belfast on Friday, the tenth of July, and remained there until Sunday evening. During the time I was there we had a meeting of the Republican Clubs at which we discussed the whole question and the necessity for insuring that there wouldn't be any strife and for talking to people and explaining to them that fighting between Catholic and Protestant would only aid the British cause. . . .

Q. Can you define the immediate objectives of the republican movement in the North?

A. The immediate objectives are manifold. Just twelve months ago the immediate objective was the implementation of the reforms for which the civil-rights movement had been fighting.

The month of August of last year changed the whole aspect of things and the immediate objective was the defense of the people. Following what happened in Derry and Belfast, people in many other towns throughout the North felt very insecure, and defense committees were established right across the Six Counties.

The issue of defense remained paramount throughout the winter. Republicans recognized that civil rights was an important aspect of the fight against British imperialism, but it was only a step on the way. They were also aware that the issue of defense of

the people was again not a final objective in itself.

There are many people on the defense committees who are there merely to defend their own homes, their own areas, and have no immediate interest outside of that.

But the events of the past couple of months in Belfast, and particularly the events in the Falls on the night of July 3, have brought the issue much clearer to people's minds that the enemy is the British occupation. This is seen now by the ordinary people in the North and the issue of just local defense is not now as much in the forefront of their minds as the issue of constitutional change.

The old partition solution no longer works. The new solution that Britain is looking for is one that will maintain her interest and control. We are therefore pointing out that the only change that can benefit the Irish people is to take into their own hands control over all the resources of the country, all the wealth and wealth-producing processes.

We have been pointing out in recent issues of our newspaper, the *United Irishman*, in statements, etc., that the great danger at the moment is a federal solution to the Irish problem, that partition would end in the sense that the border would be done away with, but the whole country would be more under the political domination of Britain than previously, the Twenty Six Counties as well as the Six Counties.

Q. When you say that one of the major questions is the constitutional question and what's involved with that is a union of one part of Ireland with Britain, then that would mean in your view the struggle that's going on now is essentially a national struggle. That would be the next higher stage presumably beyond the civil-rights struggle.

A. That is true. The objective of the republican movement is national liberation and the establishment of a democratic socialist republic for the whole country.

Our contention has always been that the Twenty Six County government was just as satisfied with the partition solution as was the Six County government. They had their own little bailiwick which they controlled down here—the Fianna Fáil government—and the Stormont Unionist government had its area over which it maintained control.

Now all has changed and therefore we are emphasizing our policy just as much in the Twenty Six Counties as in the Six Counties—that the objective must be to break the grip of economic domination by Britain on Twenty Six County affairs and to end her direct control over Six County affairs and establish a united democratic socialist republic.

We are convinced that the struggle for national independence and the struggle for a socialist form of society must continue

side by side. We are totally opposed to the idea which republicans have had in the past that we take the struggle for national independence first—on the basis that if we leave out all ideologies, we can unite all the people behind the struggle for national independence and then, national independence having been achieved, we can decide what form of government or type of society we want. This had been the main strategy of the republican movement in the forties and again in the fifties when they carried out the campaign against the British forces in the North. But both were failures.

The basic reason for the failures was that the people weren't behind the struggle. They were enthusiastic for it all right and supported it at a distance but weren't part of it and left the struggle completely to the republican movement, to the IRA and to Sinn Féin. The reason the people weren't part of it was that they didn't see it as being their struggle—for basic social justice, for jobs, for houses, for improved standards of living, for an end to emigration, for full employment.

We decided in a reassessment of our position following the end of the campaign in 1962, during the years 1963-65, that the struggle must be a revolutionary struggle of the Irish people, not just against the physical presence of British armed forces in the Six Counties, but against all the manifestations of Britain's control of the country. . . .

Q. Does the republican movement have a policy of trying to win leadership in the trade unions?

A. No, we haven't a policy of winning control of the trade unions, but we have come to the realization that republicans and militants in the trade-union sense must achieve a position of greater influence. . . .

Our attitude toward trade unions is, of course, that they are selling out the workers and have been for a number of years and are not in any sense the trade-union movement that Connolly and Jim Larkin fought so hard to build.

Connolly fought for One Big Union of workers, and he saw this as being the political arm of the working class to fight not just for such things as better pay and better working conditions but to fight for ownership of the wealth of the country for the working people. . . .

One fight we feel the trade-union movement could be brought into is the housing issue, particularly here in Dublin; it could also be done in Belfast. It is essentially the working class who are suffering the lack of housing, who are living with in-laws, living in one room, living in caravans, living in very poor conditions—broken down houses with no toilet facilities, leaking roofs, etc.

One issue leads to another, and we believe that eventually the workers in the trade-union movement will get back to the position they were in from 1913 to 1916 when they saw themselves as the political arm of the working class, and when they saw that the first enemy of the workers in Ireland is British imperialism, when they were prepared to unite against it and form a citizen army to fight against it. This would probably be a slow development.

Q. Does the republican movement consider itself part of an international movement and if so, what movement and what is its place in it?

A. Yes, we would. We believe that the fight against imperialism, neocolonialism—this is economic imperialism—is international. We are convinced that our main contribution to the fight against imperialism is against the imperialism that is affecting us, British imperialism. But we have been very prominent in protests or marches of solidarity with the Vietnamese and with other nations who are opposed to imperialism.

We also oppose the imperialism of Russia when she invades Czechoslovakia. We have continually reiterated this. Our international policy would be one of nonalignment in the sense that the smaller nations must not be aligned with the larger imperial powers, one or the other, that there must be solidarity between the small nations just as much as there must be solidarity between the men of no property, the small man in the nation, the workers.

Q. Is it your belief that what you call Soviet "imperialism" is comparable to the imperialism of the advanced capitalist countries—for example, to American imperialism?

A. No, not at all. It's completely different. Perhaps imperialism isn't the right word, although I believe that any big nation which tries to dominate and control a smaller nation is acting in an imperialist way. But the imperialism of Russia is obviously different in many ways to the imperialism of the USA or Britain, because it's not based on monopoly capitalism, large international cartels dominated by huge industrial complexes, or anything of that nature, which are the bases of the imperialism of the USA or Britain. What we oppose is one nation imposing its ideas and its system on another nation.

Q. What kind of political support would you hope to receive from left-wing organizations in other parts of the world?

A. Well, internationally at the moment we hope that socialists and progressive groups in other countries will give their full support to the demands of the civil-rights movement and to the call

for the withdrawal of British forces from this country. In the long term, we expect that this country will be engaged in the struggle against British imperialism in Ireland, that the people will have to engage Britain if she doesn't herself withdraw her forces from our country. If this happens, there is a grave danger that the Washington government would be in support of the London government in view of the close ties between America and Britain.

We would therefore hope that the American people would insure that their government would not stand behind Britain or back Britain in her struggle for the domination of the Irish people. We would hope that the links of the Irish people and the strength of the Irish tradition in America would be strong enough to overcome the British influence in Washington.

Q. Unfortunately the national identifications of people of Irish descent and origin in the United States have considerably weakened since the last full-scale struggle in Ireland. Are there other forces in America you feel you can look to for support?

A. In our association with the Irish Voice on Vietnam we have held demonstrations to show our solidarity with the Vietnamese people. In this campaign we became very much aware of the tremendous growth of the antiwar movement in America and the influence which it has in restraining the imperialist designs of the Washington government. We are convinced that this movement can be most helpful to a small nation like Ireland if it were engaged in a struggle for its national liberation such as the Vietnamese people are engaged in at the moment. . . .

Q. Will the revolution you propose involve transforming the existing state structures in Ireland?

A. Well, our objective as far as the two states in Ireland are concerned is that both states and both state structures must be destroyed and a new state structure established for the whole country, taking into consideration the different traditions of North and South and the different outlooks and philosophies of the Protestant and Catholic peoples. Also the rights of the working class whose power shall be supreme.

You could not establish a socialist form of society and maintain the existing state structure in either the North or the South because both are basically reactionary and both are designed to maintain British interests here.

Q. Do you believe that it is possible to establish the people of Ireland in the ownership of Ireland by peaceful means?

A. We've adopted a completely flexible approach to this question.

We're convinced that there must be a revolution of all the people of Ireland. No revolution is necessarily a bloody revolution, but it must be a revolution of the people, who must understand that they want change in society. They must be given this understanding by a revolutionary movement such as ours.

The manner in which the people through a revolutionary movement take power could be either through a popular demonstration and unrest; it could be through the ballot box, by the people electing revolutionaries for a revolutionary purpose; or it could be by armed revolt.

And as I say, we have a completely flexible outlook on this. Our objective in our strategy has been over the last five years a policy of economic resistance, number one. This is the people in their local area resisting economic domination either by foreign British interests or by native gombeen men — native capitalist interests.

Secondly, political action, either in the streets, in public protests, in sit-ins, take-overs, in civil-rights demonstrations, etc. This phase of the struggle could reach finality on these methods, but if not, we're quite prepared to follow up with military action.

We are completely aware that even in the event of gaining the support of the majority of the people in a democratic election that right-wing forces in this country either in the North or in the South would endeavor to ensure that we would never take power. This is one of the primary reasons why we are convinced that a political movement on its own would end in failure. It must be backed by military force of the people for such an eventuality. . . .

We are particularly concerned with ensuring that the political structure will not be totalitarian, will not be bureaucratic in any way. In other words, that power must come from below upwards, not from the top downwards. James Connolly devoted some attention to this, and he stated quite clearly that state socialism is nought but state capitalism.

His objective, which we would completely support, is that the ownership of the wealth-producing processes, the means of production, distribution, and exchange must be in the hands of the state, but the control must be in the hands of the people, must be in the hands of the workers through cooperatives, etc.

In other words, it's state ownership and cooperative control by the workers. In this way we would avoid the bureaucratic state ownership and state control of all aspects of the economy and have the power really in the hands of the workers whose cooperatives and other regional groupings would elect the representatives to the state assembly, thus maintaining the power from the production unit right up through a regional system of government to the top.

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Author: Gerry Foley

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