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**Pages  
from History  
On Irish-Soviet  
Relations**

To  
Yua Lerrchkin

With  
International  
Speeches

From Michael O'Riordan  
Nov. 27<sup>th</sup>, 1979.

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Pages  
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On Irish-Soviet  
Relations

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## FOREWORD

In 1929 a ten-strong delegation from the Dublin Trades Union and Labour Council visited the Soviet Union. The introduction to their published report said:

"In submitting this Report of our visit to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, it is necessary to give a brief survey of events leading up to the 1917 Russian Revolution and the present position. The Revolution rose immediately out of the conditions produced by the Imperialist War (1914-18), which was a struggle for markets, for trade, for spheres of influence and world domination by the capitalist powers. The Russian Army—subjected to frightful casualties—and the Russian workers, after enduring terrible war-time privations, broke away from the Allies and refused to fight for any imperialist aims. They wanted the war to end on a basis of no annexations and no indemnities, which would have meant the freedom of all countries from the crushing burdens which the Allied statesmen, in the interests of their capitalists, imposed. In Russia the people demanded *Peace, Bread and Land*. After the Czar was overthrown, Miliukov and Kerensky wanted the Russians to go on fighting for the Allies, but they refused and, as a result, in October,

1917, the Bolsheviks were brought to power by the overwhelming masses of the people.

"It was the Twelfth Anniversary of this Bolshevik Revolution which was celebrated in the presence of the Irish Labour Delegation.

### **Under the Czar**

"Russian society, previous to 1917, did not differ substantially from other capitalist countries, except that it was weaker and more backward. The workers, as elsewhere, were regarded simply as raw material, cannon fodder for the army, producing machines in the factories to turn out profit for the privileged few. Russia had a large land-owning class, which can be compared to the Irish landlords of the 18th and 19th centuries. Peasant tenants and labourers were crushed under the tyranny of agents appointed by absentee landlords who spent the money wrung from their toil in riotous extravagance. When serfdom was abolished and the peasants secured the land, they had to pay heavily for it through 'Redemption Funds'. This crippled the small farmers, and the whole village was made liable for any individual who could not pay. Village money-lenders, who usually controlled the village shop, and were nick-named 'benevolents', flourished on the misery of the people, like the 'gombeen men' in Ireland. At the time of the Revolution the peasants seized the land, including the huge estates, and stopped all payments. In the same way, workers in the towns seized the factories.

### **New Civilisation**

"The Russian Revolution, therefore, was not a mere change of flags or personalities. It established a new civilisation, based on the idea of All Power

to the Workers, which is a menace to capitalist society all over the world. The capitalist Powers attempted to destroy Russia by force. Great Britain alone spent £ 100,000,000 in supporting various Russian bandits who attacked the Soviet Republic. Huge military stores and much ammunition were given to the 'White Russians' after the Imperialist War, only to be captured by the Red Army. Germany, France, Poland, America, and Japan, as well as Great Britain, have actively supported the enemies of the workers' rule in Russia. Thus the first Workers' Republic, from the beginning, as is natural, was faced with the united opposition of all the capitalist states. The White adventurers whom they supported indulged in orgies of torture and rapine. But all around these robbers the Russian peasants rose in revolt. They swept all this capitalist filth out of their country with the iron broom of Revolution, and since then it has lain festering in drunkenness and debauchery in various cities outside the frontier. The Russian workers had to cleanse their country before they could proceed to build it up."

The signatories of the Report that followed have since gone into honoured pages in the history of the Irish Labour and Trade Union Movement — Helena Moloney, woman soldier in Connolly's Citizen Army; Robert Tynan, leader of the Municipal Workers' Union, and P. T. Daly, veteran figure of the trade union movement. All three of them were accompanied by Miss K. N. Price of Dublin, and Billy McMullen (later General President of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union), T. Geehan and H. S. Ward of Belfast; Terry Waldron, Bray Trades Council; Ned Tucker, National Society of Brushmakers, and Paddy Holohan of the Irish National Society of Woodworkers.



The introduction to their Report, giving as it does a precis of the developments just before and after the most important event in world history, is as fitting a foreword to this outline of Irish-Soviet relations, written for the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Great October Revolution, as it was when that group of Irish trade unionists covered the long distance—as it was then—from Ireland to Moscow to honour the 12th anniversary of the great achievement of the workers, soldiers and peasants of Russia.

## DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Seventeen days preceding the first day of 1977—the 60th anniversary year of the Great October Revolution—the Irish Foreign Minister, Mr. Garret Fitzgerald, arrived in Moscow.

The visit of a Foreign Minister for talks with his Soviet opposite, Andrei Gromyko, and the signing of an agreement on economic, industrial, scientific and technical cooperation, and the opening of good prospects for further mutually beneficial relations was not, in itself, an extraordinary event in the USSR which has, over the last six decades, received numerous Heads of State, Ministers and prominent statesmen from the north, south, east and west of the world.

The significance of the Irish Foreign Minister's visit was not in the fact that he came from the most westerly part of Europe to the country that marks the eastern border of that continent, or from one of the smaller states on earth to one of the biggest countries—but in the fact that it was the *first ever* official visit of a Foreign Minister of Ireland to the Soviet Union.

It was only in 1973 that diplomatic relations were established between the Republic of Ireland and the USSR. Such a late development might give the impression that it was only in the last few years

that each had discovered the other's existence. The truth, however, is that even before the setting-up of Soviet power there were close links between the Russian and Irish peoples, bonds that were originally forged by none other than V. I. Lenin, the founder of the Soviet State.

In the field of diplomatic relations it was also a fact that as far back as 1920 such contacts were made between the two countries, and even a draft Irish-Soviet Treaty of Friendship had been drawn up. Alas, this Treaty was never signed. Instead, in December 1921 the Irish signed the Anglo-Irish Treaty which opened the way to civil war and division in that small island, whilst in the Soviet state there was signed, in December 1922, the Treaty which set up the huge united multinational Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Only one year, in terms of time, separated the ratification of the two Treaties, but the consequences that flowed from each were fundamentally different. An indication of the difference can be seen even in the atmosphere in which each was adopted. The Irish one was depicted by the patriot-writer, David Hogan, who recalled the scene thus:

"And then a remarkable thing happened—and before the year was half gone it took on for me the substance of a dark prophecy. Deputy after Deputy broke down in that strained room, not on one side, but on both, and the passing of the Treaty was accompanied by the sound of brothers' weeping who till now had stood by one another in death's face. The men in that room, nearly all young soldiers, knew the vastness of the tragedy that had overwhelmed them. A British statesman had divided the men of Ireland who had held together so magnificently, had divided them irrevocably, uncontrollably. Those who for four years had fronted every

danger, never yielding, never quailing, never parting, were now at one another's throats, despite every effort to turn this English victory aside. The passing of the Treaty which saw Irish unity melt away and the nation lie helpless at last before the will of her enemy, was greeted only by tears."<sup>1</sup>

In Moscow, Mikhail Kalinin, Chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, in his closing speech at the Congress of Soviets that had just adopted the Treaty constituting the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, said:

"We are laying the first stone in the edifice of a truly fraternal community. For thousands of years humanity's finest minds have been struggling with the theoretical problem of finding forms that would enable the peoples to live in friendship and brotherhood, free from agonising torment and strife with one another. Only now is the first practical step being taken in this direction."

Since then, in place of the Czarist Empire, with its economic exploitation, pogroms, repression of national independence, culture and language, has been built a new commonwealth of fraternal unity of the peoples and a flourishing of national cultures.

For the same period of fifty-five years the Irish people, on the other hand, have been undergoing the trials and tribulations imposed on them by the British imperialist policy of division.

Union for the Soviet peoples and division for the Irish people are two sharply contrasting developments, but both, strangely enough, arose in the context of the struggle against imperialism. Some half-a-century ago British imperialist bullets in Churchill's vain attempt to "strangle Bolshevism in its cradle" were shooting down workers in Baku, as they were in the Irish capital of Dublin—and as they still do in the Irish cities of Belfast and Derry.

## LENIN'S LINKS WITH IRELAND

As division is the technique of the imperialists, so unity is the countering weapon of the anti-imperialists. The great achievement of multinational unity in the USSR was a mighty blow against the imperialists. It set the seal of defeat on the Whiteguards and the imperialist interventionists from fourteen states. It was a great victory, not only for the Soviet peoples, but for all divided humanity.

For me personally, there was the rich experience of seeing the concrete example of Lenin's policies on the national question as I witnessed the multinational character of five thousand delegates at the 25th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, February, 1976. It was a vivid, colourful and inspiring gathering of so many different nationalities of one state. It was not by chance that the character of its composition found its reflection also amongst the numerous fraternal delegations from the Communist, Workers', National-Democratic and Socialist parties of the world present at the Soviet Communist Party's Congress. As I looked around the delegations in our immediate vicinity it was both natural and stimulating to see that the Communist Party of the U.S.A. was represented by Black and White, that of Israel by Jews and Arabs, that

of Canada by both English- and French-speaking comrades, and that the representatives of the Communist Party of Ireland came from both North and South of our island, from the Catholic and Protestant sections of our working people.

There, outside the Soviet peoples, but within their great Party Congress, was an indication of the future of peoples still struggling for self-determination and social liberation. There was shown how correct Lenin was when he advanced that the organisations of workers of different nationalities, ethnic groups and communities in the same working class organisation was a prototype of the working class solution of the national question, as when he wrote:

"Here and in the Caucasus social-democratic Georgians+Armenians+Tatars+Russians have worked together, in a single S.-D. organisation for more than 10 years. This is not a phrase, but a proletarian solution for the national question. The only solution."<sup>2</sup>

In such a context of deed and word it was possible to understand even clearer the deep significance of the fact that despite all the years of the British imperialist policies of "divide and rule" the Irish working class had succeeded in reforming and building one single trade union centre embracing as it does the trade unionist workers of North and South, Catholic and Protestant, in the united Irish Congress of Trade Unions. This Congress has maintained its unity despite all the forces of division. Today in Ireland in a situation of bombings and assassinations it is not only pursuing a united campaign for "A Better Life For All"; it is also representing the future of a united working people that will live and work together in harmony for a new Ireland.



Years of struggle—some of them bloody ones—have gone into the building of the organisations of the Irish working class. The name of Lenin is forever linked with the greatest event in that struggle—the Dublin Strike of 1913.

That strike began when a number of workers were sacked from their jobs because they had joined the newly formed Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (now the largest trade union in Ireland). In an organised counter-strike Dublin's tramway workers struck suddenly on August 26th, 1913. This was the day on which began the capital's fashionable society week, the Annual Royal Dublin Horse Show. At 10 a.m. precisely, the drivers and conductors left their trams on the streets after affixing to their coat-lapels the union badge with its "Red Hand."

Then began a bitter class struggle with the employers "locking out" all those in other employments who had joined the new union. The battle was to rage for over seven months. On one side were ranged 400 of the big Irish employers, on the other were 30,000 workers under the leadership of "Big Jim" Larkin. It was a combat that was marked by extreme police brutality, and from it emerged a workers' armed force, "The Irish Citizen Army", and the contemporary trade union movement of Ireland.

A bare two weeks after its beginning, Lenin gave the international working class movement the first picture of what was happening in Dublin. He also revealed his own amazing knowledge of and insight into the details of the class struggles waged, in his time, in different parts of the world. Certainly, in the case of the Dublin 1913 strike he showed that there was no class battle too far-away from him. Writing in the Russian working class press, Septem-

ber 11th, 1913, he told its readers, under the heading of "Class War in Dublin", of how:

"In Dublin, the capital of Ireland—a city of not a highly industrial type, with a population of half a million—the class struggle, which permeates the whole life of capitalist society everywhere, has become accentuated to the point of class war. The police have gone positively wild; drunken policemen assault peaceful workers, break into houses, torment the aged, women and children. Hundreds of workers (over 400) have been injured and *two killed* (Lenin's emphasis)—such are the casualties of this war. All prominent leaders of the workers have been arrested. People are thrown into prison for making the most peaceful speeches. The city is like an armed camp."<sup>3</sup>

This description was so accurate an account that it would have seemed that Lenin, instead of being thousands of miles away, was in fact an "on the spot reporter". His articles indicated that not only was he well acquainted with the daily happenings on the streets of Dublin, but he was also well conversant—more than many who were nearer the scene—with the historical, political as well as the economic background of that decisive strike of Ireland's working class.

"Ireland," he wrote, "is something of a British Poland, only rather more of the Galician type than of the Warsaw-Lodz-Dombrowski variety. National oppression and Catholic reaction have turned the proletarians of this unhappy country into paupers, the peasants into toilworn, ignorant and dull slaves of the priesthood, and the bourgeoisie into a phalanx, masked by nationalist phrases, of capitalists, of despots over the workers; finally, they have turned the authorities into a gang accustomed to every kind of violence. . . In Dublin lives the British



Lord-Lieutenant. But in actual fact his power yields to that of the Dublin capitalist leader, a certain Murphy, publisher of the *Independent* (seriously—'Independent!'), the principal shareholder and director of the Dublin tramways, and a shareholder in a whole number of capitalist establishments in Dublin. Murphy has declared, on behalf of all the Irish capitalists, of course, that he is ready to spend three-quarters of a million pounds to destroy the Irish trade unions." <sup>4</sup>

Of the leader of the Irish proletariat in that struggle, Lenin had this to say:

"It has found a talented leader in the person of Comrade Larkin, the secretary of the Irish Transport Workers' Union. Possessing remarkable oratorical talent, a man of seething Irish energy, Larkin has performed miracles among the unskilled workers"... <sup>5</sup>

With the passage of time the 1913 strike has become legendary not only in the folklore of the working class but as part of the entire history of Ireland. It has been the subject of many speeches, songs, books and lectures. Many have written on it but none, even with the advantage of hindsight and knowledge, have equalled Lenin's graphic account of that struggle.

In a paragraph he describes the events of two days in that strike. A day that is now known as the "Bloody Sunday" of the Irish Labour Movement. The British authorities had proclaimed a meeting of strikers in the city centre. . .

"Larkin declared that he would be at the meeting no matter what happened. And indeed, he came to the meeting disguised, and began to speak to the crowd. The police recognised him, seized him and beat him. For two days the dictatorship of the police truncheon raged, crowds were clubbed, women

and children tormented. The police broke into workers' homes. A worker named *Nolan*, a member of the Transport Workers' Union, was beaten to death. Another died from injuries." <sup>6</sup>

Reading his articles today one feels the atmosphere of tremendous class feeling that developed on, and after, that day of brutality. Within seven days of the next development, Lenin wrote:

"On Thursday, September 4, Nolan's funeral took place. The proletariat of Dublin followed in a procession 50,000 strong behind the body of their comrade. The police brutes lay low, not daring to irritate the crowd and exemplary order prevailed. . . " <sup>7</sup>

Eleven years after the 1913 Strike, the 5th Congress of the Third International took place in Moscow. It was more than appropriate that the delegate from Ireland should have been "Big Jim" Larkin. On June 24th, 1924 he went to the Red Square to pay homage to the dead Lenin and to express his fraternal thanks for the great Soviet leader's championship of the Irish workers struggles.

Larkin was to describe his feelings on that occasion when he wrote in the columns of the "Irish Worker" on the first anniversary of Lenin's death:

"A year ago he passed—the great master, the mind that shook the world, destroyed an empire and gave hope and inspiration to the common people of the earth. . .

"The capitalist governments of the world and the paid defamers and the licensed liars may spit out their venom, may continue to lie and malign and even caricature the Bolsheviks and their leaders and their teacher Lenin, but he who laughs last laughs best. And to one who has been privileged to look on the face of the dead Lenin with that intriguing

smile which conveys so much one understands. He laughs last. Lenin laughed away a corrupt despotism in an hour—despotism that had endured for nearly four centuries. Leninism will laugh the capitalist system out of face into oblivion.”<sup>8</sup>

On August 25th, 1924—eleven years afterwards to the date of the Dublin tramway workers’ defiant class action, Larkin returned to Ireland, bearing with him a huge Red Banner on which was inscribed: *“TO THE REVOLUTIONARY TRANSPORT WORKERS OF DUBLIN, GREETINGS!—FROM THE MOSCOW TRANSPORT WORKERS.”* The banner was proudly carried at the head of the parade of workers which welcomed Larkin home from the land of Lenin.

## LENIN AND THE IRISH REVOLT OF 1916

When, a year after the Dublin Strike, the imperialist war of 1914-1918 broke out, over 400,000 Irishmen joined the ranks of the British Army for service at the fronts. Not all of them were loyalist citizens of the British Empire, or as they were known in Ireland—“West Britons”. Many of those in the French trenches of slaughter had been tricked into enlisting by the cry of “Defend Little Catholic Belgium”, others had been fooled by the slogan that Ireland would benefit because the war was being fought for “the freedom of small nations”, and not a few were “economic conscripts”, many of whom had fought, suffered and starved in the 1913 Strike.

When “Big Jim” Larkin left Ireland after that strike on a fund-raising campaign in the U.S.A., the responsibility of leadership fell on James Connolly, Marxist thinker, writer, and man of action.

Connolly had founded the Irish Socialist Republican Party in 1896. A convinced internationalist, he had by 1900 affiliated it to the Paris International Socialist Congress. In 1913 he was the guiding brain and military specialist in the Irish Citizen Army which, at first, during the 1913 strike, had been a workers’ defence corps, but which on the



eve of the Imperialist War had been re-organised by him into an offensive force.

In 1910 and 1912 the Socialist International had declared that the Socialists in each country would oppose participation in the imperialist war which eventually broke out in August 1914. When the guns roared and the flags were unfurled the Socialists in Britain, Germany, France, Belgium and other countries forgot their declarations, rushed to support their respective capitalist governments and betrayed the working people of their countries into the hands of the militarists. Connolly called such "Socialists" "cowardly trimmers and compromisers in a world of imperial brigandage".<sup>9</sup> His attitude was identical to Lenin's dictum of converting the imperialist war into a civil war as was clearly expressed in the columns of the "Irish Worker":

"Should the working class of Europe," Connolly wrote, "rather than slaughter each other for the benefit of Kings and Financiers, proceed tomorrow to erect barricades all over Europe, to break up bridges and destroy the transport services that war might be abolished, we should be perfectly justified in following such a glorious example and contributing our aid to the final dethronement of the vulture classes that rule and rob the world."<sup>10</sup>

Twenty months later, on April 24th (Easter Monday), 1916, Connolly in alliance with the radical nationalists led the Irish Citizen Army in an insurrection that proclaimed Ireland to be a Republic independent of the British Empire. The revolt lasted less than a week being crushed by superior British forces and their bombardment of the centre of the city of Dublin.

The native men of property were aghast at this "display of disloyalty". Led by Martin Murphy—already in 1913 noted by Lenin as the leader of the

Irish capitalists—they rushed to condemn it and to demand the execution of Connolly. Their blood-thirsty call was answered on May 12th when he, though grievously wounded in the fighting, was strapped to a stretcher and propped up before a British Army execution squad.

The reaction abroad to the rising was a hostile one. The British Labour Party leaders who were fully supporting the imperialist war regarded the revolt as "a stab in the back". The British Independent Labour Party who had adopted an opportunist-pacifist line to the war, "did not approve of the Rebellion" and said that Connolly had been "terribly and criminally mistaken". In Russia, Mr. A. Kulisher, of the Constitutional Democratic Party, characterised it as "the Dublin putsch". His party, commonly known as the "Cadets", had acted for a while in opposition to the Czar, the nature of which can be gauged from the fact that it thanked the Czar for repressing the 1905 Russian revolt, saying that it had "to bless this government which, alone with its bayonets and jails, protects us from the ire of the people". Kulisher's party was afterwards associated with the Provisional Government of Russia which was overthrown in the October 1917 Revolution.

One would have expected such an attitude from the "Cadets" to the Irish revolt, but not the reaction that came from Karl Radek, the leader of the International Left Wing Conference in Zimmerwald. He simply re-echoed the middle class Kulisher when he wrote in "The Berner Tagwacht" that the rising was "neither more nor less than a putsch".

To all the critics of the Irish Easter uprising was to come a stinging reply from V. I. Lenin. With his profound understanding of imperialism and of the struggle for national and social liberation, Lenin

fully understood the revolt and spoke out sharply in its defence.

Lenin, in his article, "The Irish Rebellion of 1916", placed the rising in the context and pattern of anti-imperialist actions that had taken place elsewhere in the course of the imperialist war, viz.: the brutal suppression by the British of an Indian Army mutiny in Singapore; the condemnation to death of Czech regiments; the attempts at rebellion in French Annam and in the German Cameroons. Referring to Dublin's Easter Week, he said, "there had been a rebellion in Ireland which the 'freedom-loving' English, who did not dare conscript the Irish, had suppressed by executions."<sup>11</sup>

The Irish revolt, he pointed out, arose because the war proved to be an epoch of crisis for the West European nations, for imperialism as a whole, and that owing to the crisis of imperialism the flames of national revolt had burst out in the colonies and in Europe; national sympathies and antipathies had manifested themselves in spite of threats and draconic measures.

Explaining the Irish rising as a product of this crisis, he not only enlightened the international working class about its real character; he also deflated Irish petty bourgeois attempts to sentimentalise the revolt as a specifically Irish event, as a manifestation of nationalist temperament that was unrelated to capitalism and imperialism.

Castigating those who would "vilify the Irish Rebellion by calling it a putsch", Lenin wrote:

"The term 'putsch' in the scientific sense of the word may be employed only when the attempt at insurrection has revealed nothing but a circle of conspirators or stupid maniacs, and when it has roused no sympathy among the masses."<sup>12</sup>

Proceeding to further explain the basic factors of

the rising, Lenin revealed his amazing grasp of Irish historical detail. This knowledge he had accumulated in his reading of Marx and Engels on Ireland and his own up-to-date study of all aspects of the principles of self-determination. That his information was not just ancient history but was based on his closeness to the events preceding the rising was shown when he wrote:

"The century-old Irish national movement, having passed through various stages and combinations of class interests, expressed itself, incidentally, in a mass Irish National Congress in America (*Vorwärts*, March 20th, 1916), which called for Irish Independence—it expressed itself in street fighting conducted by a section of the urban petty bourgeoisie *and a section of the workers* after a long period of mass agitation, demonstration, suppression of the press, etc. Whoever calls *such* an uprising a 'putsch' is either a hardened reactionary, or a doctrinaire hopelessly incapable of picturing a social revolution as a living thing."<sup>13</sup>

Lenin went on to develop a point of fundamental importance to all revolutionaries, i.e. the need of the proletariat to have allies, and in doing so he completely exposed the theory of so-called "pure" revolution:

"For to imagine that social revolution is *conceivable* without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without the revolutionary outbursts of a section of the petty bourgeoisie *with all its prejudices*, without a movement of politically non-conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against landlord, church, monarchical, national and other oppression—to imagine that means *repudiating social revolution*. Very likely one army will line up in one place and say, 'We are for socialism', while another will do so in another place



and say, 'We are for imperialism', and that will be the social revolution! Only from such a ridiculously pedantic angle could one label the Irish rebellion a 'putsch'.

"Whoever expects a 'pure' social revolution will *never* live to see it. Such a person pays lip service to revolution without understanding what revolution really is." <sup>14</sup>

Sixteen months after writing this, Lenin was himself to lead the greatest social revolution in all history. That event—the 1917 October Revolution—was also to throw into sharper relief other words he wrote on the Irish revolt:

"The misfortune of the Irish is that they rose prematurely, when the European revolt of the proletariat had not yet matured."

What an interesting speculation there is in wondering what now would be the situation in Ireland if the two events had coincided. The circumstances of the time in Ireland governed the date of the Easter Week rising. Lenin himself pointed out why it was "premature", because as he made clear that revolutions and revolts cannot just be synchronised given even the best subjective will.

"Capitalism", explained Lenin, "is not so harmoniously built that the various springs of rebellion can immediately merge into one, of their own accord without reverses and defeats. On the contrary, the very fact that revolts break out at different places and are of different kinds assures wide scope and depth to the general movement. Only in revolutionary movements which are often premature, partial, sporadic, and therefore unsuccessful will the masses gain experience, acquire knowledge, gather strength, get to know their real leaders, the socialist proletarians, and in that way prepare for the general onslaught, in the same way as separate strikes, demon-

strations, local and national mutinies in the army, outbreaks among the peasantry, etc., prepared the way for the general onslaught in 1905" (in *Russia*). <sup>15</sup>

Following the defeat of the Irish rising of 1916 and the execution of 16 of its leaders, the Irish people rallied to the cause of national liberation and of opposition to participation in the imperialist war. The masses proved Lenin's point that the rebellion was not a putsch. In 1917 by mass action and a General Strike the attempt to once again impose conscription was soundly defeated.

The 1916 Rebellion, which Lenin did so much to defend against its detractors, is today the national date in Ireland's long history. It was an action that made possible the fact that an *Irish* Foreign Minister, and not a British one, represented the Irish people in Moscow in December, 1976.

## DIVIDE AND RULE—A REALITY OF BRITISH POLICIES

At the same time—December 30th, 1922—that the working people's delegates, under the chairmanship of Mikhail Kalinin, were adopting the Declaration and Treaty constituting the unification of Soviet nations in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, British bourgeois statesmen were implementing the division of the small island of Ireland into two.

This was another stage in the oppression of Ireland that began in 1169 when Henry the Second of England imposed his rule on the island by the force of arms. Ironically enough, in the light of subsequent Irish history, these same weapons were blessed by the then Pope of the Catholic Church, Adrian the Fourth.

By the 15th century the invasion had a considerable degree of success. A garrison of settlers was established. They were of a different religion from the mass of the people who were Catholics, who suffered not only from the expropriation of their lands but also from penal restrictions on the practice of their religion.

In time, however, the colonialists in Ireland developed, like those in America, separate economic interests from the ruling class in England. From

them emerged the urge that gave rise, in 1791, to "The Society of United Irishmen", which by 1798 was suppressed, and reaction was encouraged to foment sectarian dissension between Protestants and Catholics.

The "United Irishmen" was under the leadership of Theobald Wolfe Tone and other progressive Irish Protestant merchants, farmers and artisans. Their objectives were, in the words of Tone:

"To break the connection with England, the never-failing source of all our political evils, and to assert the independence of my country—these were my objects. To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissensions, and to substitute the common name of Irishmen in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic, and Dissenter—these were my means."

Down the years these words have often been quoted because of the divisive exploitation of religion which has been one of the main ways through which the British ruling class have maintained their rule in Ireland.

In 1798 a rebellion led by the "United Irishmen" was met with a brutality that made even General Abercromby, the officer commanding the English forces in Ireland, resign in protest and horror. The rising failed not only because of the might of the enemy but also because of the vacillation of some of the more wealthy elements in the leadership. A happening which was to occur again and again in Irish history and which made Henry Joy MacCracken, one of the patriotic leaders of 1798, to cry out as he went to be executed: "The Rich Always Betray the Poor!"

In 1801, the English enacted the "Act of Union" which made Ireland part of Great Britain and every Irish man and woman "British". In contrast to the



revolutionary, democratic and progressive formation of the USSR, the dictatorial and reactionary "union" of Ireland with Britain, following on the atrocities after the rebellion of three years previously, was characterised by the infamous way in which the Act of Union was passed by both the British Parliament and the limited Irish Parliament.

In bribes to members of the Irish Parliament (from which the mass of the people were excluded by British law from having any representation), the London Government elevated, in return for their votes, 28 of its members to the rank of Peer, and 26 from one degree of an Earl to another, as well as making direct cash payments to many others. The conduct of those upper-class was to prove Henry Joy MacCracken correct. They are remembered in the folk history of Ireland as those, "Who sold their country, thanking God that they had a country to sell."

Act of Union or no, the Irish people never ceased to assert their desire for national independence as demonstrated in the subsequent risings in 1803, 1848, 1867, 1916, 1917-21 and many other manifestations to date.

The Act of Union, making Ireland part of Britain, had at least one positive effect. It provided valuable material for Marx and Engels in their work on the scientific theory of national state development:

"Formerly I held," Marx wrote in a letter to Engels on November 2, 1867, "that the secession of Ireland from England was impossible. Now I consider it inevitable, even if after secession it came to a federation."<sup>16</sup>

In 1869 Marx spoke of the need to convince the English working class that it should:

"Take the initiative in dissolving the Union estab-

lished in 1801 and replacing it by a free federal relationship."<sup>17</sup> Thus in that period of Ireland's history was laid the seed of a scientific theory which, some 120 years later, was so brilliantly cultivated by V. I. Lenin and brought to full flower in the form of a multi-national state of "a new type" by the creation of the USSR.<sup>18</sup>

After the 1916 rising there was a splendid victory for the Irish people. Throughout the imperialist war which began in 1914 the British were more than desirous to impose conscription. The people resisted this with mass meetings and the signing of a pledge of common action against any attempt to conscript Irishmen into the war forces. 15,000 delegates at a Special Trade Union Congress decided to oppose it with a General Strike. On November 4th, 1917—three days before the outbreak of the Russian Revolution—the national leader, Mr. Eamon de Valera, expressing the people's determined refusal to be dragooned into the imperialist war, said at one of the mass meetings:

"The militant stance of the people was an effective guarantee that the young men of Ireland would not be asked to take Russia's place at the front."<sup>19</sup>

The people's unity ensured that the English, as Lenin said, "did not dare to conscript the Irish".

In the British General Election of December, 1918, the pro-independence forces won 73 of the 105 House of Commons seats that were allocated to Ireland. Having done so, they refused to sit in the Westminster Parliament but instead set up their own Irish Parliament (*Dail Eireann*) in Dublin. This *Dail* adopted a Declaration affirming: "That Ireland is 'a sovereign and independent nation'; that a Republic had been established in Easter Week, 1916, of which the *Dail* constituted itself the heir and continuation. The *Dail* adopted a 'Democratic Program-

me' ... which some members, later, found 'communistic'. " <sup>20</sup>

With the setting up and operation of this *Dail* which the British regarded as an illegal assembly, there began a situation in which "dual power" existed. The British Army unleashed a military campaign of terror which was resisted by large-scale urban and rural guerrilla warfare, strikes and a mass civil disobedience campaign.

In face of the popular resistance the British recognised that they would have to concede some degree of independence, and they did so with a cunning ingenuity.

A Truce was called in July, 1921 and negotiations opened up between the Irish *Dail* and the British Government. The negotiations were prolonged until the culmination in the early hours of the morning of December 6th when the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed under the threat by the British of "an immediate and terrible war" being resumed if the Irish negotiators did not accept the terms. The threat and the Treaty split wide open the ranks of the people.

The British with a display of false magnanimity gave Dominion status to the major portion of the island, but, in order to frustrate any further development for the full liberation of the whole of the country, the London Government set out to implement a divisive plan now well known as "The Partition of Ireland".

With this plan they created two separate Irish states: *THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND* (Population: 3 million) which since 1921 by a series of unilateral legislative acts has increased its political and constitutional freedoms from its original Dominion status to that of a sovereign state. A state, however, whose economy is dominated by British monopoly capitalism who own a major portion of the manu-

facturing industries, commercial concerns, insurance corporations, and whose banks are part of the London banking system; *NORTHERN IRELAND* (Population: 1.5 million), in the north-eastern part of the country, was retained in Britain's United Kingdom. It was given a local parliament known as "Stormont" from the name of the place in which it was situated. Its powers were limited and subjected to the British House of Commons to which it elected 12 members.

The British, supposedly acting on the "principle" of giving a minority—the descendants of the original settlers who professed the Protestant religion—the protective designation of British subjects, took six of the nine counties of the Province of Ulster to provide the territory for the north-eastern statelet.

By the diabolical use of the technique of Partition they not only split the island, they also ensured further division inside the Northern state by deliberately incorporating in it Catholics (to be a third of its population) who desired to be citizens of one united Irish state.

Thus a minority became a majority and vice versa.

In the case of Northern Ireland the members of the national majority became second-class citizens. Their position was used to divide the Protestant and Catholic sections of the working people from each other.

The Catholic minority in the North were discriminated against in employment particularly. Northern Ireland, itself, is an underdeveloped part of the British economic scene, with wage rates always lower and unemployment always higher than in any other part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. <sup>21</sup> At "normal" times when its unemployment rate was 8 per cent of the working



population, the discrimination was clearly shown in the percentage of workless in the Catholic areas, viz., Strabane, 26 per cent; Dungannon, 19 per cent, and Derry, 18 per cent.

Electorat constituencies were also gerrymandered in order to deprive the minority of their full proportional representation. A typical example of underrepresentation was in the city of Derry where their 17,000 votes could only secure 8 seats in the 20-member City Council, whilst the Unionist Party—an affiliate of the British Tory Party—could get 12 seats with a vote of 10,000.

Even though Partition was imposed on Ireland by a unilateral act of the British Government—not one Irish member of the British Parliament could be got to vote for it, not even among those opposed to separation from Britain—it satisfied the class interests of the big landowning and merchant elements in Northern Ireland, who formed the leadership of the Unionist Party. To maintain its power the Unionist Government not only discriminated against the minority, economically, socially and politically, it also used its official private army, the "B-Special" unit of the armed Royal Ulster Constabulary. It equipped itself with, and applied, repressive legislation called "The Special Powers Act", which even excited the recorded envy of the racist Vorster of South Africa.

Everything was done by the Unionist Government and Party to create amongst the Protestant section of the working people the illusion that such economic privileges as they possessed, in the context of discrimination and particularly in times of unemployment, would be swept aside if full economic, social and political rights were granted to the Catholic minority. A situation not too dissimilar to the divisive methods used by the U.S.A. ruling class

to keep black and white workers apart. Whenever the Unionists felt there was a danger to their vested interests by the possibility of Protestant-Catholic working people's unity they coldbloodedly fomented sectarian fears and organised pogroms against the Catholic ghettos.

The coming to power of the Unionist Party had been foreshadowed in 1912 when the then British Liberal Government proposed, in response to the campaign for the repeal of the Act of Union of 1801, that Ireland should have its own parliament which would be given the right to administer local affairs, but which would be under the complete control of the British Government.

The workers and the radical petty bourgeoisie of Ireland, who stood for complete national independence, opposed this concession seeing it as an arrangement between the British and the conservative bourgeois sections of the Irish national movement, such as the Martin Murphys.

From no quarter, however, was there such a resistance to the granting of this limited form of "Home Rule" for Ireland as there was from the British Tory Party. A campaign against it was organised in the Protestant areas of Ulster by Sir Edward Carson, who had been Solicitor-General in the British Tory Government 1900-1906, and had been described by Lenin as "that Black-Hundred landlord, Purishkevich."<sup>22</sup>

The Unionists then, as now, were heavily armed. The Liberal British Prime Minister ordered the British Army to disarm them, but the officers with their common ties of class and Tory politics refused to obey. Instead of being courtmartialled for such a mutiny they were allowed to resign their commissions after they were given assurances that troops would not be used against the Unionists in Ulster.

Lenin, who followed closely the developments, wrote:

"Generals and other British army officers mutinied! They declared that they would not fight against Protestant Ulster, that would run counter to their 'patriotism', and that they would resign... To suppress the revolt of the aristocratic officers, the Liberal government should have appealed to the people, to the masses, to the proletariat, but that is exactly what the 'enlightened' Liberal bourgeois gentlemen feared more than anything else. And the government *actually made concessions* to the mutinous officers, persuaded them to withdraw their resignations and gave them *written assurances* that troops would not be used against Ulster.

"... These aristocrats behaved like revolutionaries of the *Right* and thereby shattered all conventionalities, all veneers that prevented the people from seeing the unpleasant but undoubtedly real class struggle. Everybody saw what was hypocritically concealed by the bourgeoisie and the Liberals (they are hypocritical everywhere, but it is doubtful whether their hypocrisy assumes such proportions anywhere as in Britain). Everybody saw that the conspiracy to break the will of Parliament had been prepared long ago. Real class rule lay and still lies *outside* of Parliament... And Britain's petty-bourgeois Liberals, with their speeches about reforms and the might of Parliament that lull the workers, proved in fact to be frauds, straw men put up to bamboozle the people. They were quickly '*shut up*' by the aristocracy who held *power*." <sup>23</sup>

Lenin's writings on Ireland embraced a reportage of what was happening as well as a clear class analysis of these developments. Reading them one sees that whilst he was dealing with particular events he was, at the same time, expounding attitudes to fun-

damental problems that were, and are, of universal concern, viz., the national question; the leading role of the working class; the need for revolutionary alliances; the role of the State; the theory of socialist revolution, etc.

In dealing with the Unionist Party in the North of Ireland he shows, as in the quotation above, where power really lies in a bourgeois democracy and clearly illustrates that such a democracy is not above classes, as some still try to say.

The fundamental issues that Lenin dealt with over sixty years ago are still with us in Ireland, and other places as well, and Lenin's teachings on such subjects are, indeed, relevant and correct.



## THE ORIGIN OF VIOLENCE

Who is responsible for the present bloody situation in Northern Ireland may be regarded as a superfluous question in view of the history of Anglo-Irish relations already described.

One does not, however, have to go back to King Henry the Second or to the years between 1798 and 1921, one finds the answer reaffirmed in the events of the last decade.

In spite of the historical and contemporary evidence, the question has to be answered, again and again, when the British monopoly capitalist media ceaselessly presents the struggle in Ireland as an *internal* one between members of the Protestant and Catholic communities.

The Partition of Ireland and the naked discrimination against the Catholic minority in the North have been resented by the majority of the Irish people (and by many in the British Labour Movement). The minority itself has resisted such with many forms of struggle. Sometimes this was done by presenting candidates for parliamentary elections who when successful would not attend parliament; other times by civil disobedience, non-cooperation and non-recognition of the State of Northern Ireland, and even by outbursts of armed activity by some sections.

To oppose the blatant discrimination and to overcome the consequent division among the working people there was set up in 1967 the *Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association* (NICRA). Significant preparatory work for the emergence of this Association had been done by the Belfast Trade Union Council whose affiliated membership is composed of a majority of organised Protestant workers.

NICRA took the struggle for equal democratic rights for all onto the streets. A series of marches and rallies took place, local committees were organised, and a high level of mass unity and discipline was established.

On October 5th, 1968 a NICRA march through the mainly Catholic city of Derry was broken up in the most savage fashion by the Unionist Government's para-military police. From that act of repression sprung the cycle of violence that is now a daily feature of life in Northern Ireland.

In August, 1969 the right wing of the Unionist Party organised a pogrom against the Catholic ghetto in Belfast. The inhabitants were shot at, many of their homes were set alight and a general reign of terror was established. Against the murderous "gun-offensive" of the Unionists the people in the ghettos set up armed defence committees. From then on the violence escalated.

It was clear that "law and order" in Britain's first colony was about to collapse. London ordered the British troops in Northern Ireland to intervene. The Government then was headed by Harold Wilson, and it was forced to accept a few of the demands of NICRA, but being a Social-Democratic government, devoid of socialist policies, it made no attempt to introduce basic reforms. It preferred to pose as a "peacemaker" in a situation created by British imperialist policies.

When in June, 1970, governmental power passed, pendulum-like, back into the hands of the Tories, the Heath Government switched the role of the British troops from pretended "peacemakers" to open repressors of the minority. Again the people in the ghettos reacted to the violence of the troops by killing many members of that force.

In August, 1971, a British Army operation swept, overnight, over 400 anti-Unionists into a special concentration camp. The minority replied with an immediate civil disobedience campaign. This took the form of complete non-cooperation with either the Unionist or British Governments by refusal to pay rents, rates and other state taxes, peaceful sabotage of the public services and the erection of barricades that created "no-go" areas to which the British Army and the Northern Ireland police were prevented from entering or policing.

On January 30th, 1972, the notorious Paratroop Regiment of the British Army opened fire on a peaceful NICRA meeting in Derry and killed 13 citizens.

On July 31st, 30,000 British troops, a Unionist Defence Regiment and armed members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary were sent into action by the British Government against the "no-go" areas. Equipped with 50-ton Centurion tanks fitted with special bulldozer blades, and Saracen armoured cars, they tore down the barricades and occupied the former "no-go" areas.

This operation was presented as a "peace-keeping" one, but in the knowledge of Irish history it can be seen that the role of the British Army in Ireland has never been a pacific one. Ireland, in fact, was the reason, in the first place, for the formation of that Army, as stated by Major-General Frank Kitson, General Officer Commanding, 2nd

Division of the Rhine, in his book dealing with his experiences in Northern Ireland:

"When the Regular Army was first raised in the 17th century, 'Suppression of the Irish' was coupled with the 'Defence of the Protestant Religion' as one of the two main reasons for its existence."<sup>24</sup>

The training of British troops for service in Northern Ireland is not for peace-keeping but for repression, not only in Ireland but if and when the need should arise in Britain itself.

The mentality of those responsible for shaping such a repressive force is that of another notorious "peace-keeper", General Sir Walter Walker, late Deputy Commander of NATO, who views the situation in Ireland thus:

"I have engaged in campaigns against blacks, yellows and slant eyes. Why should we have one rule for whites and one for coloureds? We have to decide if Northern Ireland is part of Britain or not—and if so, act accordingly."<sup>25</sup>

The continual repression by the British will fail, as in the past, to solve the "Irish Question." On the other hand, blind violent reprisals by the Provisional I.R.A. will not win national independence for the Irish people. The State terror inaugurated by the British cannot be defeated by acts of counter-violence against civilians. Such acts only help to grievously divide the working people, lead to a deepening of sectarianism, to the strengthening of that basis of division on which the British have been able to hold on to Ireland.<sup>26</sup>

With respect to such forms of struggle, Lenin had some pertinent words to say. He faced this problem in his task of building the party of a new type which later led the Soviet peoples to social and national emancipation. He had to show the common link between the Economists who believed that all empha-



sis should be placed on the "economic struggle", and the Narodniks who believed that individual acts of bravery would rouse the people and lead them onto the revolutionary path.

In his book, "What Is To Be Done?", he stated:

"The Economists and the present-day terrorists have one common root, namely *subservience to spontaneity* ... At first sight, our assertion may appear paradoxical, so great is the difference between those who stress the 'drab everyday struggle' and those who call for the most self-sacrificing struggle of individuals. But this is no paradox. The Economists bow to the spontaneity of the 'labour movement pure and simple' while the terrorists bow to the spontaneity of the passionate indignation of the intellectuals, who lack the ability or opportunity to connect the revolutionary struggle and the working-class movement into an integral whole. It is difficult indeed for those who have lost their belief, or who have never believed that this is possible, to find some outlet for their indignation and revolutionary energy other than terror."<sup>27</sup>

In an Ireland divided by imperialism, the labour movement also became divided. In the Republic, Social Democracy accepted the state set up as a result of Partition and, in essence, accepted the role and rule of the Irish capitalist class which always carried an Irish "nationalist" tinge. In the North, the leaders of Social Democracy accepted the state of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom. Gradually, the trade union movement in the Republic (85 per cent) came under Irish influence, but in the North, over 80 per cent of the trade unionists maintained their links with British-based trade unions. Despite this set-up, Irish trade unionists maintained a united all-Ireland trade union centre, but the Economist-like Social Democratic leaders

ignored the national question, in the same way as the Provisional I.R.A. rejected the Leninist concept of the revolutionary struggle and the working class movement being an integral whole. In this respect, Lenin is as valid and relevant in 1977 as he was in the 1913 and 1916 periods of Irish history.

In Ireland today there are major problems of disunity. Partition not only created two states, two governmental structures, but in fact almost two of everything. This extends not only to national and democratic organisations, but even to sporting organisations. Where the division is not geographical, it is political; for instance, there are three social-democratic parties, one in the South and two in the North. Even the Communist movement was for a period indirectly effected by the divisive effects of Partition.

The Communist Party of Ireland, covering both the North and the South of the Island, was first formed in June 1933. When war broke out in September, 1939, the Southern state adopted a position of neutrality which was maintained throughout the war, whilst Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom became a belligerent. This created a problem for the Communist Party in the South, which was aggravated by the existence there of large-scale unemployment which resulted in many party members seeking work in the wartime industrial boom in Britain. The effect of this was that it was only in the North that the Party could continue as an open political force.

Nevertheless, the Party continued in the South in a variety of forms of organisation, and in 1948 the Communists there formed the open political organisation called "The Irish Workers' Party."

Though for twenty-two years there were two Irish Marxist-Leninist parties, one in each state, the Irish

Communist Movement was united in the form of a public "Joint Council". Both parties were likewise part of the International Communist Movement, each being present at the 1969 International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow, and both signing all the Documents of that historic Conference.

In March 1970, there took place a Special Unity Congress to reconstitute the Communist Party on an all-Ireland basis. The Special Congress was held in the appropriate venue of Belfast in Northern Ireland, and at a significant time: *the Centenary of the birth of Lenin, and the 50th anniversary of the passing of the "Government of Ireland Act", the legislative instrument by which the British Government partitioned Ireland.*

The reconstitution of the Communist Party of Ireland was a striking and widely appreciated example of unity. It made the Party a unique one, becoming as it did the *only all-Ireland* political organisation of the working people. The Communist Party of Ireland is also different in that it draws its membership from both Protestant and Catholic working class backgrounds. Proof of its roots was the fact that in 1975 the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, itself, also, an all-Ireland national trade union centre, for the first time elected a Communist as its President in the person of Andrew Barr, National Chairman of the Communist Party of Ireland.

The Unity Congress issued a Manifesto entitled "For Unity and Socialism". This pointed out, inter alia, that the British ruling class, although it divided the country, *always regarded Ireland as one unit* for the purpose of exploitation, and that Partition was devised by it as a means of retaining control over *all* of the island.

The Manifesto combatted an argument that is used extensively by the Unionists that Northern Ireland by virtue of its link with Britain is the more prosperous of the two Irish states, sharing in the "benefits" of the British Welfare State. The Manifesto showed that years of imperialist domination had stamped common features on the two parts of Ireland. In both there was constant unemployment of a scale abnormal even under capitalism; heavy emigration of young people and a high ratio of dependent old and very young to the working population; economies wide open to penetration and extended domination by the imperialist monopolies; the contradiction of the export of native capital and the highly subsidised attempts to attract foreign investment; large-scale depopulation on the more under-developed areas of both states; the expropriation of the small farmers, small shopkeepers and manufacturers on a massive scale, and the erosion of Irish cultural distinctiveness before the pressures of Anglo-American commercialism. With the further progress of time and the current aggravation of the general crisis of capitalism these common features have become more marked.

The Communist Party of Ireland has a long record of struggle for the unity of the Catholic and Protestant sections of the working people. In the 1930s in Northern Ireland it played an outstanding part against the organised unleashing of religious sectarianism. It was prominent when the unemployed of both religions erected barricades against the armed Royal Ulster Constabulary with their machine-gun mounted armoured cars who sought to enforce a ban on an unemployed demonstration. The police opened fire: two were killed, one seriously wounded and a hundred in all wounded.<sup>28</sup>



## THE TALE OF TWO TREATIES

The 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty was ratified on January 7th, 1922 in the Irish *Dail* in an atmosphere of deep, grim expectations. Some six months later the "Four Glorious Years" of united struggle was to give way to a new and horrible development. Civil war in the South began when the pro-Treaty forces, supplied with British guns, attacked an anti-Treaty military position. The country was split, families divided and brothers turned against each other.

All during the fratricidal conflict that lasted from July, 1922 to May, 1923, the British supplied the pro-Treatyites with rifles and artillery which were accompanied with continual insistences for a more vigorous suppression of opposition to the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, saw the military operations of the pro-Treaty Provisional Government as the way of perpetuating British domination in Ireland with "an economy of British lives".

Between 1920 and 1921 the British ruling class were to succeed in inflicting a grievous and complex triple division on Ireland. The first was the division of the country into two states; the second was the creation and incorporation of a one-third minority

within the Northern state to ensure division there; the third was the fanning of civil war in the South where the pro-Treaty government, in ten months, executed, after court-martial, 77 fellow-Irishmen.

The 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty was a disastrous and tragic happening for the Irish people. The derivative of that Treaty, the enactment of Partition, with its conversion of majorities into minorities, lies at the fundamental basis of today's bloody mayhem in Northern Ireland.

Eleven months before the Truce that opened the way to the negotiations that led to the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December, 1921, the then functioning but internationally unrecognised *Dail Eireann* initiated moves that could have led to another altogether different kind of Treaty.<sup>29</sup>

In the *Dail* on June 29, 1920, the Acting President, Arthur Griffith, moved:

"That the Ministry be authorised to dispatch a Diplomatic Mission to the Government of the Russian Federal Soviet Republic with a view to establishing diplomatic relations with that Government."

The *Dail* approved the motion, and appointed Dr. Pat MacCartan as intermediary with a view to establishing contact. He met two Soviet representatives and as a result a Draft Treaty was drawn up.

The Draft was as follows:

"Desirous of promoting peaceful and friendly relations between the people of Russia and the people of Ireland, and striving to cooperate in the interest of the human race and for the liberation of all people from imperialistic exploitation and oppression, the Government of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic and the Republic of Ireland, by authority conferred upon them by their respective constitutions, and in the name of the people



of Russia and the people of Ireland, agree as follows:

1. The Government of the Republic of Ireland pledges itself, its resources and its influence to promote the recognition of the sovereignty of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic by the nations of the world.
2. The Government of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic pledges itself, its resources and its influence to promote the recognition of the sovereignty of the Republic of Ireland by the nations of the world.
3. The Government of Ireland pledges itself to exert its influences on all organisations and elements which are responsive to it in order to prevent the transportation of arms, munitions and military supplies intended for use against the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic.
4. The Government of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic undertakes to exert pressure on any nation, organisation or group of people with whom it has influence to prevent the shipment of arms, munitions and military supplies intended for use against the Republic of Ireland.
5. The Government of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic accords to all religious denominations represented in the Republic of Ireland every right accorded to religious sects by the Russian Constitution and entrusts the accredited representative of the Republic of Ireland in Russia with the interests of the Roman Catholic Church within the territory of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic.
6. In any nation where only one of the contracting parties has diplomatic facilities these facilities will be at the disposal of the other contracting party.
7. The Government of the Russian Socialist Fede-

ral Soviet Republic undertakes to sell whatever commodities are exported from Russia to Ireland, either directly or indirectly, exclusively through the medium of institutions designated by the Government of the Republic of Ireland, and at prices and on terms agreed upon with that Government.

8. The Government of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic agrees to place orders for whatever commodities may be bought in Ireland so far as these privileges are applicable to these institutions.

9. The privileges outlined in the preceding two paragraphs (7 and 8) will extend to extra-territorial institutions controlled by the Government of the Republic of Ireland so far as these privileges are applicable to these institutions.

10. The Government of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic will invite and accept the services of citizens of the Republic of Ireland in the reconstruction of the Russian industries, and give special consideration to offers of services made through the Government agencies of the Republic of Ireland and to persons and concerns recommended by the Republic of Ireland for the granting of concessions for the exploitation of the natural resources of Russia.

11. The Government of the Republic of Ireland pledges itself to facilitate by every means the bringing of sanitary and medical relief to the people of Russia.

12. The avowed purpose of the contracting parties being to end imperialist exploitation, to ensure the freedom of the world's highways, to bring about universal disarmament, to make obligatory the arbitration of all international disputes, and to secure peace to all the peoples of the world, they agree to enter into a league with similarly minded na-

tions, each nation to be represented by delegates freely elected by their nationals.

13. Any disputes regarding the interpretation of any clause of this treaty will be referred to the league so constituted, and a majority vote of the States therein represented will decide the matter at issue.

14. The warranty of treaties among free peoples rests ultimately upon the goodwill and good faith of the peoples themselves each to foster among its respective nationals friendship for and understanding of the other.

15. The duration of this treaty will be ten years. Notice of intent to withdraw can be given only at the end of the ninth year, and if not then given, the treaty will remain in force for a further period of ten years."<sup>30</sup>

The terms of the proposed treaty were sent to the Cabinet of *Dail Eireann* by President de Valera. In an accompanying letter he set down his thoughts thus:

"A message from Dr. MacCartan re the R. (Russian) Mission, with a proposal which should be very carefully considered by the Cabinet, first as to its advisability at all, and secondly, if advisable, what terms should be included so as to give us the greatest advantage. The commercial terms, if they could be secured, despite the efforts of the British to render them nugatory, would be designed so as to use them as a lever to bring portions of the North-'Ulster'-to the side of the Republic. The Church mandate would also be useful and the idea of grouping a League of Nations round R. (Russia) is capable of a good deal of development. Also the importance of having a centre for our eastern activities must be borne in mind.

"I have not finally made up my own mind on the question of a published agreement, but I am certain-

ly of the opinion that the mission should go and that the whole question be taken up seriously. When those who have it to hand have the proposed terms properly hammered out I will give my own decisions and send forward such recommendations as seem advisable to me. The document which the Doctor is sending and these comments of mine are merely preliminaries which will enable you to think over and discuss the matter in anticipation."

That memorandum clearly indicated Mr. de Valera's keen interest in the terms of the proposed treaty, their great possibilities for further development, and their relevance to offsetting the possibility of Partition. It also revealed his vacillating approach, a characteristic which was to win over, with later lamentable results, his appreciation of the tremendous potentialities that such a published agreement would have realised.

Dr. MacCartan in his book, "With de Valera in America", complained that he was not given any real authority to have definite talks with the Russians:

"President de Valera," he wrote, "refused to grant credentials empowering me to conclude a treaty with the Russian Government. . . Presumably, he did not want recognition, at least, not from the Russians."<sup>31</sup>

At that period, President de Valera was more concerned with the securing of recognition of the Irish Republic from the U.S.A. The hope of such was based, to a large degree, on the existence of a powerful Irish lobby in American politics. This recognition was never accorded but it did prove that American class relationships with Britain far outweighed the sum total of all the loudly-trumpeted ethnic and sentimental ties of Irish-American politicians.

Dr. MacCartan charged President de Valera with



the major blame for the non-ratification of a treaty with the Soviet Republic, which alone among the nations of the time was prepared to grant full recognition to the Irish Republic. In this connection Dr. MacCartan also sent a memorandum to Dublin, in which he wrote:

"The President referred to the wisdom of publicity. I know they (the Russians) want publicity of it and, in principle, are opposed to secret treaties. There is no use in sending a Mission if we are afraid to take the consequences. I know from my talks with their representatives here (United States) that they would only laugh at us and treat us as well-meaning but cowardly fools if we proposed such a course. It seems to me, therefore, we have to go the whole way or not start at all. There is no middle course."<sup>32</sup>

The middle course, however, was taken. Mr. de Valera was not genuinely interested in promoting relations between the Irish Republic and the Soviet Union. He was more concerned with political manoeuvring in the hope of influencing official American support or possible agreement with Britain.

When, however, the British intensified the repressive war and all hope of American recognition had finally faded, President de Valera turned once more to examine the possibilities in an Irish-Soviet treaty. He asked Dr. MacCartan to contact the Soviet representative in the United States to facilitate his (MacCartan's) journey to Russia. Dr. MacCartan related that when he asked the Russian representatives . . . "if their Government would conclude a treaty with the Republic of Ireland, they countered by asking me if my Government would not make peace with England on a basis less than complete independence. They did not point to the Cuban interview, though they did mention de Valera."<sup>33</sup>

The "Cuban interview" refers to the first indication from Mr. de Valera, on February 6th, 1920, that he was prepared to consider a settlement with Britain on terms less than the full recognition of Ireland as a sovereign Republic.

In a letter of July 20th, 1920, asking for plenary powers (which were not granted) to conduct the negotiations with the Russians, Dr. MacCartan told Mr. de Valera:

"There is not only a possibility but a probability that the Russians may think we are playing at international politics. The Russian representative in U.S. expressed a doubt more than once regarding your seriousness in the matter. I don't know how you gave him that impression, or whether he was only pretending to have doubts in order to fathom me on the subject; but he casually referred to the question a few times. . .

"Further delay may be disastrous. Much valuable time has already been wasted."<sup>34</sup>

Dr. MacCartan was prophetic. The further delaying and wasting of time indeed did prove "disastrous". The draft Irish-Soviet treaty of friendship, mutual recognition and cooperation was not ratified; instead, in less than seventeen months after Dr. MacCartan's warning, Irish signatures were appended to a treaty with Britain from which flowed, not friendship, but bloody civil war in the South, partition in the North and violence that continues to this very day in Ireland.

History is full of "ifs". If the Easter Rising had coincided with the Russian October Revolution, what would have been the course of Irish history afterwards? If, instead of signing the Anglo-Irish Treaty there had been an Irish-Soviet Treaty, would it have been possible for the British to succeed in the case of the first agreement?

## CLASS RELATIONS

The victory of the Great October Revolution of 1917 was a mighty and decisive blow against imperialism. The British ruling class were in the forefront of a united capitalist-world attempt to, in the words of Winston Churchill, "strangle Bolshevism in its cradle". British troops were the first, along with the French, in the 14-capitalist countries' armed intervention to try and destroy the infant Soviet Republic. Inside the country itself counter-revolutionary forces were organised by Sir Bruce Lockhart, a British diplomat, George Hill, the British Military Attaché, and Sidney, Reily, an Intelligence Officer. In London plans for the extension of British imperialist influence in a Russia that would follow the defeat of the Revolution were hatched. The press organ of British monopoly capitalism reported:

"In the city events are shaping more and more towards an international suzerainty over Russia modelled on the British plan in Egypt. Such an event would transform Russian bonds into the cream of the international market."<sup>35</sup>

As the 1929 Delegation of the Dublin Trades Council to the USSR recorded, "all this capitalist filth" were swept out of the country with "the iron broom of Revolution".

Having been defeated morally and militarily the imperialists took recourse to other weapons such as economic blockade, attempted subversion and made maximum use of the weapon of false propaganda (which they still do).

The Report of the Delegation from the Dublin Trades Union and Labour Council was a break through the cordon of imperialist defamation that sought to isolate the Soviet Republic from the working people of other countries. It was but natural and logical, as far as Ireland was concerned, that this action should have been performed by a section of the Labour and Trade Union Movement of that country.

The events in Russia of 1917 were followed with keen interest by the Irish Labour Movement. When the Petrograd Soviet made its first call for an International Conference, the National Executive of the Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party cabled it immediately endorsing the holding of such a Conference, and at the same time appointed two delegates to attend the Stockholm Conference.

The August 1917 Annual Conference of the Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party ratified, by an overwhelming majority, the actions of its leadership, and drafted a mandate for the delegates to the Stockholm Conference which approved cordially of the following declaration of the Russian Conference of Workers' and Soldiers' Delegates:

... "that the delegates cherish the firm hope that the ideal of a real democratic peace without annexations and indemnities, on the basis of the right of the peoples to dispose of their own destinies, an idea in the name of which every national conference has been convoked, will meet with the warm sympathy of the working class, and that they, support-



ed by their powerful organisations, will give the most energetic support to the fight for the realisation and carrying into effect of this idea in life without faltering before any obstacle, which undoubtedly will be placed in their way by people in Imperialistic circles." <sup>36</sup>

Then, in an even more direct tribute to the Russian workers, the Annual Conference, amid applause, adopted a resolution of congratulation, which read:

"This Congress of Irish workers hails the Russian Revolution. With gratitude and admiration it congratulates the Russian people upon a Revolution which has overthrown a tyranny that resisted the intellectual and social development of Russia, which has removed the standing menace of an aggressive imperialism in Eastern Europe, and which has liberated the people of Russia for the great work of establishing their own political and economic freedom on a firm foundation, and of taking part in the international movement for working class emancipation from all forms of political, economic and imperialist oppression and exploitation." <sup>37</sup>

This resolution referred, of course, to the February Revolution. However, when the reactionary bourgeois Provisional Government was overthrown by the October Revolution carried out under the leadership of Lenin's Bolshevik Party and under the slogans of "Peace, Bread and Land", the Irish Labour Movement greeted this historic event with great rejoicing. The records of the Movement <sup>38</sup> reveal that the attitude of the Irish workers to the Revolution was shown unmistakably at demonstrations of welcome to the Soviet cause all over Ireland. The Dublin demonstration filled three of the largest halls in the city and overflowed into the streets, where

thousands of people swelled the enthusiastic chorus of welcome and joy. The demonstration was amongst the three or four greatest ever held in Dublin under any auspices for any cause, and was historic in the annals of Irish Labour.

Amid the greatest enthusiasm, resolutions were unanimously voted rejoicing with the people of Russia on the issue of their battle for social and economic freedom.

In January, 1918, an Irish Labour delegation visited the plenipotentiary of the Soviet Republic, Maxim Litvinov, in London, exchanged fraternal greetings presenting him with an address of congratulations from the workers of Ireland to Soviet Russia.

On November 1st, 1918 a Special Meeting of the Trade Union Congress was held in Dublin to discuss a Statement of International Aims. The Statement which was unanimously endorsed concluded with this paragraph:

"Finally, and true to its traditions for liberty, for internationalism, for the fraternity of the working class of every land, and for the Republic of the Workers, Irish Labour utters its vehement protest against the capitalist outlawry of the Soviet Republic of Russia, and calls upon the workers under the governments sharing in this crime to compel the evacuation of the occupied territories of the Republic at the same time as it renews its welcome and congratulation to its Russian comrades who for twelve months have exercised that political, social and economic freedom towards which Irish workers, in common with their fellows in other lands, still strive and aspire." <sup>39</sup>

Plans were made to celebrate the First Anniversary of the October Revolution but the demonstra-

tions were forbidden by the British authorities, and the holding of meetings for that purpose was prohibited "at any time, place, now or in the future". All the premises likely to be used for such a purpose were taken over by armed police, who also removed the Red Flag from over a number of buildings. The Censor rigorously excluded from the press of the Labour Movement any references whatsoever to the protests against the allied intervention in Russia. However, in spite of all the activities of the authorities the Socialist Party (forerunner of the Communist Party) held a private anniversary meeting of the Russian Revolution and issued a special commemorative publication.

The growth in the feelings of solidarity in a two way sense was demonstrated in the words of the Irish Labour leaders, Thomas Johnson and Cathal O'Shannon, who on their return from the Berne International Labour and Socialist Conference held in February, 1919, concluded their lengthy published Report to the National Executive and Affiliated Organisations of the Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party with these words:

"Finally, we have grown still stronger in our conviction that the Soviet Government of Russia is Ireland's best and most disinterested friend. . ." <sup>40</sup>

So, it can indeed be stated that long before the 1973 agreement on mutual diplomatic relations between the two states, and well before the first ever official visit of an Irish Foreign Minister to the Soviet Union the Irish and Soviet peoples through their organised working class movements had established relations on a class and anti-imperialist basis, a relationship that is stronger and closer than a diplomatic one. It was indeed most appropriate that the first Irish citizen to be awarded the Soviet honour, "Order of Friendship Among the Peoples",

should have been a trade union leader, Mr. John Swift, retired General Secretary of the Irish Bakers' Union, ex-President of the Dublin Trades Council and of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, who was so decorated in 1976.



## PROPAGANDA—FALSE AND TRUE

The constant development of close relations with the Soviet Union over the years was not an easy task sometimes for its Irish advocates.

Following the forcible ejection of the interventionist armies from Russia, the publicity and propaganda machines sought to redress the defeat of their military machines by an all-out campaign of slander against the progress of the Soviet working people in building a new society. They distorted its life, concealed its achievements and generally presented it as sinking into a morass of backwardness and uncivilised behaviour.

The imperialist propaganda campaign, of course, continues to this very day being presented now in more subtle forms. Today the accusations are of the lack of "bourgeois democracy" in the USSR, the "suppression of dissidents", and the repression of human rights. In the years following the establishment of Soviet power, in the period of the late 1920s and 1930s, the propaganda was cruder, but nonetheless more spine-chilling. The stock-in-trade of the imperialist anti-Soviet propagandists was depictions of "forcible starvation", "murderous hunting" of priests, Bolsheviks "eating children", organised demonstrations for "the destruction of churches

and the piling of religious objects on bonfires", and countless orgies of various kinds.

This writer grew up in the sustained atmosphere of the anti-Soviet propaganda of the early 1930s. Engraved still in my memory are the first pictures I ever saw of the Soviet Union. When I was a young teenager in my native city of Cork—a port town on the south coast of Ireland—there came a large-scale and well mounted exhibition called "The Pro-Deo (For God) Exposition". It displayed pictorial illustrations of the "oppressed peoples of Russia", of "nationalised babies in child farms", and many horrors of life under "godless communism".

That exhibition made a false emotive impression on our people. It became the talking point of our town. For the duration of its stay it was packed to the doors with curious and indignant people whose sensations had been fully aroused. Being "admittance free" it was always sure of a full attendance because at that time there was heavy chronic unemployment in our land, with the result that there were plenty with "leisure" time on their hands.

Only in after years was it revealed that this anti-Soviet and "Pro-Deo" exhibition had been organised and financed, behind an Irish religious front, by a group of imperialist arms-manufacturers.

Deliberately hidden from our people was the reality that Soviet power had, even by then, accomplished the historic task of the complete abolition of unemployment. As we gazed spellbound at the horror picture at the false exhibition, there was concealed from us that at that very moment the Soviet people were constructing the Turksib Railway through the waterless desert of Kazakhstan, uniting Siberia and Central Asia; or that they were engaged in the gigantic building programme of new facto-

ries, mills, mines and projects like the Dnieper Hydro-power Station.

Sean O'Casey, the Irish proletarian playwright, recounted in his autobiography of his feelings, at that time, the sheer horror of the poverty that so many of the Irish working people had to live in. O'Casey had seen pictures other than the ones exhibited in the "Pro-Deo" exhibition. Of these he wrote:

"Two of the pictures showed the children of the Caucasus and the Ukraine assembling to welcome the first diesel locomotive that had come to the Soviet Republics. There they were—a crowd of them, thinlimbed, and scarcely dressed infant survivors of a dreadful time inflicted on their bodies and their souls by the good, profit-making Christians of the surrounding states.

"There they were; free now, and firm, gazing at what this one locomotive would mean to them in the years to come. The first swallow to be followed by flocks that would brighten the sky.

"Sprinkled among the children were some workers and a few Red Army men, the soldiers dressed in their loose blouses, and wearing their old cloth helmets, decked out in front with a tiny star of red; poverty their companion and bedfellow, but resurrection and courage in all their aspect; a tremendous destiny before them all. There they stood, giving a firm welcome to Russia's first diesel locomotive. They had just defeated a world in arms against them, and this one diesel engine was their first reward from God. These of the Soviet Union were they who did not despise the day of small things, and this small gain has since shown to what an amazing magnificence a single engine and firm hearts and steady minds can grow.

"In spirit, Sean (in his autobiography O'Casey re-

fers to himself in the third person) stood with these children, with these workers, with these Red Army men, pushing away with them the ruin they were rising from, the ruin from which all the people would one day rise, sharing the firmness of their unafraid hearts, adding his cheer to the cheers of the Soviet people. The terrible beauty had been born there, and not in Ireland."<sup>41</sup>

O'Casey, stirred by the humanitarian grandeur of the new society being built by members of his own working class, and perceiving its effect on proletarian struggles everywhere, went on later, in the story of his life, to write:

"... steady, workers here and elsewhere; steady, poor of the poorer places; your day is coming. The Red Star shines over the Kremlin, once the citadel of the Czars... The Red Star is a bright star. No pope, no politician, no cleric, no prince, no press-lord can frighten it down now, or screen its rays from our eyes. It is the evening star, and it is the bright and shining star. It is the star shining over the flock in the field, over the mother crooning her little one to rest, over the girl arraying herself for the bridal, over the old couple musing by the fire-side, over the youngster playing in the street, over the artist achieving a new vision in colour, over the poet singing his song, over the sculptor carving out a fair thing that he alone can see hidden in a stone, over the hammer building the city, over the sickle cutting the corn, over the sailor sailing the seven seas, over the dreaming scientist discovering better and more magical ways of life, over the lover and his lass in ecstasy on the yellow sands, coming through the rye, or sauntering through the indifferent business of some city street, over the miner bending in the deep tomb where the sun-embalmed coal lies low, over the soldier guarding his coun-



try's life, over doctor and nurse, forgetting themselves that they may coax back health into all sick persons and young children.

"Morning star, hope of the people, shine on us!

"Star of power, may thy rays soon destroy the things that err, things that are foolish, and the power of man to use his brother for profit so as to lay up treasure for himself where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.

"Red Mirror of Wisdom turning the labour in factory, field and workshop into the dignity of a fine song;

"Red Health of the sick, Red Refuge of the afflicted, shine on us all.

"Red Cause of our joy, Red Star extending till the five rays, covering the world, give a great light to those who sit in the darkness of poverty's persecution.

"Herald of a new life, of true endeavour, of common sense, of a world's peace, of man's ascent, of things to do bettering done;

"The sign of Labour's shield, the symbol on the people's banner;

"Red Star, shine on us all!"<sup>42</sup>

The prayer-like form of O'Casey's tribute to the Soviet Union was likewise but independently repeated by the Irish patriot priest, Father Michael O'Flanagan.

Father O'Flanagan had been chosen to attend the first meeting of *Dail Eireann* on January 21st, 1919 and asked to recite the prayers that opened the proceedings. Prominent in the national independence movement, he was one of the few priests who opposed the signing of the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty. The occasion for his remarks on the Soviet Union was during the Franco attack on the Spanish Republic. This gross act of rebellion was presented in

Ireland as the beginning of a "war for the defence of Christianity". In such an atmosphere anti-Communist and anti-Soviet propaganda was at full strength. The war in Spain was depicted as a "Russian invasion" and the defenders of the Spanish Republic were described as "a group of bloodthirsty Bolsheviks, persecutors of Catholic nuns and priests"<sup>43</sup>, but Father O'Flanagan saw correctly that the "fight in Spain is a fight between the rich privileged classes as against the rank and file of the poor oppressed people of Spain."<sup>44</sup>

He became one of the few prepared to mount a public platform to defend the Spanish Republic. A resolute and forthright man, he was not easily put off by hostile propaganda spread on a large scale by both the capitalist media and his fellow-priests from the pulpit. At one public meeting, he said:

"What a terrible thing it is to support a cause that is supported by the Bolshevik Republic of Russia. Because the Republic of Russia is supporting the Government in Spain they say the Government in Spain must be on the wrong side. Well, the Republic of Russia is also supporting the people of China against Japan. I wonder are the Japanese also on the right side?

"They tell us that the Russian people have turned their backs upon God, but I wonder what kind of God they turned their back upon? The God of the Orthodox Church of Russia, of which the Tsar was the head? The God which was presented to the Russian people as a big policeman behind the tyranny of the Tsar, with a knout in one hand and some sort of miraculous amulet in the other? I don't know to what extent the Russian people turned their back on God. That is a very hard thing for anyone to tell because the experiment that is taking place in Rus-

sia to-day is something new in the history of the world.

"But when I was learning the catechism in Ireland I was taught that there were seven cardinal works of mercy: to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked; to house the homeless, to comfort those that are in affliction; to visit the sick, and to bury the dead.

"And I think that the Government of Russia is making a better attempt to carry out those seven principles than any government I have read about in the history of the civilised world.

"They are feeding the hungry. As for giving drink to the thirsty, that doesn't amount to much anymore. The trouble about the thirsty I know is that they get more drink than is good for them. They are clothing the naked. And they have no people in Russia with a new costly suit of clothes for every day of the week while others are in rags." <sup>45</sup>

In dealing with the Spanish struggle he laid great emphasis on the fact that the Basque and Catalan peoples were supporting the Spanish Republican Government and said that:

"It was in the Red Republic of Russia that nationalities similar to the Basques got their fullest freedom." <sup>46</sup>

## SOME COMPARISONS

From the beginning of their rule in Ireland the British imposed economic, as well as military and political checks, for the purpose of destroying any native industry. The British Economic Acts of 1660, 1663 and 1666 imposed duties on all Irish goods. The Navigation Act of 1660 stipulated that no commodities of growth, produce or manufacture could be exported to the other British colonies, unless shipped from British ports, but since Ireland was forbidden, also, to import from the Plantations there was no purpose in operating empty ships on a return voyage.

The effect on Irish shipping was that between 1723-1772 Irish tonnage decreased by 25 per cent. In 1723 England possessed two-thirds of the Irish carrying trade, by 1772 its share was seven-eighths. In 1698 there was a ban on the export of Irish woolens, the staple Irish industry, to the continental markets, but the English market was allowed to be open, whilst at the same time London prevented the Irish Parliament from putting a tax on English wool coming into Ireland. The advantage for England was obvious; it had cheap Irish raw materials as well as its own and at the same time a duty-free Irish market. In the same period the flour-



ishing Irish glass industry was completely destroyed.

"Bloody" Lord Castlereagh, the British Chief Secretary for Ireland, who more than any other man was responsible for getting the Act of Union of 1801 through, said the wiping out of the industries was necessary, "because Ireland was growing rich and might ultimately become a menace to England".

In 1845-46-47 the Irish potato crop was affected with blight. With the destruction of their industries the Irish living standards became so low that the potato was the main food and with its failure there occurred "The Great Famine" which with death and enforced emigration reduced the population from 8 to 4 million. This was no natural disaster. "God sent the Blight, but the British sent the Famine", as the Irish say. The amount of corn and cattle exported to Britain during the Famine would have fed twice over all those who died from starvation, but the imperial economy demanded those food-stuffs, and the English absentee landlords demanded their rents. As Frederick Engels, who visited Ireland in 1855 and 1869, observed:

"Gendarmes, priests, lawyers, bureaucrats, squires in pleasing profusion and a total absence of any and every industry, so that it would be difficult to understand what all these parasitic growths found to live on if the misery of the peasants did not supply the other half of the picture."<sup>47</sup>

From then on the role of Ireland was to be that of the provider of cheap food and cheap labour to imperial Britain. Whilst in the 1970s there has been some diminution of that role the economic relationships between the two countries have not been fundamentally altered. Ireland today suffers grievous wounds from the years of direct British rule over the whole of the island.

"The population of Great Britain, at the outset of the Industrial Revolution, was around 13 million. It grew rapidly and today stands at 55 million. At the same time, the population of Ireland was in the region of more than 10 million—today it stands at a little over 4 million. If there had not been that 'unequal development', plus imperial domination and super-exploitation, Ireland's population today would be around 34 million—and possibly higher because of the always higher birth rate in Ireland. (One can only dream of what a home market there would be at our disposal today with such a population; and what a developed working class movement given the Irish thrusting temperament). These figures show the picture and tell the story of super-exploitation and imperialist oppression. Only in the Congo was there a similar situation, fully revealed in 1960 when that country won its freedom. A population of some 20 million a century beforehand had been reduced to 13 million by 1960."<sup>48</sup>

Ireland's history is not that of "ancient wrongs" alone. The British ruling class has always used its economic strength to coerce the country. In 1932-38 it waged what was known as "the Economic War". This had its roots in the continued obligatory payments of Land Annuities to Britain. The Land Annuities had their origin in the fierce peasant war against British absentee landlords and their agents in the period of the end of the 19th century. It was a bloody and determined land war, as mentioned by Engels:

"The agrarian murders in Ireland cannot be suppressed *because* and *as long as* they are the only effective remedy against the extermination of the people by the landlords. They *help*, that is why they continue, and will continue, in spite of all coercive laws. Their number varies, as it does with all social

phenomena; they can even become epidemic in certain circumstances, when they occur at quite insignificant occasions. The epidemic can be suppressed, but the sickness itself cannot." 49

Realising that they had to give way before the anger of the peasants the British passed a number of Land Acts giving the peasants the ownership of the land which they formerly held as tenants—at will. For this the new peasant-proprietors had to pay £ 5 million annually to the British Government to recompense it for the Land Bonds which it gave to the former landlords. This £ 5 million—the Land Annuities—was collected by the Land Commission of the British Government but after the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 the Irish Government was obliged to collect and transmit it to London.

In the light of the general British plunder of Ireland and the particularly hated exploitation by the former landlords, the continued payment of the Land Annuities became a highly charged national and economic issue. In terms of money the £ 5 million was substantial, being equal to the value of the Irish store-cattle export to Britain.

When the de Valera Government, in 1932, withheld further payments of the Land Annuities, London retaliated by imposing heavy tariffs on Irish cattle exports to the British market. Economic war was declared which lasted until 1938 when the Chamberlain-de Valera agreement was reached. This provided for the paying by the Irish of £ 10 million in settlement of the annuities question, but the continued dependence on Britain remained.

Today, because of the marked effect of colonial rule on industrial development, the continued neo-colonial domination of the economy by the British monopolies, and the existence of "private enterprise", Irish living standards are low and unemploy-

ment is heavy and chronic in the two states in Ireland.

The question has been posed—what if Ireland had been part of the Czarist Empire and had been consequently affected by the powerful liberating force of the Great October Revolution?

What if Ireland had been Lithuania? But why compare Ireland and Lithuania? The comparison is prompted by four reasons:

- Lithuania with its population of 3 million makes for a valid and realistic comparison.

- Secondly, bourgeois Lithuania, like Ireland, was but an agrarian satellite of the imperialists, including those of Britain. Like its sister Baltic states, Estonia and Latvia, it was as the Latvian poet, Janis Sudrabkalns, described his country, "a tiny piece of bacon and butter gripped in the avid hands of the imperialists", a description which every Irishman and woman would immediately appreciate.

- Thirdly, it is not only one of the smaller Soviet Republics, but it is also one of the youngest, being only in the USSR for 37 years.

- Finally, this writer was there and was able to see for himself.

In 1918, after the Revolution had triumphed in Russia, Soviet power was also proclaimed in Lithuania by the working people. However, it only survived until 1919 when the bourgeois nationalists, with the help of the Western imperialist interventionists, drowned it in blood.

For twenty years the people experienced a grim dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Under that regime there were thousands of unemployed, and so like the Irish, 100,000 Lithuanians had to emigrate in search of work. Industrial production went up by only 160 per cent from 1913 to 1940 compared to



its neighbour, Soviet Byelorussia, where it increased by 710 per cent.

In 1940, the bourgeois government was overthrown and Soviet power was re-established. It was clear that in the small nations, former Czarist colonies, even the achievement of Soviet power within their own national territories was not in itself a sure guarantee of their national independence. This could only be fully maintained in a union with all the other Soviet nations. This was clearly brought out by Deputy Antanas Sniečkus in his speech at a meeting of Lithuania's "Sejm" (*Dail*) on July 21st, 1940 after the people had taken power into their own hands:

"The establishment of Soviet power," said Sniečkus, "does not yet guarantee Lithuania's safety from the imperialists' attempts on its life. The Lithuanians who have known all the trials of war, enemy occupation and foreign domination, are fully aware that only unification with the USSR will guarantee them their freedom. We want to join the Soviet Union because we passionately love our country and wish to see our Lithuania in mankind's front ranks ... Comrade deputies, we have only one course open to us, if the Lithuanian people wish to live in freedom and happiness. This course is to join the Soviet Union. Any other course would be ruinous for us." <sup>50</sup>

The lesson had been well learned. Imperialism rules, as Ireland well knows, by division, and it can only be defeated by unity and firm alliances. What alliance could be stronger than the one cemented in the form of a voluntary union based on the equality of free peoples, big and small.

Lithuania joined the USSR as its 14th Republic. The poor and landless peasants were given land under a new agrarian reform act, and industry began

to develop, but on June 22nd, 1941, the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union. During their brutal occupation the Nazis exterminated nearly 700,000 people in Lithuania, destroyed power stations, demolished or carried away to Germany almost all the equipment of 1,700 factories. The entire economy of the country was in ruins by the end of the war.

After all that devastation how fares Lithuania now? Under bourgeois rule it exported raw materials and half-finished products and imported the bulk of manufactured goods; today her industrial enterprises supply many economic areas in the Soviet Union.

Only 7 per cent of the population were engaged in industry and construction—today the figure is almost 40 per cent. From 1940 to 1976 industrial output increased 49 times over.

There are over 967 collective farms and 270 state farms equipped with the latest types of farm machinery. The volume of output of basic farm products is double that of the prewar period. The Republic produces almost 130 kilograms of meat and 810 kilograms of milk per capita, which is amongst the highest figures in the world.

In capitalist Lithuania there were thousands who could not read or write, the children either had to work or could not afford schooling. In 1938, only 40 per cent of peasant children attended school. At the beginning of 1940, 408,000 aged 14 to 50 were illiterate or semi-illiterate. Now illiteracy has been wiped out, the ratio of students to the population is 189 per 10,000. The number of specialists with a higher education is fourteen times what it was in 1940.

The Lithuanians immediately impress one with their love for their language, culture and their music. They have a particular pride in the work of

their artist and composer, Konstantinas Čiurlionis, whose death at an early age they still lament, whose memory they revere and whose works they preserve and exhibit. For me this made for another comparison. In 1971, our own Irish brilliant and young composer, Sean O'Riada, died, but much of his broadcast music is lost because, philistine-like, our bourgeois radio authorities, in the interests of economy, had wiped out the tapes of same.

One's overall impression of the people of Soviet Lithuania is indeed their pride in their national history and traditions, which they always express with an emphasis that they are not a separate small country but a part of the powerful USSR, perfectly blending their patriotic pride in their own little country and in their vast multinational state.

How did the Lithuanian people make such progress in overcoming the backwardness of centuries and the destruction wrought by the Nazis? The answer came from Antanas Sniečkus, the man who proposed 37 years ago in the Lithuanian Parliament that there was only one course open to the people, the man who later was elected the First Secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party:

"The working people of Lithuania are well aware that by their own efforts and, more so, within so short a period, they could not have reached such summits of economic development. This became possible only due to the firm unity and mutual assistance of all the Soviet Republics and all the working people of our country."<sup>51</sup>

Today it is ironic that some shrill voices engaging in anti-Soviet propaganda in Ireland endeavour in imitation of the old crude slanders to convince people that Lithuania is forcibly incorporated in the Soviet Union and that the same USSR exploits it economically. They concentrate particularly on al-

leging that the Catholic Church is persecuted in Lithuania, and try to prevent people from seeing the real comparative differences between a small country that is free, united, socialist and Soviet and a country like Ireland which is still being plagued by monopoly capitalism, the true description of imperialism. The anti-Soviet propagandists even suppress the fact that the Old and New Christian Testaments had to await the advent of Soviet power before they were translated, for the first time, into the Lithuanian language!



## FORWARD IN FRIENDSHIP

The 1917 October Revolution was truly the "Ten Days That Shook The World".<sup>52</sup> It started a process of fundamental change throughout the entire globe that has changed the whole balance of forces in favour of the working people everywhere. Amongst the particular beneficiaries have been the peoples of small nations as shown by the example of Lithuania. Another more up-to-date case can be cited, an example that too has valid relevancy to Ireland, and that is the one of the small island of Cuba, thousands of miles away from the Soviet Union but only 90 miles away from a powerful exploiter which made that beautiful island a source of rich profit, a hot-bed of corruption, illiteracy, brutal gangsterism and prostitution.

Lenin saw quite clearly the worldwide liberating effects of the Great October Revolution, particularly for the small nations fighting for self-determination. In the case of the Irish struggle for such, Lenin—who produced as many as 36 articles on our people's struggles—once wrote:

"The present 'victors' in the first imperialist slaughter have not the strength to defeat small-tiny, I might say—Ireland"...<sup>53</sup>

The continued inability of the British imperialists

to hold onto Ireland was further weakened by the triumph of the 1917 Revolution and the subsequent formation of the USSR. That was six decades ago and what a decisive change there is now in the world.

Such changes were highlighted at the 15th Congress of the Communist Party of Ireland, October, 1971. The Congress examined the situation not only in the context of Ireland itself, but in the light of the causes of the declining position of British imperialism in the world system of monopoly capitalism in the previous 50 years. The Main Political Resolution pointed out that this world system was itself in a state of crisis, which had been caused by the intensification of the contradictions between the capitalist powers themselves; by the sweep of the national liberation struggles; the upsurge of the workers in the capitalist countries, "and by the increasingly proven superiority of the socialist countries—of which the first and most powerful is the Soviet Union."<sup>54</sup>

The Congress declared that the system of imperialism (in the words of Wolfe Tone) is the source of all Ireland's troubles; in all capitalist lands unemployment is increasing, inflation is soaring, and even the USA, the mightiest of all the imperialist states, is experiencing a crisis with the once Almighty dollar. The Congress Resolution went on to say:

"As the system of imperialism is being defeated in the field, it resorts increasingly to an ideological offensive against Socialism, mainly in the form of Anti-Sovietism, and attempts to divide the working people by encouraging racial, political and religious sectarianism, as in the case of white against black in the United States, Turk and Greek in Cyprus, English-speaking and French-speaking in Ca-

nada, and in our own country between Catholic and Protestant." 55

On the eve of the 60th Anniversary of the Great October Revolution the Soviet Union continues to fight for the implementation of the great ideal of peace which was one of the first Decrees of the Second Congress of Soviets which set up the first Soviet Government with Lenin at its head.

It is appropriate in this review of Irish-Soviet relations to refer back to the 1920 Draft Treaty of Friendship between Ireland and the Russian Socialist Federal Republic with its first words, "Desirous of promoting peaceful and friendly relations between the people of Russia and Ireland, and striving to co-operate in the interest of the human race" ... and Article 12, which stated, "The avowed purpose of the contracting parties being to end imperialist exploitation, to ensure the freedom of the world's highways, to bring about universal disarmament, and to secure peace to all the peoples of the world, they agree to enter into a league with similarly-minded nations, each nation to be represented by delegates freely elected by their nationals."

When the Irish Nobel Prize winner, Mr. Sean MacBride, presided over the 1973 Congress of World Peace Forces, and the 1977 International Peace Forum, both held in Moscow, he was both in the tradition of the struggle for world peace and the Irish aspirations for freedom and democracy.

Though it did take a long time before Irish-Soviet diplomatic relations were established, the class and national relations which existed from the birth of the Soviet state were viable enough to survive the worst excesses of the manipulated hate campaign against the USSR. The voices of friendship, trust and admiration of "Big Jim" Larkin and other Irish working class leaders, of Sean O'Casey and Father

Michael O'Flanagan could not be completely silenced.

The existence now of diplomatic relations creates a new and higher basis for the further enrichment of friendship between the two peoples. The mutual ties are being strengthened each day. Fraternal delegations now come to the Annual Conferences of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the gesture is returned at the Congress of Soviet Trade Unions. The tradition began by Lenin's solidarity with the Dublin transport workers has been revived, stronger than ever, with exchange visits of Irish and Soviet trade union workers. The young workers of the Connolly Youth movement and the Soviet Komsomol meet and greet each other in their respective countries.

The writings of James Connolly have been translated into the Russian language. There are many scholarly works on the history of Ireland written in the Soviet Union by A. Kolpakov, L. Golman, M. Orlova, V. Kunina, etc.

In 1968, Chekhov's "Cherry Orchard" was produced in Dublin at the Abbey (National) Theatre, with for the first time a Soviet director. The leading Irish pianist, Veronica MacSweeney, has performed for Soviet audiences including in her concerts the works of John Field, "the Russian Irishman", born in Dublin and buried in Moscow. The "Lietuva" Dance and Music ensemble from Lithuania, appropriately enough, came to captivate Irish lovers of artistic folk-music.

In Moscow, in April 1976, with the same spirit, the USSR-Ireland Society honoured the 60th Anniversary of the Irish Rising of Easter, 1916. An action that would have undoubtedly pleased Lenin and thrilled Connolly...



"Sing out the name of him who died,  
Loud and clear with Irish pride.  
Of Connolly brave who one Easter day  
Fought and fell to end the age-long sway  
Of King and Master over all mankind.

"Sing out the name of Lenin too,  
Who sprang to his defence,  
No more must working people fight,  
In strife for cruel imperial plunder,  
Heroic Easter Week was right!  
Rang Lenin's voice like thunder.

"Fifty years have now passed by,  
Since Connolly died, since Lenin spoke.  
Fifty years of upturned thrones,  
The age of man; the end of drones . . .

All mankind's marching forward now  
Let Ireland join that tide,  
That's what Lenin dreamed of,  
That's why Connolly died."<sup>56</sup>

The seeds of solidarity sown by Lenin in the Irish historical soil of 1913 and 1916 took a long time to sprout, but the tiny plants had to grow, at first, in a cold climate amidst deliberately planted poisonous weeds, but grow they did, and now they are beginning to bloom into roses of Irish-Soviet friendship.

They are indeed roses of fraternity in a contemporary world that sees more and more progress in the cause of national liberation, social emancipation, peoples' unity and peace among nations.

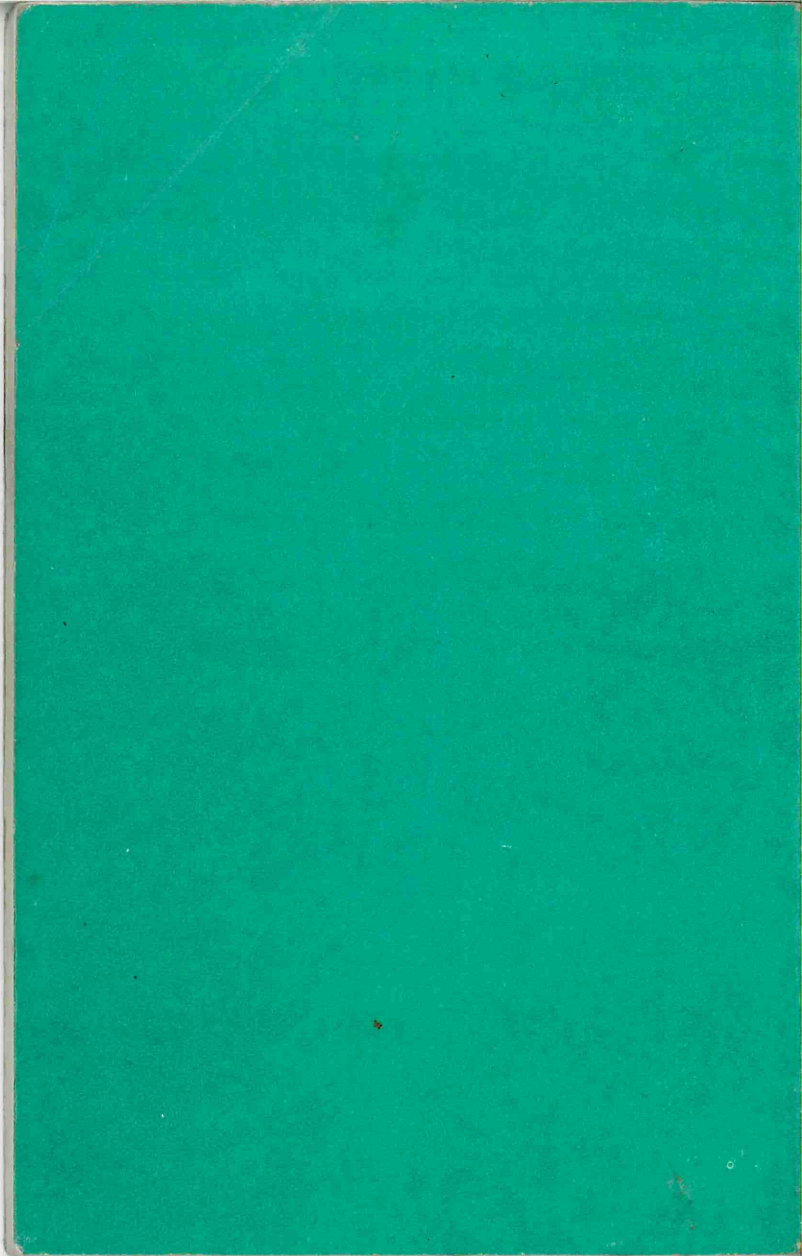
## NOTES

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3. V. I. Lenin on Britain, Vol. 19, pp. 297-301, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1960.
4. *Ibid.*, (In the period when V. I. Lenin wrote the article Galicia as a province of Poland belonged to the Austrian-Hungarian Empire of Habsburgs. It was the most backward, both economically and culturally, region).
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53. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 350.
54. *A Democratic Solution*, Programme adopted at the 15th National Congress, Communist Party of Ireland, October 16-17th, 1971.
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