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**‘Irish republicanism and the Cold War: Western geo-political state
perspectives on crises in Ireland, 1962-1976’**

Submitted in fulfilment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2011

John Mulqueen



Thesis 9522

DECLARATION

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SUMMARY

This is a study of state perceptions of subversion in Ireland before and during the Northern Ireland Troubles. The thesis explores the international dimension to the Troubles in the context of the Cold War and the evolution of a left-wing strand in Irish republicanism which aligned itself with the Soviet Union. As the Irish Republican Army (IRA) leadership attempted to explore political avenues to secure support for its revolutionary agenda, the nature of its strategy was analysed in Belfast, Dublin and London. The thesis mainly draws on archival records to assess the responses of the British, Irish and Northern Ireland governments to a subversive threat in both jurisdictions in Ireland. This study discusses strains that developed in Anglo-Irish relations as the Troubles unfolded from 1968 and the 'special relationship' between the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) as it related to British security measures in Northern Ireland. The thesis also raises the question of Soviet interest in Irish affairs, and the Official republican movement's relationship with the communist bloc, as opportunities arose to take advantage of Britain's difficulties in the North. The thesis argues that Western security advisers and policymakers were influenced by wider Cold War trends and that less than nuanced thinking in relation to terrorism adversely affected key security decisions in Northern Ireland during the early years of the Troubles.

DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this thesis to my wife Fiona, and my children Donal, Aoibh and Caireann.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANC: African National Congress.

ASIO: Australian Security Intelligence Organization.

B Specials: Ulster Special Constabulary.

CAC: Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge).

CCDC: Central Citizens' Defence Committee.

CDU: Campaign for Democracy in Ulster.

CIA: Central Intelligence Agency (USA).

CPC: Communist Party of Canada.

CPGB: Communist Party of Great Britain.

CPI: Communist Party of Ireland.

CPNI: Communist Party (Northern Ireland).

CPSU: Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

CYM: Connolly Youth Movement.

DIS: Defence Intelligence Staff (UK).

EEC: European Economic Community.

FCO: Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK).

FBI: Federal Bureau of Investigation (USA).

FDJ: Free German Youth (GDR).

G2: Irish army intelligence directorate.

GDR: German Democratic Republic.

IAAM: Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement.

INLA: Irish National Liberation Army.

IRA: Irish Republican Army.

IRD: Information Research Department (UK).

IRSP: Irish Republican Socialist Party.

ITA: Irish Telephonists' Association.

ITGWU: Irish Transport and General Workers' Union.

IUS: International Union of Students.

IWL: Irish Workers' League.

IWP: Irish Workers' Party.

JIC: Joint Intelligence Committee (UK).

JSC: Joint Security Committee (Northern Ireland).

KGB: Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopastnosti (Soviet security and intelligence service).

LHASC: Labour History Archive & Study Centre.

MI5: Security Service (UK).

MI6: Secret Intelligence Service (UK).

MoD: Ministry of Defence (UK).

NAA: National Archives of Australia.

NAI: National Archives of Ireland.

NAIJ: National Association for Irish Justice (USA).

NARA: National Archives and Records Administration (USA).

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

NCCL: National Council for Civil Liberties (Britain).

NICRA: Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association.

NIO: Northern Ireland Office.

NORAIID: Irish Northern Aid.

NZSIS: New Zealand Security Intelligence Service.

PD: People's Democracy.

PFLP: Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

PLO: Palestine Liberation Organization.

PRONI: Public Record Office of Northern Ireland.

RID: Republic of Ireland Department (UK).

RUC: Royal Ulster Constabulary.

SDLP: Social Democratic and Labour Party (NI).

SFWP: Sinn Féin The Workers' Party.

TNA: The National Archives (Kew).

UCD: University College, Dublin.

UCDA: UCD Archives.

UDA: Ulster Defence Association.

UDI: unilateral declaration of independence.

UDR: Ulster Defence Regiment.

UK: United Kingdom.

UN: United Nations.

US: United States of America.

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

UVF: Ulster Volunteer Force.

UWC: Ulster Workers' Council.

WDFY: World Federation of Democratic Youth.

WP: Workers' Party.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Peter Berry: secretary, Department of Justice, 1961-71.

David Blatherwick: second, then first secretary, British embassy, Dublin, 1970-73.

Máirín de Burca: prominent Official republican.

Jim Callaghan: home secretary 1967-70.

Patrick Cooney: minister for justice 1973-77.

Liam Cosgrave: taoiseach 1973-77.

Séamus Costello: leading republican, chairman, Irish Republican Socialist Party 1974-77.

William Craig: minister of home affairs 1966-68.

Stewart Crawford: deputy undersecretary of state, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 1970-73; chairman, Joint Intelligence Committee, 1970-73.

Brian Faulkner: Northern Ireland prime minister 1971-72, chief executive 1974.

Garret FitzGerald: minister for foreign affairs 1973-77.

Ian Freeland: general officer commanding, Northern Ireland, 1969-70.

Arthur Galsworthy: British ambassador to Ireland 1973-76.

Seán Garland: leading republican, Official Sinn Féin national organiser 1971-77.

Andrew Gilchrist: British ambassador to Ireland 1967-70.

Cathal Goulding: IRA (and Official IRA) chief of staff 1962 to (circa) 1975.

Denis Greenhill: deputy undersecretary of state, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 1966-69; permanent undersecretary of state, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and head of the diplomatic service, 1969-73.

Charles Haughey: minister for justice 1961-64, minister for agriculture 1964-66, minister for finance 1966-70.

Ted Heath: British prime minister 1970-74. Patrick Hillery: minister for external/foreign affairs 1969-73.

Roy Johnston: Sinn Féin/Official Sinn Féin director of education 1966-1972.

Albert Kennedy: inspector general, Royal Ulster Constabulary, 1961-69.

Seán Lemass: taoiseach 1959-66.

Jack Lynch: taoiseach 1966-73, 1977-79.

Tomás Mac Giolla: Sinn Féin/Official Sinn Féin president 1962-1977.

John Moore: United States ambassador to Ireland 1969-75.

Richard Nixon: United States president 1969-74.

Terence O'Neill: Northern Ireland prime minister 1963-69.

Michael O'Riordan: general secretary, Irish Workers' Party 1965-70; general secretary, Communist Party of Ireland, 1970-80.

Donal O'Sullivan: Irish ambassador to the United Kingdom 1970-74.

John Peck: British ambassador to Ireland 1970-73.

Merlyn Rees: Northern Ireland secretary of state 1974-76.

Eamonn Smullen: Official Sinn Féin director of economic and industrial research 1973-77.

Frank Soskice: home secretary 1964-66.

Harold Wilson: British prime minister 1964-70, 1974-76.

William Whitelaw: Northern Ireland secretary of state 1972-73.

INTRODUCTION

Northern Ireland's Troubles were not simply a security crisis, they were also a political crisis. The northern state had not been a democracy, Paul Arthur has written, but what has been described as a 'paranocracy': the basis of political power had been the successful appeal to paranoid fears in the unionist electorate of the subversive threat constituted by the nationalist minority. Political leaders, from both communities, he argues, lacked that basic skill, the ability to negotiate. Consequently, there would be inherent difficulties in implementing reform and finding a political solution as the Troubles developed from 1968. The Ulster Workers' Council (UWC) strike of 1974, which brought down the power-sharing executive, Arthur contends, would be but one component of this problem.¹ Following the introduction of direct rule from London in March 1972, unionism fragmented into warring factions and Protestant paramilitaries emerged as a force to be reckoned with. In 1975 the British government introduced its 'Ulsterisation' security strategy, in which the role of the army would be reduced in favour of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR); this would be accompanied by the 'criminalisation' policy which would see the removal of 'political status' from paramilitary prisoners. The following year the new secretary of state for Northern Ireland, Roy Mason, declared that the Provisional IRA was 'reeling'. He would be proved wrong.²

State security responses to the threat posed by republican and loyalist paramilitaries exacerbated the Northern Ireland conflict.³ And there were various parties to this security crisis. Adrian Guelke observes that in the early years of the Troubles, the Marxist-led

¹ Paul Arthur, *Special Relationships: Britain, Ireland and the Northern Ireland Problem* (Blackstaff, Belfast, 2000), pp. 31-70, 96-115.

² Henry Patterson, *Ireland Since 1939: The Persistence of Conflict* (Penguin, Dublin, 2006), pp. 223-33, 248-51. The main Protestant paramilitary organisation was the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), which at its peak in 1972 numbered 40-50,000 men.

³ Paul Arthur, *Government and Politics of Northern Ireland* (Longman, London, 1980, 2nd edn., 1991), pp. 69-81, 107-35.

Official republican movement was ‘an important political and paramilitary actor’ in the North.⁴ In the wider analysis of the northern conflict, however, Official republicans – overshadowed by their Provisional rivals – are sometimes overlooked, or merit mention mainly due to Official IRA actions committed before its 1972 ceasefire. But Richard Bourke, *Peace in Ireland: The War Of Ideas* (Pimlico, London, 2003), and Paul Bew and Henry Patterson, *The British State & The Ulster Crisis: From Wilson to Thatcher* (Verso, London, 1985), are exceptions to the general rule in discussing the Officials in the wider scheme of things.⁵

While comparisons can be made with other post-war conflicts in Europe and elsewhere, in many respects the Troubles can be understood as a unique phenomenon. There would be a geo-political dimension from 1969, with involvement by the British and Irish governments, which led to strained Anglo-Irish relations, but neither government militarily intervened on behalf of one of the two political communities. Guelke argues that the Northern Ireland conflict did not become internationalized; its continuation did not require Soviet assistance, for example, unlike other situations. He has compared the northern problem with other conflicts, in Lebanon, Cyprus, Israel, Puerto Rica and Corsica, and concluded that, ‘No other situation in the world is identical even in broad structural terms with that in Northern Ireland.’⁶ However, the unique nature of the Troubles can be over-emphasised.

⁴ Adrian Guelke, *Northern Ireland: The International Perspective* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1988), p. 40.

⁵ The separate role of the Official republican movement in the early years of the Troubles, as opposed to the Provisionals, is overlooked in Arthur, *Special Relationships*, and Arthur, *Government and Politics*. Among recently-published wider surveys of the North, the Officials’ landmark moments are noted in Patterson, *Ireland Since 1939*, and in Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ulster* (Blackstaff, Belfast, 1992, updated, paperback edn. 2005). They receive little attention in Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon and Henry Patterson, *Northern Ireland 1921-2001: Political Forces and Social Classes* (Serif, London, 1995, revised, updated edn. 2002), and in Sabine Wichert, *Northern Ireland Since 1945* (Longman, Harlow, 1991, 1994, 2nd edn., 1999).

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-7, 40-61, 174-94. The Troubles are compared to the conflict in the Basque Country in Michael Keating, ‘Northern Ireland and the Basque Country’, in John McGarry (ed.), *Northern Ireland and the Divided World: Post-Agreement Northern Ireland in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001), pp. 181-208.

Historians of the Northern Ireland crisis as it unfolded were generally reluctant to view the conflict in geo-political or Cold War terms. But the ending of the Troubles – and the Provisional IRA ceasefire of 1994 – should be understood within an international context, Michael Cox has argued. The end of the Cold War, Cox contends, had a big impact on the thinking of the revolutionaries who directed the Provisional IRA: ‘In effect, having become part of a wider revolutionary project, Irish republicanism could hardly avoid being affected by its collapse in the late 1980s.’ The complete alteration of the global framework within which the Provisional IRA campaign had hitherto been conducted, he argues, made it more difficult for the Provisionals ‘to legitimize a strategy which by the late 1980s had already reached a dead end’.⁷ Cox’s argument for ‘bringing in the international’ led to a wider debate following its first appearance in 1997 and proved contentious, not least because it challenged the consensus among academic analysts that communal antagonism within Northern Ireland had been the root of the conflict.⁸ Continuing the argument, Cox wrote in 2000 that the failure to view the Troubles within an international perspective was analytically parochial – ‘far too many historians of the Troubles have discussed them as if they stood in some splendid isolation from the rest of the world’.⁹ Participating in the debate initiated by Cox on the ending of the Provisional IRA’s ‘armed struggle’, Guelke has argued that the cessation of the Cold War had been a major factor in peace processes in South Africa and Israel/Palestine, which had, in turn, an impact in Northern Ireland. He contends that the ‘indirect influence’ of the end of the Cold War proved very considerable through what he saw as the *zeitgeist* of peace processes, ‘which the parties in Northern Ireland were unable to disregard’. Following the Good Friday Agreement the Provisionals enlisted senior figures in the African National Congress (ANC) to help persuade the rank

⁷ Michael Cox, ‘Bringing in the “International”: The IRA Ceasefire and the End of the Cold War’, in *International Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 4, 1997, pp. 671-93.

⁸ Adrian Guelke, ‘The International System and the Northern Ireland Peace Process’, Working Papers in British-Irish Studies No. 21, 2002, Institute for British-Irish Studies, University College Dublin.

⁹ Michael Cox, ‘Ireland after the Cold War’, in Michael Cox, Adrian Guelke and Fiona Stephen (eds.), *A Farewell to Arms? From ‘Long War’ to Long Peace in Northern Ireland* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2000), pp. 249-62.

and file to accept the deal.¹⁰ Richard English points out that the consequences of the collapse of the Berlin Wall disappointed some leftist republicans, but offered the possibility of an interventionist role for a US no longer as committed to the ‘special relationship’ with Britain.¹¹ John Dumbrell has argued that Washington’s interventionism would be rooted in a reinterpretation of Britain’s relationship to the US in the post-Cold War world.¹² The debate on the influence of the ending of the Cold War on the thinking within the Provisional IRA raises the question of the relationship between Irish republicanism and international forces during the course of the Troubles.

The Provisional IRA took inspiration from other ‘anti-imperialist’ struggles in Aden, Cyprus and Vietnam, and links were developed in the 1970s with movements in Algeria and Tanzania.¹³ From the mid-1970s the increasingly influential Gerry Adams stressed the importance of leftist agitation in the Provisionals’ struggle.¹⁴ But Provisional Sinn Féin had been assigned the junior role by the Provisional IRA and had done little to promote its non-Marxist socialism.¹⁵ While Official IRA violence did not cease following its declaration of a ceasefire in 1972, Official republicans had earlier embarked on a more leftist path than their Provisional rivals.¹⁶ In promoting the necessity of taking up various left-wing causes, Adams was seeking to follow the example of the Officials in the wake of the 1969-70 split that resulted in separate Official and Provisional movements.¹⁷

¹⁰ Adrian Guelke, “‘Comparatively peaceful’: South Africa, the Middle East and Northern Ireland”, in Cox, Guelke and Stephen (eds.), *A Farewell to Arms?*, pp. 223-34.

¹¹ Richard English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003), pp. 303-5.

¹² John Dumbrell, “‘Hope and History’: the US and Peace in Northern Ireland”, in Cox, Guelke and Stephen (eds.), *A Farewell to Arms?*, pp. 214-22.

¹³ Paul Dixon, ‘Rethinking the International and Northern Ireland: A Critique’, in Michael Cox, Adrian Guelke and Fiona Stephen (eds.), *A Farewell to Arms? Beyond the Good Friday Agreement* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2000, 2nd edn. 2006), pp. 409-26.

¹⁴ For a critical perspective on this process, see Henry Patterson, *The Politics of Illusion: A Political History of the IRA* (Hutchinson Radius, London, 1989, new edn., Serif, London, 1997), pp. 180-90. See also English, *Armed Struggle*, pp. 180-2, and Guelke, *International Perspective*, pp. 50-2.

¹⁵ The evolution of the Provisionals’ political thinking during the 1970s, and the increasing influence of Adams and his cohort, is outlined in Eoin Ó Broin, *Sinn Féin and the Politics of Left Republicanism* (Pluto, London, 2009), pp. 221-35. For an overview of Official and Provisional political developments in the 1970s, see Seán Cronin, *Irish Nationalism: A History of its Roots and Ideology* (The Academy Press, Dublin, 1980), pp. 209-15.

¹⁶ English, *Armed Struggle*, pp. 175-8.

¹⁷ The Officials’ ideological trajectory from 1970-77 is analysed in Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, pp. 140-79.

The Official republican movement would go further than the Provisionals in this left-wing direction by openly aligning itself with the Moscow-led world in 1973 and deciding to organise along Marxist-Leninist lines.¹⁸ Eunan O’Halpin has argued that the Official movement evolved from the 1969-70 schism into a Moscow-orientated communist party in all but name and developed a close relationship with the Soviet Union and some of its satellites.¹⁹ Its most notorious link with a Stalinist state would prove to be the ongoing connection with North Korea, which developed from 1976 as a result of the relationship with the Soviets.²⁰ The reassessment that led to left-wing republicans developing a Marxist-Leninist strategy began in 1962 following the failure of the IRA’s border campaign.²¹ The republican movement’s leftist journey from 1962 created a communist-republican axis not seen since the 1930s.²² Hostility to what republican traditionalists perceived as a ‘communist programme’ was central to the 1969-70 dispute; the Provisionals in their early years were vocally anti-communist.²³ The influence of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) in shaping the thinking of Irish republicans concerned the traditionalists who established the Provisional movement. Roy Johnston, the *bête noir* of traditionalist republicans in the 1960s, had been a member of the CPGB.²⁴ Within the Official republican movement leadership, the influential Eamonn Smullen had been active in the party for almost twenty years.²⁵ Another influential figure in the Official movement, Des O’Hagan, who became its director of education in 1972, had also been

¹⁸ Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, p. 161.

¹⁹ Eunan O’Halpin, *Defending Ireland: The Irish State and its Enemies Since 1922* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, paperback edn. 2000), pp. 315-7; Richard Dunphy, ‘The Contradictory Politics of the Official Republican Movement, 1969-1992’, in Richard Deutsch (ed.) *Les Républicanismes Irlandais: Actes du Colloque de Rennes* (Terre de Brume – Presses Universitaires de Rennes, Rennes, 1997), pp. 117-38.

²⁰ Brian Hanley and Scott Millar, *The Lost Revolution: The Story of the Official IRA and the Workers’ Party* (Penguin, Dublin, 2009), pp. 334, 461-3, 482-3, 489-90.

²¹ Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, pp. 96-139. Simon Prince, *Northern Ireland’s ‘68: Civil Rights, Global Revolt and the Origins of the Troubles* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2007).

²² Richard English, *Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland* (Macmillan, London, 2006), pp. 333-6.

²³ Cronin, *Irish Nationalism*, pp. 201-5.

²⁴ Matt Treacy, *The IRA 1956-69: Rethinking the Republic* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2011), pp. 71-4. Roy H.W. Johnston, *Century of Endeavour: A Biographical & Autobiographical View of the Twentieth Century in Ireland* (Tyndall, Carlow, in assoc. with Lilliput, Dublin, revised edn., 2006), pp. 167-8.

²⁵ Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, pp. 167-8.

involved in the CPGB.²⁶ In the early 1980s the Officials would develop links with communist parties in France, Italy and Spain, and in 1983 the Workers' Party (WP), as Official Sinn Féin had now become, formally established fraternal relations with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).²⁷

There had been an international dimension to militant republicanism since the establishment of the Irish state, and at various times since 1922 the IRA had established links with foreign powers and movements, including both the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany.²⁸ Prominent left-wing republican Peadar O'Donnell had been keen to attach a Comintern link to his land annuities agitation in the inter-war years.²⁹ And left-wing republicans led by Frank Ryan defied Ireland's vigorously-expressed pro-Franco sentiment to join the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War.³⁰ In 1945 the Irish army intelligence directorate (G2) identified a new threat in the 'Russian and communist problem'. Ireland's communists represented a particular subversive threat for the authorities as they were subsidised and directed from outside the state: they constituted 'a unit of an international organisation'. In the Department of Justice Peter Berry had become the main adviser on security matters in 1941.³¹ During the Northern Ireland Troubles the Official republican movement received Soviet and Eastern bloc support. O'Halpin points out that there was an absence within the British policy system and intelligence collection

²⁶ Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 222-3, 251-2.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 461-2.

²⁸ Eunan O'Halpin, 'The Geopolitics of Republican Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century', Working Papers in British-Irish Studies No. 10, 2001, Institute for British-Irish Studies, University College Dublin. On the Comintern's interest in Ireland, including the IRA, see Emmet O'Connor, *Reds and the Green: Ireland, Russia and the Communist Internationals 1919-43* (University College Dublin Press, Dublin, 2004). On IRA liaison with the Soviet Union in the inter-war years, see Tom Mahon and James J. Gillogly, *Decoding the IRA* (Mercier, Cork, 2008). See also Kate O'Malley, *Ireland, India and Empire: Indo-Irish Radical Connections, 1919-64* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2008), pp. 13-52; Brian Hanley, *The IRA: 1926-1936* (Four Courts, Dublin, 2002); and Barry McLoughlin, *Left to the Wolves: Irish Victims of Stalinist Terror* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2007).

²⁹ Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, pp. 33-75. Richard English, *Radicals and the Republic: Socialist Republicanism in the Irish Free State, 1925-37* (Clarendon, Oxford, 1994). See also Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000).

³⁰ In a bizarre twist of fate Ryan spent his final years in Hitler's Berlin. Fearghal McGarry, *Frank Ryan* (Dundalgan, Dundalk, 2002, revised edn., University College Dublin Press, Dublin, 2010). For a sympathetic portrayal of Ryan, see Seán Cronin, *Frank Ryan: The Search for the Republic* (Repsol, Dublin, 1980). See also Adrian Hoar, *In Green and Red: The Lives of Frank Ryan* (Brandon, Dingle, 2004).

³¹ O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, pp. 273-6.

agencies of any fear that Irish republicanism ‘could successfully be courted by the Soviets as a strategic cold war ally as previous generations of separatists had been by Imperial Germany and by the Nazis’. He contends that the maxim ‘England’s difficulty is Ireland’s opportunity’ offers the best explanation for militant republicanism’s range of external friendships. This ideological elasticity, he argues, ‘prevented all but the chilliest or most eccentric of western cold war warriors from arguing that Irish republican violence after 1969 could be explained largely in terms of Soviet manipulation’. The British policy system, he writes, had ‘long been conditioned to look at Irish problems as something apart from the normal run of international business, neither deriving from nor relying on wider political trends and not to be confused with larger geopolitical challenges’.³²

Communism had loomed large in the minds of Western governments for most of the twentieth century. The Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1917 inspired a wave of revolutions across the world over the next two years and the Bolsheviks created the Communist International, or Comintern, to spread global insurrection.³³ British and US officials reacted to its creation with horror. A perception of communism as a monolithic phenomenon emerged in Britain and the US during the 1920s in which all communists were lackeys of the Kremlin, Marc J. Selverstone argues, and this simplistic perception then came to permeate American and British Cold War mind-sets.³⁴ Britain broke off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1927 over the Arcos affair. The Comintern had been using London as a clandestine hub for international subversion and British security officers seized compromising documents in a raid on the premises of the All-Russia Co-operative Society (Arcos), which functioned as a front for Soviet intelligence. In the US, where the Comintern had established the Workers’ Party of America in 1921 to

³² O’Halpin, ‘Geopolitics of Republican Diplomacy’, pp. 7-11.

³³ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (Abacus, London, 1995), pp. 65-75. Comintern-era communists are remembered in Eric Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times: A Twentieth-Century Life* (Allen Lane, London, 2000, Abacus, London, paperback edn., 2003), pp. 127-143.

³⁴ Marc J. Selverstone, *Constructing the Monolith: The United States, Great Britain, and International Communism, 1945-1950* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, 2009), pp. 1-31.

organise revolution, the labour movement was persecuted.³⁵ Following the Russian revolution, Odd Arne Westad writes, Soviet communism came to be seen in the US as ‘a deadly rival of Americanism’.³⁶ The Bolsheviks inspired radicalism in Canada and, for many Canadians, Steve Hewitt observes, ‘foreigners’ equalled radicals. He has written that, ‘What was just as important to those who were concerned about Bolshevism was that non-Anglo-Saxons actively participated in such movements: in Canada, Ukrainians, Finns and Jews represented 80 to 90 per cent of all the members of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) by the late 1920s.’ Ethnic prejudice aside, however, we should note that the CPC aided Soviet espionage activities in Canada.³⁷

Westad defines the Cold War as the period in which the global conflict between the US and the Soviet Union dominated international affairs, ‘roughly between 1945 and 1991’.³⁸ In the West, following the co-operation of wartime, Robert Service points out, the Soviet Union would be depicted as the enemy of democratic freedom: ‘Popular opinion was quickly transformed. The indispensable and respected military partner of 1941-5 became the object of conventional hostility.’³⁹ Anti-communism in the West was not new, Eric Hobsbawm notes, but the Cold War perception that the USSR aspired towards world domination gave it ‘a new hysterical edge’.⁴⁰ At the outset of the Cold War, the one-time British Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) chairman Sir Percy Cradock has written, the first question for the JIC in weekly intelligence summaries was whether there were Soviet, and later Chinese, preparations for war. These fears ebbed from the mid-1950s, he observes, with a growing confidence in the West that the Cold War struggle would remain

³⁵ Robert Service, *Comrades: A World History of Communism* (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 118-22. On the Arcos raid, see Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (Allen Lane, London, 2009), pp. 154-6.

³⁶ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005), pp. 16-21.

³⁷ Steve Hewitt, *Spying 101: The RCMP's Secret Activities at Canadian Universities, 1917-1997* (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2002), pp. 6-8.

³⁸ Westad, *Global Cold War*, p. 3.

³⁹ Service, *Comrades*, pp. 272-82.

⁴⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times: A Twentieth-Century Life* (Abacus, London,), pp. 174-96. Hobsbawm, a communist, recalls that life was less difficult for supporters of the Soviet Union in Britain than in the USA.

within certain limits. Another concern, however, would be the Soviets' ambition to weaken the West through political infiltration and fostering of unrest in colonial territories.⁴¹ In the post-Stalin Kremlin, in the early 1960s, all-out war between the USSR and the US became unthinkable, but a theory developed that America would be overcome through 'wars of liberation' in the Third World.⁴² According to Cradock, there was agreement in principle between London and Washington that communist-backed insurgencies – such as in Malaya and Vietnam – should be suppressed. Britain's power in the world declined in relation to the US, he notes, but maintaining security co-operation under the 'special relationship' would be a priority for Britain:

'From the Second World War on there was a continuous intimate dialogue between the two governments about world affairs. All British governments sought as a cardinal objective to exert maximum influence in Washington.'⁴³

Throughout the Cold War Britain would be a significant intelligence target for the Soviet Union, due to its role in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and its 'special relationship' with the US. Most KGB intelligence gathering would be conducted by officers availing of diplomatic cover in Soviet embassies and trade delegations in foreign capitals. 'This was common practice for both sides in the Cold War,' Geraint Hughes notes, 'even though it violated the 1961 Vienna Treaty on diplomatic protocol.'⁴⁴ During the Cold War the JIC, designed to assess strategic intelligence, would be preoccupied with identifying trends in Soviet behaviour. Sitting at the apex of the British intelligence system, and located within the Cabinet Office, the JIC produces independent assessments of threats to and opportunities for Britain based on all available intelligence. 'The JIC of

⁴¹ Sir Percy Cradock, *Know Your Enemy: How the JIC Saw the World* (John Murray, London, 2002), pp. 50-65.

⁴² Richard J. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (John Murray, London, 2001), p. 607.

⁴³ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, pp. 192-201, 292-301.

⁴⁴ Geraint Hughes, "'Giving the Russians a Bloody Nose": Operation *Foot* and Soviet Espionage in the United Kingdom, 1964-71', in *Cold War History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2006, pp. 230-1.

the 1960s', O'Halpin notes, 'was largely but not exclusively focused on the threat from the Soviet Union and its allies.' However, he points out that the JIC would be involved in the Northern Ireland crisis from 1970 onwards.⁴⁵

Questions arise in relation to the involvement of left-wing republicans, and what becomes the Official republican movement, in events before and during the early years of the Troubles. Did the Official strand of Irish republicanism constitute a distinct threat to the state in either jurisdiction in Ireland and, if so, were the perceptions of the authorities influenced by wider security concerns during the Cold War? (We should recognise that assumptions relating to a communist menace dated back to the Bolshevik revolution.) The influence of security fears during the Cold War in shaping responses to Irish subversion, relating to the Soviet Union in particular, might be understood as a Cold War prism. A related question here is whether the Soviets were tempted to interfere in Irish affairs to any significant degree: could Ireland's communists and the Official republicans be viewed as strategic allies of Moscow as Britain grappled with the Northern Ireland crisis? This study will assess whether the hypothesis that 'England's difficulty' can explain the Officials' alignment with the Soviet Union. If various security measures exacerbated the northern crisis, were security responses at key moments during the early years of the Troubles from 1968-76 affected by Western assumptions about subversives in general, and can such assumptions be seen in the light of what Selverstone views as the simplistic mindset of the West in relation to communism?

Studies of the Official republican movement have tended to omit its place in a wider context that might assess its relative importance. Narratives based on interviews with veteran republicans and the movement's own literature and propaganda, while useful, are

⁴⁵ Eunan O'Halpin, "'A Poor Thing But Our Own': The Joint Intelligence Committee and Ireland, 1965-72", in *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 23, No. 5, 2008, pp. 660-62. Michael S. Goodman, 'The Dog That Didn't Bark: The Joint Intelligence Committee and Warning of Aggression', in *Cold War History*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2007, p. 531.

inclined towards an introspective approach. Brian Hanley and Scott Millar's history of the Official republican movement and its political successors, *The Lost Revolution: The Story of the Official IRA and the Workers' Party*, appeared in 2009. A review of thirty years of left-wing republican evolution, from 1962-92, the publisher claimed this would be the 'full story' of this movement, 'never before told'. This is a story, as one reviewer put it, 'never before told in such luxuriant detail'. Although gripping and well written, it relies heavily on interviews, many anonymous. This is a problematic approach. In twelve pages, for example, the topics touched on include deepening links with Mikhail Gorbachev's Soviet Union, media censorship of the Provisionals, talks with the Labour Party on left-wing unity, the advent of 'market socialism' within the party, and electoral advances in 1989. As the WP in the late 1980s began to address the way forward for itself, and socialism generally, none of these issues are analysed.⁴⁶ Seán Swan's study, *Official Irish Republicanism: 1962-1972* (2007), analyses the development of left-wing republicanism and the emergence of the Official republican movement between the 1962 and 1972 ceasefires. Swan had access to Sinn Féin/Official Sinn Féin minutes and correspondence, and he makes an interesting contribution to our understanding of this strand of republican thinking. He makes little use of original sources, however, and his study is limited to the internal dynamics of a relatively marginal body.⁴⁷ In *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* (2003), Richard English discusses the left-wing republican input into the civil rights movement and provides a brief overview of the Official republicans in the North during the early years of the Troubles, but he focuses on the more significant Provisionals.⁴⁸

The ideological trajectory of left-wing republicans from 1962-77 is studied by Henry Patterson in *The Politics of Illusion* (1989, 1997). His discussion of the contradictions and

⁴⁶ Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 482-93. See Jim Smyth, *History Ireland*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2010, pp. 56-7. (Official) Sinn Féin became Sinn Féin The Workers' Party (SFWP) in 1977, which in turn became the Workers' Party (WP) in 1982.

⁴⁷ Seán Swan, *Official Irish Republicanism: 1962-1972* (Lulu, 2007).

⁴⁸ English, *Armed Struggle*, pp. 81-108, 175-8.

tensions impinging on what becomes the Official republican movement remains the most analytical treatment of this strand of Irish republicanism. Patterson interviewed many leading participants and utilised the movement's literature in his analysis.⁴⁹ On the other hand, J. Bowyer Bell's *The Secret Army: The IRA* is a prime example of the 'folklore' approach to the history of militant republicanism. When it first appeared in 1970 the Official IRA's chief of staff, Cathal Goulding, warmly welcomed it as 'not just a book about the IRA, but a book for the IRA'. Similarly to Hanley and Millar, Bell heavily relied on often anonymous interviews. In the foreword to the second, 1979, edition, he pointed out that, again, 'the sources have been people rather than the printed word'.⁵⁰

The impact of communist influences within the republican movement is analysed by Matt Treacy in *The IRA 1956-69: Rethinking the Republic* (2011). Treacy explores the ideological divisions that led to the 1969-70 split between Officials and Provisionals, and utilises archival material in Belfast, Dublin and London.⁵¹ Simon Prince places the left-wing republican thinking of the 1960s in an international context, before the emergence of the Official republican movement, in *Northern Ireland's '68*. Contesting the consensus behind the 'moral case' supporting the civil rights movement, he stresses the contemporary intellectual influences on the New Left in Northern Ireland. Prince focuses on the role of civil rights agitators at the expense of other actors such as the police and their political superiors.⁵²

Other aspects of the Official republicans' evolution have been subjected to academic analysis, but largely do not draw on available archival material. Liam Cullinane explores republican violence and agitation during the 1960s in "'A Happy Blend"? Irish

⁴⁹ Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*.

⁵⁰ J. Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army: The IRA* (Transaction, New Brunswick, NJ, revised 3rd. edn., 1997). Bell, *Secret Army*, p. xiii. See Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 204-5.

⁵¹ Treacy, *The IRA*.

⁵² Prince, *Northern Ireland's '68*. See Paul Bew's introduction, pp. xi-ii.

Republicanism, Political Violence and Social Agitation, 1962-69' (2010).⁵³ Kacper Edward Rekawek discusses the Official IRA's disengagement from 'terrorism' following the 1972 ceasefire in 'How "Terrorism" Does Not End' (2008).⁵⁴ Richard Dunphy studies paramilitary-political tensions in 'The contradictory politics of the Official Republican Movement' (1997).⁵⁵ In *Fighting For Ireland? The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement* (1995), M.L.R. Smith examines the tactics of left-wing republicans and the Officials following the 1962 ceasefire.⁵⁶ Mike Milotte's *Communism in Modern Ireland* (1984) focuses on the communist movement's evolution rather than the development of left-wing republicanism in the 1960s and 1970s.⁵⁷

Contextualising the Official republican movement, during the earlier stages of the Troubles in particular, would enhance our understanding of the impact of left-wing republicanism. A study based on original sources could make a valuable contribution here by offering the perspectives of the various governments concerned with Irish subversion. A range of government archives have become available to researchers in Belfast, Dublin, London and Washington, which would enable a contextual assessment of the Official republicans. This would allow us to judge the impact of left-wing republicans according to the perceptions of state security analysts and policymakers. The methodology employed in this study is an examination of sources available in public archives in order to assess the perspectives of officials and politicians concerned with subversion in Ireland. Intelligence available to embassies, governments and security agencies offered assessments of Irish revolutionaries and their tactics. The Cold War concerns of the Irish state are reflected in the 'Communism

⁵³ Liam Cullinane, "'A Happy Blend'?: Irish Republicanism, Political Violence and Social Agitation, 1962-69', in *Saothar: Journal of the Irish Labour History Society*, Vol. 35, 2010, pp. 49-65.

⁵⁴ Kacper Edward Rekawek, 'How "Terrorism" Does Not End: The Case of the Official Irish Republican Army', in *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 2008, pp. 359-76.

⁵⁵ Dunphy, 'The Contradictory Politics of the Official Republican Movement'.

⁵⁶ M.L.R. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland?: The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement* (Routledge, London, 1995, paperback edn., 1997).

⁵⁷ Mike Milotte, *Communism in Modern Ireland: The Pursuit of the Workers' Republic* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1984).

in Ireland' document which is available in UCD Archives (UCDA). An extensive Garda dossier relating to the IRA and left-wing republican activity in 1962-66 is available in the National Archives of Ireland (NAI). RUC Special Branch carefully followed the development of the republican movement, and its intelligence reports are available in the Home Affairs (HA) series in the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). Irish subversive activity was tracked methodically in the American and British embassies in Dublin, and these records are available in the (US) National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and The National Archives (TNA), Kew. JIC minutes, available in TNA, record its deliberations on the perceived IRA threat in 1966. The papers of the British ambassador to Ireland in 1967-70, Sir Andrew Gilchrist, can be read in the Churchill Archives Centre (CAC), Cambridge. The papers of former taoiseach Garret FitzGerald, in UCDA, contain material relating to republican subversives in the 1970s. And the Northern Ireland Political Collection in the Linen Hall Library is a valuable resource. Intelligence material relating to the activities of Irish republicans can also be accessed on the web, such as the website of National Archives Australia.

A survey of the intelligence offered by embassy and government officials is not without its challenges. Care must be taken to assess the accuracy of the information at hand, which can sometimes be moulded to fit a domestic political priority. For example, when commenting on material dispatched in 1970 to Washington DC, the American ambassador stated that he had been instructed by the State Department to monitor the activities of Irish extremist groups.⁵⁸ His British counterpart provides another example of an embassy argument being tailored to meet a government's security agenda. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) remained concerned in 1972 about Soviet espionage activities and the British ambassador to Ireland encouraged it to believe that the taoiseach

⁵⁸ Moore to Richardson, 26 Feb. 1970, in NARA, RG 59, box 2383, Pol 12 Ire.

could be persuaded of the dangers of agreeing to a Russian embassy in Dublin.⁵⁹ Whenever possible, I note whether embassy intelligence derives from overt or covert sources. Attention is drawn to such information pitched to fit a contemporary domestic agenda in this study of state security perceptions. In general, the claims made in police intelligence reports used here relating to individuals or groups match information made available in the public domain.⁶⁰ However, the subversives themselves often make unsubstantiated claims. One example here is the Official republicans' argument that the Irish government conspired to destroy the civil right movement and create the Provisional movement.⁶¹

The Official republicans' viewpoint is recorded in their own periodicals, *The United Irishman* and the *Irish People*. I have also interviewed veteran republicans. Two interviews with former Official IRA prisoners were especially valuable as a record of events in Long Kesh in relation to the ending of special category status for paramilitary prisoners. Caution should be exercised when using interviews with leading participants in events who may be tempted to embellish their own role and 'forget' inconvenient detail. I have attempted to be careful here and have used interview material to corroborate other accounts in the public domain. For example, comments attributed to Seán Garland, Noel Harris and Tomás Mac Giolla relate to events or individuals that have been commented on by others. While the special category status issue in Long Kesh, as it related to Official republican prisoners, has not received scholarly attention, the two interviewees hold opposing views on the issue's significance, but do not disagree on broad details. The events they refer to, such as the burning of the compounds and its aftermath, received media coverage at the time.

If the Official republican movement played a role of some significance during the Troubles, it was not alone. NATO powers were preoccupied with the Soviet threat during

⁵⁹ Peck to FCO, 26 Feb. 1972, in TNA, PREM 15/1046.

⁶⁰ 'Review of Unlawful and Allied Organisations: December 1, 1964, to November 21, 1966', in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

⁶¹ *Fianna Fáil and the IRA* (anon., n.d.).

the Cold War. A study of the available government archives allows for contextualisation: what did the security forces and the various governments think of a particular left-wing republican threat in relation to more powerful forces? This thesis argues that Western security advisers and policymakers were influenced by wider Cold War trends.

The development and analysis of communist influences within the republican movement will be discussed in Chapter I. Stormont's fears of a resumption of IRA military activity, in conjunction with general observations on republican involvement in protest politics, will be explored here. Chapter II looks at the civil rights movement in the North and perceptions of increasing student radicalisation. This chapter discusses emerging Anglo-Irish tensions over events in Northern Ireland and fears of increased communist penetration. Chapter III examines the Soviet response to events after the introduction of internment, and Moscow's endorsement of the Official IRA, in the context of Britain's expulsion of alleged Soviet agents in Operation Foot. The Nixon administration's expressions of support in 1972 for British policies in the North is discussed in this chapter. The NIO perspective on terrorism in which all paramilitary actors were 'terrorist' will be discussed in Chapter IV. The emergence of the British government's criminalisation policy will be explored in this chapter.

Studies of Irish republicanism and its left-wing strand before and during the Troubles have not considered its international dimension. The influential Berry's view of Irish subversion had been influenced by longstanding concerns over communism since the Comintern era. Improving Anglo-Irish relations were affected by the escalation of the Troubles and opportunities arose for the Soviet Union to take advantage of Britain's difficulties. The renewal of a pro-Moscow strand within republicanism, and the active paramilitary role of the Official IRA, raised the issue of Soviet meddling in Irish affairs. Could Ireland, north

and south, be seen as an arena for an Irish liberation movement – did the KGB consider that ‘England’s difficulty is Russia’s opportunity’? This archival study of Irish republicanism will attempt to fill a gap in the literature by demonstrating that international factors were significant in the development and escalation of the Northern Ireland Troubles.

CHAPTER I: IRA CO-OPERATES WITH COMMUNISTS

‘The Special Powers Act, under which the Republican Clubs have been banned, gives powers to the Stormont Minister for Home Affairs that are essentially no different from those possessed by the most undemocratic police state.’ – **Republican Clubs**¹

‘The efforts which the present Government of Northern Ireland have made to cement a more friendly relationship with the Government of the Republic are, of course, a matter of record. Needless to say, a resumption of terrorist activities mounted from the territory of the Republic would be a serious setback to such efforts.’ – **Captain Terence O’Neill**²

(i) Introduction

During the years between two seminal Cold War moments, the Cuba missile crisis in 1962 and the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968, the ‘sixties’ happened, which, among other things, saw the emergence of fashionable protest movements in the West such as the campaign against US involvement in the war in Vietnam.³ The banning of the Republican Clubs in 1967, as the IRA threat had receded in the North, illustrates how the Northern Ireland state felt unable to allow the open expression of political dissent, unlike other parliamentary democracies in Western Europe: the existence of the IRA would never be far from the minds of the Stormont authorities.⁴ From the beginning, the government of Northern Ireland had been armed with what Richard Bourke terms as ‘a formidable array’ of emergency powers under the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act of 1922. These powers were to be employed against subversion. ‘However’, he writes, ‘subversion was all

¹ Republican Clubs directorate statement, issued 17 Mar. 1967, quoted in *United Irishman*, Apr. 1967, p.11.

² Secret letter from Northern Ireland prime minister Capt. Terence O’Neill to home secretary Sir Frank Soskice, 9 Dec. 1965, in TNA, PREM 13/980.

³ For an overview of the decade, see Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (Heinemann, London, 2005, Pimlico edn., London, 2007), pp. 390-421. See also J.M. Roberts, *The Penguin History of the Twentieth Century: The History of the World, 1901 to the Present* (Penguin, London, 2000), pp. 642-4.

⁴ Thomas Hennessey, *Northern Ireland: The Origins of the Troubles* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 2005), pp. 117-9.

too easily linked to any show of dissatisfaction on the part of the Catholic community at large'.⁵ Moscow had decided to support national liberation movements to undermine the US and its allies worldwide⁶ – with a shared hostility to Ireland's membership of the European Economic Community (EEC), the two Irish communist parties began to collaborate with republicans.⁷ The onset of the Cold War created a new dimension to perceptions of the threat posed by republicans and communists to the Irish state, and the authorities continued to monitor their activities and co-operate with Britain and the US.⁸ During the Cold War, O'Halpin points out, Ireland supplied both London and Washington with information about suspected communist activities and received related material in exchange. 'The roots of such co-operation', he writes, 'were both ideological and pragmatic – Ireland was strongly anticommunist, while, the more forthcoming Irish security officials were, the less likely that the Western allies would start spying in Ireland.'⁹

(ii) Ireland and the Cold War

While the Irish state had been militarily neutral during the Cold War, it had never been ideologically neutral. Ireland's membership of the EEC would be a central policy objective for the taoiseach, Seán Lemass, and Brussels suggested in October 1961 that the Irish government should present a case for joining (this would lapse when General Charles de Gaulle vetoed Britain's application in 1963). This raised the question of NATO membership, and Lemass repeatedly indicated that there would be no obstacle to Ireland

⁵ Richard Bourke, *Peace in Ireland: The War Of Ideas* (Pimlico, London, 2003), pp. 44-9.

⁶ Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West* (Allen Lane, London, 1999), pp. 472-7. Richard J. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (John Murray, London, 2001), p. 607.

⁷ Matt Treacy, *The IRA 1956-69: Rethinking the Republic* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2011), pp. 69-71, 79. Anglo-Irish relations improved under Lemass as Ireland and the UK sought to join the EEC; the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement of 1965 was designed to facilitate EEC membership. On the improvement in Anglo-Irish relations, see Chris Reeves, 'The Penultimate Irish Problem: Britain, Ireland and the Exhumation of Roger Casement', in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 12, 2001, pp. 151-78.

⁸ Eunan O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland: The Irish State and its Enemies Since 1922* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, paperback edn. 2000), pp. 254-303.

⁹ Eunan O'Halpin, 'Intelligence and Anglo-Irish Relations, 1922-1973', in Eunan O'Halpin, Robert Armstrong and Jane Ohlmeyer (eds.), *Intelligence, Statecraft and International Power* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2006), pp. 137-9.

joining. He had made clear his support for the aims of NATO. John Horgan writes: 'Ireland, he said on more than one occasion, was on the side of the democratic western nations in any conflict, real or potential, with the eastern bloc.' In December 1960 Lemass had stated, 'There is no neutrality and we are not neutral.'¹⁰ The leading authority on the development of Ireland's foreign policy, Patrick Keatinge, has observed that non-neutral states tend to ascribe more importance to 'neutrality' than those who have adopted a policy of neutrality. Neutral states, he contends, tend to take a particular position in a given situation according to their priorities, rather than pursuing a consistent policy. At the operational level of international relations, according to Keatinge, neutrality is something of a 'red herring'.¹¹ This generalisation would apply to Lemass's position on EEC membership and any military alliance that might have arisen from it.

The Cuba missile crisis in 1962 illustrated how Dublin could provide discreet assistance to Washington. In October, US president John F. Kennedy imposed a blockade on Cuba in a successful attempt to force the Soviet Union to remove its nuclear missiles from the island. This spectacular Cold War confrontation between the world's two superpowers, with its attendant threat of nuclear war, led to a small protest outside the American embassy in Dublin on 23 October. The next day, *The Irish Times* published a dramatic photograph of a Garda dog lunging at maverick TD Noël Browne.¹² Kennedy had outlined his overall position on the crisis to Lemass on 22 October. The next day, the British embassy in Dublin informed the Department of the Taoiseach that the British government had been asked by the US to refuse transit rights for communist bloc aircraft travelling to Cuba. The US embassy in Dublin then requested information from the Irish government on the Cuban

¹⁰ John Horgan, *Seán Lemass: The Enigmatic Patriot* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1997, paperback edn., 1999), pp. 190, 221-6; Maurice FitzGerald, 'The "mainstreaming" of Irish foreign policy', in Brian Girvin and Gary Murphy, *The Lemass Era: Politics and Society in the Ireland of Seán Lemass* (UCD Press, Dublin, 2005), pp. 94-6; J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989), p. 352.

¹¹ Comments offered by Prof. Patrick Keatinge at Research Seminar in Contemporary Irish History, Trinity College, Dublin, 7 Apr. 2010.

¹² John Horgan, *Noël Browne: Passionate Outsider* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 2000), pp. 212-3.

and Czech traffic from Shannon airport to Cuba, and Lemass agreed that this information should be supplied. The taoiseach, however, believed that a request to refuse transit rights would have to be carefully considered, given that such rights were given under an international agreement. On 24 October, the American ambassador spoke to the Department of External Affairs about the demonstration against Kennedy's action. A US embassy official had separately expressed some concern at the use of police dogs against the demonstrators, including Browne.¹³ The following month, the government announced that Cuban and Czech aircraft bound for Cuba would be searched for arms at Shannon. The Canadian government had already made a similar decision.¹⁴

The activities of subversives, both communist and republican, had been closely monitored by the Irish state for decades. The secretary of the Department of Justice, Berry, had been particularly vigilant. For most of his career in Justice – he became secretary in 1961 – Berry had specialised in studying subversion in the state and had compiled dossiers on both communists and republicans.¹⁵ Berry's second dossier on communist activity described activities from 1941 to 1947 (the first dealt with the 1922-36 period) and offers an insight into why he thought communists might pose a threat with the onset of the Cold War. Comprehensive and precise, 'Communism in Ireland' comprised two pages of introductory remarks, twelve pages of notes, plus appendices. In his introduction, Berry outlined the reasoning behind his vigilance: Justice would be expected in the Dáil to know what communists were up to and to show that reasonable precautions were being taken to ensure they would not proceed 'by way of surprise and violence'. Given the widespread hostility to their creed, advocates of communism might conclude that no other way would

¹³ Department of the Taoiseach to External Affairs, 23 Oct. 1962; External Affairs note, 23 Oct. 1962; and External Affairs note, 25 Oct. 1962, in NAI, TAOIS S 17061/62.

¹⁴ Department of Transport and Power press release, 6 Nov. 1962, and External Affairs note, 25 Oct. 1962, in NAI, TAOIS S 17061/62.

¹⁵ Patrick Maume, 'Berry, Peter', in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds.), *Dictionary of Irish Biography: From the Earliest Times to the Year 2002* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 2009), Vol. 1, pp. 499-503.

be open to them. He also stated that there were inadequate powers to obtain information 'under the existing law'. And if the number of actual party members had been relatively minute, there were other categories of communist subversives.

Berry identified five layers on which the 'Communist International' relied: the party member who openly held, or secretly, a membership card; the fellow traveller, who would be carefully trained to follow communist policy while not a party member; the sympathiser, who might disagree with some policies but who would be in general agreement with communist objectives; the opportunist, who would be unconcerned with the party's goals or tactics but thought he could use the party to his advantage; and the 'muddled liberal', who despite deep disagreement with the ultimate goals would co-operate with party members on common platforms and organisations.¹⁶ Berry's broader definition of 'communist' here could be taken to include, for example, liberals concerned with civil rights in the North or the role of the US in south-east Asia.

Berry's intelligence on communist activities, real and potential, had been made available to ministers. For example, in 1945, following a request from Seán MacEntee, he prepared notes on various communists, including Seán Nolan and John de Courcy Ireland.¹⁷ Another note listed the Communist Party of Northern Ireland (CPNI) executive members elected in 1960; the communists present at the first meeting of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions were also identified.¹⁸ In 1964, Berry warned the secretary of the Department of External Affairs, Hugh McCann, that a London-based Soviet diplomat, who had been granted a visa, ranked as major in the KGB. This 'experienced' secret service agent had acted 'suspiciously' during a stay in Dublin.¹⁹ From 1954 there had been a formal liaison

¹⁶ Department of Justice, 'Communism in Ireland', 31 Dec. 1947, in UCDA, P67/548.

¹⁷ Berry memos, 6 Feb. 1945, in UCDA, P67/551 (5).

¹⁸ Berry note in UCDA, P67/554.

¹⁹ Berry to McCann, 1 Jan. 1964, in NAI, DFA A55/II.

between G2 and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). O'Halpin writes: 'The main purpose of the liaison was to determine whether there was any Soviet or Soviet-inspired espionage or subversive activity going on within Ireland, to monitor the revolutionary Left, and to keep up contacts in case of a future East-West crisis.'²⁰ The overall communist threat, however, had been slight. The Canadian government in 1951 proposed an exchange of information concerning the intended journeys of suspected communists. Justice stated that supplying reciprocal information 'would not be free from embarrassments because the Communist Party of Ireland no longer exists as such and those who were formerly members of the Party or sympathisers or fellow travellers no longer proclaim themselves openly as Communists. Thus, it is less easy than it used to be to say with certainty who is a Communist.'²¹

The communist party in the South, operating as the Irish Workers' Party (IWP), in 1962 had a membership of 111, according to a G2 memorandum. Including members of the CPGB and the CPNI, plus covert members and sympathisers, G2 estimated that there were between 500 and 1,000 communists in the state. Furthermore, there were between 300 and 400 'carded' Irish communists in Britain. The two communist parties in Ireland worked closely and promoted a common programme. The IWP's short-term objectives included prevention of the Irish state's entry into the EEC, and adoption of a policy of 'positive neutrality' which would involve refusal to participate in NATO or any defence alliance arising from EEC membership. The IWP had been known as the Irish Workers' League (IWL) until March 1962. Members had attended communist congresses in Britain, France and the Soviet Union between 1957 and 1961, according to the Irish executive's report to the 1962 conference (attached as an appendix to the G2 memorandum). Both communist

²⁰ O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, pp. 280-2.

²¹ Justice to External Affairs, 17 May 1951, in NAI, DFA A55/6A.

parties were closely associated with the CPGB, through its Irish sub-committee.²² The CPGB's Irish Committee functioned as a sub-committee of its International Affairs Committee.²³ The CPNI adopted a programme in 1962 hostile to the EEC and sympathetic to the IRA, whose focus on militarism had isolated it from political 'anti-imperialist' struggle.²⁴ RUC Special Branch had estimated three years previously that the CPNI had 280 members, almost three times as many as the party in the South.²⁵

Communist numbers had remained very small over the years, with support close to zero. A G2 memorandum in 1953 noted that the IWL had no more than 150 members. Its activities were connected with those of communists based in Belfast and London, and its chairman, Nolan, and secretary, Michael O'Riordan, had attended an executive meeting of the CPGB that year. Its membership figure, according to G2, did not reflect its total influence. For example, over 3,000 copies of its publication, *Irish Workers' Voice*, were sold each month. Records showed that in the previous ten years 2,000 people had been in contact with the league, or had come to the attention of the authorities in connection with communist activities. G2 noted, however, that communists had not penetrated the Defence Forces. The memorandum stated that the three principal communist bodies in the state – the IWL, the Irish USSR Society and the Peace Campaign Committee – did not receive any 'substantial' funding from Moscow.²⁶ The CPGB's International Affairs Committee in 1954 had discussed the difficulties facing Ireland's communists. It noted that the CPNI in Belfast and the IWL in Dublin could not hire public halls, and that *Workers' Voice* had to be printed in Britain. During the Northern Ireland election in autumn 1953 Andy Barr had polled over 1,200 votes in east Belfast. This contrasted with the IWL's effort in May 1954, when O'Riordan polled 377 votes. The Catholic clergy had identified O'Riordan as the one

²² Memo on IWP, May 1962, in NAI, DFA A55/II.

²³ Terms of reference, CPGB Irish Committee, 21 Jan. 1965, in Rajani Palme Dutt papers, LHASC, CP/IND/DUTT.

²⁴ *Ireland's Path to Socialism*, pp. 6, 23, in PRONI, D2162/J/95A.

²⁵ Memo on CP (NI), 27 Feb. 1959, in PRONI, HA 32/1/938.

²⁶ Memo on IWL, Jun. 1953, in NAI, DFA A55/I.

candidate in the election to whom support should not be given.²⁷ The CPGB in 1951 had decided on a special strategy for the Irish population in Britain. The vehicle for this approach would be the Connolly Association and its publication, *The Irish Democrat*, and the CPGB in 1955 would be consulted on the association's constitution.²⁸

The CPGB could not command popular support either, but it could serve the Soviet Union in Britain by pursuing a subversive agenda in the industrial relations field. The CPGB wielded significant influence in the British trade union movement in the 1960s.²⁹ In 1960, following a ballot-rigging scandal in the Electrical Trades Union (ETU), the Security Service (MI5) briefed the Ministry of Labour on the activities of communists in the union. A communist committee responsible for controlling the ETU had existed for at least fifteen years, and included some of the party's leading figures.³⁰ Some years later, a joint paper prepared by the ministry and MI5 analysed the role of the CPGB in Ford. This noted that communist-influenced militancy suffered a severe blow in 1963, when the company had dismissed about twenty of the leading militants in its Dagenham plant.³¹ During a seamen's strike in 1966, prime minister Harold Wilson would tell the House of Commons that the CPGB had 'an efficient and disciplined industrial apparatus' which concerned itself with every major strike in Britain.³²

Diplomatic recognition of the (communist) German Democratic Republic (GDR) had been a Cold War issue, and Ireland sided with the NATO powers. In June 1964 Irish immigration officials denied entry to three engineers who presented GDR passports.

²⁷ Observations of CPGB International Affairs Committee, 1954, in Rajani Palme Dutt papers, LHASC, CP/IND/DUTT.

²⁸ 'Some difference among Irish Comrades', (n.d.), in Rajani Palme Dutt papers, LHASC, CP/IND/DUTT.

²⁹ Francis Beckett, *Enemy Within: The Rise and Fall of the British Communist Party* (John Murray, London, 1995), pp. 149-58.

³⁰ Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations Dept., 26 Feb. 1960, in TNA, LAB 10/3727; Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (Allen Lane, London, 2009), pp. 409-11.

³¹ 'The Industrial Situation', joint paper by Dept. of Employment and Productivity and the Security Service, 1969, in TNA, LAB 43/535.

³² Harold Wilson, *The Labour Government, 1964-70: A Personal Record* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson and Michael Joseph, London, 1971, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1974), pp. 307-11.

Lemass had recently stated that the state did not recognise the GDR. The US embassy in Dublin noted that Irish thinking on the issue had been guided by the British – there were concerns in London about East Germans availing of uncontrolled travel between the Republic and the UK. External Affairs believed this attempt to present GDR passports for entry into Ireland had been a ploy to establish a precedent.³³ South Africa, however, in 1964 got the cold shoulder from Dublin when it sought information on communists involved in the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement (IAAM). Dublin's ambassador in London dispatched a report of the Irish counsellor's meeting with a South African representative in September. Berry contended that communist participation in the IAAM had no significance, and the ambassador was informed that the Irish government did not wish to co-operate with South Africa on the issue.³⁴

Noting that Lemass led a stable and confident government, the US embassy in Dublin had reported earlier in the year that the communist powers had no voice in the Irish state. Communism or radicalism in general had little hope in a society where Catholicism held such sway, according to the embassy. 'The other factor always working against the emergence of a strong, restless, radical force in Ireland is the ease of emigration to [the] UK, Canada, Australia, and the United States. While the number of emigrants is steadily falling, it still constitutes 20,000 per year, draining off many who might emerge as malcontents, and leaving behind a population that is conservative, passive, and pleased with the clear evidence of economic and social progress in recent years.'³⁵ However, Ireland's communists were now seeking to broaden their appeal by highlighting issues around national unity and sovereignty.

³³ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 25 Jun. 1964, in NARA, RG59, box 2344, Pol 23 Ire. Paula L. Wylie, *Ireland and the Cold War: Diplomacy and Recognition 1949-63* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2006).

³⁴ Molloy to McCann, 24 Sept. 1964, Berry to McCann, 2 Oct. 1964, and McCann to Molloy, 7 Oct. 1964, in NAI, DFA A55/10.

³⁵ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 10 Apr. 1964, in NARA, RG 59, box 2343, Pol 2-3 Ire.

(iii) Republicans create Wolfe Tone Society

The IRA's campaign against the Northern Ireland state had been called off in February 1962. The organisation claimed that the general public had been 'deliberately distracted from the supreme issue facing the Irish people – the unity and freedom of Ireland'. Goulding would become IRA chief of staff in September, and a subsequent review of previous campaigns concluded that the IRA had become 'remote from the people'.³⁶ The minister for justice, Charles Haughey, had submitted a memorandum to the government on the question of an amnesty for IRA prisoners, whom he did not consider to be a threat. They were described as being, in general, 'men of limited education and poor personality who have made no particular mark in their jobs or private lives and, whatever about their ability to use the gun, there is no particular reason to fear their organising ability'. The memorandum added that at no time in the past forty years did the IRA have 'less hope of being backed by public opinion. They publicly admit it'.³⁷ The republican movement, however, had identified a new issue. Articles appeared in *The United Irishman* opposing EEC membership and any consequent commitment by Ireland to a Western European army, including NATO. *The Irish Democrat* had made similar points the previous year.³⁸ And the CPNI and the IWP had published separate but complementary programmes – *Ireland's Path to Socialism* and *Ireland Her Own* respectively – which envisioned a struggle for a united, socialist Ireland.³⁹ Thus, in relation to securing support for opposition to the EEC and NATO, 1962 saw convergence in a key area of communist and republican thinking.

The IRA sought to generate interest in the ideology of republicanism and created Wolfe Tone Directories in 1963 to mark Tone's bicentenary; the Belfast committee included Jack

³⁶ Seán Swan, *Official Irish Republicanism: 1962-1972* (Lulu, 2007), pp. 72-3, 86-7; Lawrence William White, 'Goulding, Cathal', in McGuire and Quinn (eds.), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, Vol. 4, pp. 171-3.

³⁷ 'Memorandum for the Government', 30 Mar. 1962, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/494.

³⁸ Swan, *Republicanism*, pp. 98-100.

³⁹ Mike Milotte, *Communism in Modern Ireland: The Pursuit of the Workers' Republic Since 1916* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1984), pp. 232-4; Swan, *Republicanism*, pp. 91-2.

Bennett of the CPNI. The Wolfe Tone Society emerged the following year, and functioned as a left-wing republican think-tank.⁴⁰ As part of the IRA's reassessment, Goulding sought to enlist intellectuals outside the organisation. The two most important individuals who decided to work with him in attempting to politicise the republican movement were Anthony Coughlan and Johnston. Both Coughlan and Johnston had been involved in the Connolly Association and had been influenced by its driving force, the communist Desmond Greaves, who pioneered the idea of a civil rights campaign in the North as a strategy to undermine unionism. Coughlan took up a post in Trinity College, Dublin, in 1961 and joined the Wolfe Tone Society in 1964.⁴¹ The Dublin Wolfe Tone Society later set up sister societies in Belfast and Cork.⁴² Johnston had been a member of the CPGB for three years, before returning from London to Dublin in 1963. He also involved himself in the Wolfe Tone Society and later joined the IRA to promote the new left-wing approach. Mindful of what he saw as the failure of the left-wing Republican Congress in the 1930s to make an impact without the IRA, the daunting challenge facing the ambitious Goulding would be to transform the organisation into a revolutionary force.⁴³ One of his later close associates recalls that he was 'very much a man of his times: the sixties', when it seemed as if the Left 'was going to sweep the world in front of it'.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, IRA military training had continued. In October 1963 William Craig, the Northern Ireland minister of home affairs, publicly stated that the IRA planned to launch a new offensive. Senior RUC officers made the same claim to the US consul general in Belfast. While conceding that IRA activities had been exaggerated in media reports, they were adamant that they had 'ample evidence from reliable sources' to indicate the IRA

⁴⁰ Swan, *Republicanism*, pp. 104-6, 110-1.

⁴¹ Henry Patterson, *The Politics of Illusion: A Political History of the IRA* (Hutchinson Radius, London, 1989, new edn., Serif, London, 1997), pp. 96-104; English, *Armed Struggle*, pp. 85-8; Simon Prince, *Northern Ireland's '68: Civil Rights, Global Revolt and the Origins of the Troubles* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2007), pp. 87-113; Brian Hanley and Scott Millar, *The Lost Revolution: The Story of the Official IRA and the Workers' Party* (Penguin, Dublin, 2009), pp. 70-107.

⁴² Seán Cronin, *Irish Nationalism: A History of its Roots and Ideology* (The Academy Press, Dublin, 1980), pp. 185-6.

⁴³ Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, pp. 98-9, 104-5.

⁴⁴ Des O'Hagan, quoted in English, *Armed Struggle*, p. 84.

planned to stage incidents in British cities. The RUC warned that Goulding intended to visit the US and that if his fundraising proved successful, there would be 'no doubt about a winter campaign in 1963-64'. The RUC refused to discuss their sources with the consul, who heard that IRA training took place without any Garda interference.⁴⁵ Earlier in the month Berry had visited Stormont to discuss the IRA's activities with Craig. He formed the view that his contacts with the RUC and Scotland Yard left him better informed on the IRA than Craig or the secretary of Home Affairs. The US consul had been told that Berry had refused to concede that such training had taken place.⁴⁶ In November O'Neill discussed the issue of the return of the remains of Roger Casement to Ireland with the permanent under-secretary to the Commonwealth Relations Office, Sir Saville Garner, but Garner noted that O'Neill was preoccupied during their meeting with the possibility of another IRA campaign.⁴⁷

The White House had recently been briefed on the IRA by the State Department, following a request from an Irish-American group that Kennedy call for a plebiscite on the border. Kennedy's national security adviser, McGeorge Bundy, had been told that the IRA 'is presently at its lowest point in popularity' and had a membership of 100-200. Its adherents were continually arrested in the Republic. Little interest had been generated in the US on partition and related issues such as republican prisoners. The State Department received just one or two letters per month relating to these matters, and about one letter per month arrived from congressmen and senators, on behalf of Irish-American organisations, urging US intervention. The State Department employed a consistent response to such inquiries, on the following lines: 'The Department of State has long been aware of the questions arising from the partition of Ireland. We believe, however, that this is a matter for

⁴⁵ US consul general to State Dept., 24 Oct., 1963, in NARA, RG 59, box 3947, Pol Ire-A.

⁴⁶ Maume, 'Berry', in McGuire and Quinn (eds.), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, Vol. 1, p. 500; Hughes to State Dept., 24 Oct., 1963, in NARA, RG 59, box 3947, Pol Ire-A.

⁴⁷ Reeves, 'The Penultimate Irish Problem', p. 160.

determination by the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, both of whom are friendly to the US, and is, therefore not one in which we can properly or usefully intervene.’⁴⁸ Kennedy had made a triumphant ‘homecoming’ visit to Ireland in the summer and, according to the US embassy in Dublin, had left a country ‘tired from cheering’.⁴⁹ Sinn Féin had written a letter to Kennedy, welcoming the president of ‘the great American Republic’ in the hope that he would add his voice to ‘the demand of the Irish people’ for the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. In August, however, the republicans’ monthly had referred to speculation that there had been an ulterior motive behind Kennedy’s visit, claiming that moves were afoot for an Irish-American agreement to host US submarine bases in Ireland.⁵⁰ Lemass’s economic liberalisation programme would continue, symbolised in 1965 by his historic meeting in Stormont with the Northern Ireland prime minister, Terence O’Neill, who then made a return visit to Dublin.⁵¹

(iv) IRA leadership promotes protest politics

Johnston directed the IRA’s newly-created political education section from early 1965. The Garda stated that ‘he is a member of the Irish Workers’ Party’ and noted that he had been associated with Moscow-orientated organisations for many years, including the Connolly Association, the IWL, and the International Union of Students (IUS). He had also been active in the anti-apartheid movement. The significance of his role in the IRA had been recognised by the Garda, which observed that his appointment represented ‘a complete departure’ from the former policy of avoiding contact with communist or left-wing groups. The education department instructed IRA unit commanders in February to compile details about the occupations of local members and what trade unions, farmer associations and co-operatives they were involved in. A seminar would be held the

⁴⁸ Memo to Bundy, Sep. 1963, in NARA, RG 59, box 3947, Pol Ire-A. The Garda estimated IRA membership in December 1963 at 763. Garda commissioner to Berry, 24 Nov. 1966, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

⁴⁹ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 5 Jul. 1963, in NARA, RG 59, box 3947, Pol 2-1 Ire.

⁵⁰ *United Irishman*, Jul. 1963, pp. 1, 8; *ibid.*, Aug. 1963 p. 5.

⁵¹ Lee, *Ireland*, pp. 411, 416.

following month, with twenty or so attending.⁵² G2 had described Johnston as a dedicated communist, who made ‘no secret of it’.⁵³ The FCO later described him as the most influential communist introducing Marxism into the republican movement at this time.⁵⁴

Johnston would not be the only radical newcomer confronting republicans – the Reverend Ian Paisley had emerged as a forceful unionist extremist in Belfast the previous October. When Paisley threatened to lead protesters to the republicans’ election headquarters to remove the Irish tricolour, the RUC did the job and several nights of rioting ensued. The US consul general described the events as ‘the worst series of riots in Belfast for the last twenty-five years’.⁵⁵

Initially, a controversy involving the IRA had nothing to do with Johnston’s Marxist agenda. On 19 January 1965 ten men appeared in court on charges arising from the visit of Princess Margaret and Lord Snowden earlier in the month. There were Garda baton charges as about 500 demonstrators tried to force their way into a courthouse in Mountmellick, County Laois. The men accused of cutting down trees and other offences included one Richard Behal, who would later acquire a profile as a republican rebel; on the same day, a man was sentenced to five months in prison for being in possession of sticks of gelignite in Mountmellick.⁵⁶ Lemass told a Fianna Fáil meeting on 26 January that what he saw as the strengthening of republican self-esteem should allow a member of the British royal family to visit Ireland without attracting undue attention.⁵⁷ In the course of the year the Garda believed that Johnston’s department initiated IRA intervention in more than one dispute, in keeping with the leadership’s left-wing direction. In April the IRA supported

⁵² An Garda Síochána, ‘Review of Unlawful and Allied Organisations: December 1, 1964, to November 21, 1966’, pp. 3, 19-20, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

⁵³ Intelligence note, 12 Nov. 1964, in NAI, DFA A55/II.

⁵⁴ White to Crawford, 27 Jan. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/24.

⁵⁵ Hughes to State Dept., 8 Oct. 1964, in NARA, RG 59, box 2344, Pol 14 Ire; Various, *Liam McMillen: Separatist, Socialist, Republican* (Repsol, Dublin, 1975), pp. 3-5.

⁵⁶ *Irish Press*, 20 Jan. 1965, pp. 1, 5.

⁵⁷ Lemass speech, 26 Jan. 1965, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

tenants and opposed the Earl of Middleton's sale of his extensive property interest in Middleton. In October IRA members were told to infiltrate the National Farmers' Association and to become involved in its campaign to withhold rate payments. The IRA army council in 1965 also decided to embark on cash robberies in the North.⁵⁸

The State Department in Washington had been briefed on Lemass's programme, and heard that the Irish state remained stable and deeply hostile to communism. Republican protests, left-wing or otherwise, were of little significance. The American embassy in Dublin noted that excellent bilateral relations prevailed between the US and Ireland, and Ireland's international political position and pursuit of a more liberal trade policy closely coincided with Washington's interests. Specific features of Dublin's policy – the moderation of attitudes towards Northern Ireland, Irish-British 'détente', the desire to join the EEC, support for the UN – were generally in tune with the policies of the US. Ireland's policy of neutrality had been accompanied by 'an anti-communist dedication'. These generalisations would be valid even if a new government took office, according to the embassy, given the political-economic consensus in Ireland. One of the few issues over which the Irish might depart 'from US leadership' would be (communist) China's membership of the UN, but this would be designed 'to perpetuate the image of an independent posture in international affairs'. Kennedy's visit to Ireland in 1963 had been followed by Lemass's trip to the US the same year, and Ireland's president, Éamon de Valera, visited the US in 1964 – all three visits were representational, rather than political, the embassy stated, as there were no outstanding problems in Irish-American relations.

'[I]t is doubtful that there is another country in the world where pro-US affection is so deep and where disagreements with US policy would sooner be registered with silence than with open criticism. Any recent diminution of

⁵⁸ 'Unlawful and Allied Organisations', pp. 24-6, 42, in NAI, TAOIS/98/6/495.

this sentiment must be deemed inevitable after the death of President Kennedy whom, in Irish eyes, no one can emulate.’⁵⁹

In relation to de Valera’s visit, the State Department had asked the American embassy in Dublin on the whereabouts of Goulding and any ‘known IRA aliens’ in the US; action on visa applications from suspected IRA applicants, prior to and during the visit, should be suspended, with no publicity.⁶⁰

The embassy was upbeat on what it saw as a new sense of political and economic realities – the development of better relations between Ireland and Britain, and between Dublin and Stormont. Lemass and Wilson reportedly enjoyed an excellent rapport, Lemass and O’Neill had met in January, and London had agreed to return the remains of republican ‘martyr’ Roger Casement. With a special relationship between the US and the UK – an ‘intimate’ Anglo-American relationship remained ‘a cornerstone’ of US foreign policy – the embassy thought these developments should be welcomed by Washington. ‘Any Irish citizens who felt that the Irish public was not ready to accept a détente with the British have been proven wrong for these developments were as widely welcomed as recent demonstrations in Ireland against Princess Margaret were widely condemned. Lemass summarized the situation when he recently observed that relations between the two countries have never been better.’ Ireland had also sought to improve its relationship with Western Europe, and there had been high-level French and German visits.

In the context of the Cold War, Dublin’s international policy was viewed in a positive light by the embassy. Ireland’s ‘politico-military’ neutrality was characterised by commitment to Western political, economic and religious values. The Irish objected to any military

⁵⁹ ‘Politico-Economic Assessment’, 19 Mar. 1965, in NARA, box 2343, Pol 2-3 Ire.

⁶⁰ State Dept. to US embassy (Dublin), 14 May 1964, in NARA, RG 59, box 2344, Pol 30 Ire.

alliance that would compromise the state's image as a 'small, anti-colonial, pro-democratic independent voice in international affairs'. The embassy thought the latter role might be of greater value to American and Western interests than any direct Irish contribution to NATO. The US did have a military interest in Ireland: as a strategic location in some future conflict, and as a state which supplied UN peacekeeping forces. With 8,200 men, the Irish Defence Forces were of no consequence in numerical terms and inadequately equipped. However, the embassy stated, the sale at favourable prices of badly-needed equipment and provision of officer training would be advantageous to the US.⁶¹

Republicans created another stir in the autumn – again focusing on British targets – which had an impact on Anglo-Irish relations. In September, Behal and two others attacked a Royal Navy vessel in Waterford. A court heard that three men, arrested after shots were fired at *HMS Brave Borderer*, had said they had firearms for use against British 'occupation forces'. The court was told that four nights before the attack Behal had talked to the ship's crew and had handed out leaflets to onlookers. Headlined 'economic crisis', the leaflet referred to Lemass's policies and Ireland's 'committal' to NATO. Behal was sentenced to nine months.⁶² (A 400-strong crowd, chanting 'up the IRA', had marched to the home of Waterford's mayor to protest against his welcome for the ship's crew).⁶³ Following the Waterford ambush, the *Manchester Guardian* reported that republicans had threatened to attack the helicopter support vessel *HMS Lofoten* if it visited Cork in October.⁶⁴ Berry informed Nicholas Ó Nualláin in the Department of the Taoiseach that the Garda in Cork had been taking the matter seriously. Berry noted that the attack on *HMS Brave Borderer* was the work of individuals acting on their own initiative.⁶⁵ But the Garda then informed him that the IRA army council had authorised an attack on *HMS Lofoten* in

⁶¹ 'Politico-Economic Assessment', 19 Mar. 1965, in NARA, box 2343, Pol 2-3 Ire.

⁶² *Irish Press*, 25 Sep. 1965, p. 3; *ibid.*, 1 Oct. 1965, p. 7; Bell, *Secret Army*, p. 342.

⁶³ *Irish Times*, 29 Sep. 1965, p. 1.

⁶⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, 21 Oct. 1965, p. 20.

⁶⁵ Berry to Ó Nualláin, 22 Sep. 1965, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

Cork.⁶⁶ Ó Nualláin wrote to External Affairs and advised McCann, subject to the agreement of the taoiseach, that it would be better if the visit did not take place; McCann might tell the British ambassador, Sir Geoffrey Troy, it would almost certainly cause trouble. In the interest of good relations some pretext might be found for cancelling the visit.⁶⁷ The British embassy now believed that the IRA's warning should be heeded.⁶⁸ In the event Whitehall accepted Dublin's advice: Lemass heard on 6 October that *HMS Lofoten* would be required at Le Havre.⁶⁹

The Anglo-Irish relationship could be delicate, despite the significant improvements noted in the US embassy's briefing. The fact that threats to Royal Navy visits came from the direction of the IRA meant they could not be dismissed as one-off incidents. McCann now submitted a report to Ó Nualláin, based on a discussion he had had with Troy. The ambassador had explained that he realised that Royal Navy visits, and Princess Margaret's trip to see relatives, could lead to IRA demonstrations, but they were widely welcomed. McCann outlined a more pragmatic approach: if such visits led to incidents, they could be counterproductive in the promotion of good relations and play into IRA hands by giving it publicity. Troy said he was not always consulted before visits and that the IRA sometimes obtained information before the embassy; McCann made the obvious suggestion that he should insist on being consulted. In relation to *HMS Borderer* and *HMS Lofoten*, McCann's report noted that it would be useful if London did not propose any further such visits in the near future.⁷⁰ In December McCann informed Ó Nualláin that Troy would tell London that there should be no more Royal Navy visits, and would also recommend that

⁶⁶ Garda memo to Berry, 29 Sep. 1965, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

⁶⁷ Ó Nualláin to McCann, 30 Sep. 1965, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

⁶⁸ McCann to Ó Nualláin, 1 Oct. 1965, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

⁶⁹ Ó Nualláin to Lemass, 6 Oct. 1965, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

⁷⁰ McCann to Ó Nualláin, 13 Oct. 1965, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

there should be no 'early visit' of Princess Margaret to her relatives in Ireland. Even the usual fishery patrol vessel visit should not take place.⁷¹

The Irish government did not always see eye to eye with the Americans either. In December External Affairs wrote to the American ambassador, Raymond R. Guest, to inform him that the government would not permit entry to Dublin to US airlines, because it would divert tourism from the Shannon region.⁷² Lemass had previously informed Guest, in person, of the decision and was told that it would not be welcomed in Washington.⁷³

Meanwhile, communism emerged as an issue within the republican movement as the left-wing IRA leaders pushed their agenda in the teeth of vigorous opposition. The vexed question of abstentionism had been debated at a special Sinn Féin árd fheis in June, when the traditionalists carried the day and defeated a proposal to drop the longstanding policy of shunning the parliaments in Dublin, Stormont and Westminster. Abolishing abstention had first been attempted at an IRA convention in 1964, which rejected this radical departure, although other innovations were accepted, such as involvement in social and economic agitation and the creation of a 'national liberation front'.⁷⁴ Sinn Féin's ordinary árd fheis in October 1965 heard its president, Mac Giolla, endorse the thinking of James Connolly: Connolly's 'co-operativism' could be understood as the ideal balance between unChristian individualism and anti-religious communism, and this delicate formula would allow for 'co-operative control' of the means of production, distribution and exchange.⁷⁵ However, hostility to Goulding's approach surfaced during this árd fheis. A motion outlining a communist threat had been eventually withdrawn after what the Garda described as heated exchanges. The resolution had condemned communism 'as the lowest

⁷¹ McCann to Ó Nualláin, 1 Dec. 1965, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

⁷² External Affairs to US ambassador, 7 Dec. 1965, in NAI, DFA 98/3/333.

⁷³ Lemass note to External Affairs, 4 Dec. 1965, in NAI, DFA 98/3/333.

⁷⁴ Swan, *Republicanism*, pp. 139-41; Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, p. 105.

⁷⁵ *United Irishman*, Nov. 1965, p. 1.

form of slavery', forbade the party from collaborating with communist organisations, and made connections with communists an expulsion offence.⁷⁶ Johnston was the principal threat identified here. From early in the year there had been friction between Seán Mac Stíofáin and Goulding, who faced Mac Stíofáin down when the latter demanded that Johnston should be dropped, citing his Moscow-orientated Marxism which infringed a regulation forbidding membership to communists.⁷⁷

IRA-backed agitation would now be condemned by the minister for justice, Brian Lenihan. Defending the use of the Offences Against the State Act in the Dáil, in November, during a union recognition dispute involving telephonists, Lenihan said that anti-state organisations with ulterior motives were intervening in agitations to provoke conflict with the Garda. Lenihan claimed that four people who had been arrested for picketing Leinster House were not members of the Irish Telephonists' Association (ITA), but were involved with the National Civil Liberties League, which he described as 'a front for anti-state, communist and physical force elements'. According to *The Irish Press*, two of the four arrested were ITA members and the other two were members of other unions.⁷⁸ Dublin's *Evening Herald* had insinuated that communists were involved in the dispute, and claimed 'unrepresentative' organisations were trying to exploit the issue. Three of those associated with the controversy were 'hard to find' when a reporter called to their given addresses. The paper had also reported on the 'Reds' controversy at the recent Sinn Féin árd fheis.⁷⁹

When two telephonists were jailed for disobeying a High Court injunction the republican movement's support group in Britain, Clann na hÉireann, organised pickets on the Irish

⁷⁶ 'Unlawful and Allied Organisations', pp. 52-3, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495; Swan, *Republicanism*, 141-6.

⁷⁷ Robert W. White, *Ruairí Ó Brádaigh: the Life and Politics of an Irish Revolutionary* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2006), pp. 119-23; Seán Mac Stíofáin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (Gordon Cremonesi, Edinburgh, 1975), pp. 91-3.

⁷⁸ *Irish Press*, 5 Nov. 1965, pp. 1, 4; *ibid.*, 6 Nov. 1965, p.1; Niamh Puirseil, *The Irish Labour Party: 1922-73* (University College Dublin Press, Dublin, 2007), pp. 139, 228.

⁷⁹ *Evening Herald*, 1 Nov., 1965, p. 8; *ibid.*, 5 Nov. 1965, p. 5; *ibid.*, 1 Nov. 1965, p.7.

embassy in London. Clann had been established the previous year as a ‘non-violent’ exiles’ support and fund-raising organisation. It had denied responsibility for a petrol bomb explosion outside the Irish embassy in London on 22 April, and also repudiated those involved in disturbances on 25 April after a march to the embassy to protest at Garda treatment of Easter Lily sellers. Clann highlighted Irish economic and civil liberties issues and supported co-operative projects such as Father James McDyer’s in Glencolumkille, County Donegal. It opposed ‘the takeover of the land of Ireland by foreigners’ and supported workers ‘in their fight against exploitation by foreign capitalists’.⁸⁰ An Irish Trotskyist group emerged at this time, with IRA connections: according to the British embassy in Dublin, Gery Lawless and Liam Dalton were the leading figures in the Irish Workers’ Group, and former IRA member Lawless surfaced in London as a ‘well-known’ Trotskyist. Late in 1965 he became involved again with the IRA, according to the embassy, and associated with Clann leader Seán Kenny (Ó Cionnaith). Lawless was linked with left-wing republican dissidents in Cork and, in 1967, four of Lawless’s associates in London were sentenced for illegal possession of arms.⁸¹

In December 1965 Johnston hosted an education conference and urged infiltration of trade unions and other bodies to promote opposition to the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement. About fifty people attended the conference, according to the Garda, including forty-two members of the IRA and a ‘prominent’ IWP member. The following month an education meeting was addressed by IRA officers and a member of the IWP. Johnston’s education department promoted the IRA’s left-wing strategy through various fronts: the Wolfe Tone Society, Comhar Linn, Dublin Housing Action Group, Economic Independence League and the Civil Liberties League. Playing a leading role in the republicans’ new direction, the

⁸⁰ ‘Unlawful and Allied Organisations’, pp. 16-9, 25, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

⁸¹ UK embassy (Dublin) to FCO, Jul. 1970, in TNA, FCO 33/1204.

Wolfe Tone Society was described by the Garda as comprising mainly graduates.⁸² Some left-wing republicans such as Tony Meade favoured expanding the society into the political wing of the republican movement, leaving Sinn Féin traditionalists behind.⁸³ The Garda observed that the Wolfe Tone Society pioneered the new approach of forging links between republicans and trade unions and the co-operative movement. Meetings had been held with the Labour Party, Sinn Féin and Clann na Poblachta, and with student groups. Co-operative work had extended 'to all parts of Ireland, including Glencolumkille'. Public meetings had been held on housing, free trade and the use of the Offences Against the State Act against trade unionists and farmers. The society had published two booklets by former IRA leader Seán Cronin, *Wolfe Tone* and *Our Own Red Blood* (on the events of 1916). The Garda noted that members of the society had written under other auspices – Scéim na gCéardchumann, a trade union-based Irish language and cultural society, had published a pamphlet by Cronin on 'working class hero' Jemmy Hope.⁸⁴

There was now contact between republicans and Labour Party members through organisations such as the Wolfe Tone Society and Scéim na gCéardchumann. Recognising the political aspirations of left-wing republicans, Wolfe Tone Society and Labour Party activist Proinsias Mac Aonghusa called on Sinn Féin 'progressives' to join Labour.⁸⁵ Despite their energetic efforts to be part of a wider left-wing opposition to Lemass's modernisation programme, Goulding's followers faced obstacles: Behal and others had demonstrated that displays of hostility to manifestations of the British presence remained attractive to militant republicans.

⁸² 'Unlawful and Allied Organisations', pp 21-3, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495; Lee, *Ireland*, p. 353.

⁸³ Roy H.W. Johnston, *Century of Endeavour: A Biographical & Autobiographical View of the Twentieth Century in Ireland* (Tyndall, Carlow, in assoc. with Lilliput, Dublin, revised edn., 2006), pp. 199-200, 219-20.

⁸⁴ 'Unlawful and Allied Organisations', pp. 23-4, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495; *United Irishman*, Jan. 1966, p. 8.

⁸⁵ Puirseil, *Labour Party*, pp. 225-6.

(v) Stormont warns London of danger of ‘terrorist activities’

In September 1965, according to the RUC, the IRA decided that Special Branch officers and government ministers in Northern Ireland should be kidnapped and shot.⁸⁶ In November Goulding stated that the only way to unite Ireland would be to defeat the British army in the North. But he also urged republicans to think of their mission as one involving a struggle for economic independence – the IRA leadership had openly broadened its agenda beyond the traditional demand to remove the border.⁸⁷ Later in the month the home secretary, Sir Frank Soskice, apprised Wilson of the reasoning behind the provision of police protection to Stormont ministers: the precautions had been taken on the advice of the RUC, acting on information ‘which our own sources confirm’.⁸⁸ A note on IRA activities had been dispatched by Stormont to the Home Office, which pointed out that the IRA proposed to imminently launch a campaign in the North. This would include a threat to members of the cabinet and RUC Special Branch. ‘This information came from more than one reliable source and the [RUC] Inspector General felt it necessary to advise that steps must be taken to give immediate protection to ministers.’ The information on which the RUC had based its advice came from the same source for the intelligence it had supplied to London about the threat to *HMS Lofoten*.⁸⁹

In Belfast, on 3 December, five teenagers were jailed for twelve months under the Special Powers Act on various charges, including IRA membership and possessing *The United Irishman*.⁹⁰ On 7 December the minister of home affairs, Brian McConnell, announced that the government had received information that the IRA intended to attack selected individuals. The convictions for IRA-related offences, McConnell stated, corroborated the government’s intelligence and justified the steps which were being taken. The offences for

⁸⁶ ‘General Survey of Irish Republican Activities February, 1962 – February 1966’, in PRONI, HA 32/1/1378A.

⁸⁷ ‘Speech by Cathal Goulding at Edentubber, Co. Louth, on 7th November, 1965’, in PRONI, HA 32/1/1378A.

⁸⁸ Soskice to Wilson, 18 Nov. 1965, in PRONI, HA 32/1/1378A.

⁸⁹ ‘Note on the activities of the IRA and the consequent necessity to guard Northern Ireland ministers’, in PRONI, HA 32/1/1378A.

⁹⁰ *Irish News*, 4 Dec. 1965, p. 4.

which the five had been convicted, and the break-up of a British army film show in a school, were the IRA's 'first overt activities' for some time.⁹¹ A Liberal MP at Westminster, Eric Lubbock, later asked O'Neill why such a severe sentence had been imposed on teenagers. O'Neill replied that the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 Rising could see a renewed IRA campaign in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, reports that the organisation had been penetrated by communists had been substantiated.⁹²

Communists and republicans had co-operated in the North. A conference on civil rights had been held under the auspices of Belfast Trades Council in May the previous year; veteran communists Betty Sinclair and Billy McCullough were among the organisers. This brought together a range of non-unionist opinion, including trade unionists, the CPNI, the Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP) and republicans. The IRA then attempted in 1965 to establish a 'one man, one vote' committee, although this foundered. The National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL) in Britain had also taken an interest in civil rights issues in the North, including the use of the Special Powers Act.⁹³ British Labour backbenchers, acting under the umbrella of the Campaign for Democracy in Ulster (CDU), were now attempting to raise Northern Ireland issues at Westminster. Wilson, however, publicly maintained that O'Neill was best suited to implement reform.⁹⁴

The RUC outlined its latest information on the IRA threat to the secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs, John Greeves. RUC inspector general Albert Kennedy informed Greeves that the question of interning IRA leaders had been discussed, but had been left over for a decision later. Another decision to be made was whether an approach concerning the threat should be directly made to Dublin, or through the Home Office. The note pointed out that

⁹¹ Statement by minister of home affairs, 7 Dec. 1965, in PRONI, HA 32/1/1378A.

⁹² Lubbock to O'Neill, 25 Jan. 1966, and O'Neill to Lubbock, 2 Feb. 1966, in PRONI, HA 32/1/1378A.

⁹³ Anonymous, *Communist Party of Ireland: Outline History* (New Books, Dublin, c. 1975), p. 45; Various, *McMillen*, pp. 5-6; Research Section, The Workers' Party, *Civil Rights: Reform or Revolution?* (Citizen Press, Dublin, 2008), p. 18.

⁹⁴ Peter Rose, *How the Troubles Came to Northern Ireland* (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2000, in assoc. with the Institute of Contemporary British History), pp. 23-8.

information continued to reach RUC headquarters – ‘confirming that previously received’ – relating to the IRA’s intention to kill selected members of the RUC. Following training, Kennedy stated, younger elements in the IRA were putting the leadership under pressure to reopen an armed campaign in the North. ‘The situation is not unlike that which existed prior to the opening of the last campaign in 1956 when similar pressure resulted in precipitate action by the then leaders of the organisation. Should action not be taken officially very soon there is the danger that splinter groups will operate without IRA [h]eadquarter[s] authority.’⁹⁵

O’Neill now approached the Home Office. He wrote a secret letter to Soskice to remind him of the RUC view on the IRA threat: the organisation was preparing to resume its activities in the North, and the situation resembled the prelude to the 1956 campaign. O’Neill warned that ‘a resumption of terrorist activities’ mounted from the Republic would be a serious setback to efforts to build a more friendly relationship between Stormont and Dublin. O’Neill suggested to Soskice that London might convey these concerns to the Irish government, and that Dublin should assist in suppressing illegal activities conducted within its jurisdiction. Lemass’s meeting with Wilson offered an opportunity to express London’s views. O’Neill pointed out that the principal leaders of the IRA were Irish citizens and that they had visited the North to organise units there. The RUC had information that weapons had been brought over the border into Northern Ireland. ‘In many aspects the present situation is on a par with that which prevailed immediately before the last IRA campaign was mounted in 1956.’ O’Neill stated that the IRA had organised at least thirty-four training camps during the year. ‘Some of these have been conducted fairly openly, and the sound of firing has been audible over a wide area.’ How could Dublin not know about IRA military preparations? O’Neill offered two examples of ‘the rising tide of militancy’ in the North: an army film show had been broken up in October, and five men

⁹⁵ Kennedy to Greeves, 3 Dec. 1965, in PRONI, HA 32/1/1378A.

had been imprisoned in December who had been loitering, with bayonets and handcuffs, within a mile of the house of the army's commanding officer in Northern Ireland. The RUC had taken steps to protect government ministers and to strengthen police stations in border areas.⁹⁶ O'Neill made the most of overt IRA activity in this letter to the home secretary: a ruined recruitment event and five republicans behaving suspiciously hardly constituted a 'tide of militancy'. This time he did not refer to any communist dimension to his concerns. (On his only visit to the North, Soskice would be quoted by the *Belfast Telegraph* as saying of unionism, 'From England we watch it, we admire it and we rejoice in it.').⁹⁷

Wilson duly raised the question of an IRA threat with Lemass, who said that in general he thought such reports 'tended to be exaggerated'. Lemass did say, however, that the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising the next year might tempt the IRA into illegal acts. But the Dublin authorities would do 'all they could' to prevent this.⁹⁸ Shortly afterwards, Soskice replied to O'Neill, telling him that Whitehall had the impression that Dublin was genuine in helping to suppress illegal activity.⁹⁹ In July 1963, four men had been imprisoned following a Garda raid on an IRA training camp in County Waterford. Three were from Belfast (one of these men, Bobby McKnight, would become a prominent Goulding supporter in the city). According to the US embassy in Dublin, Garda officers had found 'one Bren gun, one Thompson sub-machine gun, three Lee-Enfield rifles, two revolvers, one Parabellum pistol and 289 rounds of ammunition'.¹⁰⁰ If Dublin-based IRA leaders were looking forward to a new strategy that would include collaboration with communists and liberals, Stormont simply saw preparations for another 1950s-type border campaign.

⁹⁶ O'Neill to Soskice, 9 Dec. 1965, in TNA, PREM 13/980.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Rose, *How the Troubles Came*, p. 26.

⁹⁸ Minute of Wilson-Lemass meeting, 13 Dec. 1965, in TNA, PREM 13/980.

⁹⁹ Soskice to O'Neill, 15 Dec. 1965, in PRONI, HA 32/1/1378A.

¹⁰⁰ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 26 Jul. 1963, in NARA, RG 59, box 3946, Pol Ire.

(vi) JIC interest in Northern Ireland

In January 1966 Kennedy informed Greeves that the IRA intended to commit ‘outrages’ in Northern Ireland and that its ‘build-up’ was ongoing. The RUC’s sources of information had stressed the necessity of maintaining the security precautions recently put in place. A significant development, he warned, had been the close connection which had developed between republicans and communists – this had been confirmed by Lenihan. The IRA, Lenihan was quoted as saying, wanted to involve itself in strikes and housing issues. Kennedy saw a republican hand behind a current dispute: ‘It would not be surprising to learn that the present agitation and activity against Northern Ireland fishing boats off the [É]ire [c]oast has been stirred up by the IRA in conjunction with the Communist Party and the reported singing of rebel songs by the [É]ire fishermen involved is significant.’ In the opinion of the RUC, the next few months were fraught with danger.¹⁰¹

Later in the month the US consul general in Belfast, Byron Manfull, wrote to the Ministry of Home Affairs, indicating his wish to meet the minister to discuss renewed IRA activities. The consul wanted to know whether Stormont anticipated outbreaks of violence in conjunction with the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising, and could any evidence of IRA funding from US sources be produced that he could forward to Washington?¹⁰² The RUC informed Home Affairs that only small amounts of money were coming from American sources to the IRA. Following the cessation of the border campaign in 1962, Goulding had travelled to the US to raise funds: ‘It is understood that the response to his efforts has been very disappointing.’ Manfull subsequently heard there was no evidence the IRA received money from US sources.¹⁰³ On 18 January the State Department had reiterated the US policy of non-intervention in Irish affairs to senator Robert Kennedy, who had raised the proposal of an Irish-American organisation for Congress to advocate

¹⁰¹ Kennedy to Greeves, 5 Jan. 1966, in PRONI, HA 32/1/1378A.

¹⁰² US consul general to Home Affairs, 20 Jan. 1966, in PRONI, HA 32/1/1378A.

¹⁰³ RUC HQ to Home Affairs, 24 Jan. 1966, and Home Affairs, 25 Jan. 1966, in PRONI, HA 32/1/1378A.

the unification of Ireland. There had been significant progress in Anglo-Irish affairs, the senator was told, including the signing of the free trade agreement and the Lemass-O'Neill meetings. 'Surely this improved climate and growing spirit of mutual trust and accommodation should not be jeopardised by actions which might well be viewed as blatant intervention on the part of the United States and could only serve the purpose of re-awakening passions better left dormant.'¹⁰⁴

In February Goulding outlined his new direction for the republican movement, as the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 Rising loomed. In a *Belfast Telegraph* series of interviews with leading republicans, he admitted that 'most people don't really know what we stand for'. In the past the IRA had always engaged in action regardless of popular support, but now 'the demand for revolution' should come from the people, not from strategists in a back room. In a significant departure, he stated: 'We want to try to get through to the Protestant working classes.' Issuing a veiled warning to dissidents, Goulding said the IRA had lost support in the 1940s by engaging in robberies and stated that any member bringing it into disrepute would usually be beaten up or tarred and feathered.¹⁰⁵ Ironically, the same month the prominent dissident Behal escaped from Limerick prison.¹⁰⁶ Tensions now increased north of the border, and petrol bomb attacks and daubing of slogans on chapel walls were reported. Police forces were strengthened and a radio link was set up between the Garda and the RUC, 'in case border raids begin again'. There were fears that thousands would attend 1916 Rising commemorations in Northern Ireland, as Paisley proclaimed his hostility to any renewal of republican activity: 'We are not going to be hammered into the ground by these people.'¹⁰⁷ The Garda radio network had been installed despite good

¹⁰⁴ State Dept. to Kennedy, 18 Jan. 1966, in NARA, RG 59, box 2344, Pol 32 Ire.

¹⁰⁵ *Belfast Telegraph*, 16 Feb. 1966, p. 8; *ibid.*, 17 Feb. 1966, p. 8.

¹⁰⁶ *Irish Times*, 21 Feb. 1966, p.1.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 21 Feb. 1966, p.1; *ibid.*, 22 Feb. 1966, p. 1.

Special Branch intelligence that the IRA had no military intentions for Easter 1966, and Berry ordered that it be dismantled.¹⁰⁸

On 1 March dissident republicans attacked the Dublin home of the British military attaché, Brigadier R.N. Thicknesse, with a petrol bomb.¹⁰⁹ The next day the US defence attaché, Colonel Bradford Butler Jnr., began to receive anonymous telephone calls, threatening his life and home. A link was made in these calls with American military involvement in Vietnam. The US embassy in Dublin reported that Thicknesse continued to receive threatening calls, and claimed there was evidence to suggest that the threats to both attachés were being made by the same person.¹¹⁰ The following month the minister for external affairs, Frank Aiken, wrote to the taoiseach to suggest that the state should pay any compensation arising from the fire at the Thicknesse home: first, because of the ‘international character’ of the incident and, secondly, because a claim for malicious damage would have to be heard in court and would create ‘further undesirable publicity’. Lemass agreed with Aiken’s suggestion.¹¹¹

The IRA denied any connection with the destruction of Nelson’s Pillar on 8 March. *The Irish Times* reported that the view in official circles was that the attack had been the work of a splinter group. The explosion exacerbated Stormont’s security fears: public buildings were placed under special guard and RUC garrisons received supplies of new automatic weapons. The authorities in Dublin also reacted: extra protective measures were put in place for the British ambassador, and Thicknesse’s home, while armed gardaí were placed at various monuments.¹¹² The US embassy in Dublin commented: ‘The blowing up of this famous Dublin landmark is being attributed to the fringe element of the Irish Republican

¹⁰⁸ O’Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, p. 302.

¹⁰⁹ *Irish Times*, 2 Mar. 1966, p.1; *Irish Press*, 2 Mar. 1966, p.1.

¹¹⁰ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 11 Mar. 1966, in NARA, RG59, box 2343, Pol 2-1 Ire.

¹¹¹ Aiken to Lemass, 6 Apr. 1966, and Lemass to Aiken, 6 Apr. 1966, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

¹¹² *Irish Times*, 8 Mar. 1966, pp. 1, 4; *ibid.*, 9 Mar. 1966, p.1; *Irish Press*, 10 Mar. 1966, p.1.

Army, and it is possible that the blast could form a link in the chain of such incidents planned to coincide with 1916 anniversary celebrations.¹¹³ Addressing 4,000 protesters in Belfast, Paisley demanded the banning of 1916 commemoration events, and Belfast Corporation cancelled an Ulster Hall concert booking by a representative of an anniversary committee. Meanwhile, preparations to send 1,000 extra British soldiers to Northern Ireland were in train.¹¹⁴

The JIC discussed Northern Ireland regularly in the months leading up to the 1916 commemorations, with the cabinet secretary in London overseeing a special security operation.¹¹⁵ The JIC heard on 10 February that the RUC believed the IRA would stage incidents ‘modelled on EOKA terrorist activities’, which would consist of attacks on individuals rather than sabotage. The director general of MI5, Martin Furnival Jones, stated that the RUC had been correct to take this threat seriously, as it would be well informed on IRA activities. The RUC’s report on this threat confirmed a previous assessment that the IRA would focus on assassinations.¹¹⁶ The JIC recorded on 17 March that ‘little of value’ had emerged from a meeting in Dublin between the RUC and the Garda, and recommended an approach to Berry.¹¹⁷ The JIC would have been better informed about IRA intentions if it had paid less attention to the RUC and had listened to Berry, who gave assurances that the IRA did not plan sustained activity in the North beyond parades.¹¹⁸ As Dublin concluded its week-long celebrations to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising, on 16 April, Stormont suspended the weekend north-south train service without giving notice. That afternoon Ó Nualláin apprised Lemass of a message from O’Neill’s office; no warning had

¹¹³ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 11 Mar. 1966, in NARA, RG59, box 2343, Pol 2-1 Ire.

¹¹⁴ *Irish Press*, 1 Mar. 1966, p.1; *Irish Times*, 4 Mar. 1966, p.1, *Irish Press*, 12 Mar. 1966, p. 1.

¹¹⁵ O’Halpin, ‘Intelligence and Anglo-Irish Relations’, in *Intelligence, Statecraft and International Power*, pp. 138-9; Eunan O’Halpin, ‘The British Joint Intelligence Committee and Ireland, 1965-1972’ (Institute for International Integration Studies, IIIS Discussion Paper No. 211, March 2007), pp. 8-9, available at <http://www.tcd.ie/iiis/pages/publications/discpaperseries.php>; O’Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, pp. 301-2.

¹¹⁶ JIC minutes, 10 Feb. 1966, in TNA, CAB 159/45.

¹¹⁷ JIC minutes, 17 Mar. 1966, in TNA, CAB 159/45.

¹¹⁸ O’Halpin, ‘Joint Intelligence Committee and Ireland’, pp. 8-9.

been given ‘in order to save us embarrassment’. Ó Nualláin added that Belfast had stated that things had gone well ‘so far’.¹¹⁹

Excluded, naturally, from the Irish state’s celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising, Margaret O’Callaghan writes, the republican movement placed Belfast at the centre of its commemorative agenda. This offered an opportunity to promote the leadership’s left-wing ambitions and create interest in its Republican Clubs initiative. On 10 April, several thousands had marched in the republicans’ annual Easter Sunday parade in Belfast. The march had been one of the biggest such events in years, according to media reports. But this demonstration would be secondary to the main 1916 jubilee events which took place a week later. The 1916 anniversary parade along the Falls Road to the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) grounds in Casement Park, on 17 April, was seen as one of the most widely-supported events ever held in west Belfast. Tens of thousands were involved, as participants or spectators. The IRA’s acting chief of staff, Séamus Costello, delivered the main speech at the rally in Casement Park; Betty Sinclair had been proposed as a speaker, according to one member of the organising committee, but the GAA vetoed an address by a communist. Costello condemned the Dublin government for allowing the sale of ‘national assets’ to foreigners and using the Offences Against the State Act against workers ‘struggling for a just wage’. O’Callaghan argues that ‘the elevation of the socialist aspects of Connolly in particular was an outsiders’ imposition, and the agenda of Dublin Sinn Féin rather than a local Belfast agenda’.¹²⁰ However, the CPNI and the IRA had been working closely in Belfast. Communists had marched down the Falls Road with republicans, doing so following the Belfast Trades’ Council banner or, for west Belfast communists, with the

¹¹⁹ Ó Nualláin note, 16 Apr. 1966, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

¹²⁰ Margaret O’Callaghan, ‘From Casement Park to Toomebridge – The Commemoration of the Easter Rising in Northern Ireland in 1966’, in Mary E. Daly and Margaret O’Callaghan (eds.), *1916 in 1966: Commemorating the Easter Rising* (Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 2007), pp. 102-8.

Wolfe Tone Society. The jubilee commemoration organisation committee included Derek Peters of the CPNI executive.¹²¹

However, this celebration of the republican heritage in the North did not go unchallenged. On the same day as the Rising commemoration in west Belfast, Paisley presided over an alternative rally in the Ulster Hall – to celebrate the rebels’ defeat in 1916 – that brought thousands of his supporters onto the streets. Four days later, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) declared war on ‘the IRA and its splinter groups’. Two Catholics were subsequently killed: John Patrick Scullion, days after the UVF’s announcement, and, two months later, Peter Ward. The organisation was then banned.¹²²

On 16 April, republicans attending a 1916 commemoration in Dublin were assured about the existence of the IRA. Mac Giolla told them that since 1962 the aim of the army had been to reorganise, while Tony Ruane declared that ‘the IRA still lives on, stronger than ever’. Six demonstrators were arrested after disturbances on 24 April, the actual date of the Rising. Gardaí had tried to seize an IRA flag, and Belfast republicans jeered gardaí. Demonstrators chanted, ‘We want Behal, we want Behal’.¹²³ The US embassy in Dublin later reported on the incidents in Dublin. The trouble began at the unveiling of a memorial in Glasnevin cemetery, when the IRA flag had been produced. Mac Giolla had stated that Lemass, by going to Belfast to meet O’Neill, had given recognition to ‘a usurping government’. The embassy noted that an unusual feature of the disturbances during the day had been the presence of an ‘extremely large contingent’ from the North. Lenihan later stated that the government would not permit parades at which banners or insignia were displayed which purported to present the participants as a military organisation.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Interview with Noel Harris, 20 Nov. 2009; O’Callaghan, ‘From Casement Park to Toomebridge’, p. 108.

¹²² O’Callaghan, ‘From Casement Park to Toomebridge’, pp. 109-10.

¹²³ *Irish Times*, 18 Apr. 1966, pp.1, 11; *ibid.*, 25 Apr. 1966, p.1.

¹²⁴ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 29 Apr. 1966, in NARA, RG59, box 2343, Pol 2-1 Ire

The JIC believed that the IRA had trained extensively and distributed arms in Northern Ireland, but thought that the security measures put in place resulted in the 1916 anniversary passing off relatively peacefully. It had also discussed the communist influence in the republican movement and heard that the IRA had flirted with communism in the past, but had rejected its adherents as republicans relied on the support of Catholics.¹²⁵ Events before and during the 1916 commemorations showed that violence could overshadow any political demands left-wing republicans wished to promote. Unlike Garda Special Branch, RUC Special Branch believed that the IRA imminently planned another military campaign.

(vii) IRA leadership asserts political priorities

The IRA leadership clarified its position on the way forward: agitation on political issues remained the priority. It denied involvement in attacks on public utilities and monuments, and claimed that it had not taken military action south of the border since 1954, except for attacking the Royal Navy. Damaging monuments could have no impact when the economy was weak, the IRA stated, because such activity could be blamed on the republican movement, which would then face the threat of internment. Such a draconian measure, if introduced, could then be extended to other groups who were at odds with the government, ‘mainly on economic issues’.¹²⁶ According to this argument, the dissidents’ activities threatened the IRA’s left-wing departure. Goulding, however, still defended what he saw as republicans’ right to take up arms. Facing charges of possessing a pistol and ammunition, he had told a court in April that he had spent a total of fifteen years in prison because he was an active republican. ‘If you find me guilty of these charges, you are finding every Irishman of every generation from Tone to the men of 1916 guilty of the

¹²⁵ JIC minutes, 21 Apr. 1966, in TNA, CAB 159/45.

¹²⁶ *Irish Times*, 23 Apr. 1966, p.1.

same thing, because they used the methods I am seeking to use now for the very same reasons.’¹²⁷

There were two republican splinter groups, one in Dublin and the other in Cork. The Garda estimated the Dublin group’s membership at 41, among whom were a core of ex-IRA members with arms, ammunition and explosives. According to the Garda, there were thirteen members in the Cork group, which criticised the IRA for not being more ‘revolutionary’. This group had circulated statements to sympathisers in Ireland, Britain and the US, and had opened a book shop. The public perception that the IRA had been responsible for splinter group actions perturbed the IRA leadership, the Garda noted, which had decided to ‘stamp out’ their activities.¹²⁸

Challenges to the Goulding leadership also arose within the upper ranks of the IRA. Mac Stíofáin would face disciplinary action for opposing criticism of traditional republican practices. He took exception to a letter from Johnston in the May issue of *The United Irishman*, which had criticised the recitation of the rosary at events such as 1916 commemorations. Johnston argued that this custom was sectarian and redundant: commemorations should promote the republican movement’s new political direction. Mac Stíofáin, who saw Johnston’s intervention as a Marxist criticism of religion, stopped distribution of the paper in Cork and south Kerry, and was suspended.¹²⁹ Mac Stíofáin at this time believed the IRA was being run down to facilitate revolutionary politics.¹³⁰ One veteran traditionalist recalls Goulding telling him in 1966 that the days of ‘skulking around’ with Thompson sub-machine guns had long passed.¹³¹ Johnston had been kept away from Sinn Féin for two years by Goulding, but he attended his first árd fheis in

¹²⁷ *Irish Times*, 20 Apr. 1966, pp.1, 4.

¹²⁸ ‘Unlawful and Allied Organisations’, p. 56, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

¹²⁹ White, *Ó Brádaigh*, pp.131-2; Mac Stíofáin, *Memoirs*, pp. 96-7.

¹³⁰ Mac Stíofáin, *Memoirs*, pp. 92-3.

¹³¹ Comment offered by Des Long at annual workshop, ‘The Irish Republican Left’, Ralahine Centre for Utopian Studies, University of Limerick, 30 Apr. 2010.

November 1966. The IRA ensured his election to the árd chomhairle and he then became Sinn Féin (as well as IRA) director of education.¹³²

The JIC again considered IRA intentions in the North. It heard on 23 June that there were three occasions that might be exploited: the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July; a visit by the queen on 6-7 July; and the annual Orange celebrations on 12 July. The RUC, at this point, had adopted a less alarmist tone. It did not now believe that the IRA had ‘anything substantive’ in mind, but was less certain about splinter groups of whom ‘coverage’ was ‘less good’. It was thought that the IRA might stage some action during the queen’s visit, but this would probably be something relatively minor such as an attack on a customs post. Significantly, the potential of Paisley’s followers to provoke ‘some violent reaction’ had now been recognised.¹³³ However, the JIC did not assess the emerging loyalist paramilitary threat. From the summer of 1966 the JIC did not engage with Northern Ireland until the Derry events of October 1968. (In 1967 Christopher Ewart-Biggs, who would be assassinated in 1976 shortly after he arrived in Dublin as British ambassador, chaired a JIC working group on intelligence priorities.)¹³⁴ The republican movement’s Easter commemorations had inadvertently served to strengthen Stormont’s determination to combat any perceived threat to the state. McConnell on 25 July secured ‘stern measures’ to deal with republicans, as the cabinet extended police powers even further.¹³⁵

During the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the Rising, many questioned whether the realities of the Irish state measured up to the ideals of the 1916 heroes. Attention focused on James Connolly in particular. Niamh Puirseil notes: ‘What was interesting about the

¹³² Johnston, *Century of Endeavour*, pp. 201-4.

¹³³ JIC minutes, 23 Jun. 1966, in TNA, CAB 159/45.

¹³⁴ Eunan O’Halpin, “‘A Poor Thing But Our Own’: The Joint Intelligence Committee and Ireland, 1965-72”, in *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 23, No. 5, pp. 664-6.

¹³⁵ Cabinet minutes, 25 Jul. 1966, in PRONI, CAB 4/1336.

treatment of Connolly at this time was that writers were placing greater emphasis on his socialism than on his nationalism, the latter having overshadowed the former for decades.’ The Labour Party benefited from this new-found idealism. Labour had traditionally spoken of ‘social justice’ rather than socialism, but now its rhetoric became more radical. This went down well with its many younger recruits, and the October 1966 annual conference would be its biggest to date.¹³⁶ Meanwhile, the left-wing IRA leaders’ vision of a revolutionary republican movement, which did not preclude an active role for the IRA, had entered the public domain.

(viii) ‘Blueprint for revolution’ seized by Garda

In December Berry provided an *aide mémoire* on the IRA for the taoiseach, prior to a meeting between Jack Lynch and Wilson to discuss the EEC. There was no reason, Berry wrote, to believe that IRA violence would commence within twelve months. Easter commemorations and Paisley-instigated riots might provide an excuse for violence – ‘if the organisation were otherwise ready’ – but, he pointed out, Craig had recently stated that IRA activities were no longer a serious concern. However, Berry warned of consequences arising from the situation facing the northern minority: ‘there is a strong recrudescence of feeling running through the country at present which might be reflected in violence again unless signs became evident that the large block of nationalists in the Six Counties will not be denied their fair share of public appointments and participation in public affairs’. The IRA did not have the financial resources to maintain a military campaign for any length of time, he noted, although individual acts of terrorism could not be ruled out. The organisation’s left-wing political aspirations were also recognised: a policy of force might be left in abeyance for some years while public support would be sought in local and Dáil elections. IRA leaders, he pointed out, had attended classes conducted by persons listed by

¹³⁶ Puirseil, *Labour Party*, pp. 238-40.

the Garda as members of communist organisations.¹³⁷ Berry based his memorandum on a recent, comprehensive Garda report, 'Review of Unlawful and Allied Organisations', which had been prepared specifically for the new taoiseach.¹³⁸

Despite the opposition of traditionalists, the IRA's leading left-wing figures had pressed ahead with their agenda. The Garda report stated that the IRA's most recent convention had been held in October. Approximately fifty-five delegates had elected an executive of twelve, which included Johnston as director of political education. An army council of seven would run it on an ongoing basis, with only one member from the North.¹³⁹ Impatience with Sinn Féin became evident at an army council meeting in November, which considered resolutions referred to it by the convention. According to the Garda review, one of these called for the formation of a new political organisation if Sinn Féin did not carry out IRA policy. The motion had been rejected, but the fact that it had been put forward indicates the level of dissatisfaction felt by certain IRA radicals with Sinn Féin's traditionalists.¹⁴⁰ The convention had instructed the army council to devise a course which would explain the sequence of events leading towards successful revolution – economic resistance, political and, finally, military action. These various stages had to be followed before there could be a successful confrontation with the British government 'and its forces of occupation'.¹⁴¹ Significantly, political struggle would precede armed struggle.

An imaginative plan for the republican movement had been found on Garland in May (he received a prison sentence for possessing incriminating documents).¹⁴² This blueprint comprised a political and a military plan. Lenihan circulated the political section of the captured material to members of the Oireachtas and the media, with the full document, the

¹³⁷ 'IRA Organisation', 9 Dec. 1966, and Ó Nualláin to Berry, 6 Dec. 1966, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

¹³⁸ Berry to Ó Nualláin, 6 Dec. 1966, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

¹³⁹ 'Review of Unlawful and Allied Organisations', pp. 1-3, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 7-8.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, pp. 6-7.

¹⁴² Ibid, p.8. The Garda review erroneously states here that Garland was arrested on 7 September.

political and the military sections, restricted to the cabinet. The proposal by leaders of the IRA – euphemistically referred to as ‘an illegal organisation’ – to transform the republican movement into a revolutionary force made the front pages of the newspapers. The Belfast dailies, the *News Letter* (unionist) and *The Irish News* (nationalist), did not make a fuss. Neither did the *The Irish Times* nor *The Irish Press*, although *The Irish Independent* described the ‘blueprint for a revolution’ as disturbing.¹⁴³

The military plan stated that ‘classic guerrilla-type operations’ – as had been attempted during the 1950s – would not be successful in the North: the IRA should learn from the Cypriot struggle and employ ‘terror tactics only’. This would include the creation of ‘shock units’ and ‘spectacular kidnaps’ if republicans were executed. Silencers and poison darts could be employed in the assassination of RUC personnel.¹⁴⁴ According to Johnston, these military proposals lacked credibility and were included as a sop to anti-politicisation traditionalists such as Mac Stíofáin.¹⁴⁵ However, the details of the military plan, even if it was included to mollify traditionalists, gave hostages to fortune. RUC Special Branch took such proposals literally, and Stormont already believed that RUC officers would be selected for assassination.

The *News Letter* made dramatic claims about the IRA’s intentions on 21 May, one week after its initial report on the seized blueprint. The section of the document relating to the North, its correspondent wrote, had been leaked. The IRA hoped to take over Northern Ireland after an ‘armed stand’ in Belfast and an appeal to the UN; a military seizure of Belfast would emulate the Hungarian uprising of 1956 and the 1916 rebellion. According to ‘reliable sources’, the IRA aimed to infiltrate the British army, the Royal Navy, and

¹⁴³ *News Letter*, 14 May 1966, pp. 1, 5; *Irish News*, 14 May 1966, p.1; *Irish Times*, 14 May 1966, pp. 1, 7; *Irish Press*, 14 May 1966, pp. 1, 4; *Irish Independent*, 14 May 1966, pp. 1, 11.

¹⁴⁴ ‘Review of Unlawful and Allied Organisations’, pp. 11-2, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

¹⁴⁵ See Johnston, *Century of Endeavour*, pp. 192-4.

even the RUC, the Ulster Special Constabulary (B Specials) and Orange lodges. The *News Letter* contended that the Irish government had restricted disclosure of these proposals because the IRA's intended action in the North would put Dublin under pressure to intervene. The newspaper's claims were speculative, but loosely based on some of the ideas contained in the IRA plan seized from Garland. The *News Letter* was on stronger ground when it teased out the implications of the IRA's political ambitions. Following its success in exploiting students in Dublin for the purposes of demonstrations, the newspaper warned, university students in Northern Ireland would be 'indoctrinated'. Bodies such as the Wolfe Tone Society would be part of this enterprise, which found inspiration in the Saor Éire project of the 1930s to agitate around a left-wing republican agenda. While farfetched, the newspaper's report stated, the IRA plan was being taken seriously – possibly by RUC Special Branch – because its authors were 'fanatical'. The *News Letter's* argument about the latest IRA threat endorsed Stormont's security measures: 'It justifies the precautions taken North and South of the Border over the Easter celebrations of the 1916 anniversary, for the document envisaged forays on the Border over the Easter period.'¹⁴⁶

An army council meeting in August had discussed a draft political plan. It decided that the republican movement needed to organise within trade unions, with the ambitious aim of making them 'more revolutionary'. Committees under IRA control would deal with issues such as housing and free trade, and would co-operate with like-minded groups outside the movement. The IRA would retain its own structure and function 'as a back-bone' within a revolutionary movement, with military action seen as the final phase of republican struggle.¹⁴⁷ The drafters of this section of the document, who saw the IRA as the elite

¹⁴⁶ *News Letter*, 21 May 1966, p.1.

¹⁴⁷ 'Review of Unlawful and Allied Organisations', pp. 8-10, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

within a revolutionary movement, were influenced by the Bolsheviks' strategy in Russia in 1917.¹⁴⁸

According to the review, over thirty per cent of the estimated 1,000 IRA members were located in Dublin city; the six counties of Northern Ireland were not well represented. Over seventy per cent of the total membership were based in nine counties: Dublin, Cork (East Riding), Cavan/Monaghan, Limerick, Louth/Meath and Waterford/Kilkenny.¹⁴⁹ And about 30,000 copies of *The United Irishman* were printed each month.¹⁵⁰ Following imprisonment in the South, IRA volunteers were instructed to demand 'political' conditions including wearing their own clothes, refusing to do prison work and obtaining freedom of association. The sacrifices of republican prisoners in the past should be remembered:

'Other Volunteers have fought and died to obtain these conditions which are recognised as Political Treatment. It is your duty to guard what they have won.'¹⁵¹

While fanciful in the extreme, the seized IRA document reveals that Goulding and his allies were prepared to challenge old ways of thinking in the republican movement. If the IRA was to become the armed guarantor of the movement's revolutionary gains, Henry Patterson points out, then there was much traditional thinking behind the Goulding project.¹⁵² MLR Smith, however, sees the captured blueprint as evidence of the determination of the left-wing leadership to chart a new course. The rejection of IRA vanguardism, he argues, and 'the willingness to be open-minded' about the mix of strategic

¹⁴⁸ Research Section, The Workers' Party, *The 1970 Sinn Féin Árd Fheis: An Analysis* (Citizen Press, Dublin, 2010), p. 6.

¹⁴⁹ 'Review of Unlawful and Allied Organisations', p. 1, NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 45-6, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, pp. 15-6, in NAI, TAOIS 98/6/495.

¹⁵² Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, p. 99.

methods, 'all repelled traditionalist assumptions concerning the pre-eminence of military means'.¹⁵³ Berry, a shrewd analyst, recognised this left-wing political influence when he advised that military plans might be put on hold while republicans sought electoral support.

(ix) Republican Clubs banned

An argument designed to persuade the IRA to support a civil rights campaign in the North was made in the newsletter of the Dublin Wolfe Tone Society, *Tuairisc*, in August 1966. But the civil rights issue would not be promoted for its own reasons. Rather, in this viewpoint, demanding reform in Northern Ireland could undermine Stormont. A civil rights campaign would force O'Neill to concede more than 'he thinks he can dare give' without risking overthrow by 'more reactionary' unionists. According to *Tuairisc*, Britain wanted the Irish state to rejoin the UK, which meant that Fianna Fáil was more useful to London than Stormont. It argued that O'Neill had been ordered to 'play down discrimination' and 'brush the corruption of his regime under the carpet'. Unionism in the North was divided, the argument asserted. Therefore, there were unprecedented opportunities for a civil rights campaign to create political realignments in the North. The possibility that disaffected unionists might stop flirting with the NILP and return to the Unionist Party, or move over to Paisley, was not entertained.¹⁵⁴

The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) was founded in Belfast in January 1967.¹⁵⁵ Most of its executive were republicans or communists, and Harris, a communist, became its first chairman.¹⁵⁶ The previous August Wolfe Tone Society members had met in Maghera, County Derry, and decided to launch a civil rights campaign in the North. A

¹⁵³ M.L.R. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland?: The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement* (Routledge, London, 1995, paperback edn. 1997), pp. 77-80.

¹⁵⁴ *Tuairisc*, 31 Aug. 1966, pp. 6-8, in PRONI, HA/32/2/13.

¹⁵⁵ Purdie, *Politics in the Streets*, pp. 132-3.

¹⁵⁶ Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 85-6; Workers' Party, *Civil Rights*, pp. 19-20; interview with Noel Harris.

paper based on the *Tuairisc* civil rights argument had been read at the meeting, which had been agreed by the IRA army council.¹⁵⁷

Stormont saw the IRA's attempts to build a political base in the North as a prelude to another military campaign. Any effort to win public support by focusing on everyday concerns was mere window dressing, according to this viewpoint. The Republican Clubs, established to evade the ban on Sinn Féin, were banned by Craig in March 1967. (Centenary commemorations of the Fenian rising were also forbidden.) The authorities argued that the IRA intended to use the clubs as a front, in the same way as Sinn Féin branches had been used before the launch of the IRA campaign in 1956. According to the RUC, the ban had dealt a severe blow to the IRA. About eighty people attended a protest meeting over the issue, including MPs Harry Diamond and Gerry Fitt, Betty Sinclair and Derek Peters of the CPNI, and Frank McGlade, a leading republican. The RUC recognised the political ambitions of left-wing republicans and the divisions in the republican movement over the way forward, and saw tensions between many in the North and the Dublin leadership. The RUC noted that there were suggestions the leadership might set up a new political wing separate from Sinn Féin, to allow the promotion of 'progressive and modern policies' as well as providing support for military action. The establishment of the Republican Clubs, in this viewpoint, had been part of a wider subversive agenda.¹⁵⁸

Banning the clubs spurred Stormont's critics, including the NILP and the NCCL, which called for the repeal of the Special Powers Act. The NCCL stated that Stormont's action denied free speech. The chairman of the CDU, Paul Rose MP, drew attention to the problem of local government electoral arrangements when he said that Dungannon's segregated housing could be compared to South African apartheid. The chorus of

¹⁵⁷ Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, pp. 110-12.

¹⁵⁸ Stormont to Home Office, 21 Mar. 1967, and submission from RUC inspector general, in TNA, HO 284/48.

condemnation over the ban, Thomas Hennessey contends, does not take into consideration unionist perceptions of republicans as terrorists wishing to overthrow the state.¹⁵⁹ The problem with Stormont's perception of the subversive threat, however, would be its inability to allow the expression of political dissent as in other Western European parliamentary democracies. Suppressing protest activity would have profound consequences.

Prior to the Westminster Northern Ireland debate, in October, Stormont supplied the Home Office with an RUC summary in relation to the Republican Clubs, outlining previous measures to combat subversion. The IRA had been proscribed under the Special Powers Acts since 1922 and Sinn Féin had been similarly proscribed in 1956 after the resumption of IRA violence; Sinn Féin in 1964 had then set up the Republican Clubs. The total membership of the clubs had been 427, of whom 116 were known IRA members. They would provide cover under which IRA meetings and training sessions would take place, with the overall aim of making them centres of subversive activity. For instance, it was hoped that they would play a part in augmenting the work of 'economic resistance directories' which had been set up by the IRA's education department. The ban was not a blow against civil liberties, the Home Office was told. The clubs were a front for the IRA and controlled by Sinn Féin, and both these organisations aimed to overthrow the Northern Ireland constitution by force of arms.¹⁶⁰

Craig's banning order had caused controversy in Queen's University. A republican club had been set up there the day after the order was announced, and two days later students marched to Belfast City Hall over the ban. In November, the university's Academic Council refused to recognise the club for legal reasons. When Paisleyites threatened to

¹⁵⁹ Hennessey, *Origins of the Troubles*, pp. 117-20.

¹⁶⁰ Stormont to Home Office, 18 Oct. 1967, and memorandum on Republican Clubs, in TNA, HO 284/48.

block a march to Unionist Party headquarters to deliver a petition 2,000 demonstrators marched to Craig's home instead.¹⁶¹

Sinn Féin contested the June 1967 local elections in the South, when the Labour Party performed relatively well in Dublin. Labour, now moving leftwards, had showed that it could appeal to young people. An IRA meeting in August recognised that left-wing republicans had a mountain to climb, and, two years later, an internal document noted that circulation of *The United Irishman* stood at 14,000 – comparable to that of *The Irish Socialist*, the publication of the IWP. Following the 1967 elections, the republican movement took up housing agitation and set up the Dublin Housing Action Committee with the IWP. The housing campaign in Dublin involved demonstrations, occupations of public buildings and squatting, and proved popular with left-wing students, while the *Herald* published articles identifying the groups and personnel behind the campaign. Later in the year, the Sinn Féin árd fheis declared its aim to be the establishment of a Socialist Republic.¹⁶² (At an Easter commemoration, Goulding had condemned NATO and any Irish attempts to join the alliance.)¹⁶³ In Belfast, however, leading republicans such as Billy McMillen were having difficulty persuading the movement of the merits of political agitation, and three British army premises were damaged in IRA attacks.¹⁶⁴ Unlike Berry, the northern authorities ignored emerging nuances in republican thinking and, as the Republican Clubs ban illustrated, chose to see political activity as preparing the ground for another military assault.

¹⁶¹ Workers' Party, *Civil Rights*, p. 16; Prince, *Northern Ireland's '68*, pp. 194-5.

¹⁶² Puirseil, *Labour Party*, pp. 247-49; Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, pp. 113-14, 118-19.

¹⁶³ *United Irishman*, Apr. 1967, p.1.

¹⁶⁴ Various, *McMillen*, pp. 7-8.

(x) Subversive activity alarms UK and US embassies

With the onset of student protest in Dublin against the Americans' role in Vietnam, republicans publicly participated in demonstrations with communists. Up to 500 people attended a protest meeting at Dublin's Mansion House in July 1966 over the Vietnam war. The US embassy noted that the speakers included 'well known super liberal' Conor Cruise O'Brien, George Jeffares and Peadar O'Donnell. The embassy doubted whether the meeting would have any effect on public opinion, which it saw as supportive of US policies in Vietnam.¹⁶⁵ Students then marched to the US embassy in October to demonstrate against American bombing in North Vietnam, and Garda Special Branch was 'most helpful' in supplying information on the organisers, the embassy reported. Among the marchers were members of the IWP, the Connolly Youth Movement (CYM) and the IRA.¹⁶⁶ The Garda had predicted that 'a mixed bag' of about 100 'leftist students' would attend an orderly event, but it would be prepared for other eventualities.¹⁶⁷ Another demonstration outside the embassy took place in January 1967, and a letter written by O'Donnell, of Irish Voice on Vietnam, was handed in. The embassy noted that Irish Voice on Vietnam was a new 'pacifist' group, not known to be communist. But some members, according to the embassy, appeared to be closely associated with the IWP and, as far as the Americans were concerned, O'Donnell was a communist. The embassy stated that Irish Voice on Vietnam supporters also backed the Irish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the IAAM.¹⁶⁸ Lynch followed Lemass's strong pro-Washington line and supported the White House over Vietnam. RTÉ reversed a decision in April to send a broadcast team to North Vietnam to report on the war after Lynch had taken the unusual step of telephoning

¹⁶⁵ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 27 Jul. 1966, in NARA, RG59, box 2344, Pol 23 Ire.

¹⁶⁶ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 1 Nov. 1966, in NARA, RG59, box 2344, Pol 23 Ire.

¹⁶⁷ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 26 Oct. 1966, in NARA, RG59, box 2344, Pol 23 Ire.

¹⁶⁸ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 3 Feb. 1967, in NARA, RG59, box 2223, Pol 23 Ire; *ibid*, 8 Mar., 1967. Donal Ó Drisceoil, *Peadar O'Donnell* (Cork University Press, Cork, 2001), p. 118.

RTÉ management to express the government's concerns on the matter. Government statements on the war called for a dual cessation of hostilities.¹⁶⁹

In October 1967 the embassy believed that campus protests in the US had influenced Irish students. A march organised by Irish Voice on Vietnam managed to attract double the figure predicted by the Garda, and this was partly attributed to the media publicity given to student demonstrations in California. Despite the attention to detail in this analysis of student protest in Ireland, US embassy reports could exaggerate. For example, it was stated that Dan Breen, the chairman of Irish Voice on Vietnam, was a member of the IWP – Breen had been a Fianna Fáil TD from 1932 to 1965.¹⁷⁰ The embassy later reported that O'Riordan had been the principal organiser of the event. It also noted that there would be Irish participation in the Soviet Union's golden anniversary celebration of the 1917 revolution. The IWP would be represented by O'Riordan and Nolan, and prominent trade union leaders who would travel to the USSR included the general secretary of the Workers' Union of Ireland (WUI), Jim Larkin, and the general secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), Ruaidhri Roberts.¹⁷¹ Larkin later posted a card from Moscow to his long-time friend de Courcy Ireland, affirming his belief in 'the age old dream'.¹⁷² Larkin, son of WUI founder 'Big Jim' Larkin, had been a student in the International Lenin School almost forty years previously.¹⁷³

After his first day as British ambassador in Dublin, in February 1967, Sir Andrew Gilchrist concluded that he was very welcome.¹⁷⁴ Later in the year he reported that militant

¹⁶⁹ Dermot Keogh, *Jack Lynch: A Biography* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 2008), pp. 133-5.

¹⁷⁰ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 24 Oct. 1967, in NARA, RG59, box 2223, Pol 23 Ire; *ibid*, 3 Feb. 1967; MA Hopkinson, 'Breen, Daniel', in McGuire and Quinn (eds.), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, Vol. 1, pp. 796-7. For an outline of arguments in Ireland on the Vietnam war, see 'Irish appeals on the situation in Vietnam' in Justice memo, 1 Feb. 1968, in NAI, JUS 99/1/443. See also Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation Of Ireland 1900-2000* (Profile, London, 2004, paperback edn. 2005).

¹⁷¹ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 3 Nov. 1967, in NARA, RG59, box 2223, Pol 2-1 Ire.

¹⁷² John de Courcy Ireland papers, UCDA, P/29/G/32.

¹⁷³ Emmet O'Connor, *James Larkin* (Cork University Press, Cork, 2002), pp. 88-9.

¹⁷⁴ Gilchrist to Commonwealth Office, 27 Feb. 1967, in CAC, GILC/14A.

republicanism had been on the wane in the Irish state. Although the IRA had ‘good supplies of arms’ and Royal Navy visits had been abandoned because of the danger of ships being sniped at, the old resentment against the British had been seldom visible. And Irish recruits still comprised a significant proportion of the British army’s men and officers. The population of the Republic had become better acquainted with Britain for two reasons, he wrote. The enormous post-war emigration to Britain had led to emigrants’ relatives visiting British cities, and two-thirds of the Irish television-owning public were able to receive British stations. The ambassador illustrated the new mood that he perceived: ‘When I am on tour, I often ask the local pop-group ballad-singers in a pub to give me some anti-British ballads, and they comply with delight and hoots of laughter; though when they know who I am they generally leave out the really bad ones.’ Gilchrist’s despatch ended with the hope that he was right in hardly making any reference to ‘the problems of partition and the frontier’.¹⁷⁵ (As if to illustrate the relatively relaxed attitude in the South surrounding issues relating to republicanism, a Trinity College debating society had invited Goulding to speak at a symposium on Home Rule opponent Edward Carson.)¹⁷⁶

Renewed IRA activity the following year, however, saw Gilchrist changing his opinion on the threat posed by republicans. In his view, London could not depend on the Irish government to protect British targets from attack. He also noted the republican movement’s new-found emphasis on left-wing agitation. Garland had outlined the leadership’s revolutionary ambitions in his address at the 1968 Wolfe Tone commemoration in Bodinstown, and Gilchrist sent the July edition of *The United Irishman* to Whitehall with its report of Garland’s speech, under the headline ‘No longer will the

¹⁷⁵ Gilchrist to Commonwealth Office, 1 Aug. 1967, in CAC, GILC/14B; on the impact of Telefís Éireann, see John A. Murphy, *Ireland in the Twentieth Century* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1975), pp. 145-6.

¹⁷⁶ University Philosophical Society invitation to Cathal Goulding, 26 Jan. 1967, in private collection, in the care of Prof. Eunan O’Halpin, Trinity College, Dublin.

army of the Irish revolution stand idly by'.¹⁷⁷ Garland had stressed the importance of political struggle in his showpiece address: Sinn Féin had been neglected by the IRA, he pointed out, but should play a leading role in republican struggle. All successful revolutionary movements, he argued, had a political wing acting as the 'mass organiser'. In this strategy, the IRA would become the 'army of the people' to defend revolutionary gains.¹⁷⁸ Garland was redefining the IRA's function here, as Goulding had outlined in the *Belfast Telegraph* two years before when he emphasised that republicans needed to win political support before engaging in armed struggle. (In January 1968 Costello showed that republicans could appeal to the electorate when he polled over 2,000 votes in a by-election in Wicklow.)¹⁷⁹

The ambassador drew Whitehall's attention to the republican movement's recent emphasis on agitation. The IRA was 'increasingly penetrated or manipulated' by leftwingers and communists, Gilchrist stated. Its agenda now included 'liaison with international subversive bodies' and the exploitation of industrial unrest. The first public indication of this new left-wing phase, he pointed out, came when the IRA claimed responsibility for burning coaches used to take workers to the strike-bound EI factory near Limerick. Gilchrist believed that violence against British targets remained a 'talisman' for the IRA because of anti-partition sentiment. Hitting British targets preserved the IRA's status in the eyes of the Irish public, giving it 'a privileged position amounting almost to legal immunity'. He argued that the Irish government, no matter how hostile it was to communism, would hesitate before attempting to tackle the perpetrators of industrial sabotage, because they would be 'clothed in the full patriotic armour of the IRA'. No arrests had been made. And, according to Gilchrist, no arrests were likely to be made in

¹⁷⁷ Gilchrist to Commonwealth Office, 1 Aug. 1968, in TNA, FCO 23/192.

¹⁷⁸ *United Irishman*, Jul. 1968, p. 9.

¹⁷⁹ Workers' Party, 1970 *Sinn Féin Árd Fheis*, pp. 10-11.

connection with the burning of the EI buses.¹⁸⁰ The IRA's target here had been the US-based multinational General Electric, whose EI subsidiary had been involved in a long-running recognition dispute at its Shannon plant with the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU).¹⁸¹ According to Garland, the republican movement at this time had links with liberation movements such as the ANC and the MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola/People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola).¹⁸²

The American embassy in Dublin had heard that US Navy communications installations in Derry might be attacked by the IRA. A caller to the embassy, purporting to be a member of the army council, had warned that a 'virulently anti-American' element in the republican movement planned such an operation. The attack would probably involve explosives and would be designed with publicity in mind, not involving danger to life. One reconnaissance had been undertaken. This caller, who said IRA left-wingers enjoyed growing influence, contended that the organisation should be anti-British, not anti-American.¹⁸³

Gilchrist's report also noted that the IRA often raised funds by bank robbery. There had been a spate of robberies, he noted, though these may have been the work of a splinter group. Prominent dissident Behal had recently appeared on an RTÉ television show claiming credit for anti-British violence. He had been imprisoned for this activity, the ambassador wrote, but it had not taken him very long before he made his 'escape'.¹⁸⁴ Behal had appeared on a *Late Late Show* panel with Goulding, which prompted Gilchrist to complain to External Affairs. As a result of his experience elsewhere, he wrote, Goulding

¹⁸⁰ Gilchrist to Commonwealth Office, 5 Jul. 1968, in TNA, FCO 23/192.

¹⁸¹ *Irish Times*, 30 May 1968, p. 1; see also John Walsh, *Patrick Hillery: The Official Biography* (New Island, Dublin, 2008), pp. 155-6.

¹⁸² Seán Garland, quoted in Liam Cullinane, "'A happy blend'?: Irish republicanism, political violence and social agitation, 1962-69", in *Saothar: Journal of the Irish Labour History Society*, Vol. 35, 2010, p. 56.

¹⁸³ US embassy (Dublin) to CO, US Naval Comm. Center, Londonderry, 1 Mar. 1968, in box 2222, Pol 12-3 Ire.

¹⁸⁴ Gilchrist to Commonwealth Office, 5 Jul. 1968, in TNA, FCO 23/192.

was a communist as he used ‘the usual techniques’.¹⁸⁵ Gilchrist had an interest in intelligence, and communism, and his background may explain why he would become more alarmed than most over the threat posed by communist-influenced agitators. He had been ambassador to Indonesia when British forces in Borneo and Brunei had battled Indonesian infiltrators, and had stood armed inside the embassy chancellery as rioters tried to break in. During the Second World War he had served with the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in Thailand. After an assassination scare in June 1968 he became friendly with the head of Garda Special Branch, chief superintendent John Fleming.¹⁸⁶ Despite a visit from McCann, Gilchrist did not take the death threat very seriously.¹⁸⁷ His comments on the matter, however, revealed his scepticism about the likelihood of the Irish authorities dealing with the IRA. If the assassination threat came to pass, ‘the assassin in all probability would not be arrested, or if arrested not convicted, or if convicted not held in prison for very long before effecting an “escape”’.¹⁸⁸

On 21 August 500,000 Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia. The ‘Prague Spring’ – the communist regime’s experiment with democratic reform – had been stopped by Moscow. There was widespread condemnation in the West, of course, even by communist parties. Some Irish communists, however, including O’Riordan, supported the Soviet invasion. So, too, did leading South African communist Joe Slovo, who was in Dublin at the time. ‘We know who our friends are,’ he said. The Kremlin had correctly calculated that it could impose its authority in Eastern Europe, and there were more important issues for the world’s two superpowers other than Czechoslovakia. There were signs that there might be a thaw in the Cold War: the previous month the Soviet Union and the US had

¹⁸⁵ McCann note, 24 Apr. 1968, in NAI, DFA 98/2/26.

¹⁸⁶ O’Halpin, ‘Intelligence and Anglo-Irish relations’, in O’Halpin, Armstrong and Ohlmeyer (eds.), *Intelligence*, pp. 139–41.

¹⁸⁷ Gilchrist to Commonwealth Office, 27 Jun. 1968, in TNA, FCO 23/192. A background note in this file points out that the ambassador’s personal bodyguard was discontinued from April 1964, as a result of British efforts, and had only been reinstated because of the threat to Gilchrist. Another note records that the protection in Dublin in the mid-1950s was maintained to demonstrate ‘the strength of feeling’ against partition, rather than to guard against a direct threat of violence.

¹⁸⁸ British ambassador to Commonwealth Secretary, 5 Jul. 1968, in TNA, FCO 23/192.

signed a Treaty of Nuclear Non-proliferation.¹⁸⁹ As the Soviets crushed the Czech reform movement, and republicans joined with communists to campaign for reform in the West, alarm bells began to ring over what outside influences were at work in the republican movement.

(xi) Conclusion

Dublin's perceptions of communist influences within the republican movement could be seen in the light of the Irish state's anti-communist tradition, but the Cold War had been a factor in the thinking of the American embassy. It had requested assistance from the Irish authorities in relation to two confrontations between the US and international communism: the Cuba missile crisis and the Vietnam war. Although RUC Special Branch recognised a leftist component within militant republican thinking, the IRA's ongoing military planning convinced it that Northern Ireland faced a resumption of the border campaign. The emergence of a left-wing political strategy within the republican movement did not remove its traditional militarism, and Dublin and Stormont drew different conclusions from reports of communist penetration. O'Neill focused on the perceived terrorist threat to the state, and republican political initiatives in the North were linked to the IRA. Berry concluded that the IRA aimed to subordinate military activity in an attempt to secure support in elections. The JIC accepted in 1966 that the IRA posed a terrorist threat to Northern Ireland and did not see republican activity in terms of its Cold War priorities. While Gilchrist feared renewed violence in 1968 against British targets would go unchecked by the Irish authorities, he did see the emerging communist influence over the IRA as a significant development. In warning Whitehall that the republican movement had made contact with 'international subversive bodies' he linked republican subversion to the global threat facing the UK and its allies during the Cold War. It would be the political activities of Irish

¹⁸⁹ Judt, *Postwar*, pp. 444-5; interview with Noel Harris.

republicans and communists within the fragile Northern Ireland state, however, that would lead to the crisis that damaged improving Dublin-Stormont and Anglo-Irish relations.

CHAPTER II: COMMUNIST INFLUENCES OVER IRISH REPUBLICANS

‘The behaviour of British troops within the Falls area is reminiscent of Black-and-Tan days, assaults on Cypriots, maltreatment of Kenyans, and gross viciousness towards the working classes everywhere.’ – **Official IRA**¹

‘Communist activity as a whole is definitely on the upswing in Ireland, and feeds on the irritants which have crept into Irish feelings for the US as the old family ties between the two countries weaken with the passage of time.’ – **John Moore**²

(i) Introduction

During the Falls curfew events in July 1970 the Official IRA engaged the army in Belfast. Up to 3,000 troops were involved in this exercise, which the Officials later described as the biggest battle in Ireland since 1916.³ The curfew imposed to facilitate arms searches proved to be a political disaster. Henceforth, the army would be perceived by nationalists to be backing the unionists.⁴ The Northern Ireland prime minister, Major J.D. Chichester-Clark, had pressed the curfew on the army, and the principle beneficiary of the affair would be the Provisional IRA.⁵ Stormont had linked civil rights protests to global communism: in 1969 Chichester-Clark warned that the Workers’ Republic sought by some protesters would be an ‘Irish Cuba’.⁶ The civil rights campaign led to sectarian strife, however, and the British government deployed troops in the North in August 1969.⁷ Anglo-Irish relations deteriorated when the August violence erupted and the Irish

¹ Official IRA army council statement on Falls curfew, quoted in *United Irishman*, Aug. 1970, p. 8.

² US ambassador to Ireland John Moore to US under secretary of state Elliot L. Richardson, 26 Feb. 1970, in NARA, RG 59, box 2383, Pol 12 Ire.

³ Geoffrey Warner, ‘The Falls Road Curfew Revisited’, in *Irish Studies Review*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2006, pp. 325-42.

Thomas Hennessey, *The Evolution of the Troubles 1970-72* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2007), pp. 37-48.

⁴ J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989), pp. 433-5.

⁵ Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon and Henry Patterson, *Northern Ireland 1921-2001: Political Forces and Social Classes* (Serif, London, 1995, revised, updated edn., 2002), pp. 173-4; Paul Arthur, *Government and Politics of Northern Ireland* (Longman, London, 1980, 2nd edn., 1991), pp. 111-2.

⁶ *Irish Times*, 14 Jul. 1969, p.9.

⁷ Richard Bourke, *Peace in Ireland: The War Of Ideas* (Pimlico, London, 2003), pp. 49-117.

government sought to involve the UN in the North, receiving support from the Soviet Union.⁸ The outbreak of unrest in Northern Ireland would raise the question of whether Irish revolutionaries would seek Moscow's assistance for their endeavours, as KGB 'special actions' through proxy organisations had been a tool of Soviet foreign policy during the Cold War.⁹ The IRA would appeal to the KGB for arms more than once.¹⁰ Hijackings by the Soviet-backed Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in September 1970 led the JIC to conclude that the threat to British security from Arab terrorism had 'significantly increased' – the FCO would now be alerted to the developing links between Official republicans and the Palestinian Al Fatah movement.¹¹

(ii) Civil rights movement emerges

The northern authorities did not accept the bona fides of NICRA. It had ulterior motives: republican and communist. The emergence of NICRA would be seen as another attempt by the IRA to lay the foundations for an armed campaign against the state. Its first march, from Coalisland to Dungannon on 24 August 1968, had been more a republican parade than a civil rights march, according to the RUC. Kennedy emphasised the role of republicans during the protest and the difficulties faced by the police in containing demonstrators (up to 3,000) and counter-demonstrators (up to 2,000). No one was arrested or injured, he stated, although there had been scuffles between some protestors and stewards.¹² In Dungannon NICRA's chairwoman, Betty Sinclair of the CPNI, attempted to lead the crowd with the civil rights anthem, 'We Shall Overcome', but most of the protesters didn't know the words, according to one participant, and broke into 'A Nation

⁸ John Walsh, *Patrick Hillery: The Official Biography* (New Island, Dublin, 2008), pp. 176-89.

⁹ Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West* (Allen Lane, London, 1999), p. 488.

¹⁰ Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (Allen Lane, London, 2009), pp. 605-6. Brian Hanley and Scott Millar, *The Lost Revolution: The Story of the Official IRA and the Workers' Party* (Penguin, Dublin, 2009), p. 141.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 607-10; Evans to FCO, 22 Sep. 1970, in TNA, FCO 95/961.

¹² Kennedy to Home Affairs, 29 Aug. 1968, in PRONI, HA 32/2/27. For an analysis of the civil rights movement, see Purdie, *Politics in the Streets*.

Once Again'.¹³ An RUC district inspector reported that Sinclair did not command the respect of many of the protesters and had been booed over the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Nationalist MP Austin Currie was believed to be the organiser of the event. 'Detested' in local loyalist circles, according to this report, Currie was viewed as sympathetic to the republican cause and, the RUC noted, was related to the killers of Constable Forbes in Dungannon in 1942.¹⁴ (A cousin of Currie's father had been involved with the IRA and fled across the border after the killing of Forbes).¹⁵

Craig's decision to ban the next civil rights march, in Derry on 5 October, proved momentous. Media images of RUC officers beating marchers with batons were seen across the world.¹⁶ Craig spelled out his views in a Stormont speech on 16 October. The route proposed for the Derry march had created 'intense resentment' among the loyalist population of the city and was therefore banned. In Northern Ireland, there were certain areas which were traditionally the preserve of loyalists and others which were the preserve of nationalists. Craig asked: 'But why should this custom affect the Civil Rights Association which, on the face of it and by virtue of its own claims, is non-political and non-sectarian?' The answer to this question was that the civil rights movement was a revolutionary wolf in sheep's clothing. Its members came from the Derry Housing Action Committee, most of whom were members of the Connolly Association; the Republican Clubs, which included well-known members of the IRA; the Young Socialists; and the CPNI. Goulding had allegedly said that the IRA intended to infiltrate and use the civil rights organisation. According to Craig, the IRA had also stated that unrest and disorder were a prerequisite for another military campaign. Although the Republican Clubs' efforts

¹³ Bernadette Devlin, *The Price of My Soul* (Andre Deutsch, London, 1969, in assoc. with Pan), pp. 93-4.

¹⁴ RUC district inspector, Dungannon, to Kennedy, 28 Aug. 1968, in PRONI, HA 32/2/27.

¹⁵ Austin Currie, *All Hell Will Break Loose* (O'Brien, Dublin, 2004), pp. 32-3.

¹⁶ Thomas Hennessey, *Northern Ireland: The Origins of the Troubles* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 2005), pp. 137-44. Republicans from Belfast and other areas participated in the Derry march. Research Section, The Workers' Party, *Civil Rights: Reform or Revolution?* (Citizen Press, Dublin, 2008), p. 21-2. Following the break-up of the march, Sinn Féin president Tomás Mac Giolla had his first encounter with unionist counter-demonstrators Ian Paisley and Ronnie Bunting. Paisley and Bunting took photographs of Mac Giolla and everyone he spoke to. Information from Tomás Mac Giolla.

at agitation had been blocked, after they were banned the previous year, the IRA had then turned elsewhere. Civil rights marches would ultimately lead to a resumption of republican violence. Craig quoted Goulding on the issue of a military campaign: it would happen when ‘the people’ wanted it. Political agitation and armed struggle went together. Therefore, in Craig’s view, one form of struggle would lead to the other.

Craig also drew attention to the New Left element at the forefront of the Derry march. The Trotskyist Irish Workers’ Group was led by former IRA internee Gery Lawless. This group’s membership in the North included Rory McShane, who had helped to form the Republican Club in Queen’s University.¹⁷ It would become commonplace for unionist politicians to condemn Queen’s as a hotbed of republicanism, but republicans were few on the ground in the university even after the Trotskyist People’s Democracy (PD) emerged there in 1968.¹⁸

The civil rights agitation in the North became a civil rights *movement* after the Derry events. It would now galvanise the minority community. Up to this point, Bob Purdie points out, NICRA had been a small group of self-selected activists, not a movement. ‘Before the events in Derry on 5 October, the civil rights movement did not exist; there was only a small, isolated group of activists. In the wake of 5 October, NICRA mushroomed into a movement with branches in most towns in Northern Ireland in which there was a significant Catholic population.’ The original body would be ‘swamped by hundreds of new activists and thousands of supporters’.¹⁹

¹⁷ ‘Speech by Minister of Home Affairs’, 16 Oct. 1968, in PRONI, HA 32/2/26. Goulding told UTV that republicans should concentrate on political and economic issues and that an IRA volunteer might agitate for civil rights and ‘never see a gun for years’. The IRA aimed to be ‘the nucleus’ of a popular revolutionary movement. ‘Transcript of Ulster Television programme “It’s All Happening Now” shown on evening of Friday, 27th September, 1968’ in PRONI, HA 32/2/28. One Dublin newspaper reporter had been shocked around this time at the relative lack of decorum in the Northern Ireland House of Commons. Frank Kilfeather, *Changing Times: A Life in Journalism* (Blackwater, Dublin, 1997), p. 48.

¹⁸ Éilís McDermott, ‘Law and Disorder’, in Michael Farrell (ed.), *Twenty Years On* (Brandon, Dingle, 1988), p. 151.

¹⁹ Purdie, *Politics in the Streets*, pp. 155-6.

Craig's depiction of NICRA as a republican/communist conspiracy would not be shared by everyone supporting political stability in the North. Some well-placed observers attributed genuine motives to the majority of civil rights marchers. The US consul general in Belfast, Neil McManus, argued that the communist conspiracy theory was wide of the mark.²⁰ And Kennedy had altered his view of the demonstrators. He now made a distinction between what he saw as 'violent republicans' and 'ordinary people' marching to redress legitimate grievances.²¹ Both McManus and Kennedy believed that Craig's heavy-handed tactics were counterproductive: the majority in the civil rights movement could be satisfied with meaningful reforms. Following the Derry events, McManus drew conclusions from the fact that O'Neill had approved the RUC's actions rather than Craig himself. He stated that Craig had embarrassed the government before 'by his ill-advised views and remarks'. McManus reported that it was 'generally regarded' that neither republicans nor communists had played an important role on 5 October. The leaders of the northern opposition kept their distance from the IRA, he wrote. Sinclair, a prominent communist, was so harmless that even Craig himself saw her as a 'negligible danger'.²²

The following month Kennedy took a brave stand. In a letter to Craig Kennedy warned that the unrest in the North would be likely to continue until the introduction of electoral reform. The crisis had the potential to be worse than the security difficulties created by the IRA's 1956-62 border campaign, he believed. That campaign had not involved ordinary people on the ground, but the civil rights agitation had provoked opposition on the streets. Some loyalists were 'confused' and did not distinguish between the IRA and those marching for civil rights: 'This is resulting in opposition to peaceful marches, demonstrations and meetings, of such a nature as could lead to armed conflict, with the IRA stepping in to take advantage of the situation to exploit their aims and objects.'

²⁰ McManus to State Dept., 18 Oct. 1968, in NARA, RG 59, box 2651, Pol 23-8 UK.

²¹ Kennedy to Craig, 25 Nov. 1968, in PRONI, HA/32/2/26.

²² McManus to State Dept., 18 Oct. 1968, in NARA, RG 59, box 2651, Pol 23-8 UK.

Kennedy warned that death and destruction were inevitable in such a conflict and that ‘the impact on the whole way of life in Ulster would be catastrophic’. Not enough was being done by ‘responsible people’ to prevent this potential conflict; specifically, by pointing out the differences between violent republicanism and peaceful civil rights demands. Kennedy accepted NICRA’s stated aims and the fact that the IRA had little control over events. He made a daring suggestion to Craig on how to defuse the threat to the state posed by the civil rights mobilisation. ‘If it could be proclaimed that the old bogey of partition plays no part in the present agitation (and this is how I see it) and that the constitution is not in any danger from those who are protesting, I feel that a great deal of heat will disappear.’ He claimed that RUC information indicated that many unionists supported the protesters and that the counter-demonstrators were a small minority of extremists, who saw a danger to the constitution which did not exist. Kennedy also warned those holding important positions – including, presumably, Craig himself – from making public statements which would inflame passions. Appeals for calm would only be effective if they were accompanied by the distinctions which had been absent from the discourse so far, he argued. In what amounted to a prophetic statement, Kennedy concluded: ‘Unless there is a marked change in the situation soon I am afraid that the small police force we have in Ulster will be up against a problem of maintaining law and order unprecedented in the history of the Province, and one which they may find quite impossible to cope with successfully.’²³

Kennedy’s warning fell on deaf ears. He resigned suddenly in February 1969, the day after O’Neill called a general election, and was replaced by Anthony Peacocke, his deputy. Peacocke then demonstrated that he would toe the Craig line by stating that the IRA was actively involved in the civil rights campaign, but would not engage in outward violence

²³ Kennedy to Craig, 25 Nov. 1968, in PRONI, HA 32/2/26.

because the movement was achieving its objectives.²⁴ Simon Prince emphasises the determination of New Left agitators, such as Eamonn McCann, to provoke a crisis in the North by employing ‘provocative’ tactics. But this argument only focuses on some of the actors in the drama. The critical remarks of McManus and Kennedy illustrate how well-placed observers saw that Craig’s hardline approach effectively added petrol to the flames of discontent. Craig did more than any subversive to create the crisis that developed in the North from October 1968.²⁵

Kennedy’s concerns about the dangers of misrepresenting NICRA were not widespread in the upper echelons of the RUC. Three weeks after PD marchers were attacked at Burntollet Bridge, which was followed by police violence in Derry,²⁶ the RUC restated its view that NICRA pursued an IRA agenda. The RUC obtained the ‘proposed’ civil rights programme for 1969, from what it termed ‘a rather delicate source’. This programme followed ‘reasonably closely’ the outline for agitation in the North as advocated by Johnston.²⁷ Furthermore, the Ministry of Home Affairs was warned of a movement afoot within the civil rights community to associate itself with republican commemorations at Easter. This information, from a ‘credible source’, confirmed the prevailing view within Stormont. Should the government grant the demands of the civil rights demonstrators, they would ‘continue to march and demonstrate towards the re-unification of Ireland’.²⁸ Communist connections were noted. Responding to a Home Affairs query, the RUC reported that groups supporting a Northern Ireland civil rights demonstration in Oxford included the CPGB and Clann na hÉireann, and Irish civil rights meetings were being organised by someone who had attended the 1967 national CPGB congress as a full delegate. The RUC

²⁴ Chris Ryder, *The RUC 1922-2000: A Force Under Fire* (Methuen, London 1989, rev. edn., Arrow, London, 2000), p. 108.

²⁵ On the links between Irish Trotskyists and the international New Left, see Simon Prince, *Northern Ireland’s ‘68: Civil Rights, Global Revolt and the Origins of the Troubles* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2007), pp. 147-61.

²⁶ Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ulster* (Blackstaff, Belfast, 1992, updated, paperback edn., 2005), pp. 659-61; for eyewitness accounts of the Burntollet ambush and harassment of marchers in the days leading up to the attack, see Bowes Egan and Vincent McCormack, *Burntollet* (LRS Publishers, London, c. 1969).

²⁷ Meharg (RUC HQ) to Home Affairs, 17 Jan. 1969, in PRONI, HA 32/2/25.

²⁸ Meharg to Home Affairs, 28 Jan. 1969, in PRONI, HA 32/2/25.

also supplied the names of the local civil rights committee members.²⁹ As the civil rights agitation gained momentum – accompanied by rising tension – RUC Special Branch retained its view that this agitation was orchestrated by the IRA.

(iii) British ambassador claims IRA behind civil rights agitation

Gilchrist accepted the argument that the IRA was behind the civil rights movement, and believed the IRA had a communist agenda. He told the FCO in December 1968 that the democratic socialist republic the republican movement aspired to had more to do with Eastern Europe than Connolly's Workers' Republic. The organisation had not fumbled in a left-wing direction attempting to overcome traditionalist objections; rather, Gilchrist believed, it had incited other revolutionary groups to further its aims. He argued that the IRA had had remarkable success with its new strategy of promoting civil rights in the North, which included the 'penetration and incitement of student and other left-wing groups ...'.³⁰

The previous month the home secretary, Jim Callaghan, asked MI5 for a report on the prospect of violence from the IRA in Northern Ireland. MI5 obtained its information on the North from the RUC and informed the Home Office that its inquiries would require 'discreet handling'. Its assessment, 'The Threat of Violence in Northern Ireland', recognised a bigger picture, noting the potential for republican, and loyalist, violence. The assessment concluded that the IRA might see the civil rights movement as a broader base for the achievement of its aims, thereby provoking a unionist backlash.³¹

Gilchrist had met O'Neill, who stressed that the IRA had ulterior motives in pushing the civil rights agenda. For the ambassador, there were other indications that this was the case.

²⁹ Meharg to Home Affairs, 14 Jan. 1969, in PRONI, HA 32/2/25.

³⁰ Gilchrist to FCO, 12 Dec. 1968, in CAC, GILC/14A.

³¹ Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, pp. 602-3.

Mac Giolla told the Sinn Féin árd fheis that the power of the civil rights movement, as demonstrated in Derry in October, had shaken the Unionist Party 'to its foundations'. Attempting to persuade republicans that political struggle could be effective, Mac Giolla stated that the civil rights campaign was the first effective weapon to be forged by the anti-unionist forces. This assertion, according to Gilchrist, implied that the republicans were claiming credit for the new situation in the North. He concluded that Mac Giolla's claim endorsed O'Neill's view that the IRA had played a central role in creating the unrest.³² O'Neill had recently sacked the hardline Craig and made his television appeal, 'Ulster is at the crossroads'. O'Neill warned unionists that if his limited reform package was not introduced, London might intervene.³³ Gilchrist's argument here omitted the role of Trotskyists such as McCann in the Derry events. The republican movement had attempted to influence NICRA, but it was not the only group hoping to advance in the volatile situation following the Derry events.

Highlighting the role of the IRA in the civil rights agitation, the ambassador did not concern himself with tensions over tactics between leading figures, such as the militant McCann and the moderate John Hume. Gilchrist reminded Whitehall that the republican movement had turned away from militarism towards the exploitation of social and industrial unrest, and was developing international contacts. The IRA had extended the objective of overthrowing British rule in Ireland to the establishment of a socialist republic. Therefore, the ambassador argued, the promotion of civil rights in the North was a logical step in the new strategy. Gilchrist had identified a communist hand behind the civil rights agitation. His assessment focused on the militant element rather than the moderate. He was right in arguing that NICRA was something more than outward appearances suggested, but wrong not to see that the civil rights phenomenon was a

³² Gilchrist to FCO, 12 Dec. 1968, in CCA, GILC/14A.

³³ Hennessey, *Origins of the Troubles*, pp. 161-2.

mobilisation of the aggrieved minority in the North, and that it had leaders such as Hume who could accept a Stormont reform package. Unlike MI5, Gilchrist did not consider the prospect of loyalist violence.

He alerted the FCO to what London might face in a worst-case scenario, and outlined some possibilities for Ireland, north and south, such as reluctantly-imposed direct rule in Northern Ireland. Gilchrist warned of the implications: enforcing the law 'by British bayonets' could benefit the IRA. According to this argument, it would resume its military campaign and, by a combination of propaganda and martyrdom, win popular support. Instability in the North could spill over the border, so Dublin had a vested interest in avoiding this scenario. There was overwhelming support in the South for O'Neill's survival, he pointed out, and for the pause in civil rights demonstrations which he had called for.³⁴ Gilchrist was wise to anticipate the implications for London as a result of the unrest. Republicans believed NICRA could create a situation where Britain would be forced to intervene, thereby highlighting the partition issue. In March 1969 Greaves met leading republicans. According to Johnston, Greaves spoke to Goulding and Costello, arguing against what he saw as a plan to create turmoil in the North, thereby forcing Westminster to abolish Stormont. Goulding, according to this account, welcomed this outcome as it would demonstrate that the northern state was Britain's responsibility.³⁵ Gilchrist, who believed republicans were using NICRA as a Trojan horse to create unrest, would not be alone in perceiving that the republican movement pursued a communist strategy.

³⁴ Gilchrist to FCO, 12 Dec. 1968, in CAC, GILC/14A.

³⁵ Desmond Greaves diary entry, quoted in Roy H.W. Johnston, *Century of Endeavour: A Biographical & Autobiographical View of the Twentieth Century in Ireland* (Tyndall, Carlow, in assoc. with Lilliput, Dublin, revised edn., 2006), pp. 251-2.

(iv) Proposal to split IRA submitted to Irish government

In 1969 Berry warned the Irish government that it faced a new threat from a communist-led IRA. Berry informed the cabinet, in two separate submissions, that the IRA's left-wing leadership wanted to establish a Workers' Republic. An IRA convention, he pointed out, had decided to contact revolutionary groups and governments to obtain money and arms. (According to the British authorities the London-based Smullen was now liaising with Cuba and other communist states. Shortly after the submission of Berry's second memorandum, Smullen visited Cuba.) Berry proposed a political solution to this problem. If state and church authorities combined to publicise the communist influence over republicans, he argued, the movement would split. Republican Congress had been defeated in this way in the 1930s, he suggested.

Justice issued two memoranda to the government, in March and July 1969, which dealt solely with events within the jurisdiction. The unusual argument that church and state forces could be mobilised to crush a communist threat was made in the July memorandum. In addition to political initiatives emergency legislation might be required to deal with the IRA 'conspiracy', including the re-establishment of the Special Criminal Court and, as a last resort, internment.³⁶ This second memorandum was submitted because Berry believed that the new government should be reminded about the threat it faced. The memorandum emphasised that an opportunity existed to split the organisation: to drive a wedge 'between the rural members – the old faithfuls – and the doctrinaire republicans, mainly based in Dublin, who were sedulously propagating the gospel of a "Workers Socialist Republic" ...'

³⁶ 'Memorandum for government in relation to the I.R.A.', 14 Jul. 1969, in NAI, JUS 2000/36/3; DPP file, in relation to prosecution of Smullen for conspiring to obtain firearms in Huddersfield, in TNA, DPP 2/4755; 'Eamonn Smullen' in 'Irish Personality Notes', in TNA 87/601. On rekindled fears of communist influence over the IRA, see Eunan O'Hallpin, *Defending Ireland: The Irish State and its Enemies Since 1922* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, paperback edn. 2000), pp. 300-1; on Republican Congress and the communist issue, see Seán Cronin, *Frank Ryan: The Search for the Republic* (Repsol, Dublin, 1980), pp. 51-8, 63-4.

(The minister for justice had received a dossier on subversives to use in the recent general election).³⁷

Berry highlighted the fact that the IRA had recently engaged in violent activity, in conjunction with political agitation. He pointed out that when the border campaign ended in 1962, the IRA leadership had decided not to engage in acts of violence within the jurisdiction. This policy had been maintained, with one or two exceptions, until 1968. After the failure of the border campaign, the memorandum pointed out, there had been a reprise of the thinking that had created the left-wing republican initiatives, Saor Éire and Republican Congress, of the 1930s. Communist intellectuals had now been recruited to lecture republicans on exploiting social unrest, Berry stated. But military classes were also being held. By 1967 IRA leaders were publicly advocating the goal of a Workers' Republic and, according to the memorandum, mentioning an eventual resort to arms to this end. The organisation was prepared to support political agitation with military action. Since May 1968, notwithstanding the IRA's role in the non-violent civil rights campaign in the North, there had been eight violent incidents involving arson or explosives in the jurisdiction for which the IRA had claimed responsibility. These included the burning of buses as a result of the EI industrial dispute in Shannon, County Clare; the damage by explosives of an 'American owned' fishing vessel in Rossaveal, County Galway; the damage by explosives of a car outside a landlord's house in Dalkey, County Dublin; and the burning of a farmhouse in Kilcock, County Meath, owned by a naturalised Irish citizen of German origin. According to the Department of Justice, the Garda knew other crimes had been committed for which responsibility would not be claimed. The most recent had been the armed robbery of £25,000 at Dublin Airport, 'a commando-style operation'. Other

³⁷ Vincent Browne, *Magill*, Jun. 1980, 'The Peter Berry Papers: The Top Secret Memoirs of Ireland's Most Powerful Civil Servant', p. 50.

raids had been abandoned as a result of Garda action, but it was believed there would be further robberies.

Echoing Gilchrist's concerns about effective anti-subversion measures, the July memorandum pointed out that successful prosecutions were unlikely unless the perpetrators were caught red-handed. The Garda found itself severely handicapped by the evidential requirements of ordinary law in dealing with armed conspiracy. Special provisions had to be enacted for that purpose: the military tribunals, established in 1931; the Offences Against the State Act 1939; and the Offences Against the State (Amendment) Act 1940. With special courts not in operation since 1962, Berry argued that the Garda had less means 'than at any time in the past 40 years' for dealing with a violent IRA campaign. The seizure of seditious publications or arms searches would not seriously impede an organisation planning to overthrow the government, the memorandum suggested. Normal law enforcement, even if such a policy were prosecuted by the Garda, would not stamp out the threat posed by IRA Marxists. According to this argument, it would not be possible, for instance, to curb the activities of Johnston and other left-wing strategists 'under the ordinary police provisions'.³⁸

The dangers facing the state were sinister in more ways than one, Berry believed. The March memorandum pointed out that republican-communist spokesmen could now publicise their agenda in the media. Statements published by the press, it argued, portrayed the republican movement as the sole defender of workers and small farmers against exploitation by capitalists, landlords or foreigners: the subversive purposes of the IRA were ignored. This memorandum stated that 'known advocates of violence and of armed conspiracy' spoke on television programmes and at student meetings, and were taken seriously. A small number of left-wing individuals in the media, Berry contended, were

³⁸ 'Memorandum for government', 14 Jul. 1969, in NAI, JUS 2000/36/3.

contemptuous of parliamentary democracy – in common with those openly advocating revolution media left-wingers wanted to restructure society. A political counter-propaganda service was urgently required, he argued, which could not be provided by any civil service department.³⁹ The republican movement had promoted its new agenda through various fronts, including Citizens for Civil Liberties, which campaigned against the Criminal Justice Bill; the Wolfe Tone Society; tenant organisations; housing action campaigns, in Dublin, Cork, Dundalk and Drogheda; ‘land leagues’; and the National Waters Restoration League, which organised ‘fish-ins’.⁴⁰

An appendix to the March memorandum estimated that IRA membership had varied little in recent years. It stood between 1,100 and 1,200 (a small increase on the Garda’s 1966 estimate), and splinter group followers numbered less than 100, according to this Garda information. The organisation’s finances were poor, the memorandum stated, but Goulding’s visit to the US the previous December had netted £865. It was also noted that £100 had been received from the Birmingham branch of the CPGB in October 1968. *The United Irishman* now had a print run of 25,000.⁴¹ IRA violence in the South allowed Berry to link its new-found emphasis on agitation with its traditional militarism. On this, key figures in Dublin and Belfast security circles could agree.

(v) USSR supports Ireland at UN Security Council

Following violence in Derry British troops were deployed on the streets of Northern Ireland on 14 August 1969. The Irish government was not then prepared to adequately respond to the sectarian onslaught against Catholic communities in Belfast.⁴² The outbreak

³⁹ ‘Memorandum for government in relation to the I.R.A.’, 18 Mar. 1969, in NAI, JUS 2000/36/3; on RTÉ’s ‘concerned’ programme-makers at this time, see C.S. Andrews, *Man of No Property* (Lilliput, Dublin, 2001), pp. 281-2, 285-7.

⁴⁰ ‘Memorandum for government’, 14 Jul. 1969, in NAI, JUS 2000/36/3.

⁴¹ ‘Memorandum for government’, 18 Mar. 1969, in NAI, JUS 2000/36/3.

⁴² Lee, *Ireland*, pp. 428-430; O’Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, pp. 304-7.

of violence in August displaced 1,800 families – 1,500 of them Catholic.⁴³ The minister for external affairs, Patrick Hillery, went to London for talks, aiming to secure Britain's agreement for a UN peace-keeping force in the North, but the British rejected this proposal – Northern Ireland affairs were an internal matter for the UK. On 16 August he travelled to New York to bring Dublin's proposal for a UN peace-keeping force before the UN Security Council. The delegations represented on the Security Council first had to agree to discuss the Irish application, and the Irish encountered effective lobbying by the FCO against this proposal. Britain had Article 2.7 of the UN Charter to utilise, which prohibited UN intervention in an area within the jurisdiction of a sovereign state. Britain could also rely on the effective support of the US, which maintained its traditional policy of non-interference in Northern Ireland affairs. However, the Irish received support from the Soviet Union delegation. Having decided to attempt to avoid a procedural vote on the application, but to put the Irish case on the northern violence, Hillery made a statement which focused on the denial of civil rights to the nationalist minority. The Soviet ambassador went further. He criticised Britain's role in the North, accusing the British government of fostering sectarian divisions and failing to deliver civil rights. The meeting was then adjourned after the British statement was heard. The Security Council had facilitated a compromise to allow both sides to make their case, while avoiding a vote.⁴⁴

The Soviet Union now took advantage of recent events in the North, and British policies in relation to Ireland were condemned for domestic reasons. The British embassy in Moscow reported that the Soviet press had emphasised the 'colonial' nature of the Northern Ireland issue. According to the Russians, Britain was an imperial power. The recent conflict had arisen, it would be argued, because Britain had partitioned Ireland and retained the six north-eastern counties. The civil rights dimension to the August violence had been stressed

⁴³ David McKittrick and David McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles* (Blackstaff, Belfast, 2000), p. 59.

⁴⁴ Walsh, *Hillery*, pp. 176-89. See also Dorr, *United Nations*, pp. 190-207.

in the Russian media, the embassy stated. British troops in the North had not been dispatched to protect vulnerable nationalist communities, but were occupiers in a 'colonial' territory. Unusually, it was reported, letters from 'indignant citizens' had been published in the USSR, condemning 'imperialist' injustice in Europe. However, according to the embassy, there were domestic reasons why Moscow had engineered such indignation: 'Given the co-incidence with the anniversary of their own invasion of Czechoslovakia, one is led to the conclusion that they are seizing upon the disturbances in Ulster as an excuse to divert people's attention from the present unpleasantness in Prague and the feelings which last year's actions aroused even among the Russian people.'⁴⁵

Northern Ireland had finally registered as a regular item of business for the JIC in Whitehall. An Ulster Working Group had been established and, despite MI5 disapproval, the head of RUC Special Branch was co-opted. The previous month the JIC had heard of ongoing efforts aimed at 'improving intelligence assessments'. However, the political priorities of the left-wing IRA leaders were not recognised. In an assessment of the threat to the UK in the event of a confrontation with the Soviet Union, there was speculation that 'the Communist element in the IRA might be tempted to encourage it to resume its traditionally violent role for disruptive purposes'. Clearly, the JIC needed to consider the motivation behind those individuals driving the politicisation process within the republican movement. O'Halpin observes: 'The JIC also reflected on emerging difficulties and friction between the RUC, anxious lest any other government agency collect and forward intelligence to London independently of it, and MI5 and the army.'⁴⁶ In April MI5 had heard that RUC Special Branch was overwhelmed in the new emergency, and an MI5 security liaison officer (SLO) was posted to RUC headquarters.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ UK embassy (Moscow) to FCO, 27 Aug. 1969, in TNA, FCO 33/773.

⁴⁶ Eunan O'Halpin, "'A Poor Thing But Our Own': The Joint Intelligence Committee and Ireland, 1965-72", in *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 23, No. 5, pp. 665-70.

⁴⁷ Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, pp. 603-4.

A well-placed former British official emphasises the JIC's lack of knowledge about Northern Ireland at this time. With no understanding of Irish history, what he describes as 'short-termism' became the order of the day. It had been easier for some contributors to suggest that the northern situation was stable, rather than to point to difficulties in relation to security policy and risk censure. This former official also remembers a 'hostile attitude' at the JIC towards the RUC.⁴⁸ Christopher Andrew notes: 'Historical ignorance goes far to explain British policy and intelligence failures in Northern Ireland in the 1970s.'⁴⁹

Gilchrist made observations on developments within the republican movement in October. He admitted that he had underestimated the determination of IRA Marxists to pursue their politicisation strategy and could now see that there had been a socialist-republican element determined to move away from militarist methods. Gilchrist had assumed that the Marxist-led politicisation process would be abandoned when the republican movement could unite against traditional anti-British targets, i.e. the army in the North. But the ambassador could see no evidence, in October 1969, of the southern IRA membership turning to a traditional strategy of 'dynamite and the gun'. Johnston's influence, Gilchrist reported, had continually been exerted in the direction of non-violence. Gilchrist stated that Lynch had been on the point of introducing internment, as Berry had suggested he might, but had been deterred by the impact on southern opinion of the August events.⁵⁰ The emergence of dissent within the republican movement over its allegedly 'communist-led' direction had not been identified as problematic by Gilchrist.

Proposals for ultimately abolishing the Northern Ireland state had emerged within the Irish government. A memorandum from External Affairs suggested a federal republic as a long-

⁴⁸ Comments offered at witness seminar in Trinity College, Dublin, 2010.

⁴⁹ Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, p. 618.

⁵⁰ Gilchrist to FCO, 30 Oct. 1969, in CAC, GILC/14A.

term objective, with the removal of bans on contraception and divorce to appease northern Protestants.⁵¹ Gilchrist had been told by the minister for finance, Haughey, that a new version of the 'O'Neill-Lemass honeymoon' was old hat. But Britain's strategic interests as a NATO power could be recognised in a federal Ireland, and Irish military neutrality would be abandoned. Gilchrist believed that Haughey's proposals were representative of a wider Dublin viewpoint and should be seriously considered by Britain: 'The Irish claim for reunification, by some form of federal approach, lies on the table and will not be withdrawn; it will be critical for our future relationship with the Republic.'⁵² Gilchrist met Haughey on 4 October. Haughey outlined audacious proposals for a federal republic and told Gilchrist there was nothing he would not do for Irish unity. A new all-Ireland entity could meet unionist fears in relation to the power of the Catholic Church and have a close relationship with NATO: along with the abolition of the special constitutional position of the Catholic Church, Ireland could rejoin the Commonwealth; Britain could have access to Irish bases; and NATO troops could be stationed in Ireland. In relation to conspiracy theories about Fianna Fáil's fear of IRA-inspired economic agitation in the state, it should be noted that the republican movement did not feature in the conversation between Haughey and Gilchrist.⁵³ If Haughey's proposals for a NATO presence had come to fruition, a federal Irish republic would have had a commitment to the Atlantic alliance similar to Iceland's. When the Northern Ireland crisis took on an international dimension, following the deployment of troops, with Ireland and Britain opposing each other at the UN, the Soviet Union seized an opportunity to take advantage of Britain's difficulties in Ireland.

⁵¹ David Andrews, *Kingstown Republican: A Memoir* (New Island, in assoc. with First Law, Dublin, 2007), p. 46.

⁵² Gilchrist to FCO, 30 Oct. 1969, in CAC, GILC/14A.

⁵³ Gilchrist draft in CAC, GILC/14B; Anthony Craig, *Crisis of Confidence: Anglo-Irish Relations in the Early Troubles* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2010), pp. 68-9.

(vi) Republican movement splits

Hostility towards another liaison between the republican movement and the Soviet Union, after more than thirty years, would now be voiced within Irish republicanism. Opposition within the republican movement to the leadership's left-wing direction had been aired in public in July 1969. Jimmy Steele, a veteran Belfast republican, attacked what he saw as a communist influence during a speech at the reinterment of the remains of Peter Barnes and James McCormack. He claimed that 'one is now expected to be more conversant with the thoughts of Chairman Mao than those of our dead Patriots'.⁵⁴ However, his denunciation of Goulding's left-wing priorities encouraged those in Belfast who were uncomfortable with the new direction.⁵⁵ The Belfast dissidents, who saw the IRA as primarily a Catholic defence force, had been challenged the previous Easter. During a speech in the city Garland had stressed the need for the republican movement to reach across the sectarian divide, citing the 1932 outdoor relief agitation as an example of working class unity.⁵⁶ Steele and other traditionalists went on to challenge Goulding's Belfast lieutenants, Billy McMillen and Jim Sullivan, after the mid-August violence. In December the Belfast-based dissidents joined forces with Mac Stíofáin, who became the first chief of staff of the Provisional IRA.⁵⁷

The IRA split occurred at its convention in December 1969 when a decision was taken to abandon the IRA's traditional opposition to parliamentary abstention. The breakaway Provisional IRA was born.⁵⁸ One opponent of the left-wing leadership, which wanted to drop abstentionism, recalls being deliberately blocked from attending. He and other Clare/Limerick delegates were supposed to meet Costello in Tullamore to be taken to the

⁵⁴ Henry Patterson, *The Politics of Illusion: A Political History of the IRA* (Hutchinson Radius, London, 1989, new edn., Serif, London, 1997), p. 124. Workers' Party, *1970 Sinn Féin Ard Fheis*, pp. 8-9.

⁵⁵ On republican tensions in Belfast in summer 1969, see Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, pp. 123-9.

⁵⁶ Workers' Party, *1970 Sinn Féin Ard Fheis*, pp. 8-9. Matt Treacy, *The IRA 1956-69: Rethinking the Republic* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2011), p. 159.

⁵⁷ On the creation of the Provisionals, see English, *Armed Struggle*, pp. 103-8.

⁵⁸ Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 144-5.

convention, but he never showed up.⁵⁹ According to Garland, Costello had been arrogant and alienated ‘good people’ at this time.⁶⁰ The divisions in the republican movement became public the next month when about eighty supporters of the Provisional IRA walked out of the Sinn Féin árd fheis. A leadership motion was passed to create a national liberation front – whereby republicans would co-operate with other left-wing groups, including communists – but Mac Stíofáin led the walkout after a motion was put expressing confidence in IRA policy.⁶¹ According to Mac Giolla, who wanted to avoid a split, the traditionalists’ departure had been planned in advance.⁶² Those who remained loyal to the Goulding leadership would become known as Officials, or ‘sticks/stickies’.⁶³ The Official republican movement, free of the more conservative traditionalists, could now promote increasingly leftist policies.⁶⁴

Gilchrist promptly reported on the árd fheis, drawing attention to the hostility of the left-wing republicans towards the Irish state. Goulding’s supporters, he pointed out, had the Dublin government in their sights as part of their socialist-republican programme. Mac Giolla had told the 257 delegates, Gilchrist stated, that the southern establishment could be swept away by the same means that had shaken the Stormont regime, ‘the politics of the street’.⁶⁵ A month later the British embassy noted speculation concerning the national liberation front, but dismissed the initiative as an unlikely venture.⁶⁶ Ireland was too conservative for such a left-wing movement, according to this line of thought, especially the rural areas.

⁵⁹ Comment offered by Des Long at annual workshop, ‘The Irish Republican Left’, Ralahine Centre for Utopian Studies, University of Limerick, 30 Apr. 2010.

⁶⁰ Interview with Seán Garland, 29 Jul. 2010.

⁶¹ Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 146-8; Bell, *Secret Army*, p. 367.

⁶² Interview with Tomás Mac Giolla, 28 May 2008.

⁶³ Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 150-1. At Easter in 1970 the Officials issued commemorative badges with an adhesive, or sticky, back. The Provisionals issued the traditional paper badge with a pin to attach it. The Officials were called ‘stickybacks’ and the Provisionals, briefly, were called ‘pinheads’. The Officials’ nickname henceforth would be ‘sticks’ or ‘stickies’. The Provisionals would be known as ‘provies’ or ‘provos’.

⁶⁴ Lee, *Ireland*, p. 432.

⁶⁵ Gilchrist (UK embassy, Dublin) to FCO, and Gilchrist report on Sinn Féin árd fheis, 12 Jan. 1970, in TNA, FCO 33/1197.

⁶⁶ Evans (UK embassy, Dublin) to FCO, 11 Feb. 1970, in TNA, FCO 33/1197.

The Provisionals made clear their hostility to orthodox pro-Moscow communism. They launched their own publication, *An Phoblacht*, and listed the issues which provoked the split: recognition of Stormont, Leinster House and Westminster; extreme socialism leading to dictatorship; failure to provide maximum possible defence for ‘our people’ in the North; not seeking the abolition of Stormont; and the ‘internal methods’ employed to exert control over the movement. The paper stopped short of using the description ‘communist’ for those who had attempted what it called a take-over, but it drew attention to Johnston’s role in recent years. *An Phoblacht* claimed that the republican movement’s policymakers had included some who had joined from the IWP. The traditionalists argued that a national liberation front involving co-operation between republicans and the CPNI, the IWP and the CYM would result in amalgamation. Co-operating with communists could only end in disaster:

‘We know that in other countries that have come under the control of organisations similar to these “radical groups” totalitarian dictatorship has been the outcome. We have no reason to believe that the result would be any different in Ireland.’⁶⁷

The FCO had now posted David Blatherwick to the embassy in Dublin, along with Peter Evans, who would monitor political developments in the South.⁶⁸ Officials and Provisionals held separate 1916 commemorations at Easter, Blatherwick noted, when Goulding analysed the Irish situation in Marxist terms, arguing that new forms of struggle would arise as new political and economic crises developed. Therefore, republicans should support campaigns on economic issues and view the ending of abstention as a tactical move. He again attempted to get the militant republican constituency to think differently

⁶⁷ *An Phoblacht*, Feb. 1970, pp. 4-5.

⁶⁸ Peck, *Dublin from Downing Street*, p. 37.

about the use of 'elitist' military force. Just as he had in 1966, when he was interviewed by the *Belfast Telegraph*, and in 1968, when he spoke to UTV, Goulding had stressed that the republican movement needed to secure popular support. Physical force would be effective when the IRA was defending 'the people'. The Officials' economic campaigns, such as fish-in protests aimed at highlighting private ownership of fishing rights, might garner some support, Blatherwick stated. However, he predicted, it was unlikely that many republicans would follow Goulding in attempting to create a southern version of the northern civil rights movement.⁶⁹ According to the British embassy, the Provisionals would be more popular than the Officials in the South.

The split in the republican movement was replicated in other organisations republicans had controlled, such as the National Waters Restoration League. In March 1970 the Galway branch elected a national committee, whose chairman was a member of the Provisional Sinn Féin executive. To counter this, a meeting in Dublin elected another committee including Séamus Ó Tuathail, editor of *The United Irishman*. It was thought in the British embassy that there was a rural-urban divide within republicanism; not all socialist republicans supported Goulding. The committee elected in Galway included left-wing individuals who had not followed the Officials. In the embassy Blatherwick believed that the Officials would become increasingly isolated from rural areas, which would weaken the Marxist 'urban leadership' in Dublin.⁷⁰ This prediction did not turn out to be accurate. Understanding the split in the republican movement as a rural-urban divide would prove to be simplistic.

The left-wing republicans around Goulding had a powerful enemy in Berry, and there were others in high places who were deeply hostile to a republican movement that would

⁶⁹ Blatherwick to FCO, 20 Mar. 1970, and 3 Apr. 1970, in TNA, FCO 33/1197.

⁷⁰ Blatherwick to FCO, 14 Apr. 1970, in TNA, FCO 33/1197.

campaign against the Irish government. Influential figures within Fianna Fáil provided funding to republicans who were determined to create an IRA that would focus on forcing Britain out of the North. Official republicans later claimed that Fianna Fáil attempted to sabotage their political agenda by funding individuals opposed to Goulding's leadership, arguing that the August 1969 violence in Belfast had created the conditions in which republican militarists, who would confine their activities to the North, could undermine a potential left-wing challenge to Fianna Fáil.⁷¹ The evidence available in the public domain, however, suggests a more complex reality than this assertion would allow. Berry, it is true, wanted Fianna Fáil and the bishops to crush a left-wing republican movement, but in April 1970 he succeeded in preventing the importation of arms for use by republicans. Lynch dismissed Haughey and Neil Blaney from his cabinet over the arms scheme, and accepted the resignation in protest of Kevin Boland.⁷² Contrary to the later claims of the Officials, Lynch's government was not acting in concert after the violence in August the previous year. Therefore, it was not capable of conspiring to undermine what would become the Official republican movement, whatever about the hostility of various individuals. (Blaney would later say of the birth of the Provisionals: 'We didn't help to create them but we certainly would have accelerated, by whatever assistance we could have given, their emergence as a force'.⁷³ He would also say later that there was 'no way' that arms would have been donated to the Officials.⁷⁴) One week after Catholics were burned out of their homes in Belfast, in August 1969, Berry informed the minister for justice that a member of the cabinet (Haughey) had met Goulding. According to Berry, Haughey and Goulding had

⁷¹ *Fianna Fáil and the IRA* (anon., n.d.), pp. 16-19; Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, pp. 129-35, fn. p. 139; Justin O'Brien, *The Arms Trial* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 2000), pp. 105-6.

⁷² O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, pp. 304-11; Michael Mills, *Hurler on the Ditch: Memoir of a Journalist Who Became Ireland's First Ombudsman* (Currach, Blackrock, 2005), pp. 48-89; Andrews, *Kingstown Republican*, pp. 44-50. See also Donnacha Ó Beacháin, *Destiny of the Soldiers: Fianna Fáil, Irish Republicanism and the IRA, 1926-73* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 2010), pp. 283-302.

⁷³ Quoted in O'Brien, *The Arms Trial*, p. 109.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Ó Beacháin, *Destiny of the Soldiers*, p. 296.

agreed that IRA violence would cease in the South in return for 'a free hand' in staging a cross-border military campaign.⁷⁵

In his evidence to the Committee of Public Accounts, which later investigated the disbursement of government funds to aid victims of the northern unrest, chief superintendent John Fleming of Garda Special Branch stated that Goulding had been given money by Haughey and Captain James Kelly to purchase arms for use in the North. According to Fleming, Haughey met Goulding and promised him about £50,000. Some days after 14 August his brother Pádraig Haughey paid over £1,500 to Goulding in London. Fleming also told the committee that Kelly met Goulding 'on umpteen occasions', agreed to get him a regular supply of arms and ammunition, and also promised to provide training facilities. Kelly then handed over £7,000 and later paid two sums of £1,000 and £1,500 respectively. Fleming told the committee that he was in 'complete control' of the situation in relation to subversives; there was nothing to suggest Kelly had been attempting to split the republican movement in the North. Based on this evidence, left-wing republicans received £11,000 from government sources before the movement split into Officials and Provisionals at the end of 1969.⁷⁶ Official republicans later admitted that Goulding met Pádraig Haughey in London, who had handed over £1,500. They alleged there had been a stipulation that republicans should cease political activity in the South. Another £600 was later received, the Officials stated.⁷⁷ Despite the differing accounts of how much money the IRA received in 1969, the Public Accounts Committee evidence indicates that elements within Fianna Fáil were prepared to deal with the left-wing IRA leadership. Money had been made available for use by northern nationalists in the aftermath of the August violence. This occurred before the emergence of an organised

⁷⁵ Browne, *Magill*, Jun. 1980, 'Berry Papers', pp. 51-2; Pádraig Faulkner, *As I Saw It: Reviewing Over 30 Years of Fianna Fáil & Irish Politics* (Wolfhound, Dublin, 2005), p. 94; O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, pp. 306-11; Craig, *Crisis of Confidence*, pp. 70-2.

⁷⁶ *Committee of Public Accounts: Interim and Final Report (Order of Dáil of 1st December 1970)*, (Dublin, 1972), pp. 417-28, 745-53; Faulkner, *As I Saw It*, pp. 92-4.

⁷⁷ *Fianna Fáil and the IRA*, p. 24.

group of republicans in Belfast who would concentrate their activities in the North. Bizarrely, Irish revolutionaries received funding at this time not from Moscow but from domestic supporters of capitalism.

(vii) US embassy alarmed over student protests

In the White House Lyndon Johnson and then Richard Nixon believed that the communist powers backed the US anti-war movement, despite CIA evidence to the contrary.⁷⁸ Nixon, in 1969, was not pleased when a CIA report into the global student movement did not find evidence that it was a conspiracy created by communist states.⁷⁹ The US embassy in Dublin was prepared to believe that violence might be employed by those demonstrating against the Vietnam war, when they had previously shown they were employing peaceful methods to appeal to liberal opinion. Following an Irish Voice on Vietnam march in November 1968 the embassy reported that it had been ‘rumoured’ that violence had been planned by extremists – equipment for the making of Molotov cocktails had been stolen from laboratories in University College, Dublin (UCD). Extremists opposed to peaceful protest might have hoped to throw petrol bombs. But the embassy jumped to the conclusion that any temptation to resort to violence was averted thanks to Garda protection: ‘The large numbers of police detailed to guard the Embassy no doubt discouraged the “Irish Voice on Vietnam” from attempting any violence against the Embassy ...’⁸⁰ Demonstrations against the US’s role in Vietnam the following year followed the established non-violent pattern.⁸¹ A protest on 15 October 1969 in Dublin was part of the Moratorium, as organised anti-war protests were called, when hundreds of thousands demonstrated in the US against the Nixon administration’s policy.⁸²

⁷⁸ Robert Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power* (Penguin, London, 2008), pp. 133–4.

⁷⁹ Christopher Andrew, *For the President’s Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency from Washington to Bush* (HarperCollins, London, 1996), pp. 354–5.

⁸⁰ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 12 Nov. 1968, in NARA, RG59, box 2223, Pol 23 Ire.

⁸¹ Ibid, 19 Jul. 1969, ibid, 15 Oct. 1969, ibid, 15 Nov. 1969.

⁸² Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger*, p. 161; Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (Arrow, London, Arrow edn., 1979), p. 402.

There had been a mushrooming of ultra-left groups in Dublin, mainly among the (politically marginal) student population. Interest in their activities had not been confined to the US embassy: it has been claimed that Garda Special Branch officers attended lectures in UCD disguised as students.⁸³ And Trinity College's band of, mainly English, Maoist Internationalists was relatively exotic, in more ways than one. A Trinity contemporary remembers them as 'disgruntled daughters of British army generals'.⁸⁴

Following the May 1968 events in Paris, as another academic year approached in the autumn, the possibility of student unrest had occupied minds in the US embassy in Dublin. Several reports on Irish student affairs, going into considerable detail, were sent to the State Department. Since the issues were relatively mundane, such as campus facilities, the embassy accurately predicted that disturbances would not lead to anything like the violence seen in Paris or Berkeley.⁸⁵ This proved to be an understatement. But it was noted that there were links between the Irish student organisation and Soviet-orientated international bodies, and some student leaders, such as Howard Kinlay, had had 'associations' with Irish communists. Three Soviet observers, the embassy reported, had attended the January 1969 annual conference of the Union of Students in Ireland (USI). This had followed a visit by an Irish delegation the previous year to a conference in Prague.

Following the ambush of the PD march at Burntollet Bridge on 4 January 1969, and the subsequent violence in Derry, the American embassy reported that the civil rights issue

⁸³ Niamh Puirseil, *The Irish Labour Party: 1922-73* (University College Dublin Press, Dublin, 2007), pp. 257-60. The heady days of 1968-1969 in Dublin are recalled, from the perspective of a Trinity College Trotskyist, in Carol Coulter, 'A View from the South', in Farrell (ed.), *Twenty Years On*, pp. 106-16.

⁸⁴ Comment offered by Prof. Patrick Keatinge at Research Seminar in Contemporary Irish History, Trinity College, Dublin, 7 Apr. 2010.

⁸⁵ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 13 Sep. 1968, in NARA, RG59, box 2222, Pol 12-3 Ire. For an overview of student protest in Western Europe in the late 1960s, including the claims of Trotskyism and Maoism, see Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (Pimlico, London, 2007), pp. 401-21.

could radicalise students in the South.⁸⁶ As if to illustrate this point, students participated in a 1,000-strong demonstration organised by the Dublin Housing Action Committee, recently set up with the backing of the ‘increasingly leftish’ Sinn Féin. The embassy speculated on the impact of unrest in the North: ‘There can be no doubt that the Internationalists and other Irish radical groups will seek to capitalize upon widening student restlessness, which is fanned by the civil rights discontent in Northern Ireland.’⁸⁷ Ultra-leftists in Dublin might have harboured this ambition, but it was highly unlikely that marginalised groups could emulate the exploits of students in Paris, for example, in what was still a very conservative political environment. A serious assessment of the left-wing scene would have pointed this out. Instead, US embassy reports sometimes veered towards melodramatic possibilities, rather than hard-headed analysis.

The exaggerated picture created in Dublin embassy reports on student protest is highlighted when it is contrasted with a JIC perspective. A December 1969 JIC paper assessed the global student movement. The JIC paper noted that the student revolt in the US had ‘forced itself to the forefront of American politics’ mainly over the Vietnam issue. Furthermore, there were indications of ‘large-scale militancy’ in relation to other campus issues. Therefore, student protest was a matter of concern in American security circles, particularly within the White House. However, the JIC paper found that the situation in Western Europe was quite different.

In Western Europe the majority of students were not interested in revolution, and extremists were only a tiny proportion of the student population. Communist agencies had tried to orchestrate activities in different countries on issues such as Vietnam, according to the paper, but it was not clear that they had played a leading role. The paper pointed out

⁸⁶ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 29 Nov. 1968, and *ibid*, 27 Jan. 1969, in NARA, RG59, box 2222, Pol 12-3 Ire.

⁸⁷ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 27 Jan. 1969, in NARA, RG59, box 2222, Pol 12-3 Ire.

that the evidence did not support the theory of an organised communist conspiracy behind the student movement. Trotskyism – energetically opposed to orthodox communism – had been an important external influence on protest movements in Western Europe, but Trotskyists were few in numbers and short of money, the paper noted. Likewise, pro-Chinese Maoist groups would continue to attempt to ‘revolutionise’ the movement but would not succeed. The paper pointed out that communist parties in the West were expected to pay further attention to the student protest movement. However, ideological differences between Moscow and the New Left meant the role of orthodox communists here would be limited. The communist parties in Western Europe were expected to avoid alienating their support by having a close association with extremist elements.⁸⁸

Significantly, this JIC paper omitted any mention of the activities of Trotskyist students in Ireland. New Left elements had had a leading part to play in recent events: they had organised the banned march in Derry and the march which had been attacked at Burntollet Bridge. The paper failed to analyse the role of Trotskyist students in what had become an extremely volatile situation just 300 miles from Whitehall, necessitating military intervention by the British government.

The American embassy in Dublin now linked a communist threat with the IRA. Following the republican movement’s split the embassy reported on what it saw as increasingly open communist activity in Ireland, and a ‘highly-placed’ Garda source was quoted as saying that communism had made more progress in the last two or three years than in the previous thirty or forty. The embassy submitted a comprehensive list of Irish communist organisations, or fronts, and their leaders to the State Department. This list had been supplied to the embassy by ‘an authoritative source in the Irish Government’.⁸⁹ We can

⁸⁸ ‘Revolutionary student protest’, JIC (A) paper, 16 Dec. 1969, in TNA, CAB 186/3.

⁸⁹ US embassy (Dublin), to State Dept., 3 Feb. 1970, in NARA, RG 59, box 2383, Pol 12 Ire.

only speculate about the identity of this ‘authoritative’ government source. However, Berry had been analysing the activities of republican and communist subversives for over thirty years at this point, acquiring what he described as an ‘encyclopaedic knowledge of subversive elements’.⁹⁰ Berry’s secret material had been printed for use by senior civil servants and various ministers for justice.⁹¹ Berry had previously submitted intelligence on subversives to ministers outside the Department of Justice and his information, based on Garda Special Branch intelligence, again may have found a wider audience in 1970. The intelligence the US embassy now relayed to Washington was extremely detailed.

A new US ambassador to Ireland, John Moore, had been appointed in April 1969. His brother worked for Nixon in the White House, and his family had a longstanding engagement with Irish nationalism. His father had been secretary of the Friends of Irish Freedom in the US, set up in 1916 by John Devoy. His grandfather had actively supported Charles Stewart Parnell and Michael Davitt.⁹² We might surmise that the ambassador had inherited clear views on who Irish republicans should look up to. It is unlikely this list included Karl Marx.

Two weeks after the Sinn Féin árd fheis in January 1970 the US embassy in Dublin reported that the republican movement had been the target of a ‘concerted communist take-over effort’. The embassy emphasised Johnston’s leading role. The republican movement had been targeted by communists in the mid-1960s because the IWP had been weak and ineffectual, and a lingering affection for the IRA would be something that could be exploited. And Johnston’s argument that elitist violence and parliamentary abstention were sterile had been attractive to republicans with political ambitions such as Costello.⁹³

⁹⁰ Browne, *Magill*, Jun. 1980, ‘Berry Papers’, p. 44.

⁹¹ Vincent Browne, *Magill*, May 1980, ‘The Arms Crisis 1970’, p. 33.

⁹² Seán Cronin, *Washington’s Irish Policy 1916-1986: Independence, Partition, Neutrality* (Anvil, Dublin, 1987), pp. 305, 311.

⁹³ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 19 Jan. 1970, in NARA, RG 59, box 2383, Pol 12 Ire.

Johnston was the communist ringmaster, in this perspective, dictating each step away from the traditional republican path.

The ambassador had followed instructions in making these observations: the State Department's interest in following the activities of extremist groups had been stressed. Moore pointed out that the embassy had followed the administration's policy of monitoring subversive activity:

‘While we are of course in continuing touch with the governing and opposition political parties, we are increasingly concerned with [the] growing activities of the extremist groups. We have all been making an extra effort to speak to, meet with and follow the activities of the extremists.’

The embassy's political officer had spoken to student groups at every university that academic year and the ambassador had spoken at Trinity College, where he had been met by ‘communists’ and Maoists. ‘Our concern with this matter is best reflected in this Embassy's reporting, as illustrated in the enclosures to this letter.’ Moore's response to the under secretary of state, Elliot Richardson, had been accompanied by reports on communists and front organisations (3 February) and what he perceived to be the communist-inspired split in the republican movement (19 January).

The State Department would be informed that the Left in the South ranged from the Labour Party, a ‘respectable’ opposition party, to the republican movement and Maoist groups. The embassy stated that the Maoists, with no formal links with China, had established branches in all Irish universities and were moving into secondary schools. Bruised by campus protests in the US, student agitation remained a matter of concern. The

ambassador claimed that the embassy had been handicapped by not having the resources to explain the policies of the Nixon administration to reach an increasingly restive student population. He claimed that their 'shocking ignorance' of the US and its history and culture had been exploited by communists. Therefore, the embassy analysis found, left-wing activity was on the upswing in Ireland.⁹⁴

The report on communist and front organisations, submitted earlier, included the names of various executive members, among other detail. Three main points were made. First, communist activity in Ireland, long of negligible proportions, had been increasing in significance. Secondly, the two communist parties, based in Belfast and Dublin, planned to amalgamate. Thirdly, communists had made 'determined efforts' to infiltrate the republican movement and expand their front activities. The IWP had an estimated 200 members, with another 100 fellow travellers. Front organisations included the Irish Campaign for Peace, Irish Voice on Vietnam and the Ireland-USSR Society. Very small groups did not escape mention. For example, the Irish Communist Group, with about forty members, received literature from Albania. The (Trotskyist) League for a Workers' Republic had an estimated membership of thirty. The Internationalists were now believed to have about 100 members, mostly in Trinity.⁹⁵ The three main points made here were true in themselves: there had been an increase in extremist activity, the two communist parties intended to amalgamate, and Marxists had acquired influence within the republican movement. However, an increase in communist efforts from an extremely low base still amounted to very little. The US embassy's fretting over student protests may have reflected the concerns of the administration in relation to unrest in the US itself.

⁹⁴ Moore to Richardson, 26 Feb. 1970, in NARA, RG 59, box 2383, Pol 12 Ire.

⁹⁵ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 3 Feb. 1970, in NARA, RG 59, box 2383, Pol 12 Ire.

(viii) All-Ireland communist party created

In March 1970 the separate communist parties amalgamated to become the Communist Party of Ireland (CPI). This new organisation subsumed the IWP and the CPNI. Notwithstanding the fact that Johnston had been working within the republican movement for the past five years, the US embassy in Dublin believed that he had played a central role in the creation of a single communist party. It reported that Johnston had been an instrumental figure in merging two ineffective communist organisations into an all-Ireland body with greater revolutionary potential.⁹⁶ It is not clear how the embassy arrived at this conclusion. One Irish communist close to O’Riordan at the time recalls that Johnston and O’Riordan were co-operating at this stage, and that Johnston had an influence in the creation of the CPI.⁹⁷

The proposal to unite the two communist parties had already attracted the attention of McManus in Belfast. According to international press reports, he stated, the CPNI attended meetings in Moscow and Eastern Europe. It could be presumed, therefore, that communist unity in Ireland had the approval of the Soviet Union. The CPI was launched at a conference in Belfast, with equal representation on the executive from members north and south. It was reported that 100 delegates attended, McManus noted, with observers from Britain, France, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria. According to one press report, a fraternal delegate from the Soviet Union attended. Messages were received from Czechoslovakia and East Germany. McManus’s information had been obtained from overt sources i.e. various media reports – some sessions had been open to the media. McManus added that as soon as he received additional information on executive members he would report this separately.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 27 Jan. 1971, in NARA, RG 59, box 2383, Pol 14 Ire.

⁹⁷ Interview with Noel Harris.

⁹⁸ McManus to State Dept., 12 Mar. 1970 and 24 Mar. 1970, in NARA, RG 59, box 2650, Pol 12 UK.

The CPI manifesto had been introduced by O’Riordan, who denounced the British military presence in the North. He stated that the troops in Northern Ireland were not peacekeepers, but a ‘protective guardian of British monopoly interests in Ireland’. O’Riordan’s ‘anti-imperialist’ rhetoric, naturally, would be in tune with Soviet media responses to the deployment of the army. The Soviet Union’s hostility to an enlarged EEC, involving Ireland and Britain, was reflected in platform utterances, and Edwina Stewart, also honorary secretary of NICRA, urged opposition to the EEC.⁹⁹

Irish communists’ hostility to Britain’s role in the North had not been confined to policy statements: the IWP had asked Moscow to supply arms to the IRA. On 6 November 1969, O’Riordan had written a letter requesting 2,000 assault rifles and 150 machine guns. He optimistically claimed that good relations had always ‘more or less’ existed between Irish communists and the IRA. Furthermore, he wrote, a secret mechanism for consultations had been in operation for more than a year between the communists, north and south, and the IRA leadership. He exaggerated the extent of communist influence over the republican movement in recent years, claiming that the IRA ‘unfailingly’ accepted communist advice in relation to tactics, omitting to mention Sinclair’s difficulties in controlling civil rights demonstrations. The previous August, he stated, the IRA had been unable to play its traditional role as the armed defender of Belfast’s nationalists because of its concentration on political activity. Goulding and Costello had appealed to him for help in procuring arms. O’Riordan would be mindful of the Soviet insistence on secrecy in relation to ‘special actions’ in the West. On 18 November Moscow was assured that the IRA promised ‘to keep in strictest confidence the fact that the Soviet Union is supplying it with arms and will guarantee the complete secrecy of their shipment to Ireland’.¹⁰⁰ Costello had

⁹⁹ McManus to State Dept., 24 Mar. 1970, in NARA, RG 59, box 2650, Pol 12 UK; Swan, *Irish Republicanism*, pp. 329-31.

¹⁰⁰ O’Riordan’s appeals to Moscow are included in an appendix in Boris Yeltsin’s memoir *The View from the Kremlin*. See Boris Yeltsin, *The View from the Kremlin* (HarperCollins, London, 1994), pp. 311-16. Andrew and Mitrokhin, *Mitrokhin Archive*, pp. 492-3.

earlier requested arms through the Soviet embassy in London, but had been rebuffed.¹⁰¹ By overplaying communist influence over militant republicans, O’Riordan had overstated his own importance in Irish affairs and the potential role of his amalgamated party.

The IRA sought support from leftists other than orthodox communists at this time. Goulding indicated, at least to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), that the republican movement had differences with O’Riordan. Goulding had visited the US in November 1969 to address the conference in New York of the National Association for Irish Justice (NAIJ), which supported the civil rights struggle in the North. The FBI interviewed Goulding, who stated that he was the IRA’s chief of staff. He explained his differences with NICRA: the IRA was primarily interested in the cause of a united Ireland and, while civil rights in the North was a worthy goal, this was not the solution to Ireland’s problems. FBI agents asked him if he had called for armed struggle in Ireland during a ‘very socialistic’ speech at the NAIJ conference. Goulding replied that he had expressed the view that ‘it was unlikely that the Irish would ever obtain very much from the British unless they fought for it or were prepared to do so’. Goulding distanced himself from the Soviet Union and said such a socialist system was ‘quite different’ to the socialism advocated by the IRA, whose membership was ‘at least’ ninety per cent Catholic. While in San Francisco, he visited the headquarters of the Black Panther Party and addressed students in Berkeley.¹⁰²

Colourful claims would be made about the role of Irish military intelligence officers in Northern Ireland as the crisis unfolded. G2 memoranda to Lynch indicate that their brief in 1970 was to assess all security issues in the North, and not just any posed by the revolutionary Left. On 27 July, a memorandum made observations on British army and

¹⁰¹ Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, pp. 605-6.

¹⁰² FBI records relating to Cathal Goulding, in NARA, obtained under FOIA NW30162; Andrew J. Wilson, *Irish-America and the Ulster Conflict 1968-1995* (Blackstaff, Belfast 1995), pp. 30-9.

UDR numbers, and rifle clubs set up by disbanded B Specials. Another G2 memorandum, dated 23 November, highlighted a concern about stability, which might be threatened by unionist ultras attempting to unseat Chichester-Clark.¹⁰³

Following the CPI's launch the question arose in Whitehall of what the new communist party would do. The Kremlin's interest in the conference had been noted: five officials from the Soviet embassy in London had attended. For Whitehall, according to the Irish ambassador in London, Dr Donal O'Sullivan, the creation of an all-Ireland communist party had more significance than any potential IRA threat. Dublin did not share London's concerns here and, instead, worried about loyalist and republican paramilitaries.¹⁰⁴ The question of interference in Irish affairs by communist bloc states had also arisen. The British foreign secretary, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, told O'Sullivan that the latter two organisations had received arms from a central European source, which tallied with other information obtained by Dublin.¹⁰⁵ Irish communists saw themselves as having some influence over militant republicans, as O'Riordan's letter to Moscow illustrates.

(ix) Implications of Falls curfew

Oliver Wright would be the most senior Whitehall official deployed in Belfast after the August 1969 events – Callaghan's 'eyes and ears'. In the FCO Kelvin White had been selected to handle relations with Dublin, and he would later head up a Republic of Ireland Department (RID).¹⁰⁶ In March 1970 Wright outlined future prospects for the North in a ten-page report. He was cautiously optimistic. Wright did not mention an IRA threat once. Nor did he mention communists, who were about to create a single pro-Soviet party in

¹⁰³ G2 to taoiseach, 27 Jul. 1970, in NAI, Papers of Jack Lynch, 2001/8/9; G2 to taoiseach, 23 Nov. 1970, in NAI, Papers of Jack Lynch, 2001/8/12; *Fianna Fáil and the IRA*, p. 17; Patterson, *Ireland Since 1939*, p. 173; Eunan O'Halpin, "'A Greek Authoritarian Phase'? The Irish Army and the Irish Crisis, 1969-70", in *Irish Political Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 4, pp. 475-90.

¹⁰⁴ O'Sullivan to McCann, 26 Mar. 1970, in NAI, DFA 2001/43/1407.

¹⁰⁵ O'Sullivan to Dublin, 1 May 1970, and 'Comments on meetings in London', 5 May 1970, in NAI, DFA 2001/43/1407.

¹⁰⁶ Craig, *Crisis of Confidence*, pp. 55-60.

Ireland. Northern Ireland had been on the brink of civil war the previous August, he wrote, but was now much calmer – Catholics could sleep ‘without intolerable fear’ in their beds. However, there were clouds on the horizon, on the unionist side as the reform programme struck at ‘Orange’ power over the police and local government. Wright warned Callaghan that there would be no alternative to Stormont except direct rule, ‘and no-one in their right mind wants that if it can be avoided: it would be even more difficult, even more expensive, and involve an even more open-ended military commitment.’¹⁰⁷ Fifteen months earlier Gilchrist had also warned of the implications of direct rule.

In London a special cabinet meeting discussed Northern Ireland in June. The chief of the general staff, General Sir Geoffrey Baker, stated that events the previous year had revealed ‘considerable deficiencies’ in the intelligence system in the North. RUC Special Branch had been ‘ineffectual’ and had tended to focus exclusively on the IRA. However, it had since been strengthened and improved with the assistance of the British forces and MI5. A director of intelligence had been appointed and an evaluation system put in place. Baker told the meeting that ‘the position had already changed for the better’.¹⁰⁸

Meanwhile, in the Lower Falls area in Belfast, the loyalist attacks of August 1969 had not been forgotten. The Official IRA – still waiting for arms from Moscow – patrolled the district. According to the WP account of the Falls curfew, ‘The number one priority for republicans in the Lower Falls at the time was defence of the area.’ Jim Sullivan wore two hats: he was the Official IRA adjutant in the city and was prominent in the Central Citizens’ Defence Committee (CCDC), which liaised with the authorities. Official republicans recall that relations with the army were generally friendly.¹⁰⁹ The Falls curfew

¹⁰⁷ Wright to Callaghan, 6 Mar. 1970, in TNA, DEFE 13/1397.

¹⁰⁸ Cabinet meeting minutes, 22 Jun. 1970, in TNA, PREM 15/100.

¹⁰⁹ Workers’ Party, *Falls Curfew*, pp. 8-12. This account of the curfew includes several eyewitness and participants’ accounts.

of 3-5 July would be a landmark moment in the history of the Troubles which created widespread nationalist hostility towards the army. Four civilians, with no direct involvement in the disturbances, were killed. At least three were killed by the army, which made 337 arrests. Eighteen soldiers were wounded.¹¹⁰ The army carried out house-to-house arms searches of the area in ‘an exceptionally brutal manner’.¹¹¹ The imposition of a curfew, by General Sir Ian Freeland, had previously been used by the army in Aden.¹¹² On 4 July the prime minister, Ted Heath, heard that the army believed the exercise had been very successful in delivering a shock to ‘the extremists’ and in boosting the morale of the troops and ‘the moderates’. It was intended to maintain the curfew, and a request for two additional armoured car squadrons had been approved by the secretary of state for defence.¹¹³ Stormont’s Joint Security Committee (JSC) – including representatives from the cabinet, the army, the RUC and MI5 – met the same day. Freeland told the JSC that the previous night’s ‘battle’ had been sparked off by a search for arms in Balkan Street: ‘The situation escalated into a military operation to take over the Falls Road. Five battalions of soldiers were involved and considerable armour.’¹¹⁴ Northern Ireland army headquarters informed the Ministry of Defence (MoD): ‘This was not an elaborately pre-planned cordon/curfew/search exercise. It was a battle.’ This memorandum stated that there had been ‘street to street fighting’ and troops had faced ‘heavy firing’.¹¹⁵

On 6 July, after the weekend violence, Moore was asked by the Irish government to approach London. McCann told Moore that Dublin now faced an ‘extreme crisis’. The Irish government believed a civil war could erupt in the North, and the stability of the Lynch government was threatened. McCann said the British government should disarm

¹¹⁰ Warner, ‘Falls Road Curfew’, pp. 325-27. The curfew was illegal. M.L.R. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland?: The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement* (Routledge, London, 1995, paperback edn. 1997), p. 92.

¹¹¹ Adrian Guelke, *Northern Ireland: The International Perspective* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1988), pp. 46-7.

¹¹² Peter Taylor, *Brits: The War Against the IRA* (Bloomsbury, London, 2001), pp. 49-51.

¹¹³ Note to Heath, 4 Jul. 1970, in TNA, PREM 15/100.

¹¹⁴ Conclusions of JSC meeting, 4 Jul. 1970, in PRONI, HA/32/3/3.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Craig, *Crisis of Confidence*, pp. 85-7.

loyalists and reroute or cancel controversial Orange parades. External Affairs had also approached the ambassadors of Canada, France, Italy and Germany. The next day, the deputy chief of mission in the US embassy in London acted on instructions. He met the permanent under-secretary to the FCO, Sir Denis Greenhill, to convey American concerns.¹¹⁶ Also on 7 July, Lynch wrote to Heath. He was more restrained than McCann had been with Moore. Lynch expressed concern over provocative Orange parades and the impact on public opinion of the army's actions in the Lower Falls. He pointed out that this area had been the target of armed mobs the previous August, who had burned hundreds of houses and killed several people. Arms searches should be impartial and should be seen to be so, Lynch stated, 'if they are not to be regarded as further repression of the minority'.¹¹⁷

Reviewing these events on 7 July the Northern Ireland cabinet noted that a 'very substantial haul of arms and ammunition' had been recovered. A significant point, given speculation about the importation of arms into the North, was made by one minister, who had toured the area with the army: the age and variety of the weapons indicated that 'there had been no recent organised supply of arms' to the Lower Falls. Ammunition had been discovered on the premises of the CCDC in Leeson Street, and the army had severed its contacts with this body. Chichester-Clark told his cabinet that the issue of the visit by Hillery to the area, the previous day, had been taken up with London. With their customary blindness towards the sensitivities of the minority community, the cabinet was dismayed at the media coverage of the curfew: there had been a 'smear campaign' against the army, similar to that launched against the RUC on previous occasions. Ministers regretted the tendency in the media 'to play up the alleged depredations of the troops'.¹¹⁸ Callaghan later emphasised that he had closely monitored the making of security decisions in the North.

¹¹⁶ Moore to State Dept., 6 Jul. 1970, and US embassy (London) to State Dept., 7 Jul. 1970, in NARA, box 2654, Pol 23-9 UK.

¹¹⁷ Lynch to Heath, 7 Jul. 1970, in TNA, PREM 15/100.

¹¹⁸ Conclusions of cabinet meeting, 7 Jul. 1970, in PRONI, CAB 4/1532/15.

He argued that the new Conservative home secretary in July 1970, Reginald Maudling, took his eye off the JSC's decision-making, and this had been welcomed by the unionist cabinet and Freeland. According to Callaghan, Freeland's decisions should have been prevented by someone capable of assessing the political implications for the army's relations with the minority.¹¹⁹

By the autumn of 1970 it was realized within Whitehall that Northern Ireland had become a geo-political issue and that officials would have to deal with the Irish government. The FCO had not been prepared for the strains that had arisen in Anglo-Irish relations. A memorandum from White to deputy under-secretary Sir Stewart Crawford is revealing on Whitehall priorities. The FCO had little knowledge or experience in relation to the Irish state and it had been a non-subject until 1969, unlike the traditional issues of Western Europe, the Middle East or the Soviet bloc.¹²⁰ Crawford chaired the JIC and had overall responsibility for Irish matters within the FCO.¹²¹ Two FCO officials, David Blatherick and Peter Evans, had arrived in Dublin to join the new British ambassador, John Peck. The ambassador came to realize that getting his point across to London about political realities in Ireland would be difficult. He had been told that every telegram would be widely distributed in Whitehall and every despatch would go 'straight to the top'. However, Peck came to doubt the ability of Whitehall to see beyond law and order priorities in the North. In his autobiography, he wondered whether the embassy's efforts in Dublin 'made much difference to the ensuing policy decisions in London, or to the manner in which these decisions were implemented'.¹²²

¹¹⁹ James Callaghan, *A House Divided: The Dilemma of Northern Ireland* (Collins, London, 1973), pp. 144-5.

¹²⁰ White (FCO Western European Dept.) to Crawford, 23 Sep. 1970, in TNA, FCO 33/1200.

¹²¹ O'Halpin, 'Intelligence and Anglo-Irish Relations', in O'Halpin, Armstrong and Ohlmeyer (eds.), *Intelligence*, p. 138.

¹²² Peck, *Dublin from Downing Street*, pp. 37, 114-16.

The Falls curfew events demonstrated that heavy-handed security decisions would have far-reaching consequences in the North. In October 1968 Craig said he had banned the civil rights march in Derry because it had been organised by republicans and communists. In July 1970 Freeland could say that his troops were compelled to seize illegally-held arms, held by the Official IRA. In both these instances short-sighted decisions were made on accurate intelligence. But if long-term consequences had been taken into consideration, wiser counsels might have prevailed.

(x) Lynch threatens to introduce internment

Following the August 1969 events in Derry and Belfast the IRA attempted to obtain arms in England, leading to jailings and protests throughout 1970. In March Official republicans occupied British European Airways offices in Dublin in a protest aimed at drawing attention to the imprisonment in England of six men on arms charges. These included Smullen, Gerry Doherty (Clann na hÉireann president), Pat O'Sullivan and Conor Lynch. Smullen and Doherty had been convicted of conspiracy to obtain firearms illegally in Huddersfield, while Lynch and O'Sullivan had been convicted of raiding the Sterling Machine Gun Factory in Dagenham.¹²³ Official Sinn Féin supporters picketed Berry's home in July, claiming he had given information to the British authorities which had helped to convict republicans. The protesters were later convicted of threatening behaviour. The Garda believed his life was in danger and extended armed police protection to him and his family; he was also persuaded to carry a firearm.¹²⁴

During the Easter weekend, the British embassy in Dublin reported that its officials had just been warned by the Garda of a kidnapping threat against them. The threat was allegedly made by republicans who had been agitating for the release of Irish prisoners in

¹²³ *Irish Times*, 5 Mar. 1970, p. 1; TNA, J 297/57; statement by Det. Insp. Desmond Winslow, 9 Oct. 1969, in TNA, DPP 2/4755.

¹²⁴ Maume, 'Berry', in McGuire and Quinn (eds.), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, p. 501.

Britain. The FCO asked what the Irish government would do in the event of a British diplomat being kidnapped, even if those who might attempt kidnapping would be well-known to the 'efficient' Special Branch. Dublin's security policy received scathing criticism. The counsellor, Peter Piper, stated that drastic action would only be taken against republicans if they posed a danger to the government itself. Should a British diplomat be kidnapped to secure the release of Irish prisoners, Piper wrote, Dublin would argue the best solution would be to release the prisoners. Gilchrist's earlier criticism of the Irish government's attitude towards the IRA would be repeated. Piper pointed out that the IRA had come out more into the open in the past two years and functioned, according to this argument, 'without let or hindrance'. The authorities had done 'very little' to curb IRA arson attacks and bank robberies, Piper argued. Only when a Garda had been murdered had there been any attempt to bring culprits to book. (Garda Richard Fallon had been shot dead in April during a bank raid by Saor Éire members).¹²⁵ Hijacking and kidnapping threats made their way onto the Whitehall agenda in 1970. Later in the year the British trade commissioner in Montreal would be kidnapped by Québécois terrorists and held for several weeks. The British ambassador to Uruguay was then seized and held in captivity for nine months.¹²⁶

There would be further leftist violence in Dublin, this time ostensibly over the war in Vietnam. In July a US Navy sailor was shot in the arm and leg. An 'Irish-Indo-Chinese Solidarity Front' claimed responsibility, warning that 'American murderers of unarmed Vietnamese peasants' would not be tolerated. A picket would later be placed on a US Navy ship by an assortment of groups, with a decidedly international flavour: Official Sinn Féin, the CYM, the Labour Party, the German Communist Party, the Irish Campaign for Greek

¹²⁵ Piper to FCO, 28 Mar. 1970; White to Piper, 8 Apr. 1970; and Piper to White, 24 Apr. 1970, in TNA, FCO 33/1197. Peck, *Dublin From Downing Street*, p. 37. On the Fallon killing, see Liz Walsh, *The Final Beat: Gardai Killed in the Line of Duty* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 2001), pp. 1-7. See also Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 154-5.

¹²⁶ Denis Greenhill, *More By Accident* (Wilton 65, York, 1992), pp. 145-6.

Democracy and the Trotskyist Socialist Labour Action Group.¹²⁷ There were now student branches of the Official republican movement in the universities in Dublin, Cork and Galway. Promoting the IRA, the cover of the October issue of their magazine, *Resistance*, featured a silhouette of a guerrilla with an AK47.¹²⁸

Protests during Nixon's visit to Dublin, in October, provided further evidence of the change in Irish attitudes earlier identified by Moore. This visit would be nothing like John F. Kennedy's. The FCO saw an opportunity to advise the administration on Britain's priorities in relation to Irish issues: the president's Irish party could be offered a brief on Ireland.¹²⁹ The White House regarded the Irish state in a positive light. Nixon visited Ireland to draw the attention of Irish-Americans to his Irish roots and his own brief for the visit, supplied by Henry Kissinger, described Ireland as 'a constructive and reliable neutral'.¹³⁰ Lynch continued his strong support for Washington during Nixon's tenure. The taoiseach 'played down' Vietnam in his meetings with Nixon during the president's visit and subsequently during a return visit to Washington the following year.¹³¹

Towards the end of the year the government announced that internment would be introduced unless it could be satisfied that a threat to kidnap 'one or more prominent persons' was removed. Berry was reported to be one of the intended victims. Garda information indicated that the kidnapping conspirators (allegedly Saor Éire) also planned armed bank robberies, which might involve murders or attempted murders. This announcement to bring into operation Part II of the Offences Against the State Act, 1940, pointed out that places of detention were being prepared. The Council of Europe would be informed of the government's intentions as these proposals involved derogation from

¹²⁷ Blatherwick to FCO, 31 July 1970, in TNA, FCO 33/1197.

¹²⁸ *Resistance*, No. 1, Oct. 1970, p. 1.

¹²⁹ White to Crawford, 23 Sep. 1970, in TNA, FCO 33/1200.

¹³⁰ Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson and Michael Joseph, London, 1979), p. 935.

¹³¹ Dermot Keogh, *Jack Lynch: A Biography* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 2008), p. 135.

certain provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights.¹³² Ultra-leftist violence and a kidnapping threat, rather than IRA violence, had prompted Dublin into threatening to introduce internment. As the British embassy in Dublin had accurately predicted, such a measure would be contemplated only when the Irish government felt directly threatened.

(xi) Communist ‘threat’ assessed by British embassy

The implications of the split in the republican movement were analysed in the British embassy in Dublin by the second secretary, Blatherwick, and the information officer, Evans. Their reports attempted to assess the nature of any communist threat in the South and the role of the Official republican movement. In July 1970 the embassy argued that communism was not ‘at present’ a threat. Blatherwick supplied details on left-wing organisations, communist and non-communist, to the FCO’s Western European Department. He stated that Ireland had been stony ground for communism: the Republic was rural, bourgeois and clerical, where the Russians and their agents had been seen as ‘the legions of hell’. Making a telling point about dissent in Ireland, Blatherwick wrote that Irish republicanism had provided a non-communist outlet for rebellion: partition had been a cause for many who might otherwise have agitated on political issues. He observed that the CPI was small, isolated, introverted and without influence: ‘It lacks dynamism and capable leaders and it seems most unlikely that its influence will grow in the foreseeable future.’ Similarly, other left-wing extremists, such as the Trotskyist and Maoist groups, were of little importance. Instead, the main communist danger would be indirect, in the shape of Official Sinn Féin and its left-wing ‘allies’ in the North, in PD and the civil rights movement.

¹³² Government Information Bureau statement, 4 Dec. 1970, in NAI, TAOIS/2001/6/539; O’Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, pp. 311, 325-6; *Irish Times*, 5 Dec. 1970, pp. 1, 16.

Blatherwick stated that there had been some evidence of communist infiltration in the Official republican movement, chiefly by Johnston. But, at this time, Blatherwick thought it unlikely that there were more than one or two ‘hard-line communists’ within the Officials. He concluded that the greatest communist threat – ‘though small in absolute terms’ – had passed: Johnston’s bid to take over the republican movement *in toto*. This attempt had failed because mainstream republican opinion did not approve of Marxist innovators i.e. Johnston and his cohort. Therefore, in the South at least, Blatherwick predicted that the Provisionals would continue to draw support away from Goulding. This report included a biographical profile of Johnston, which highlighted his view that the republican movement, rather than an orthodox communist party, had potential as a left-wing force. The embassy believed that Johnston had probably not been ‘in regular contact’ with communist organisations, but the emergence of Official Sinn Féin was a direct result of his efforts.¹³³

Blatherwick followed his first submission on a communist threat with further assessments. These reports would seem to have been based on overt sources of information, available in the public domain. In August Blatherwick reported on Goulding’s ongoing attempts to define the Official IRA’s role. The Official republican leadership had indicated that a military campaign in the North would be counter-productive: physical force or any other action against British troops would endanger the implementation of reforms won by the civil rights movement. (This included the disarming of the RUC and the disbandment of the B Specials). What was now needed in the North, according to an Official spokesman, would be to transform ‘street fighting into a political struggle’.

Blatherwick later outlined the main points made by Goulding in a two-part interview with *This Week*. These highlighted the differences between the Provisionals, who prioritised

¹³³ Blatherwick to FCO, 6 July 1970, in TNA, FCO 33/1204.

armed struggle, and the Officials, who favoured political agitation with the Official IRA having a 'defensive' role. Three reasons were given for the split in the movement: the Provisional leaders had a sentimental interest in republicanism, rather than an ideological one; some republicans feared parliamentary participation would make the movement reformist, rather than revolutionary; others were concerned that the leadership's concentration on agitation had fatally weakened military capacity. On the latter point, Goulding argued that the gun battle with troops during the Falls curfew disproved the argument that the Official IRA had lost its ability to use arms. For Goulding, the curfew gun battle illustrated how the Official IRA could be the people's defender. He also tried to reassure traditional republicans by denying that the Official republicans were anti-clerical or communist: no 'outside force' dictated policy.¹³⁴

In September the embassy provided an update on the activities of Official Sinn Féin in the South. Official republicans were campaigning on left-wing causes embraced elsewhere in Western Europe. They agitated against Ireland's membership of the EEC, which the Soviet Union opposed, but Blatherwick doubted the campaign's *bona fides*: 'Though the arguments are presented in economic and social terms, it is likely that the opposition of the Marxist element is basically political.' In other words, the anti-EEC agenda of the Soviet Union was believed to be a factor behind the Official republicans' campaign against the EEC. They were also involved in a Palestine solidarity committee, which aimed to support 'the revolution of the Palestinian people'.¹³⁵ Two years earlier, in 1968, the PFLP had started to hijack aircraft and caused explosions in London the following year.¹³⁶

Blatherwick identified the leaders behind recent agitation in the South as Johnston, Goulding and Mac Giolla. These individuals might be seen as the leadership figures in the

¹³⁴ Blatherwick to FCO, 6 Aug. 1970, and 11 Aug. 1970, in TNA, FCO 33/1197.

¹³⁵ Blatherwick to FCO, 22 Sep. 1970, in TNA, FCO 33/1197.

¹³⁶ Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, pp. 600-2, 605-6.

Official movement most prominently associated with the republican politicisation process. Garland, however, did not feature here. He had attracted the attention of the British ambassador in 1968, but had a lower profile in 1970. A list of people openly identified with protests had been supplied by the embassy. Official republican Máirín de Burca – ‘perhaps the most active of the demo fringe’ – had been a member of the Palestine committee and had visited Amman, in Jordan. She had earlier been sentenced for her role in a protest over the Vietnam war. This agitation, in effect, would be perceived by the embassy as a local dimension to an international protest movement: Blatherwick supposed Irish agitators would have been demonstrating even if Sinn Féin had not existed. However, this was Ireland and the IRA had allure: the connection with the republican movement gave these agitators what he called ‘an enhanced status’.¹³⁷ Irish republicans, in this viewpoint, had more potential than Irish communists.

Meanwhile, left-wing developments in the North were being monitored by army headquarters in Lisburn, mainly reported by RUC Special Branch. This intelligence was passed on to the embassy in Dublin. The Official republicans’ growing international contacts, including de Burca’s trip to Jordan, were noted; in particular, the association with Al Fatah and its front organisation, the General Union of Palestinian Students.¹³⁸ The role of Al Fatah and the Palestinian struggle had been prominently covered in *The United Irishman* the previous year.¹³⁹ Whitehall now heard that ‘the demo fringe’ in the South could go beyond pickets and occupations and adopt more dramatic methods. Since Palestinian terrorists had made headlines across the world by hijacking aircraft, the possibility of Irish copycat tactics had not been ruled out by the British embassy in Dublin. The embassy had earlier asked the FCO’s Information Research Department (IRD) for information on the Irish connection to Palestinian solidarity movements. Evans pointed

¹³⁷ Blatherwick to FCO, 22 Sep. 1970, in TNA, FCO 33/1197.

¹³⁸ NI HQ to UK embassy (Dublin), 29 Sep. 1970, in TNA, FCO 33/1197.

¹³⁹ *United Irishman*, Jun. 1969, p. 3; *ibid.*, Jul. 1969, p. 4.

out that de Burca had been accompanied on the trip to Amman by Seán Ryan, who had been interned in the 1950s for IRA activities. Ryan had founded the Irish-Arab Friendship Society in 1968 and this group co-existed with the Irish-Arab Solidarity Committee, perceived as an Official republican front. Terrorism on behalf of Al Fatah ‘and the like’ in Ireland would not be impossible, Evans believed. Official republicans might be tempted to emulate ‘the hi-jacking their Arab friends practise with such notorious impunity’. This might be *possible*, of course, but no evidence had been offered by Evans to substantiate this point.¹⁴⁰ The emergence of the Official republican movement and its increasing international contacts saw the development of a British embassy view which placed left-wing republicanism within an international context and subject to Soviet influence.

(xii) Perceptions of Soviet penetration

In October 1970 the FCO replied to the British embassy in Dublin regarding the issue of a communist threat to the Irish state. Soviet ‘meddling’ was identified as the most important issue. This answer to the Dublin embassy would be significant in that the embassy had sought to bring Whitehall’s attention to Soviet penetration for over two years. British comment on communist-linked subversion in Ireland would now be two-way traffic between the Dublin embassy and Whitehall. Communism was not a threat, *per se*, according to the FCO. However, both the Soviets and the Czechs were taking a greater interest in Irish affairs, and this had not been confined to overtly left-wing organisations. There were indications that the Soviets were interested in trade unions, the FCO stated, and a Soviet delegation had visited Dublin and Belfast the previous August. The Tass office which had opened in Dublin under Yuri Ustimenko, the FCO pointed out, could be the forerunner of a Russian trade mission and provide greater opportunities for Soviet

¹⁴⁰ Evans to FCO, 22 Sep. 1970, in TNA, FCO 95/961; Michael Burleigh, *Blood & Rage: A Cultural History of Terrorism*, (HarperPress, London, 2008, revised edn., Harper Perennial, 2009), pp. 153-5. On the role of the IRD in the Cold War, see Richard J. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (John Murray, London, 2001), pp. 130-41.

espionage. During three years in London with Tass, the FCO wrote, Ustimenko had taken a keen interest in youth movements. And the FCO shared the embassy's view that the Czech trade mission in Dublin had taken more than a 'casual interest' in Irish affairs.¹⁴¹ It would be assumed in Dublin media circles that Ustimenko, and his successors, headed up KGB activity in Ireland.¹⁴²

The Soviets had openly indicated their hostility to an enlarged EEC and also their desire to develop relations with Ireland. The Kremlin's priorities in Europe were outlined by a Soviet representative in an address to the Ireland-USSR Society. Lev Sheidin chided Ireland for applying to join the Common Market – indicating Russian approval for the campaign against Ireland's membership – but said the recent Soviet-Irish trade talks in Moscow had been fruitful. He took a hard line on Czechoslovakia, and claimed the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968 was necessary to prevent the country becoming 'the playground of reactionary forces'. The British embassy saw Sheidin as another 'diplomat' attempting to boost the Soviets' profile in Dublin. In a report to the FCO, it noted that Sheidin had visited Ireland a number of times and was prominent among those Russians with an interest in Irish affairs. According to Sheidin, membership of the Ireland-USSR Society in the Soviet Union numbered 70,000. However, according to Evans, it would be inconceivable that 70,000 Russians 'could possibly be interested in the Irish'. The relatively high membership figure could be explained by the fact that entire factories of workers would be informed that they had volunteered to join the friendship society.¹⁴³

Whitehall fears in relation to a Soviet embassy opening in Dublin were given impetus after the conclusion of trade talks between the Russians and the Irish. The FCO would be

¹⁴¹ Thorpe to Blatherwick, 1 Oct. 1970, in TNA, FCO 33/1204.

¹⁴² Comment offered by Prof. John Horgan at Research Seminar in Contemporary Irish History, Trinity College, Dublin, 3 Mar. 2010.

¹⁴³ Evans to FCO, 1 Dec. 1970, in TNA, FCO 33/1204.

informed in January 1971 that the possibility of exchanging diplomatic missions between Ireland and the USSR had emerged from the recent talks. However, it appeared that the Soviets were insisting on the establishment of a full diplomatic mission, Peck reported. The question for External Affairs, if an embassy opened, would be how to balance trade advantage against political disadvantage. According to Peck, the Irish were aware of the dangers involved and External Affairs had appreciated intelligence supplied by the British. External Affairs had mentioned that ‘various elements in Irish society’ would be susceptible to Soviet propaganda, he claimed. The issue had not gone to the cabinet for decision, Peck stated, but there was a possibility the Irish would be unable to object to establishing diplomatic relations, especially since the Tass representative, Ustimenko, had given no cause for complaint.¹⁴⁴

A stronger Western European political entity, the EEC, could strengthen NATO’s capability; arguments about the military potential of the EEC were made by opponents of Irish membership, effectively backing the Soviet Union on this issue. Left-wing republicans exploited domestic concerns about the ability to maintain the traditional Irish policy of military neutrality if Ireland joined. They argued that Dublin appeared to be willing to make a commitment to military obligations within a NATO-dominated EEC. Since the EEC emphasised the development of political partnership alongside economic relationships, Official Sinn Féin argued, military commitments to NATO of some kind would inevitably arise: ‘Ireland would soon be forced to join and allow NATO bases to be established at Shannon, Cork and elsewhere.’¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Peck to FCO, 29 Jan. 1971, in TNA, FCO 33/1621.

¹⁴⁵ *Why Sinn Féin Says No to the Common Market* (Republican Educational Department, Dublin, 1971), pp. 12-13; Anthony Coughlan, *The Common Market: Why Ireland Should Not Join* (Common Market Study Group, Dublin, 1970).

The ANC's Ruth First spoke at an Official republican seminar in November 1970, joined by de Courcy Ireland, Johnston, McMillen and Goulding.¹⁴⁶ De Courcy Ireland's lecture on previous revolutionary movements would be published and its question and answer session is revealing on the Official leadership's attitude at this time to the Soviet Union: it was considered a potential ally. Asked could Ireland become another Cuba, de Courcy Ireland replied that 'we could do a Cuba' if external support was received. He argued that Fidel Castro's Cuba would not have lasted without the support of the Soviet Union and, to some extent, China.¹⁴⁷ The Chinese embassy in London had funded PD and other left-wing groups in Northern Ireland, the State Department heard in January. McManus reported that he had received this information from an unofficial friendly source, 'believed to be reliable'. The informant had indicated that this funding programme would be known to the authorities in London, Belfast and Dublin, and McManus assumed the validity of his report could be confirmed with 'the appropriate agencies' in the US embassy in London.¹⁴⁸

Developments within the Official republican movement provided evidence of increased Soviet influence in Ireland, the US embassy in Dublin believed. It continued to see a link between republican politicisation and communist infiltration. In January 1971 the Official Sinn Féin árd fheis voted to abandon the parliamentary abstentionism policy. The embassy saw this as proof that communists had taken control of 'their faction' of the republican movement. The dropping of abstentionism was seen as an important step in a broader strategy. Communists could now take seats in Dáil Éireann 'and take advantage of Ireland's democratic institutions in order to achieve their aims' – if they won enough votes of course. According to this logic, the left-wing republicans influenced by Johnston were a communist vanguard.

¹⁴⁶ *United Irishman*, Dec. 1970, pp. 6-7.

¹⁴⁷ John de Courcy Ireland, *Revolutionary Movements of the Past* (Republican Education Department, Dublin, 1971), pp. 23-5.

¹⁴⁸ McManus to State Dept., 18 Jan. 1971, in NARA, RG 59, box 2653, Pol 18 UK.

As in 1970 the American embassy had received detailed information based on Garda Special Branch intelligence. The CPI had less than 150 members in the South, mostly concentrated in Dublin, and its influence on Irish politics had been negligible. But, the embassy reported, Official Sinn Féin had made a good start towards promoting its policies by dropping abstentionism. Ustimenko had attended the Official Sinn Féin árd fheis, the embassy reported. As in the embassy's assessment of the consequences of the republican split twelve months earlier, Johnston still loomed large. The point was again made that he had been a central figure in the creation of the CPI.

According to the embassy, the total active membership of both IRAs in the Republic had been estimated by a 'responsible' Irish government official to be about 1,300. This figure represented a small increase on the estimate provided by Berry to the Irish cabinet in March 1969. According to the intelligence supplied to the State Department by the embassy in 1971, the Official IRA accounted for under half the IRA total in the South, with 250 Officials 'very active'. The total (Official and Provisional) IRA membership in the North had been estimated to be about 650. The Official IRA was believed to be better organised and trained, posing a greater long-term threat than the Provisionals. Berry's criticism of the role of the media in 1969 would be echoed: there was little public awareness of communist efforts to capture 'working control' of a republican organisation and the media had been reluctant to identify de Burca and Johnston as communists. According to the embassy, de Burca and Johnston – 'of course' – had sought 'to conceal their true purposes and allegiance'.¹⁴⁹

In May 1971 the US embassy submitted another assessment of Irish republicanism to the State Department. Almost eighteen months after the split in the republican movement, this

¹⁴⁹ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 27 Jan. 1971, in NARA, RG 59, box 2383, Pol 14 Ire.

report stressed that communism constituted the main issue dividing the rival IRAs. Johnston's ultimate aim was a socialist republic 'friendly to Russia'. The embassy described him as a Red manipulator, plotting behind the scenes 'to take advantage of Ireland's democratic institutions'. While the Official IRA had the upper hand – 'brains, trained men, money and arms' – the Provisional IRA had gained ground in Belfast. By the end of 1970, according to this assessment, the Provisionals had been as well-armed and at least as strong as the Officials in Belfast. Rivalry between the two IRAs, it was noted, had led to a fatal dispute in March 1971.¹⁵⁰

The mutuality of American and British interests in relation to NATO was highlighted by the US embassy in London. In its annual UK assessment for 1971, the embassy stated that the US and Britain 'should continue to find common ground on fundamental issues', especially where the security of the West would be concerned.¹⁵¹ As Whitehall became concerned at the possibility of the Soviets using Dublin as a base for espionage, the American embassy in Dublin believed that by dropping parliamentary abstentionism the Official republican movement had taken an important step towards promoting a pro-Soviet agenda.

(xiii) Official IRA armed struggle

Unlike the Provisionals, whose energies were directed against Stormont, the Official republicans were openly hostile to the Irish state and its institutions, and the IRA had been defined as 'the army of the Irish revolution' by Garland. In May 1971 Garland, the Officials' national organiser, identified the key issue dividing Irish republicanism. Republicans, he stated, needed to work for a socialist revolution and political agitation and

¹⁵⁰ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 18 May 1971, in NARA, RG 59, box 2383, Pol 12 Ire; on the killing by the Official IRA of Charlie Hughes, see Gerry Adams, *Before the Dawn: An Autobiography* (Brandon, Dingle, 2001), p. 149; McKittrick, Kelters, Feeney, Thornton and McVea, *Lost Lives*, no. 65, pp. 69-70.

¹⁵¹ US embassy (London) to State Dept., 11 Feb. 1971, in NARA, RG 59, box 2658, Pol 1 UK-US.

armed struggle went together. Since the Provisionals relied on a military strategy they could not succeed as revolutionaries, Garland contended. 'Armed struggle on its own' would be doomed to failure, he argued, just as 'political action or demonstrations on their own' were doomed. For the Officials, armed struggle and political agitation would be the two strands of an integrated revolutionary strategy.¹⁵²

The Official IRA's armed struggle in the South raised hopes in the British embassy that Lynch might introduce emergency legislation to combat republican subversives. Official IRA attacks on the army in Belfast had been accompanied by explosions at the Mogul mine in County Tipperary and a British pensions office in Cork. German-owned chalets were destroyed in Arklow, while Fianna Fáil's head office in Dublin was damaged by unknown assailants. The Mogul mine explosion had been an attempt by the Official IRA to intervene in an industrial dispute, along the lines of the EI bus burning in 1968. Following the funeral of Martin O'Leary, who died as a result of injuries received in the Mogul explosion, Blatherwick speculated about Dublin being provoked into introducing internment. A marginal note on his letter to the FCO, written in Whitehall, illustrates how armed struggle in the South might be advantageous to Britain: 'IRA activity in the Republic, against Irish targets, would in certain circumstances be very welcome.'¹⁵³ The explosion at the Tipperary mine would not be the last time that Official IRA activities gave ammunition to London, as it considered how to put Dublin under pressure in relation to IRA activity.

The funeral of O'Leary saw a showdown between the Irish state and left-wing republicanism. A large force of up to 500 gardaí had been present to prevent a volley being fired. Goulding delivered the oration. O'Leary, he said, was the first martyr in the new

¹⁵² *United Irishman*, May 1971, p. 6.

¹⁵³ Blatherwick to FCO, 9 Jul. 1971, in TNA, FCO 33/1600.

phase of the revolutionary struggle. Goulding employed violent rhetoric. Since it would not be possible to achieve the revolution by peaceful means, class enemies would face ‘the language that brings these vultures to their senses most effectively, the language of the bomb and the bullet’.¹⁵⁴ Blatherwick understood the symbolic significance of the funeral for the Official republican movement.¹⁵⁵ O’Leary had been a full-time organiser for the ‘Army of the Irish Revolution’ in Munster, and had been one of those arrested following an attempt to destroy Royal Navy launches in Baltimore, County Cork, in April.¹⁵⁶

The Official republican movement now claimed that Lynch was considering internment and argued that Stormont and Dublin were equally repressive. The Irish government faced as much hostility as the British army in *The United Irishman*. It claimed that ‘threatened internment’ and legal measures such as the Prevention of Forcible Entry and Occupation Bill – directed against squatting, sit-ins and fish-ins – were Fianna Fáil’s attempt ‘to do in the 26 counties what the British military are doing in the 6’.¹⁵⁷

When internment did materialise, on 9 August, it was introduced by Brian Faulkner in Northern Ireland, after consultation with Heath. As a drastic measure to suppress the IRA, internment proved disastrous: there was an immediate surge in violence. The army arrested 342 republican suspects, mainly Officials, but released 105 within two days – there would be complaints in Whitehall about the ‘out of date’ intelligence supplied by RUC Special Branch to the army.¹⁵⁸ Whitehall fears about the inadequacy of RUC Special Branch intelligence had come to pass. Heath conceded in his autobiography that RUC intelligence had been ‘hopelessly out of date’. He also admitted that the authorities underestimated the scale of the condemnation of the measure, and the effectiveness of what he termed ‘the

¹⁵⁴ *Irish Times*, 9 Jul. 1971, pp. 1, 16; Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 243-4.

¹⁵⁵ Blatherwick to FCO, 9 Jul. 1971, in TNA, FCO 33/1600.

¹⁵⁶ *United Irishman*, Aug. 1971, p. 12; *ibid.*, May 1971, p. 2; TNA, FCO 33/1600.

¹⁵⁷ *United Irishman*, Aug. 1971, p. 1.

¹⁵⁸ Smith, *Fighting for Ireland?*, p. 101; Bardon, *Ulster*, pp. 681-5; Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, pp. 618-9.

IRA propaganda machine'.¹⁵⁹ (The Irish state later successfully prosecuted Britain under the European Convention on Human Rights over ill-treatment of internees.)¹⁶⁰ Official republicans secured an international propaganda coup when a photograph of Joe McCann, during a gun battle with troops in the Markets area of Belfast, was published by the *Daily Mirror* and subsequently by *Life*. The photograph appeared on the cover of *The United Irishman* beside the headline, 'Army of the People'.¹⁶¹ The introduction of internment in the North led to widespread destruction of property – at least 2,000 and possibly more than 2,500 families were displaced.¹⁶² The revolutionary strategy defined by Garland would be tested in the North following internment: the consequences of Official IRA violence would prove to be problematic for those who wanted to advance a political agenda.

(xiv) Conclusion

The prominent involvement of communists in NICRA did not significantly alter the RUC's traditional view of subversion within Northern Ireland: civil rights agitation simply represented a new weapon forged by the IRA to destroy the state. This traditional perception remained in place as civil rights agitation galvanized the Catholic minority, with a consequent polarisation of the political mood in the North. In Dublin, however, more attention would be paid to the dangers of communism. From 1969, a perception developed in the light of the Cold War of various security threats emanating from elements who were developing direct or indirect links with the Soviets. Berry had drawn attention to the IRA's pursuit of international contacts within the Soviet orbit, including Cuba. Alarmed at the emergence of various communist groups amidst the controversy over the US role in Vietnam, the American embassy in Dublin obtained intelligence on subversives

¹⁵⁹ Edward Heath, *The Course Of My Life: My Autobiography* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1998), pp. 428-30.

¹⁶⁰ O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, pp. 329-31. See Samantha Newbery, Bob Brecher, Philippe Sands, Brian Stewart, 'Interrogation, Intelligence and the Issue of Human Rights', in *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 24, No. 5, 2009, pp. 631-43.

¹⁶¹ On the international impact of the McCann photograph, see John Mulqueen and Jim Smyth, "'The Che Guevara of the IRA': the legend of "Big Joe" McCann', in *History Ireland*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 46-7.

¹⁶² McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense*, p. 69.

from Irish security sources. The British embassy in Dublin and the FCO detected increased Soviet penetration in Ireland, noting the controversy over communist ambitions during the split in the republican movement and the involvement of Official republicans in Soviet-approved agitation such as the campaign against the EEC. But there had been more to Irish protest than communist-backed subversion. The northern civil rights movement had moderate leaders; the Official IRA in the Lower Falls prioritised defence. Craig, Chichester-Clark and Freeland, with their less than nuanced perceptions of subversive elements, made decisions that actually created unrest. Then, despite Whitehall's misgivings about RUC Special Branch intelligence, Heath allowed Faulkner to introduce internment.

CHAPTER III: HEIGHTENED SOVIET INTEREST IN IRELAND

‘We have given notice, by action that no words can now efface, that those who are responsible for the terrorism that is Britain’s age-old reaction to Irish demands will be the victims of that terrorism, paying richly in their own red blood for their crimes and the crimes of their imperial masters.’ – **Cathal Goulding**¹

‘You and I have problems in common, which we are seeking to solve. The Soviet purpose will be to exacerbate these problems whenever and wherever they can.’ – **Ted Heath**²

(i) Introduction

Just days after he denounced Britain’s role in the North to thousands of mourners at the funeral of Joe McCann, *Pravda* profiled Goulding. The Kremlin in April 1972 had approved the Official IRA’s struggle against British ‘imperialism’. Eight months after the introduction of internment, the Troubles had now claimed more than 300 lives.³ The army had frequently mishandled situations and, as Sabine Wichert has argued, operated ‘without political guidance from London’ and acted ‘as in previously encountered colonial situations’.⁴ Following the introduction of internment, on 9 August 1971, the Anglo-Irish relationship ‘dipped below freezing point’.⁵ Anglo-Soviet relations would also cool further. Heath had no interest in catching up with the UK’s allies in the ‘bicycle race’ to normalise contacts with the Soviets after its invasion of Czechoslovakia, and, facing what he saw as a ‘blatant’ and ‘extensive’ Soviet espionage operation in Britain, he approved a plan to expel Soviet diplomats and trade delegation officials in what became known as

¹ Oration by Goulding at funeral of Joe McCann, quoted in *United Irishman*, May 1972, p. 7.

² Draft letter from Heath to Lynch, 29 Feb. 1972, in TNA, PREM 15/1046.

³ UK embassy (Moscow) to Foreign Office, 28 Apr. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/24; *Irish Times*, 19 Apr., 1972, p. 1; David McKittrick, Seamus Kelters, Brian Feeney, Chris Thornton and David McVea, *Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children Who Died as a Result of the Northern Ireland Troubles* (Mainstream, Edinburgh, 1999, revised, updated edn. 2007), no. 334, pp. 175-6.

⁴ Sabine Wichert, *Northern Ireland Since 1945* (Longman, Harlow, 1991, 1994, 2nd edn., 1999), pp. 132-137.

⁵ Dermot Keogh, *Jack Lynch: A Biography* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 2008), pp. 306-9.

Operation Foot. Geraint Hughes notes: 'The expulsions received widespread coverage from the British press, and journalists filed reports on Soviet sabotage plans, Eastern bloc involvement in industrial espionage, and on allegations of KGB meddling in Northern Ireland.'⁶

(ii) Moscow exploits Northern Ireland crisis

The US embassy in Moscow reported in August 1971 that Britain had emerged as the favourite 'whipping boy' for the Russians and *Pravda* attacked the government over a range of issues, including Northern Ireland. 'Provocations' against the USSR had increased since the Conservatives came to power the year before, the Soviet daily claimed. It accused London of waging a campaign of 'spy mania'.⁷ On 24 September Greenhill informed the Russian *chargé d'affaires* that a total of 105 intelligence officers working under official cover were to be expelled from Britain. A KGB defector, Oleg Lyalin, had provided information on Soviet plans for sabotage during an East-West crisis or conflict, but his debriefings suggested these were embryonic.⁸

Notwithstanding the violence that followed internment, including competition with the Provisional IRA, Official republicans prioritised the campaign against EEC membership. But the leadership feared that the northern situation weakened the movement's political agenda. At the October árd fheis Malachy MacGurran stated that an 'emotional' involvement with the North distracted attention from the EEC campaign. Mac Giolla warned that what he described as 'revolutionary potential' in the South had deteriorated since 1969. Overtures were made to the Soviet Union. In relation to economic affairs,

⁶ Geraint Hughes, "Giving the Russians a Bloody Nose": Operation *Foot* and Soviet Espionage in the United Kingdom, 1964-71', in *Cold War History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2006, pp. 229-49.

⁷ US embassy (Moscow) to State Dept., 26 Aug. 1971, in NARA, RG 59, box 2659, Pol UK-USSR.

⁸ Hughes, 'Giving the Russians a Bloody Nose', pp. 237-8; Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West* (Allen Lane, London, 1999), pp. 499-500; Greenhill, *More By Accident*, pp. 157-9; Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (Allen Lane, London, 2009), pp. 565-75. In his memoirs the former Soviet foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko, described this episode as a 'gross provocation'. Andrei Gromyko, *Memories* (Hutchinson, London, 1989), p. 158.

trading opportunities were identified in the communist world. Eoin Ó Murchú called for the expansion of Irish trade with developing countries and Eastern Europe to break economic dependence on Britain. The report on the *árd fheis* from the British embassy noted that most sections of the conference had been open to the press.⁹

The Official IRA now portrayed itself as the ‘army of the people’, allowing a distinction to be made between the Official IRA and the Provisional IRA. The Official IRA had a ‘defensive’ role, involving ‘reprisal actions against British forces who have been engaged in particular terror tactics’.¹⁰ Goulding criticised the strategy of the Provisionals. The Provisional IRA had embarked on a military campaign prematurely, he argued, and neither IRA would succeed: the Provisionals who had started a physical-force phase of the republican struggle prematurely, and the Officials ‘who were forced into it knowing it was premature’. Goulding alluded here to previous statements made by him on the function of armed struggle as a back-up to political agitation. He was reported as saying that both the Officials and the Provisionals had been hit hard by internment, leading Blatherwick to interpret Goulding’s criticism of the Provisionals’ militarism as an admission of defeat. Blatherwick wrote, rather rashly as events would turn out: ‘We are beginning to hear from our political contacts that the battle against the IRA is going very much our way, but this is the first open sign we have seen that either IRA group is admitting its despondency.’¹¹

The Soviet Union made a public statement on the northern crisis in November 1971, on the eve of the fifty-fourth anniversary of the Russian revolution. This statement managed to make a link, for Cold War propaganda purposes, between the Nixon administration and Heath’s security policies:

⁹ UK embassy (Dublin) to FCO, 2 Nov. 1971, in TNA, FCO 33/1594.

¹⁰ *United Irishman*, Sep. 1971, pp. 1, 5.

¹¹ Blatherwick to Bone (Republic of Ireland Dept., FCO), 23 Nov. 1971, in TNA, FCO 33/1594.

‘For 18 months now the armed struggle by the population of Northern Ireland against the British colonialists has continued unabated. To the lawful demands of the masses, the Republican government of the United States and the British [C]onservative government reply with cruel repressions.’

Allowing for a little exaggeration, this statement on ‘18 months’ of armed struggle may have been a reference to the Official IRA’s engagement with the army during the Falls curfew in July 1970. The State Department speculated on the extent of Soviet bloc interest in the North. A Czech arms shipment, seized in the Netherlands, could be seen as ‘the only concrete evidence’ of bloc involvement. Also, there had been reports, including one from a British communist source, of Russian participation in meetings with Irish communists in Belfast, ‘as well as authorization of the arms shipment’.¹² Later in the month the US embassy in Moscow reported that O’Riordan had visited Lithuania in the Soviet Union. On his departure for Moscow O’Riordan stated that he had to hurry home to take a direct role in the workers’ struggle against ‘oppression and exploitation’. Lithuanian media reported that this had been O’Riordan’s second visit there. According to the US embassy, there may have been some special link or that the Soviets thought Lithuania would be an appropriate place to send a representative of the ‘miniscule’ CPI.¹³

As the Irish-American lobby made itself heard, the State Department met British officials later in November to discuss internment. The assistant secretary of state for European affairs, Martin Hillenbrand, was appearing before the ‘Irish caucus’ of the House of Representatives. Hillenbrand met Whitehall officials, including Crawford and White of the FCO. Hillenbrand heard that internment had been used more than once in Ireland, north and south. Lynch had even threatened to introduce the measure after incidents had

¹² State Dept. intelligence note, 10 Nov. 1971, in NARA, RG 59, box 2659, Pol UK-USSR.

¹³ US embassy (Moscow) to State Dept., 22 Nov. 1971, in NARA, RG 59, box 2383, Pol 7 Ire.

occurred ‘not nearly as serious as those of the past year in Northern Ireland’. The British emphasised the political, as opposed to the security, dimension of the northern problem. The Home Office, which had responsibility for Northern Ireland, indicated that a political initiative was a priority. The Home Office representative said that a way had to be found to give the minority a role in the government of the North. Direct rule from London would not be the solution, but could be an interim stage. These remarks demonstrate that some kind of power-sharing initiative was being contemplated in Whitehall at this stage.¹⁴

Five months after the Mogul mine explosion, which led to Whitehall speculation on internment being introduced in the South, an Official IRA atrocity gave London an opportunity to apply pressure on Dublin over security co-operation. The British government called on the Irish authorities to take action against the IRA after the killing of Senator Jack Barnhill in County Tyrone, just 400 metres inside the border, on 12 December. The slaying followed cross-border killings two days before. Two days after Barnhill’s assassination, for which the Officials claimed responsibility, Peck delivered a diplomatic note to Lynch. This alleged that the Republic allowed murderers to operate with impunity. However, in light of recent violence south of the border, London argued that the (Official and Provisional) IRA threat was now a matter of common concern.¹⁵ In Belfast, the Official IRA raided the homes of six unionists, five in the relatively affluent Malone Road area. Bombs were placed in all of them, and three exploded. *The Irish Press* reported that the Officials in Belfast had decided that retaliatory action over internment would be directed against senior unionists and their families.¹⁶ Following the diplomatic note, on 21 December Peck sent a despatch on ‘safe haven’ to the FCO. While conceding that members of Saor Éire had recently received ‘realistic’ prison sentences in the Irish courts,

¹⁴ ‘Memorandum of Conversation’, 22 Nov. 1971, in NARA, RG 59, box 2654, Pol 23-9 UK.

¹⁵ Peck to Lynch, 14 Dec. 1971, in NAI, TAOIS 2002/8/252.

¹⁶ *Irish Press*, 15 Dec. 1971, pp. 1, 4.

internment would be the only measure to prevent paramilitary raids across the border.¹⁷ Since there would be nothing to stop northern-based paramilitaries escaping south of the border after attacks in the North, this argument was less than convincing. Political violence in Northern Ireland had more complex causes than Peck's argument would allow. There had been nothing complex, of course, in the Soviets' propaganda which attacked the British 'colonialists' and the Nixon administration.

(iii) Speculation on Soviet-linked subversion

In November the US embassy in Moscow assessed Soviet intentions in relation to the northern conflict. The Kremlin's interest in the North had not been recently born, the embassy reported. The Soviets were unlikely to resist the temptation to interfere and to develop contacts, overt and covert. However, there were risks in doing this. Direct support for the IRA or 'involvement in subversion' in Northern Ireland could lead to exposure. This would hinder détente in Europe, rather than helping to create difficulties that could impede Britain's integration into the EEC. The embassy thought the Russians would want Western Europe to think that they respected the principle of non-intervention in international affairs. At the fortnightly meeting of NATO counsellors, the US political counsellor asked a British counterpart if the Soviets were intervening in the North. He replied that they were not. The British counsellor confirmed that the Czechs had denied that the Czech arms shipment, intercepted in the Netherlands, had been destined for Ireland. There were no 'reliable reports' to back up British press speculation about Soviet intervention in Northern Ireland.¹⁸

A British army reconnaissance aircraft photographed a Soviet tanker and submarine off the Northern Ireland coast in December 1971. The question arose of whether they were trying

¹⁷ Peck to FCO, 21 Dec. 1971, in TNA, FCO 33/1594.

¹⁸ US embassy (Moscow) to State Dept., 18 Nov. 1971, in NARA, RG 59, box 2654, Pol 23-9 UK.

to land arms and whether this sighting might be publicised. However, publication of photographs would inevitably give rise to further speculation about Soviet involvement in the North. If this became widespread, Whitehall might be eventually forced to issue an official denial 'of any suspicion of Russian involvement in Northern Ireland – in which case we would have done much better not to raise the hare in the first place'.¹⁹

The FCO had become concerned about fundraising for the Irish republican cause outside Ireland, and this had led to liaison between Whitehall and other Western intelligence services. The New Zealand intelligence service, for example, had been in touch with British counterparts about the activities of the Irish Connolly Association. In June 1971 the FCO drew the attention of the British High Commission in New Zealand to the fundraising issue. The High Commission had already contacted the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service after articles appeared in the press, in that country, in relation to the intention of the Connolly Association to raise funds for Irish republicans. The New Zealand security service knew of the activities of the Connolly Association – describing the organiser of the fundraising effort as 'almost a card-carrying Communist' – and had secured the co-operation of the Reserve Bank in preventing the transfer of any funds by this group.²⁰ In October the British embassy in Dublin asked the FCO for an appraisal of the IRA to counter the Irish government's arguments that it could be understood as an indigenous Northern Ireland problem. Such an appraisal might be based on JIC or other secret material. It would cover participation by operatives based in the Republic, and fundraising in the US. Soon after this request the JIC discussed liaison with the CIA in relation to Irish subversives and agreed that an earlier paper would meet the CIA's requirements.²¹ The Australians would also receive a JIC paper on Irish subversion.²²

¹⁹ UK Rep. Belfast to FCO, 31 Dec. 1971, and MoD to Prime Minister's Office, 4 Jan. 1972, in TNA, PREM 15/793. I owe this reference to Prof. Eunan O'Hallpin.

²⁰ British High Commission (Wellington) to South West Pacific Dept., FCO, 11 Jun. 1971, in TNA, FCO 33/1593.

²¹ Evans to FCO, 20 Oct. 1971, and Bone to Crawford, 10 Nov. 1971, in TNA, FCO 33/1594.

²² White to Crawford, 8 Feb. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/1.

Official republicans had made public statements designed to promote Soviet objectives. In November, during a visit to North America, Ó Cionnaith engaged in anti-NATO propaganda. He alleged that NATO forces were co-operating to suppress the Irish struggle. At a press conference in Halifax he stated that NATO states were colluding in the training of special forces for actions in Ireland: US advisers were training British soldiers in Canada. Distorting the Irish situation to emphasise the Officials' Marxist message, and to appeal to separatist opinion in Quebec, Ó Cionnaith described the Irish conflict as 'purely economic'. Ireland and Quebec were similar, he argued, in that outside interests controlled the bulk of the economy. Attempting to dilute any sectarian implications arising from Official IRA armed struggle, he made the ridiculous assertion that the religious composition of the (Official) IRA had changed dramatically since Goulding's interview in 1969 with the FBI. Volunteers were now twenty-five per cent Protestant and fifty per cent Catholic, while the rest were 'not particularly anything'.²³ (An IRD paper, based on a Defence Intelligence Staff [DIS] report, noted in May 1972 that there had been contact between the IRA and Québécois separatists.)²⁴ The State Department had previously asked the US embassy in Dublin for information on Ó Cionnaith, especially on his visa.²⁵ The following summer an Official republican representative spoke at a demonstration in Canada at the British Army Training Unit in Suffield, Alberta.²⁶

The Official republican movement issued an end-of-year statement in January 1972. The statement criticised the tactics of the Provisionals, the British embassy in Dublin reported, and reiterated the position on armed struggle as outlined by Garland the previous May:

²³ US consul (Halifax) to State Dept., 24 Nov. 1971, in NARA, RG 59, box 2383, Pol 14 Ire.

²⁴ IRD paper, 'The IRA in Eire', May 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/3; Andrew and Mitrokhin, *Mitrokhin Archive*, pp. 493-4.

²⁵ State Dept. to US embassy (Dublin), 16 Sep. 1971, in NARA, RG 59, box 2383, Pol 14 Ire.

²⁶ British High Commission (Ottawa) to North American Dept., FCO, 13 Jul. 1972, in TNA, FCO 82/153.

armed struggle on its own, or as an end in itself, would fail. It had to be integrated with political struggle.²⁷ The Officials stated:

‘It has never been and is not now our intention to launch a purely military campaign against British forces in the North. We have seen the failures of past campaigns based on military action only and have set our faces against such campaigns which are doomed to failure. We do not see, nor do we want a repetition of the fifties.’²⁸

The same month a JIC assessment mentioned an intelligence report which indicated that the Official IRA planned further violence in the South. Whereas the Mogul explosion six months before had encouraged hopes in Whitehall that Dublin might introduce internment, this report led to speculation in the FCO on the likely impact of IRA activity on Irish stability. Apparently, the Irish government knew that republican violence within the jurisdiction might be a problem it could face. Lynch had told Peck of his concern at the high rate of unemployment and ‘the danger of there being so many idle hands’. Lynch may have been exaggerating the potential danger of left-wing subversion in the South, with consequences for political stability, to encourage a British initiative in the North. But the FCO could see that Dublin needed to see political progress in Northern Ireland: ‘The moral can only be that now, even more than previously, stability South of the Border must depend on political progress in the North.’²⁹ Comments made by O’Sullivan, as reported in Whitehall, indicated that Dublin had concerns about left-wing republicans. O’Sullivan met Heath, in January, and speculated about the relative strengths of the two IRAs. According to O’Sullivan, if the Provisionals in Belfast were ‘on the ropes’ the initiative would pass to

²⁷ Blatherwick to Bone, 5 Jan. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/1.

²⁸ Quoted in M.L.R. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland?: The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement* (Routledge, London, 1995, paperback edn. 1997), p. 88.

²⁹ Bone to White, 14 Jan. 1972, in TNA FCO 87/1.

the Officials. The Official republican movement had been 'infiltrated' by communists, he said; the Officials were 'in many ways' more sinister than the Provisionals.³⁰ Arrangements were made for Lynch to meet Heath in Brussels on 23 January, where both men were to sign the Treaty of Accession to the European Communities. According to briefing notes for the meeting, Lynch would be pressed to give details on how he would deliver on anti-IRA measures, such as introducing internment.³¹

Whereas Whitehall would use actual Official IRA actions in its argument for anti-IRA measures, Lynch used potential subversive activity in his argument for the introduction of a political initiative in Northern Ireland. In Brussels, Lynch argued that security measures alone, even if successful in the short term, would not succeed. In relation to the South, he worried about unemployment and the potential appeal of subversives to the jobless. Republican paramilitaries enjoyed passive support all over the Republic, according to Lynch. This support could become active if frustration grew with the rate of progress in the North, or with his own government. For his part, Heath held a view, not unlike O'Sullivan's, on the relative superiority of the Official IRA. The Provisionals might be close to giving up violence, he thought, but it had been less clear if the Officials were 'anywhere near such a position'.³²

The question arose within the FCO of whether republican violence in the North could be linked to communist subversion. Some Officials were communists and therefore probably in touch with Moscow, an FCO paper noted. But the Marxists who had driven the left-wing republicans' politicisation agenda were believed to have lost influence following post-internment violence. This paper found, as in October 1970, that no indigenous communist

³⁰ Downing St. to FCO, 18 Jan. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/28.

³¹ Briefing note for Heath-Lynch meeting, in TNA, FCO 87/27. Keogh, *Lynch*, pp. 324-6.

³² Note on Heath-Lynch meeting, in TNA, FCO 87/27. Lynch urged Heath to make some concession on internment and to initiate a talks process. Keogh, *Lynch*, 325-6.

threat existed in Ireland. Ironically, it noted that communism within republican circles had had an effectively beneficial impact: communists in the Official republican movement were believed to be opposed to violence. So long as British soldiers were at risk, this was one area where communist influence might be considered a blessing. This paper saw Johnston's resignation as significant, because he had been perceived as the most influential figure behind the Officials' politicisation project.³³ The British embassy in Dublin saw Johnston's resignation, erroneously, as a defeat for those who wanted to adhere to his 'political' line. An ironic marginal note on the embassy's report reads: 'A pity. Communist influence was a force for good – i.e. less killing, more scribbling – in Ireland.'³⁴ Johnston had been depicted in both American and British embassy reports as being the most influential communist in Ireland. The fact that his resignation made little or no difference to the Officials' evolution indicates an underestimation in this FCO paper of the politicisation role of key figures such as Goulding and Garland. British embassy perceptions of the Official republican movement could be inaccurate. (Johnston later joined the CPI, but would be expelled in 1977.)³⁵

The FCO did not believe the Official republican movement received funding from Moscow – it obtained most of its money from robbing banks. While the Soviet press welcomed events in Northern Ireland as an opportunity for anti-British reports, the FCO paper noted, the attitude towards the (Official and Provisional) IRA had been non-committal. Up to this point, a distinction had rarely been made between the two IRAs. And while the recent Czech arms controversy could be interpreted as marginal Soviet bloc involvement, the paper observed, it could not be said that communists – 'either individuals, parties, or governments' – had a significant role in the northern conflict. Crawford, while

³³ White to Crawford, 25 Jan. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/24; Henry Patterson, *The Politics of Illusion: A Political History of the IRA* (Hutchinson Radius, London, 1989, new edn., Serif, London, 1997), pp. 152-154; Johnston, *Century of Endeavour*, pp. 320-1.

³⁴ Blatherwick to Bone, 18 Jan. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/1.

³⁵ Johnston, *Century of Endeavour*, pp. 326-7, p. 333.

agreeing with this conclusion, noted that a close watch should be kept on the situation.³⁶ Speculation about the level of Moscow's interest in Northern Ireland now gave way to assessments of *Pravda's* interest in the crisis.

(iv) Open Soviet support for Official republicans

Towards the end of January the Soviets decided to favour the Official IRA, as opposed to the Provisionals. The British embassy in Moscow pointed out that the Official IRA had received more positive coverage in an article by Ustimenko than most Soviet media had given hitherto. *Pravda*, in a routine report on the North, had, unusually, referred to a three-hour exchange of fire between British forces and members of the 'IRA'. Previously, such reports had instead referred to 'Irish patriots', 'Irishmen struggling for their civil rights', 'workers' or, occasionally, inhabitants of 'the Catholic ghettos'. Soviet press semantics were significant in determining who had found favour with the Kremlin, and whether a closer relationship could be developing between a guerrilla/liberation movement and the local communist party. The embassy did not draw a conclusion on this point: 'Whether this signals a new and closer relationship between the Irish Communist Party and the IRA Officials, it is no doubt too early to say.'

According to the embassy, Ustimenko arranged a UK visa for a *Pravda* journalist, Yuri Nikolaeovich Yasnev, who then made contact with various organisations, including NICRA. *Pravda* published an article, allegedly by Yasnev, claiming that he had visited republican prisoners in Long Kesh and had spoken with an internee. *Pravda* carried a statement from the internees, the embassy reported, calling on Soviet workers to express solidarity with the 'oppressed' Irish people. Enquiries with the Home Office had revealed

³⁶ White to Crawford, 25 Jan. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/24.

that a 'welfare officer' had given Yasnev a visitor's pass into the prison. The embassy recommended a 'sharp word' with the RUC at Long Kesh.³⁷

Unlike the Official republican movement, the CPI had not been considered to be of any significance by the US authorities. It would be unlikely to make much impact with its estimated membership of 200 and negligible public support, according to a US annual review of communist organisations worldwide (the twenty-third). Its influence remained minimal as it continued 'to follow devotedly the leadership of Moscow'.³⁸ However, the US consulate in Belfast later reported that some CPI members directed NICRA in an 'uneasy coalition' with Official republicans.³⁹

(v) Dublin and Whitehall appeals to White House

The Bloody Sunday killings on 30 January 1972, when thirteen civilians were shot dead by the army at a civil rights march in Derry, had a global impact from the Soviet Union to Australia. The march against internment had been preceded by civil rights rallies in Belfast and Magilligan. In Derry up to 20,000 people had followed the banner of (the Official republican-dominated) NICRA.⁴⁰ The killings created diplomatic tensions – Dublin withdrew its ambassador from London – and Lynch sent Hillery on a tour of Western capitals to appeal to international opinion over British policy in the North. In Dublin the British embassy became the target of angry republican demonstrators, including Officials, who destroyed the building by fire on 2 February.⁴¹

³⁷ UK embassy (Moscow) to FCO, 31 Jan. 1972, and 26 Jan. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/24.

³⁸ 'World Strength of the Communist Party Organizations', 1971 edn., in NARA, RG 59, box 1637, CSM 1.

³⁹ 'A View From the Lower Falls', 20 Nov. 1972, US consul (Belfast) to State Dept., in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK.

⁴⁰ For an overview of the Bloody Sunday events, see the entry for Jack Duddy, the first to be killed on that day, in McKittrick, Kelters, Feeney, Thornton and McVea, *Lost Lives*, no. 243, pp. 143-6. See also Alan F. Parkinson, *1972 and the Ulster Troubles: 'A Very Bad Year'* (Four Courts, Dublin, 2010); and Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ulster* (Blackstaff, Belfast, 1992, updated, paperback edn. 2005), pp. 686-8.

⁴¹ John Walsh, *Patrick Hillery: The Official Biography* (New Island, Dublin, 2008), pp. 276-7; Keogh, *Lynch*, pp. 329-33. For detail on the burning of the embassy, see 'Garda Report', in NAI, JUS 2003/26/6.

The burning of the embassy, after three days of siege, illustrated how emotional the mood in the South could become as the northern crisis worsened. This dramatic example of the Troubles spilling over the border must have served as a reminder to Lynch, if he needed one, of the urgency of securing London's agreement for an initiative in the North. The extraordinary scenes outside the British embassy fuelled speculation that Lynch's government could be potentially unstable, as it faced the prospect of a referendum on Ireland's membership of the EEC. Tens of thousands protested. According to the US embassy, British officials in Dublin believed that the Irish government decided to sacrifice the chancery 'to vent the spleen of the mob'.⁴² Lynch's justice minister, Des O'Malley, recalls that the crowd numbered between 50-70,000, and that the Defence Forces believed the demonstrators could not be dispersed except with live bullets. 'We decided that we would not move in to defend the embassy.'⁴³ If this approach seemed weak to some, it proved to be a wise decision. After the Derry killings, a bloody confrontation in defence of a conspicuous symbol of the British state would only have made matters worse. The burning of the embassy defused southern anger about British security measures in the North, and can be seen as a turning point in relation to perceived threats to the stability of Lynch's government.

The US embassy thought renewed tensions between Dublin and Whitehall would be used by the Soviets for propaganda purposes. More importantly, Moscow would seek to advance the objective of full diplomatic representation – the Americans had been advised by the Irish on the issue of the establishment of relations with the USSR. Soviet daily *Izvestia* compared Bloody Sunday to the Sharpeville and My Lai massacres, in South Africa and Vietnam respectively. Ustimenko wrote that the Derry killings showed that

⁴² US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 1 Feb. and 2 Feb. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK.

⁴³ Des O'Malley, quoted in *Seven Ages*, DVD, Vol. Two, Prog. 6, dir. Seán Ó Mórdha (Araby/RTÉ, in assoc. with The O'Reilly Foundation, 2002).

Britain continued its 'mailed fist' policy in the North.⁴⁴ With a 'special relationship' the UK had the ear of the US during a moment of geo-political tension that might impinge on Western European security. The British ambassador in Washington, Lord Cromer, on 2 February briefed the US secretary of state, William Rogers, before Hillery's visit the next day. Cromer highlighted Dublin's unwillingness or inability to do 'anything effective' to help restore order in Northern Ireland.⁴⁵

During his meeting Hillery told Rogers that talking to the British would be pointless if they insisted on a military solution in the North; each meeting between Heath and Lynch had been shortly followed by increased repressive measures. Hillery asked if the Nixon administration would ask the British government, behind the scenes, to abandon internment and withdraw troops from nationalist areas. If the present policy continued, Hillery told Rogers, the Irish would summon the 'necessary force' to make the British listen. Hillery alluded here to the possibility of enlisting Soviet bloc support for his government. He had hinted at such a scenario two days before when he told reporters that his orders were 'to seek help wherever I can get it'. Rogers replied by reiterating the US position of non-intervention in Northern Ireland: the White House would do its best to encourage 'two good friends' – Ireland and Britain – to solve the problem. According to Rogers, Hillery maintained that if the British remained focused on security measures alone the Irish would 'beg, borrow, or somehow build up military force' – another allusion, perhaps, to the possibility of Dublin appealing to the Soviet Union for help.⁴⁶

The FCO could be pleased with the reaction of Western governments to Hillery's appeals. He had been rebuffed by the Americans and the Canadians, it observed, and had received

⁴⁴ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 1 Feb. and 2 Feb. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK.

⁴⁵ State Dept. to US embassy (London), 4 Feb. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK.

⁴⁶ State Dept. to US embassy (Dublin), 3 Feb. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK; *Irish Times*, 2 Feb. 1972, p. 6. On Hillery's visit to North America, and the prospect of Dublin welcoming Soviet assistance, see Walsh, *Hillery*, pp. 277-83. John Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations in the Cold War and After* (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 199-201.

non-committal, if warmer, responses in EEC capitals. The level of sympathy Hillery found, or the lack of it, may have been partly due to energetic British warnings in advance of his encounters.⁴⁷ Of course, Britain had approached fellow NATO-members here. Compared with the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, the FCO had been vastly superior in terms of experience and staff strength: Hillery could be regarded as a lightweight on the international stage.⁴⁸

After Bloody Sunday, the British embassy in Washington recommended a Whitehall appeal to Nixon in relation to Dublin's security policy. This would be an attempt to secure White House assistance to put Lynch under pressure to introduce tougher measures against the IRA. After the Derry events public opinion in the US had been less sympathetic to the British position on Northern Ireland. The day after the burning of the Dublin embassy Cromer claimed that the credibility of British policies had eroded in the US, even in the White House. Since it remained imperative that Dublin should crack down on the IRA, because a military and political solution would have to go together in the North, he suggested that he should seek a meeting with Nixon. The subversive threat to political stability in the Republic should be highlighted with the White House.⁴⁹ An FCO draft argued that the emotional atmosphere in the South, as illustrated by the destruction of the British embassy, helped republican subversives. However threatening the political atmosphere had become for Lynch, it would be exaggerated in this FCO draft for the purposes of an appeal to the White House. According to this argument, the IRA sought 'an even greater say in affairs' in the Irish state and could 'conceivably take over the whole of the Republic' – Nixon would agree that the thought of one of the Western democracies 'descending into anarchy' would be too appalling to contemplate. But if Lynch could be

⁴⁷ White to Crawford/Daunt, 9 Feb. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/101; Walsh, *Hillery*, pp. 283-7.

⁴⁸ On the evolution of the Department of External Affairs (Foreign Affairs), see *Special Relationships: Britain, Ireland and the Northern Ireland Problem* (Blackstaff, Belfast, 2000), pp. 76-8.

⁴⁹ UK embassy (Washington) to FCO, 3 Feb. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/101.

encouraged by Nixon to think that a political initiative for Northern Ireland was imminent, the draft suggested, Lynch might move against the IRA 'before it is too late'.⁵⁰ A later draft added that left-wing republican elements were exploiting the situation, highlighting the role of the Official IRA (although, within the FCO, Crawford observed that the Officials were 'on the down grade').⁵¹

Another exaggerated picture would again be created by Whitehall for Washington. Following the Derry killings NICRA announced that other demonstrations would go ahead. In defiance of the ban on marches in the North, a march went ahead in Newry one week after Bloody Sunday and passed off peacefully. A march in Enniskillen followed a week later.⁵² Home Office officials now briefed the US embassy in London on the Irish situation. They argued that NICRA was closely linked with the IRA, and emphasised what they saw as Lynch's political weakness. At a briefing in London, after the Enniskillen march, the Home Office stated that peaceful marches did not demonstrate that the NICRA leadership was 'regaining control' over the republican paramilitaries – it would be impossible to distinguish between the two. The US embassy was told that, without prejudging the results of Lord Widgery's inquiry into the Derry killings, 'Home Office information indicated that the IRA had been present in strength in Londonderry on the day 13 were killed'. This jesuitical choice of words avoided the issue of whether demonstrators had been armed or not. (In January the general officer commanding in Northern Ireland, General Sir Harry Tuzo, described NICRA as the 'active ally' of 'the IRA' and, the same month, the chief of the general staff, General Sir Michael Carver, had described the 'IRA propaganda machine' as the main enemy.)⁵³ In relation to the possibility of a civil war in

⁵⁰ 'Draft for PM', n.d. c. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/101.

⁵¹ FCO note, n.d. c. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/101.

⁵² US embassy (London) to State Dept., 3 Feb. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK; 'Republic of Ireland Calendar, 1972', in TNA, FCO 87/172. As many as 100,000 marched in Newry, according to one MP who participated. Currie, *All Hell Will Break Loose*, pp. 189-90.

⁵³ 'Memorandum of Conversation', 14 Feb. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK. On the British army's attitude to NICRA, and other civil rights lobbyists, see Thomas Hennessey, *The Evolution of the Troubles 1970-72* (Irish

the North, the US embassy heard that a civil war involving the South would be a greater danger. Recent events – presumably the burning of the British embassy in Dublin – had shown that republican subversives had ‘impressive authority’ in the Republic. According to this argument, Lynch’s position remained ‘far from secure’. If Lynch fell he would probably be succeeded by Hillery, the Home Office contended, but ultimately someone like (the hardline nationalist) Blaney would take over.⁵⁴

The US embassy in Dublin analysed the impact of Bloody Sunday on stability in the Republic, highlighting what it perceived as the fragility of the Irish government. The embassy reported that Lynch was moving barely fast enough to keep up with the pressures he faced. Some Irish politicians believed, the embassy reported, that the republican demonstrators in Merrion Square would have burned down Leinster House if there had been any attempt to forcibly move them away from the British embassy. According to the embassy Faulkner had said that the IRA could not win in the North, but the same could not be said about the South. The embassy thought that Lynch’s adviser Eamonn Gallagher described his decision-making with a neatness it lacked: ‘Lynch’s method is always to play by ear, avoiding hard decisions.’⁵⁵ However, not for the first time, Lynch had shown that he could be politically astute. The embassy demonstrations had shown that he, at least, knew how not to make a bad situation worse. Faulkner, on the other hand, had spectacularly worsened Northern Ireland’s problems by introducing internment.

Developments within NICRA now led to a speculative, and colourful, despatch from the US embassy in Dublin on the activities of the Official republican movement. Two Dublin sources, one politician and one journalist, had reported that communists and Official

Academic Press, Dublin, 2007), pp. 223-4. Carver quoted in Henry Patterson, *Ireland Since 1939: The Persistence of Conflict* (Penguin Ireland, Dublin, 2006), p. 223.

⁵⁴ ‘Memorandum of Conversation’, 14 Feb. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK.

⁵⁵ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 22 Feb. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK.

republicans had taken over the organisation after its recent elections. The embassy stated that out of fourteen officers, four were members of the CPI and most senior personnel were Officials. The Official republicans' takeover of the civil rights organisation might have long-term implications if violence continued, according to this report. With the Officials in control of an organisation such as NICRA, there was a greater possibility that they would be able to 'pick up [the] pieces' in an Ireland shattered by prolonged violence.⁵⁶ The burning of the embassy in Dublin marked the most dramatic outbreak of public anger in the South against British policies in the North, and FCO suggestions to Nixon that the Irish state might be overwhelmed by subversives proved to be greatly exaggerated.

(vi) Official IRA ceasefire declared

The Official IRA bombing of the officers' mess at the headquarters of the Parachute Regiment in Aldershot, on 22 February 1972, killed seven people – six civilians and a chaplain. The Officials claimed responsibility for the attack as a reprisal for Bloody Sunday, and initially claimed that 12 officers had been killed. A wave of condemnation followed.⁵⁷ Mac Giolla, a member of the Official IRA army council at the time, said of the atrocity: 'The timing was something like 10 or 15 minutes out and the bomb went off too soon. It got all the people who were serving up the grub. In another 10 minutes the officers would have been in there sitting down.'⁵⁸ The Aldershot bombing highlighted the political dangers of Official IRA competition with the Provisionals. An IRA requirement to retain what it saw as military credibility with a republican constituency would be counter-productive for a left-wing organisation attempting to agitate on civil rights in the North and economic issues in the South.

⁵⁶ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 24 Feb. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK.

⁵⁷ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 23 and 24 Feb. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655.

⁵⁸ Interview with Tomás Mac Giolla, *Hot Press*, Vol. 33, Issue 14, 29 Jul. 2009, pp. 54-7, 113.

The British embassy in Dublin believed that the tough line on the IRA adopted by Lynch and O'Malley, at the Fianna Fáil árd fheis had been taken on the assumption that the British government would shortly announce a political initiative. They hoped, the embassy thought, that this would be 'sufficiently attractive to moderate Catholic opinion' to undermine the IRA. There had been 'an almost audible' gasp of relief in Dublin, the embassy reported, when Heath 'made it clear that he was not being deflected by Aldershot from his planned course'. Later in February the Official IRA made an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate the Stormont Home Affairs minister of state, John Taylor. This produced the same reaction in Dublin as Aldershot, the embassy reported. Again there were fears, according to the embassy, that British policy proposals might be delayed.⁵⁹

On 21 May, the killing by the Officials of a British soldier home on leave, Ranger William Best, provoked an angry reaction in his native Derry. The Official republican movement responded to these various public relations reversals, after acrimonious debate, by declaring a ceasefire on 29 May. However, the organisation would still undertake 'defensive' and 'retaliatory' actions, and Official IRA attacks against the security forces continued in the North up to the end of 1974. But this formula allowed the Dublin-based leadership to gradually apply a more stringent interpretation of the terms of the ceasefire and rein in northern units. MLR Smith writes:

'Through shrewd bureaucratic manipulation, Goulding was able to apply a steadily more stringent interpretation of the terms of the ceasefire. In effect, by the end of 1973, OIRA's military campaign had been defused by stealth,

⁵⁹ UK embassy (Dublin) to FCO, 26 Feb. 1972, in TNA FCO 87/1.

finally fulfilling the essential desideratum of the 1960s' strategic reappraisal.'⁶⁰

Garland had wanted to wind down the IRA, believing that it should have been active 'in all areas' – it could have other functions other than military. In relation to the leadership's direction of armed struggle, he recalls that there had been a local 'do it yourself' approach in the North, 'in Derry in particular'.⁶¹

The gradual implementation of the Official IRA ceasefire marked the end of its integrated revolutionary strategy, as reiterated at the beginning of 1972. Political struggle would take precedence over armed struggle. It is important to note that the cessation of the Officials' military campaign over time was the direct result of the leadership's ambition to pursue a political strategy. The Official IRA's campaign in the North had not been directed by the Soviet Union.⁶² The armed struggle created martyrs – O'Leary and McCann among them – but it also produced the Aldershot atrocity. The thousands who might emerge in a dramatic moment arising from the northern crisis, such as the mobilisation during the McCann funeral, would not provide consistent support for campaigns against internment or EEC membership. As violence escalated after the introduction of internment, and particularly after Bloody Sunday, the Officials' ceasefire can be seen as a crucial step towards orientating the movement away from a 'war' against British 'imperialism'. This initiative would allow the Official republican movement to highlight economic issues in the South.

Meanwhile, the FCO tracked the movements of Official republicans abroad. It monitored McGurran's visit to Denmark, Sweden and Norway in March 1972, and attempts were

⁶⁰ Smith, *Fighting for Ireland?*, pp. 88-90; Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, pp. 153-6. Brian Hanley and Scott Millar, *The Lost Revolution: The Story of the Official IRA and the Workers' Party* (Penguin, Dublin, 2009), pp. 195-8.

⁶¹ Interview with Seán Garland.

⁶² On Soviet interest in international terrorism, see Eunan O'Hallpin, *Defending Ireland: The Irish State and its Enemies Since 1922* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, paperback edn. 2000), pp. 319-22.

made to counter republican propaganda and to prevent such visits taking place at all. The most senior Official IRA figure in the North, McGurran's tour took place shortly after the Aldershot atrocity, and it was the Officials' violence rather than any communist links which would be highlighted by the FCO. Missions were supplied with a briefing. This made the point that the Official IRA was vulnerable to the charge of adopting 'brutal Provisional' tactics: 'McGurran should be pressed to distinguish if he can between recent admitted Official murders of civilians, including jobbing gardeners, and known Provisional atrocities.'⁶³ The British embassy in Copenhagen reported that McGurran had given a press conference, and suggested that it could speak to the Danish government with a view to getting the Danes to prevent further such visits. In Stockholm, the secretary-general of the ministry of foreign affairs was reminded that Heath had raised the 'unhelpful attitude' of the Swedish media on the Irish question with the foreign minister. The Swedish prime minister and other ministers considered a British request to prevent this 'wanted man' entering (neutral) Sweden, and after taking advice from the security authorities they decided not to intervene. The FCO suffered a similar rebuff in Oslo.⁶⁴

A snapshot of Irish left-wing organisations in Britain at this time reveals the presence of various Marxist influences over Official republicans, other than orthodox communism. Metropolitan Police Special Branch supplied this survey at the trial of three men arising from the Aldershot explosion, for which Noel Jenkinson would later be sentenced to life imprisonment. Clann na hÉireann represented the Official republican movement in Britain, with its leadership largely based in Birmingham. Some of Clann na hÉireann's most prominent members were believed to be connected with International Socialism, one of the two main British Trotskyist factions. (There were close links between Trotskyist groups in Ireland and Britain: Tariq Ali visited Dublin to deliver the oration at the funeral of Peter

⁶³ Douglas-Home to UK embassy (Stockholm), 10 Mar. 1972.

⁶⁴ UK embassy (Copenhagen) to FCO, 10 Mar. 1972; UK embassy (Stockholm) to FCO, 10. Mar. 1972 and 13 Mar. 1972; UK embassy (Oslo) to FCO, 10 Mar. 1972.

Graham, who had been shot dead in unexplained circumstances in 1971.) According to this information, communists had an influence over Clann in London, its secondary base. The Connolly Association had similar objectives to Clann na hÉireann, the Metropolitan Police survey noted. 'It has a comparatively small but consistent membership and is closely aligned with the Communist Party of Great Britain, almost to the extent of being a "front" organisation.' Saor Éire had been 'a generic form' for a loose association of republican splinter groups which specialised in armed robberies, to raise funds for the IRA, but this group had been 'practically annihilated' by police action in Ireland and England.⁶⁵

In a separate series of observations, Metropolitan Police Special Branch found that republican groups in Britain were fragmented and had little influence over the Irish population there. As in the US, Official republicans had less appeal than the traditionalist Provisionals. New Scotland Yard reported that these organisations suffered from 'the general reluctance of Irish residents in Great Britain to involve themselves publicly in Irish politics: while an unusual number of Irish were stirred by the events of 30 January 1972 to take part in demonstrations, they seem now to have relapsed into their normal apathy.'⁶⁶

Links between Irish left-wing republicans and communists were also studied in Australia, where Official republican supporters were linked with the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) monitored the activities of Irish groups in Australia, who had become more active as violence escalated in the North; following the Bloody Sunday killings, up to 1,600 marched in protest in Sydney. The Seán South & Fergal O'Hanlon Society supported the Official republican movement and, since it tapped the telephones of the CPA, the ASIO closely observed contacts

⁶⁵ Statement of Det. Chief Insp. Desmond Winslow, 4 Apr. 1972, in TNA, J 297/57; *Irish Times*, 15 Nov. 1972, p. 1; on the Graham killing, see Charlie Bird (with Kevin Rafter), *This is Charlie Bird* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 2006, paperback edn. 2007), pp. 15-17.

⁶⁶ Metropolitan Police Special Branch reports, Mar. 1971-Mar. 1972, in TNA, HO 325/76.

between local Official republican supporters and communists. The CPA executive in Queensland, acting on a request from the South & O'Hanlon Society, recommended *The United Irishman* to branch secretaries.⁶⁷ In Victoria, the ASIO noted, the Connolly Association had direct links with Australian communists. The ASIO also had intelligence relating to the CPI. Despite a membership of 'only' 300, it reported, the CPI had a disproportionate influence in Ireland, thanks to its links with the Official IRA.⁶⁸ One prominent Official republican supporter addressed a communist conference in Sydney the following year.⁶⁹

May 1972 would also be a landmark for the Official republican movement because of the failure of the anti-EEC membership campaign in the referendum in the South. Following Ireland's signing of the treaty of accession to the EEC in January, the Common Market Defence Campaign had marched to the GPO in Dublin, as part of a series of anti-EEC rallies. The parade had a strong nationalistic flavour, according to *The Irish Times*. A declaration of allegiance to the concept of Irish independence, outlined in the 1916 Proclamation, had been read in Irish and English. This described acceptance of the Treaty of Rome as 'incompatible with the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies'.⁷⁰ The Labour Party's campaign against membership had been half-hearted; the leadership opposed co-operation with republicans and the Common Market Defence Campaign.⁷¹ In April, two weeks before the referendum on 10 May, a CIA Central Intelligence Bulletin reported that the EEC campaign raised a number of emotional issues, including fears over sovereignty, neutrality and unemployment. Most Labour frontbenchers supported membership, it noted, but the

⁶⁷ ASIO brief, 7 Feb. 1972, and CPA executive, Queensland, 10 Dec. 1971, in NAA, A6122, 2244.

⁶⁸ ASIO to Victoria Police, 22 Feb. 1972, in NAA, A6122, 2244.

⁶⁹ ASIO memo, 23 May 1973, in NAA, A6122, 2244.

⁷⁰ *Irish Times*, 24 Jan. 1972, pp. 1, 7.

⁷¹ Niamh Puirseil, *The Irish Labour Party: 1922-73* (University College Dublin Press, Dublin, 2007), pp. 300-301.

party was aligned with the No campaign because of its relationship with the trade unions.⁷² A CIA Weekly Summary, dated 5 May, reported that the Yes campaign was likely to win the referendum. It noted that Lynch had addressed republican complaints that northern voters could not participate in the poll: he had stated that the border would be less significant once Ireland joined the EEC. Other referenda on EEC membership were scheduled for 24 September in Norway and 2 October in Denmark.⁷³

The overwhelming Yes vote for EEC membership illustrated just how little political influence Official republicans had. Opposing membership along with Provisional Sinn Féin and leftist groups, Official Sinn Féin's warnings of calamity were not heeded by the electorate, with eighty-three per cent voting in favour of joining.⁷⁴ After years of left-wing republican rhetoric depicting Fianna Fáil as traitors, willing to sell the nation to a 'new empire' of monopoly capitalism,⁷⁵ clearly the Officials' socialist-republican message was falling on deaf ears. As security services in Britain and Australia monitored links between Irish left-wing republicans and communist parties, the FCO warned Dublin of the possibility of co-operation between the KGB and the Official IRA.

(vii) Fears of Soviet threat emanating from Dublin embassy

In January 1972 the US embassy in Dublin alerted the State Department to the implications of a Russian embassy opening in Ireland. It had been tipped off by the FCO that negotiations were under way on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Irish and the Soviets. The question for the US government would be how to counteract a significant increase in 'Soviet acceptance and influence' in Ireland. It would be difficult to see what a Russian mission in Dublin would do, the embassy stated, except to engage in

⁷² CIA, Directorate of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Bulletin, 27 Apr. 1972, p. 8, in CIA-RDP79T00975A021700110001-8, CIA Records Search Tool (CREST), NARA.

⁷³ CIA, Directorate of Intelligence, Weekly Summary, 5 May 1972, pp. 15-16, in CIA-RDP79-00927A009500080001-1, CIA Records Search Tool (CREST), NARA.

⁷⁴ Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, pp. 154-5; Bell, *Secret Army*, p. 388.

⁷⁵ Sinn Féin (Official), *Why Sinn Féin Says No*, p.1.

the activities that had recently led to alleged Soviet agents being expelled from Britain. In the short term, the Soviets could be expected to exploit the northern crisis, using the communist-influenced Officials as their 'natural vehicle'. Moore suggested that 'thought should be given as to our intelligence gathering here, especially in view of the continuing political instability spilling over from the North and the role the IRA is playing in the present conflict.' As the Irish state reorientated itself towards Europe by joining the EEC, he again warned that the ties between Ireland and the US were weakening: the 'special relationship between our two countries' which the US had 'always taken for granted' was rapidly diminishing.⁷⁶

Two days later, on 15 January 1972, a CIA Central Intelligence Bulletin commented on the talks between Ireland and Russia. The CIA material originated in Dublin and pointed out that the Republic and the Soviet Union would probably establish formal diplomatic ties within a few months. While broadly similar in the details, this note was markedly less speculative than Moore's communication. It reported what a senior Irish official had recently said to the US embassy, and did not mention the FCO. The Irish planned a two- or three-man mission in Moscow, according to the CIA, and wanted a similarly-sized equivalent in Dublin, but fears had been expressed by the Irish in relation to a large Soviet presence. The CIA note made the same point that Moore had made about the Official republican movement: it would be the Soviets' obvious proxy to interfere in the North. A Soviet embassy in Dublin, it stated, would overtly aim to improve the image of the USSR. The Irish official had said that the government wanted to balance probable EEC membership with the development of at least limited ties with Warsaw Pact states.⁷⁷ The following month, Foreign Affairs notified the US embassy in Dublin of the arrival in Ireland, separately, of delegations from Poland and the Soviet Union for trade talks. The

⁷⁶ Moore to State Dept., 13 Jan. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box, 2384, Pol Ire-USSR.

⁷⁷ CIA, Directorate of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Bulletin, 15 Jan. 1972, p. 4, in CIA-RDP85T00875R000800020012-5, CIA Records Search Tool (CREST), NARA.

embassy concluded that Dublin intended to demonstrate that EEC membership would not mean abandonment of Ireland's independent foreign policy.⁷⁸

Whitehall again corresponded with the British embassy in Dublin on the issue of a communist threat emanating from the Republic. Concerns for the maintenance of Britain's improved domestic security, arising from an increased Soviet presence in Dublin, were highlighted in February. Douglas-Home outlined his concerns to the embassy in Dublin about the intentions of a Russian trade delegation. (The benefits of trade with Eastern Europe would later be outlined in the September *United Irishman*.) The FCO believed the delegation would be at a high level and that talks on the establishment of diplomatic relations would be conducted in conjunction with trade discussions. The opening of a Soviet embassy in Dublin would be an unwelcome development, as the Russians might hope to make up numbers lost after the expulsion of the alleged intelligence agents from London the previous September. Such operators in Dublin, according to Douglas-Home, could take advantage of the common travel area between the UK and the Republic, and erode Britain's improved security. The Soviets might want to further exploit the situation in Northern Ireland, he suggested, as a more positive attitude to republican paramilitaries had been discernible after the Derry killings. The embassy should contact Foreign Affairs, Douglas-Home wrote. Since the Russians prioritised intelligence needs abroad, the embassy should point out that the British security services were ready to work closely with their Irish counterparts on any problem to which an increased Soviet presence might give rise. The common travel area constituted a matter of considerable concern for the FCO, and Dublin had 'some responsibility' in relation to the establishment of a Soviet mission. Therefore, according to this reasoning, it would be important for the Irish to take a strong stand on numbers, travel restrictions and immunities. As the common travel area would, technically, give Russian officials right of entry to the UK without visas, the British would

⁷⁸ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 16 Feb. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK.

want to control entry. This had been done in the case of Ustimenko. Dublin might also note the working of the British travel notification scheme, which monitored the movements of UK-based Soviet officials.⁷⁹

The same day, Peck took issue with Douglas-Home's points. He wrote that security co-operation against the Soviets could not be expected as of right from the Irish government. In the circumstances, after Bloody Sunday, Dublin would be unwilling and unable to take action merely to please Whitehall. However, Peck argued, a persuasive case could be based upon Irish self-interest, which coincided with Whitehall's. He claimed that the Irish government had been increasingly worried by the long-term threat posed by the Official IRA, because of communist penetration. Therefore, agreeing to the opening of a Soviet embassy in Dublin would be asking for trouble. According to this argument, the KGB and the Official IRA would pose a joint threat to Irish security. If the decision to allow the opening of a Russian mission had been taken, it would be very controversial. When widely known, Peck thought, it would be unwelcome 'in many influential circles' (a reference, perhaps, to clerical hostility). And given the public reaction against the Officials after the Aldershot bombing, four days before, public opposition would be even greater. Peck suggested that Heath should send a secret and personal message to Lynch. This message could be illustrated with material outlining the general threat, and evidence of Soviet interest in the Official IRA. It would also be worth emphasising the commitment involved in keeping tabs on Russian embassy staff, 'which the Irish would be incapable of doing'.⁸⁰

The ambassador's argument that Whitehall should couch its appeal in terms that matched Irish interests represented sound advice. But it is not clear how Peck could assert that Lynch was increasingly worried by a long-term threat from the Official IRA. Lynch's

⁷⁹ Douglas-Home to UK embassy (Dublin), 26 Feb. 1972, in TNA, PREM 15/1046. The potential of trade links between Ireland and the communist bloc would be highlighted by the Officials. *United Irishman*, Sep. 1972, p. 7.

⁸⁰ Peck to FCO, 26 Feb. 1972, in TNA, PREM 15/1046.

remarks to Heath in Brussels a month before, on the potential appeal of subversives to the unemployed in the South, could have been a ploy to spur on a British initiative in the North. Nor is it clear how Peck could assert that a decision to allow a Russian embassy in Dublin would be ‘very controversial’ – even more so after the Aldershot atrocity, which nobody had linked to the Soviets. Whitehall, however, accepted Peck’s advice.

On 29 February the FCO wrote to 10 Downing Street. Heath favoured Peck’s recommendation that a ‘secret and personal’ message should be sent by him to Lynch. After speaking to Foreign Affairs that morning, Peck reported that he had gained the impression a decision had not been finally made to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviets. This impression, according to the FCO, strengthened the case for a message to Lynch, and a draft was attached. The FCO informed Downing Street that it would follow up Peck’s recommendation that Dublin should be provided with material illustrating the threat of subversion from Russian missions. But the ‘best evidence of Soviet intentions in Ireland’ came from the recent KGB defector, Oleg Lyalin, which it included in the draft.⁸¹

Following the expulsion of the alleged Soviet agents in September 1971, the draft explained, it could be admitted that the situation contained an element of ‘closing the stable door’. However, Britain had had diplomatic relations with the USSR for about fifty years. Soviet intelligence had systematically exploited the desire to promote friendly relations, the draft stated, and successive governments had grown more concerned at the level of activities directed against Britain’s security. The draft pointed out that London had been too indulgent over the years about the accreditation of Russian diplomats and their immunities and travel restrictions, and it would have been wiser to have taken a firm stand from the start. The British had documentary proof that Soviet officials were preparing plans for sabotage and subversion, to be implemented in moments of crisis. The draft

⁸¹ FCO to Downing St., 29 Feb. 1972, in TNA, PREM 15/1046.

reminded Lynch of the recent positive coverage of the Official IRA in the Soviet magazine *New Times*. The magazine had informed its readers that the Officials wanted to overthrow 'reactionary governments' north and south. A defector had revealed that the KGB took a close interest in the Irish situation, and the Soviets had discussed the Irish communist (O'Riordan) request for arms for the Official IRA. Lyalin had said that an attempt to set up a mission would be an indication of serious interest in exploiting difficulties in Ireland. At least half the embassy staff, the draft warned, would be KGB officers, and the Soviet purpose would be to exacerbate those problems 'whenever and wherever they can'. A lot had been learned in Britain about Russian techniques over the years, the draft stated, and if any assistance could be offered in 'the technical fields' associated with the control of KGB activities, 'you need only mention the matter to Sir John Peck, and we will do what we can to help'.⁸²

Heath's argument did not convince Lynch. In relation to diplomatic relations with Soviet bloc states, Dublin would adopt a position on what it thought was to be expected of a new EEC member-state. This policy would not be in tune with British security interests, as outlined in Heath's draft to Lynch.⁸³ Peck had misread the mood of the Irish government in relation to the Soviet Union. According to FitzGerald, then a prominent Fine Gael TD, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael had a bi-partisan view at this time that Ireland should have full diplomatic relations with the Soviets.⁸⁴

The Irish did have concerns in relation to the implications of a large Soviet mission, according to the British embassy in Warsaw. On 9 March there were exchanges in the House of Lords on the question of Polish relations with the Republic. The British embassy

⁸² Draft letter from Heath to Lynch, 29 Feb. 1972, in TNA, PREM 15/1046.

⁸³ Garret FitzGerald, *All in a Life: An Autobiography* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1991), pp. 124-5.

⁸⁴ Comment offered by Dr Garret FitzGerald at Research Seminar in Contemporary Irish History, Trinity College, Dublin, 3 Mar. 2010.

in Warsaw sought an assurance from the Poles on arms sales. Could arms be sold that might be used by the IRA? A Polish official in the foreign ministry said that he 'could not imagine' this. He then gave an account of his recent visit to Dublin, the embassy reported. The Poles had been anxious to have relations with the Irish, according to the embassy, but Dublin had been holding out because of the objections of the Catholic church. These difficulties had now been overcome, the Polish official said. He understood Dublin wanted to be able to say to Moscow that the Poles would agree to the establishment of diplomatic relations without having a big mission. The Irish hoped that if this proposal to the Poles were successful, they would then be able to avoid having a large Soviet presence. According to the Warsaw embassy's interpretation of these exchanges, the Irish believed this 'could lead to trouble'.⁸⁵

Irish attitudes to the Soviet Union had been the subject of speculation in a State Department intelligence note, dated 22 March. Since the Irish-Soviet talks concluded earlier in the month, the US embassy in Dublin stated, diplomatic recognition of the USSR was considered a virtual certainty in media circles. Strained Anglo-Irish relations over the North, the embassy argued, influenced Ireland's policy towards the Soviet Union. Lynch had previously hinted that he might use the threat of Moscow recognition as a lever to extract a northern initiative from Whitehall. British concerns over a Soviet embassy in Dublin presented him with an opportunity which he would probably use, the embassy speculated. When the Irish request for assistance had been rebuffed by the White House, after Bloody Sunday, Lynch had qualified a denial that he might seek help from the communist bloc by saying: '... if we found that the situation was such that neutral and friendly countries did not support us, we would have to consider the situation in that light ...' For their part, the Soviets could hope to extend their influence and presence in Western Europe. The embassy noted too that the Republic's free travel area with the UK would be

⁸⁵ UK embassy (Warsaw) to FCO, 14 Mar. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/24.

useful for espionage purposes, after the expulsion of the alleged Soviet agents from London.⁸⁶ The speculation in the intelligence note about an Irish-Soviet flirtation, in order to put London under pressure, proved to be ill-founded. The same day, 22 March, Faulkner arrived in London to be confronted with changes in British policy for the North: the phasing out of internment, a border pebiscite, and direct control of security from London. Two days later, on 24 March, Heath announced the suspension of Stormont for one year after Faulkner refused to cede control over security.⁸⁷ The foreign policy priorities of Ireland, a neutral state, would be pursued despite the fears of a NATO power in relation to possible Dublin-based Soviet espionage activities.

(viii) Nixon assures Heath of non-intervention in North

In 1972 American legislators, in New Jersey and Rhode Island for example, recommended various measures to assist the northern minority, including Irish unification.⁸⁸ For the White House, however, the 'special relationship' between the two main NATO powers was more important than Irish-American concerns about events in Ireland. Following the introduction of direct rule from London on 24 March, Nixon wrote to Heath to assure him of his support. Nixon 'particularly appreciated' advance notice of the measure and stressed that his administration supported the British government. In relation to Northern Ireland, he would not do anything which might cause any difficulties for London. But he was not speaking on behalf of all American legislators: 'In this regard, and as you well know, I speak for the Executive Branch of the United States Government, but not for certain elements of the Congress which are beyond my control.' Nixon had told the Irish ambassador to the US on St Patrick's Day that there would be no place 'for carping or uninvited United States intervention in any form'.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ State Dept. intelligence note, 22 Mar. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2384, Pol Ire-USSR.

⁸⁷ Keogh, *Lynch*, pp. 334-5.

⁸⁸ Resolution of Senate of New Jersey, and resolution of General Assembly of Rhode Island, Feb. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK.

⁸⁹ Nixon to Heath, 29 Mar. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2657, Pol UK-US.

The US policy of non-intervention in Irish affairs, as outlined by Rogers to Hillery, had been reiterated. The State Department prepared a memorandum on the situation in Ireland for Nixon's national security adviser, Kissinger, before the presentation of shamrock to the president on St Patrick's Day. This observed that the continuing crisis in the North had caused much difficulty for the 'moderate' Lynch government, which was under pressure to confront London and support the northern minority more openly. The memorandum explained that the US had followed a policy of non-intervention in Northern Ireland, as had other Western states. It also pointed out that Dublin had asked the White House, publicly and privately, to attempt to persuade Britain to change its security policy in the North. These requests for American intercession had been rejected:

'We have told the Irish we will not do this because it would be taking sides in the dispute and would do no good. All of the European countries approached by Ireland, and Canada, have taken a position similar to ours.'⁹⁰

Hillery's experiences with NATO governments in the aftermath of Bloody Sunday illustrated that a small state such as Ireland had no bargaining power when seeking assistance from the allies of a more powerful neighbour. However, Iceland at this time demonstrated that a very small NATO-member state could count on US sympathy during a dispute with Britain. In the spring of 1972 Iceland asserted itself against the UK over Icelandic fishing limits, while receiving US sympathy because of its strategic location in the North Atlantic. Iceland had a defence agreement with the US and hosted American troops at the Keflavik base. The renewal of the defence agreement arose as an issue in 1972 when the extension of Iceland's fishing limits became a cause of dispute with Britain. For its embassy in Reykjavik, Royal Navy activity in defence of British trawlers raised the

⁹⁰ Memo for Kissinger, 14 Mar. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2384, Pol 17 Ire-US.

question of whether Iceland would remain a member of NATO. Rogers believed the Icelandic foreign minister supported retention of the Keflavik base and could prevail over communist ministers in the coalition government. After meeting Icelandic ministers, Rogers said he hoped that the UK could be 'as gentle as possible' over the fishing limits issue.⁹¹ Meanwhile, the British government had the full support of the White House for its endeavours in Northern Ireland.

(ix) Official IRA chief of staff profiled in 'Pravda'

Following the Aldershot bombing on 22 February, leading Officials, including Goulding and Garland, were arrested by the Garda under the Offences Against the State Act. The US embassy in Dublin reported – as did the British embassy – that the Irish were afraid the atrocity might delay initiatives in the North. The US embassy noted that the public's reaction to Aldershot would make it easier for Lynch to act against the IRA, 'without creating civil disturbances'. Mac Giolla stated that he refused to go into hiding, making the most of the distinction between the illegal Official IRA and the legally-registered Official Sinn Féin. There were few legal devices to deal with those arrested, the US embassy noted. 'Evidence is genuinely difficult to obtain, and juries are reluctant to convict, whether because of sympathy or fear,' it observed. The establishment of military or other special courts would probably face legal challenges, the embassy pointed out, and the government would have to prove that judges and juries were so intimidated as to make ordinary procedures unworkable. Internment would be an option open to Lynch, according to the embassy, but such a move would involve serious risks in the Dáil and with public opinion, 'even after Aldershot'.⁹²

⁹¹ UK embassy (Reykjavik) to FCO, 5 May 1972, 15 May 1972 and 16 May 1972, in TNA, FCO 33/1702.

⁹² US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 23 and 25 Feb. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK; 'Republic of Ireland Calendar, 1972' in TNA, FCO 87/172.

The difficulties of securing convictions against subversives in the absence of special legislation were illustrated in two trials relating to the Official IRA. On 10 March a Dublin court dismissed charges against the four men accused of being members of the Official IRA, including Goulding. Three days later he faced charges of inciting persons to unlawful activities, but this trial collapsed. The incitement charges arose from his oration at the funeral of O'Leary the previous summer, when he had promoted 'the language of the bomb and the bullet'. On the first day of the trial ten jurors failed to appear and were fined by the judge. On the second day the jury said it could not reach a verdict and a new trial was scheduled.⁹³ At this time, acting on information from Garda Special Branch, the government doubled O'Malley's personal and family protection.⁹⁴

The Official IRA made headlines again when paratroopers killed Joe McCann, one of its most famous volunteers, on 15 April. The next day the Officials killed two soldiers in Derry and an officer in Belfast, in a weekend of rioting and attacks on army posts. On 17 April two civilians were killed by the army in west Belfast. McCann had been shot dead in his native Belfast in controversial circumstances. Concerns were raised in the media about the army's rules for the firing of weapons, specifically over whether it had a 'shoot to kill' policy. The McCann funeral, on 18 April, allowed the Officials to stage a showpiece event, with the Turf Lodge area of the city blocked off for the removal of his remains. Over 3,000 took part in the funeral procession, including four MPs, and thousands lined the route to the cemetery – Goulding gave an emotive oration. McCann had found fame, not least because of the *Life* photograph of him in action the previous August.⁹⁵ Heath wanted to know why no arrests had been made at the funeral, and questioned the army's policy in relation to arresting IRA leaders who appeared on public occasions. The NIO replied that it

⁹³ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 15 Mar. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK.

⁹⁴ Keogh, *Lynch*, pp. 337-8.

⁹⁵ *Irish Times*, 17 Apr. 1972, p.1; *ibid.* 18 Apr. 1972, p.1; *ibid.* 19 Apr. 1972, p. 1; McKittrick, Kelters, Feeney, Thornton and McVea, *Lost Lives*, no.s. 334, 336-40, pp. 175-8; Alan F. Parkinson, *1972 and the Ulster Troubles: 'A Very Bad Year'* (Four Courts, Dublin, 2010), pp. 116-8. For childhood impressions of McCann, see Henry McDonald, *Colours: Ireland – From Bombs to Boom* (Mainstream, Edinburgh, 2004), pp. 13-15.

was left to those on the spot to make a decision regarding an arrest, but likely loss of life – if such an attempt had been made at the McCann funeral, for example – had to be considered.⁹⁶ A State Department intelligence note observed that the McCann killing, and the issuing of the hotly-disputed Widgery report into the Bloody Sunday shootings, led to renewed support for the IRA.⁹⁷

The Northern Ireland secretary of state, William Whitelaw, met the Irish ambassador in London on 20 April. According to O’Sullivan, Whitelaw said the McCann killing had been a mistake. O’Sullivan quoted Whitelaw as saying that the British had made ‘a martyr’ of McCann – he should have been ‘shot in the legs and then arrested’. Whitelaw believed that the escalation of republican violence after the killing of McCann had been an effort to produce a show of strength. According to all his information, he said less plausibly, IRA support had noticeably receded. ‘Personally convinced’ that internment had been a grave mistake, he would continue to release more internees. Whitelaw took the opportunity to make the point that Dublin could do more to combat the IRA. The strengthening of Garda forces on the border was appreciated, he said, but more could be done against republican paramilitaries in the courts.⁹⁸ If Whitelaw seriously believed that republican paramilitary support had been on the wane, a heavyhanded security policy would ensure that it would recover.

Pravda profiled Goulding on 23/25 April. The Official IRA again received positive coverage in the Soviet media, with further criticism of the Provisionals. The articles were based on an interview with Goulding, who just days before had condemned British ‘terrorism’ and its agents at the McCann funeral. Two years after the split in the republican movement, on broadly Left-Right lines, Goulding stated that the Officials defended the

⁹⁶ Northern Ireland Office to Downing St., 11 May 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/3.

⁹⁷ State Dept. intelligence note, 28 Apr. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK.

⁹⁸ O’Sullivan to McCann, 21 Apr. 1972, in NAI, DFA 2003/13/16.

Soviet Union in Ireland. According to the British embassy in Moscow, the Official IRA chief of staff was 'well on the way' to inclusion in the list of liberation movement heroes. The main theme of the interview had been the methods employed by the rival IRAs; Goulding condemned the Provisionals' bombing campaign as 'inhuman'. The Official IRA, on the other hand, employed violence in response to the 'terror tactics' of the security forces. According to Goulding, the Officials' 'defensive' strategy justified the bombing of the house of the Northern Ireland parliament's speaker and the burning of the Public Records Office in Derry.⁹⁹ Goulding's remarks had been promptly reported to Whitehall. He spoke of the controversy within Irish republicanism that had been created by his politicisation initiative: 'Many members of the IRA accused the leadership of having given up the rifle for the booklet, bombs for placards and of having ceased to be a revolutionary force.'¹⁰⁰ The Moscow embassy saw the *Pravda* articles as marking a significant stage in the Soviets' attitude to Ireland. Although repeating much of what had appeared in *New Times* in January, a flattering description of the Officials identified the Russians' sympathies more closely with the Official IRA than had hitherto been the case. The embassy thought, optimistically, that *Pravda's* profile of Goulding indicated that the Soviets did not expect much from the development of relations with the Irish government and that the articles were not calculated to please Dublin.¹⁰¹

Following the *Pravda* articles, the British embassy in Dublin reminded the Irish authorities of the dangers of flirting with the Soviets and co-operation between the KGB and the Official IRA. When Victor Louis, a Soviet citizen, obtained Irish visa approval, the embassy approached the consular section of Foreign Affairs. The embassy provided a story on Louis, 'a mixture of fact and fiction', and it emphasised the (supposedly) 'strong views' of the taoiseach on KGB agents recruiting members of the Official IRA. The FCO had

⁹⁹ UK embassy (Moscow) to FCO, 28 Apr. 1972, in TNA, 87/24.

¹⁰⁰ Goulding, quoted in *Pravda*, 25 Apr. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/3.

¹⁰¹ UK embassy (Moscow) to FCO, 28 Apr. 1972, in TNA, 87/24.

learned in confidence from the Irish that Louis had applied for a visa. His KGB affiliations were described as 'notorious' and his intended visit to Dublin marked a further stage in the development of Soviet interest in Ireland. This, specifically, involved pursuing contacts with the Official IRA. One line of action considered in Whitehall was feeding Dublin media with material on Louis as a KGB frontman. While the FCO did its best to make things difficult for a Soviet undesirable who had secured visa approval, Dublin-London security service co-operation offered other possibilities: intelligence material could be handed over to the Irish security services, and MI5 would pass on information about Louis 'on their channel'.¹⁰² Louis had not been the first Soviet visitor to Ireland to be labelled a spy in the Irish media following British interventions, either by the IRD or direct contact with Foreign Affairs. Ustimenko and Yasnev had also fallen victim.¹⁰³

Heath had found himself in conflict with powerful trade unions in Britain and he drew parallels between the CPGB and the Official republican movement. Strikes in 1972, in which communists played an influential part, caused concerns in Downing Street about a potential trade union role for the Officials in the North. The JIC noted in March that the Official IRA was aiming to promote industrial action, along the lines of the recent miners' strike. Lessons had been learned in London on what were perceived as politically-inspired strikes, and Heath believed this to be an important issue: 'He suggests that the Northern Ireland Government should be advised how to deal with this situation from our own experience.'¹⁰⁴ If the JIC's intelligence had been correct about the Officials aspiring to emulate the tactics of the miners' union, it is difficult to see how this could happen within a labour force polarised along sectarian lines. The trade union leadership in the North, where communists had some influence, had been relatively moderate. Looking at the

¹⁰² UK embassy (Dublin) to FCO, 11 May 1972, and FCO to Dublin, 8 May 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/24.

¹⁰³ Anthony Craig, *Crisis of Confidence: Anglo-Irish Relations in the Early Troubles* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2010), pp. 136-8.

¹⁰⁴ Downing St. to Home Office, 13 Mar. 1972, in TNA, CJ 4/193; Beckett, *Enemy Within*, pp. 178-9. The Officials hijacked coal trucks near Newry during the miners' strike. Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, p. 177.

question of whether communists had a role in the Troubles, the US consul in Belfast observed that more than one communist occupied a key union position, but ‘no one has ever suggested that they have used these positions for any subversive purpose’. There had been other speculation, however, about links with the Soviets – Ustimenko had ‘reportedly’ been a regular weekend visitor to Belfast.¹⁰⁵

In May the FCO’s Eastern European and Soviet Department suggested that parallels could be drawn between the potential challenges the Irish faced with the Soviets and difficulties created by them in Belgium and Denmark. Danish ‘wetness’ in relation to Russian intelligence operatives could be contrasted with alleged pressure applied against the Danes in Moscow, it contended, and media publicity over Soviet espionage activities in Belgium and Denmark could show how the Russians would exploit ‘good relations’ with small countries. The FCO’s Ireland department might wish to consider whether this could be raised with Dublin in any future discussions about the Republic agreeing to having diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. The difficulties faced by the Danes and the Belgians, according to this argument, were ‘a splendid example’ of Soviet bullying.¹⁰⁶

In May 1972 the Irish government acted against republican subversives. It decided to deal with the problem of jury intimidation by subversives and reactivated the non-jury Special Criminal Court, under the Offences Against the State Act.¹⁰⁷ According to O’Malley, who introduced the measure, ‘juries were being widely interfered with by the Official IRA, principally, and to a lesser extent by the Provos, at that time.’¹⁰⁸ The US embassy reported that the non-jury court initiative did not involve much political risk for Lynch: what would have been dangerous in the circumstances after Bloody Sunday would be now feasible

¹⁰⁵ US consul (Belfast) to State Dept., 16 Mar. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK.

¹⁰⁶ FCO memo, 12 May 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/24.

¹⁰⁷ O’Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, pp. 325-6.

¹⁰⁸ O’Malley, quoted in *Seven Ages*, Vol. Two, Prog. 6.

because public sympathies had changed.¹⁰⁹ The re-introduction of the Special Criminal Court was a decisive step in removing doubts about the stability of the Irish state.

(x) Official republican movement ‘more serious long-term threat’

A draft paper prepared by the FCO’s IRD, ‘The IRA in Eire’, assessed the threat posed by subversives in the South. Based on a ‘sanitised’ version of a secret Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS) paper prepared for the JIC, the IRD’s paper was primarily intended as a mini-manual for distribution to posts abroad. The paper had been submitted to White on 23 May 1972, three days before the Irish government announced the establishment of the non-jury Special Criminal Court. The paper highlighted Dublin’s perceived leniency towards republican subversives: ‘Despite the IRA’s illegality, with the exception of two periods, 1939-45 and 1957-62, the full letter of the law has only rarely been implemented against the organisation or its individual members.’ The IRD would be told that this was ‘all very unsatisfactory’ and the pages dealing with the Irish government’s handling of republican subversion would have to be ‘substantially redrafted’.¹¹⁰

Observing the increased Soviet interest in Irish affairs, the paper noted that the Official republican movement was placing a greater emphasis on political agitation. Official republicans, rather than the Provisionals, were regarded as the more serious long-term threat ‘because of their greater intellectual depth and appeal’ – but the Provisionals would declare a ceasefire the following month and be invited by the British government to talks in London. Within the Official republican movement, differences were detected between the approach of Garland and Goulding. The paper contended that the Official IRA had been increasingly under the control of the ‘militant’ assistant chief of staff, Garland, at the

¹⁰⁹ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 26 May 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK.

¹¹⁰ IRD to White, 23 May 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/3. DIS was created in 1964. Stephen Twigge, Edward Hampshire and Graham Macklin, *British Intelligence: Secrets, Spies and Sources* (The National Archives, Richmond, 2008, paperback edn. 2009), pp. 131-2, 190.

expense of Goulding. The latter had used his *Pravda* interview to reiterate the Officials' position on physical force, and the IRD paper quoted him as saying that republicans should employ all forms of struggle – primarily economic and political, but also military if compelled. Goulding had relegated armed struggle behind economic and political agitation. Submitted six days before the Official IRA declared a ceasefire on 29 May, the IRD implied that the 'communist' emphasis on political struggle within the Officials had been on the wane. White criticised the assertion that Goulding had lost 'effective leadership' of the Official IRA, commenting 'needs to be redrafted'. The IRD's paper stated that disagreements over strategy – between those promoting violence and those urging a political approach – had led to the resignation of Johnston in January 1972. However, the twin strategy allowed for political agitation in conjunction with armed struggle. The significance of the differences between Garland and Goulding may have been overstated in the paper. The declaration of the ceasefire demonstrated, at the very least, that the politicisation process within the Officials remained of fundamental importance. Johnston's absence from the Official republican movement for four months had made little or no difference.

This assessment highlighted the ambition of Official republicans to acquire influence in the trade union movement. It doubted whether more than a handful were convinced Marxist-Leninists, though these were presumed to be in contact with communists abroad, but the paper pointed out that the Officials aimed to infiltrate organisations in a Leninist fashion. It noted that the Official republican movement had support in the universities and sympathisers in the media, but had not penetrated the Defence Forces, the civil service or the mainstream political parties. The Officials, however, had close links with left-wing members of trade unions, 'the penetration of which is one of their declared aims'. The British army's view that civil rights campaigners were an 'active ally' of the Official IRA,

as outlined by Tuzo in January, had been echoed: 'IRA volunteers are to be trained in the methods of increasing the exploitation of such ostensibly respectable organisations as the Civil Rights Association for their own ends.' The paper speculated about actual Soviet aid to the Official republican movement. According to the IRD paper, the Soviets had possibly been behind a contribution of £750, paid in 1971, by a trade union leader to an Irishman in London for the purchase of arms. A letter from Michael Mullen of the ITGWU, a 'well-known' (Official) IRA supporter, had been read in court. In September 1971, the paper stated, the Central Council of Trade Unions in the Soviet Union offered £5,000 to the ICTU for the 'war of liberation' in the North. However, the IRD thought it unlikely that an IRA source had received such a large amount of money. There had been little evidence of direct Czechoslovakian involvement with the IRA, despite the attempt by the Provisionals' Daithi Ó Conaill to import arms from Omnipol, also in September 1971.¹¹¹

Links between Poland and the Official republican movement later attracted attention. A Polish magazine, *Polityka*, featured the northern crisis in January 1973, although the Officials did not receive a specific endorsement. The British embassy in Dublin noted that the Poles had been 'reasonably circumspect' and, at times, even helpful on Ireland: 'Not so the Russians or Czechs!'¹¹² The FCO pointed out, however, that there had been contact between the Polish embassy in London and NICRA – an organisation 'virtually under Official IRA control'. A NICRA representative had given an interview to a Polish newspaper eighteen months before, which had been designed 'to applaud Official IRA objectives'.¹¹³

Moscow backing for Official republicans went beyond *Pravda* flattery when the Soviets finally delivered the guns sought by the Officials. Over two-and-a-half years after his

¹¹¹ IRD paper, 'The IRA in Eire', in TNA, FCO 87/3.

¹¹² Blatherwick to Bone, 15 Jan. 1973, in TNA, FCO 87/177.

¹¹³ Comment by Tonkin, 17 Jan. 1973, in TNA, FCO 87/177.

initial request for Russian arms, O’Riordan reminded Moscow that no shipment had been authorised. On behalf of the Official IRA, he had had numerous discussions about shipping the arms with KGB ‘technical specialists’. Accepting his assurances of secrecy, in August 1972 the head of the KGB, Yuri Andropov, submitted a plan to the Soviet leadership for the shipment of weapons to the Official IRA. Codenamed Splash, this plan would be a variation of a delivery of arms to the PFLP two years before. The weapons – considerably less than had been originally requested – were all of non-Soviet origin to disguise KGB involvement. The cache would be submerged on a sandbank, ninety kilometres from the coast of Northern Ireland, and the Officials allegedly received several further Russian arms shipments by similar methods.¹¹⁴

Towards the end of 1972 the British embassy in Dublin reported that Lynch had decisively acted against republican subversives. In November the chief of staff of the Provisional IRA, Seán Mac Stíofáin, had been imprisoned under the Offences Against the State Act, and an amendment to the act, which allowed the offence of IRA membership to be proven on the word of a Garda superintendent, became law on 3 December.¹¹⁵ Dublin had gone further in putting to rest fears about political stability in the South.

(xi) State Department co-operation with Whitehall

Western states were advised on the purpose of Operation Motorman four months following the introduction of direct rule. During Motorman the army took over paramilitary ‘no go’ areas in Belfast and Derry on 31 July, and an explanatory message was sent from Heath to governments in and outside NATO, including the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This claimed that spontaneous peace movements had arisen in Catholic areas in the North. These developments, according to Heath, had forced the Official IRA and then the

¹¹⁴ Andrew and Mitrokhin, *Mitrokhin Archive*, pp. 501-3.

¹¹⁵ Peck to Douglas-Home, 12 Dec. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/4; O’Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, pp. 325-6.

Provisional IRA to declare ceasefires, in May and June respectively. This argument exploited the Official IRA's killing of Best, which had provoked protest in Derry, and, separately, the emergence of peace groups in Belfast. The Provisional IRA had effectively bombed its way to the negotiating table in July – something the Official IRA could not, and would not, do – but talks with the British government collapsed. The Provisionals then ended their ceasefire and killed eleven people in explosions on Bloody Friday.¹¹⁶ In the wake of Motorman, O'Sullivan met Heath and heard that an internal Northern Ireland political solution would be required. Heath, a europhile, believed that in the long term the border would diminish in importance as Ireland and Britain worked together within the EEC.¹¹⁷ Britain would again be assured of support from the US, as the White House reiterated its policy of non-intervention in Irish affairs. Replying to Heath's letter on Motorman, Nixon told him that his administration would resist responding to 'continuing pressure from various quarters' to intervene in the North.¹¹⁸

Despite the drama of Motorman, the security forces believed the Official IRA ceasefire would hold. On 14 August Heath had told the NIO that he thought the Officials might resume a military campaign 'fully organised' since all their internees had been released. He asked about the quality of intelligence on 'the Regulars' and their intentions. Whitelaw pointed out to Heath that the 'intelligence organisation' had been monitoring the Official IRA closely, and their ability to withstand the pressure after Motorman to end their ceasefire indicated a determination to pursue political methods. The NIO attached an intelligence assessment with Whitelaw's response. This assessment derived from overt and covert sources, with the latter in Dublin affording 'indirect access to the Official leadership'. The assessment focused on the Officials' role in the North and, significantly,

¹¹⁶ TNA, FCO 87/78; Patterson, *Ireland Since 1939*, pp. 236-8; Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, pp. 155-6.

¹¹⁷ Downing St. to NIO, 2 Aug. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/29; Smith, *Fighting for Ireland?*, pp. 91-116; Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, pp. 154-5; Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, pp. 461-5

¹¹⁸ Nixon to Heath, Aug. 17 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/79.

did not mention any collaboration there with the Soviets. It noted that short-term objectives, such as securing the release of all 'political prisoners' and the abolition of the Special Powers Act, were being pursued by 'front organisations' such as the Republican Clubs and NICRA.¹¹⁹

Following the introduction of internment a propaganda war had been waged in the US between the British government and Irish republicans. The two IRAs competed for Irish-American money – the Irish Northern Aid (Noraid) committees supported the Provisionals and the Irish Republican Clubs backed the Official republican movement. McMillen visited the US to raise funds for Official republican prisoners, admitting that the Official IRA killed British soldiers.¹²⁰ British officials came under pressure, especially in areas with a vocal Irish/Irish American lobby, and had to consider effective media approaches. One consulate official recommended a law and order theme for the conservative American public: 'Student unrest, hippy cults etc have made them susceptible to this approach.' Official republicans could be drawn into advancing the merits of a workers' state, the official stated, and into claiming that the Dublin government was little better than the regime in Belfast. According to this argument, Official republicans would lose the debate as far as everybody except the 'rabid nationalists' and student protestors were concerned.¹²¹

British observers had noted the links between Official republicans and Palestinian revolutionaries after de Burca's visit to Amman in 1970, and the British embassy in Washington offered media advice after republicans admitted having contacts with Palestinians. Such links should be publicised fully in material aimed at the US, the

¹¹⁹ Heath to Whitelaw, 14 Aug. 1972, Whitelaw to Heath, 29 Aug. 1972, and intelligence assessment of 'current position' of Official IRA, in TNA, CJ 4/195.

¹²⁰ UK embassy (Washington) to FCO, 11 May 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/104; Wilson, *Irish-America*, pp. 40-9.

¹²¹ Memo to FCO Guidance & Information Policy Dept., 9 Feb. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/101.

embassy suggested in April. This would discourage 'those in Zionist circles here who are inclined to support IRA objectives and sometimes also to condone their tactics'.¹²² It would be suggested in the autumn within the FO that the point should be made that the IRA had 'unsavoury friends' such as the Palestinian Black September terrorists, who had killed eleven Israeli athletes at the Olympic Games in Munich.¹²³ Monitoring US media reports of the Irish situation, the New York-based British Information Service noted in July that a series of articles in the *New York Times* followed a line favourable to Whitehall. Its reporter had talked to de Burca who, with astonishing naïvety about Irish-American sensitivities, or indifference to political realities in the US, told him the Official republican movement's heroes were now Marx, Lenin and Castro.¹²⁴

For Whitehall, Washington would prove to be more helpful in dealing with Official IRA propagandists than the neutral Swedes. In September 1972 the US embassy in Dublin informed its British counterparts that Goulding intended to visit the US. The Americans agreed that a visa would not have been issued if the US immigration authorities had known that Goulding had been imprisoned in Britain for arms offences. British officials were now attempting to block Irish republicans with prison records from visiting 'friendly countries' on speaking and fundraising tours. The British embassy in Dublin suggested that the Home Office study the names it would provide to see if any of them had 'form', so that they could be denied visas to enter the US. The embassy informed the FO that the co-operative US official in Dublin would warmly welcome this information.¹²⁵ After Goulding's visa had been revoked, the State Department advised the US embassy in Dublin on how to deal with any press queries in relation to the decision. A connection between Irish and Palestinian terrorism should be made. It should be emphasised that, in the wake of the

¹²² Cromer to FCO, 4 Apr. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/2.

¹²³ IRD memo, 21 Sep. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/106; Burleigh, *Blood & Rage*, pp. 162-7.

¹²⁴ UK embassy (Washington) to UK embassy (Dublin), 21 Jul. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/106.

¹²⁵ UK embassy (Dublin) to White, 19 Sep. 1972, in TNA, FCO 87/4.

Munich killings, the US could not admit an alien ‘with a record of terrorist activities such as Goulding has’.¹²⁶

On 16 November, at the invitation of the State Department, the British government gave a briefing on its proposed political initiative for the North. Whitelaw had published a green paper on 30 October, *The Future of Northern Ireland: A Paper for Discussion*. At the briefing in Washington, Lord Windlesham said the green paper represented an attempt by London to establish options for the governance of Northern Ireland. The State Department recognised Britain’s efforts to find a solution to ‘this almost intractable problem’. One practical American contribution, Windlesham suggested, would be preventing the flow of arms and money from the USA to ‘terrorists’. He heard that the Justice, Treasury and State departments had investigated this, but there were no laws preventing US citizens from remitting funds abroad. Both sides agreed that Irish government condemnations of Noraid and like-minded groups, such as that made by O’Malley, would probably be more effective than any legal action.¹²⁷ In January 1973 Greenhill responded to Peck on foot of his annual review. Peck had suggested that 1972 might be seen as a turning point in the development of better relations between the Irish and London, and Greenhill conceded that Lynch had demonstrated greater readiness to take ‘effective action to control the IRA’. However, Greenhill wrote, this would only be the beginning: ‘I have no doubt at all that he will have to stretch his powers of comprehension to the maximum when we come to discuss with him the elements of a settlement.’¹²⁸ As the US supported Britain’s attempt to solve the Northern Ireland problem, both American and British officials would make connections between militant republicans and Palestinian terrorism.

¹²⁶ State Dept. to US embassy (Dublin), 16 Sept. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2383, Pol 14 Ire.

¹²⁷ ‘Lord Windlesham briefing at State Department’, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK; on the green paper, see Keogh, *Lynch*, pp. 361-3.

¹²⁸ Greenhill to Peck, 18 Jan. 1973, in TNA, FCO 87/172.

(xii) Conclusion

The Soviet Union had been happy to use the Troubles as ammunition in its propaganda against the two principal NATO powers, but, excepting the arms shipment for the Official IRA, it did not seek to cause trouble whenever it could in Ireland in 1971-2. British and Irish officials were apprehensive, as always, about communism, and while the FCO did not see an indigenous communist threat in the South, the Irish ambassador in London believed that communist penetration of the Official republican movement represented a sinister development. Irish and British officials continued to exchange information on suspicious Soviet visitors to Ireland. When Heath voiced concerns that Official republicans might seek to emulate the trade union tactics of the CPGB, he had his eye on domestic communist-created difficulties. However, Whitehall used a Cold War prism when it contemplated the prospect of a Soviet embassy in Dublin. The FCO's argument on how the KGB would use such a base – with the Official IRA in tow – reflected continuing British fears of Soviet espionage directed against the UK. Speculation about the potential role of the Official IRA surfaced again in the FCO drafts suggesting that the White House might persuade Lynch to tackle subversion. The scenario painted here – the Republic might be overwhelmed by republican subversives – did not come to pass. Less than nuanced views would also be articulated by the army in relation to the political opposition in the North: Carver's view of 'IRA propaganda' and Tuzo's depiction of NICRA illustrated that they had a simplistic view of the problems the British government faced. But Britain could rely on its NATO allies in relation to the crisis in Northern Ireland.

CHAPTER IV: IRELAND'S 'NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT'

'Our sense of brotherhood cuts through the barbed wire of the concentration camps, breaches the prison walls and joins us in spirit with you who are struggling to defeat imperialism throughout the world.' – **Official IRA prisoners**¹

'The Government wish it to be known that they strongly disapprove of the holding of a so-called "anti-imperialist festival" in Dublin and that they will not facilitate the entry to Ireland of people to attend it.' – **Patrick Cooney**²

(i) Introduction

Correspondence between the NIO and Whitehall in relation to the Official republicans' Festival of Anti-Imperialist Struggle in May 1974 discussed the question of how 'undesirable aliens' could be prevented from attending this international conference for 'terrorist organisations'.³ Despite the fact that Official IRA attacks on the security forces in the North had all but ceased, following the declaration of its ceasefire two years previously,⁴ British analysts still perceived the Official republican movement as being part of an international terrorist network. The climate for Anglo-Irish security co-operation improved in 1973, despite strains, and the Sunningdale agreement leading to power-sharing put intelligence co-operation on a formal footing. The Soviet embassy in Dublin opened in 1974.⁵ The NIO would claim that criminalisation of paramilitary prisoners

¹ Message of solidarity from 'Irish republican prisoners' to Festival of Anti-Imperialist Struggle, 1974, in UCDA, P29/C/10 (b).

² Statement issued by minister for justice Patrick Cooney, 19 Jul. 1974, in NAI, TAOIS 2005/7/598.

³ NIO to MoD, 23 May 1974, and HO to NIO, 26 May 1974, in TNA, FCO 87/286.

⁴ On the Official IRA's role following the 1972 ceasefire, see Kacper Edward Rekawek, 'How "Terrorism" Does Not End: The Case of the Official Irish Republican Army', in *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 2008, pp. 365-71.

⁵ Eunan O'Hallpin, *Defending Ireland: The Irish State and its Enemies Since 1922* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, paperback edn., 2000), pp. 329-31, 338-39.

would separate the Provisional IRA from the nationalist community. This claim, as Arthur writes, ‘was to be sorely tested by the hunger strikes’.⁶

(ii) Fears over Soviet-sourced arms for Provisionals

A 1973 assessment of the Irish state by the US embassy in Dublin concluded that nothing short of a political convulsion could move Ireland out of the pro-West camp, and only the northern problem could cause such a convulsion. But anti-Americanism was again seen as a growing phenomenon. Although the Left in the Republic usually confined its activities to demonstrations and polemics, the embassy observed, in 1970 two US Navy personnel had been shot and wounded in Dublin. It advised that the US should encourage the Irish state’s traditional tendency to see its security interests as related to those of the US and its NATO allies, especially the UK. The Republic was so firmly orientated towards the US and Western Europe, the embassy noted, that any threat to American security seemed remote.

‘Though neutral militarily, Ireland is perhaps more viscerally anti-Communist than any other Western nation. The only factor we can foresee that could alter this situation would be a revolutionary political situation, which could result from a worsening of the Northern Ireland troubles.’⁷

Briefing the FCO on Ireland’s membership of the EEC, which it had joined in 1973 along with the UK, Peck pointed out that the Irish state remained firmly in the Western camp and contended that its neutrality was not ‘a considered policy’ but ‘a desire to make a virtue out of a lack of necessity’. Nevertheless, he observed, there was an evident wariness in the

⁶ Paul Arthur, *Special Relationships: Britain, Ireland and the Northern Ireland Problem* (Blackstaff, Belfast, 2000), pp. 165-6.

⁷ Moore (US embassy, Dublin) to State Dept., 9 Jan. 1973, in NARA, RG 59, box 2384, Pol 17-1 Ire-US.

Irish attitude to the work of the EEC's political committees, especially when there was an overlap with NATO.⁸

In March a State Department assessment described the northern crisis as the worst in a century. Both IRAs had rejected the Northern Ireland power-sharing initiative, the paper noted, although neither was popular enough to elect a single member to the 144-seat Dáil. According to the paper, the Officials were 'Maoist-Marxian' and more intellectual than the Provisionals, with both organisations posing a security threat. A component of a policy analysis series produced by the Department of State's Bureau of European Affairs, the paper had been approved by the National Security Council.⁹ Meanwhile Anglo-Soviet relations had remained frosty. In December 1972 *Pravda* had carried a condemnation of the British media's 'hysterical' allegations of Soviet interference in the North, including arms deliveries, the US embassy in Moscow reported. A Soviet official in London had been called in to the FCO, according to this report, and shown photographs of Soviet-manufactured rockets which had turned up in Northern Ireland, and a Sunday newspaper had then published photographs of what it alleged was a Russian submarine landing arms off the Irish coast. *Pravda* noted that a British government minister had stated that the rockets found in Northern Ireland were of a type used by Warsaw Pact forces. The US embassy reported that the Soviet daily claimed that these British media reports had been part of a campaign to divert attention from the 'terror against democratic forces' in the North and moves towards détente.¹⁰

In March Irish security forces seized the *Claudia* off the Waterford coast, which carried a shipment of arms for the Provisional IRA. Six Irishmen were arrested, including leading

⁸ 'Ireland and the EEC', 3. Jan. 1973, in TNA, FCO 87/193.

⁹ 'Europara Ireland 1973', 4 Apr. 1973, in NARA, RG 59, box 2384, Pol 17-1 Ire-US.

¹⁰ US embassy (Moscow) to State Dept., 14 Dec. 1972, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK. On Soviet intentions following Operation *Foot*, including the policy of détente, see Geraint Hughes, "'Giving the Russians a Bloody Nose": Operation *Foot* and Soviet Espionage in the United Kingdom, 1964-71', in *Cold War History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2006, pp. 243-4.

Belfast Provisional Joe Cahill. Five tons of arms on the vessel reportedly included Soviet self-loading rifles and anti-personnel mines. At a press conference, flanked by senior army and Naval Service officers, minister for defence Patrick Donegan claimed that the *Claudia* had been lured into a trap. The US embassy in Dublin reported that there had been no such ‘spectacular victory’ in the Republic against republican subversives for many years. It pointed out that some of Lynch’s anti-subversive measures had been more difficult politically, but none had the same news impact as this arms seizure, with the possible exception of his decision to face down Mac Stíofáin’s hunger strike. The embassy stated that the discovery of Soviet rocket launchers in the North had led to media speculation that they had originated in Libya, and the seizure of the *Claudia* strengthened the impression that Soviet arms were being smuggled into Ireland from the Middle East.¹¹ The information on the shipment came from British intelligence sources via Britain’s new ambassador in Dublin, Sir Arthur Galsworthy, who had called on the taoiseach, Liam Cosgrave. The ambassador had asked that the ship and crew be released without charge lest the British source be compromised. Galsworthy also met Donegan, who later agreed to hand over samples of the *Claudia* shipment to the British.¹²

The US embassy later reported that the Irish had promised to make information available on the recovered munitions and would forward a report to Washington after a meeting with the Defence Forces. The embassy stated that the seizure demonstrated Cosgrave’s strong anti-paramilitary orientation and the action had been carried out with success and precision, elements ‘not always present in Irish security operations’. In April the Defence Forces supplied a list of the seized items, including Soviet AK 47s, to the Americans. The Irish army source had pointed out that all the indications suggested that the shipment had been loaded in Libya; some of the containers had the word ‘Tripoli’ printed on them. This

¹¹ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 30 Mar. 1973, in NARA, RG 59, Pol 23-9 UK.

¹² Anthony Craig, *Crisis of Confidence: Anglo-Irish Relations in the Early Troubles* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2010), pp. 157-61.

source denied that the British had provided intelligence on the *Claudia*. Soviet daily *Izvestia* claimed that the Soviet Union had never supplied arms to the IRA and accused the British press of making a 'provocative' fuss. However, one Irish newspaper pointed out that while *Izvestia* had denied Moscow involvement, it did not deny the Soviet origin of some of the *Claudia* shipment.¹³ At the UN, the Irish drew the attention of the Libyan government to media reports that the arms had been taken aboard in Tripoli.¹⁴ Moore requested that the secretary of state authorise him to provide the Irish government, in confidence, with Washington's evaluation of the information relating to the seized arms. Moore believed the Irish would be 'very grateful'.¹⁵ Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Gadaffi in April admitted that he had given aid to the Provisional IRA and would later boast that he would continue to support 'the Irish people in their struggle against Britain'.¹⁶ For their part, the Officials had discussed arms procurement with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) at meetings in Lebanon, but the deal fell through.¹⁷

Irish-American financial support for the Provisional IRA exercised minds in Dublin and London. In June the US embassy in Dublin corresponded with the Irish desk in the State Department over contributions to Noraid, now believed to be behind most of the Provisional IRA's funding – CIA analysts had asked for more information on this subject. The embassy had been surprised that Washington lacked information on this issue, especially since there had always been 'good cooperation' between US and British intelligence services and the Irish had been co-operating 'readily' with the British. A 'well-placed' Irish source had said that effective channels had 'long been set up' for transmitting information to the FBI. The embassy understood that the main channel had been through the American legal attaché in London, with some co-operation occurring in the US itself.

¹³ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 2 Apr., 3 Apr. and 4 Apr. 1973, in NARA, RG 59, Pol 23-9 UK.

¹⁴ US embassy (Dublin) to State Dept., 12 Apr. 1973, in NARA, RG 59, Pol 23-9 UK.

¹⁵ Moore to State Dept., 13 Apr. 1973, in NARA, RG 59, Pol 23-9 UK.

¹⁶ *Irish Independent*, 26 Nov. 1973, p. 11.

¹⁷ Brian Hanley and Scott Millar, *The Lost Revolution: The Story of the Official IRA and the Workers' Party* (Penguin, Dublin, 2009), p. 188.

The Irish government believed that seventy-five per cent of Provisional IRA funds came from the US, and Moore wanted to know whether the Washington agencies were satisfied with the information from the Irish. Moore's Irish source said he believed his facts were 'entirely in line' with those of 'British intelligence' and the US Department of Justice. According to the embassy in Dublin, the Irish government was supplying all information requested by British or US agencies. Moore's source believed the information exchange was adequate, but the Irish would be happy to co-operate if anything additional was requested.¹⁸

The FBI produced a memorandum on the feelings of the Chicago Irish-American community in relation to the Northern Ireland crisis. This concluded that Official republicans had little appeal in the city. Two sources, who had provided 'reliable information' in the past, reported that most Irish-Americans in Chicago who concerned themselves with the northern minority were conservative, and middle-aged or elderly; the Officials, perceived as Marxists, were not acceptable to this community. Support had been consistently withheld for events sponsored by any organisation with leftist leanings, including the Republican Clubs of North America. However, according to these sources, 'small amounts of money' had been raised for the Official republican movement in New York and Canada.¹⁹

Meanwhile, within the FCO, Crawford heard how republicans might be steered towards political activity in the North. White had given his thoughts on a JIC paper to Crawford and wrote that he had tried to get NIO policymakers to think about ways of encouraging republicans away from violence. For example, the oath obligation, for long a complaint in the North, could go, and the Republican Clubs could be legalised. At a recent NIO

¹⁸ US embassy (Dublin) to officer-in-charge, Irish Affairs, State Dept., 21 Jun. 1973, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK, and Moore (US embassy, Dublin) to State Dept., 21 Jun. 1973, in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK.

¹⁹ FBI memo, 'Irish Northern Aid Committee', in NARA, RG 59, box 2655, Pol 23-9 UK.

meeting, White wrote, the discussion had centred ‘a little illogically’ on the assertion that some gunmen were pathological killers. The question of whether ‘the sting’ could be drawn from groups such as the Officials – wavering between political activity and violence ‘but anxious to be able to opt for the former’ – had been overlooked. He thought the question of the extent to which Official republicans could be weaned from violence by such concessions should be considered. Expressing surprise that Johnston’s departure had not been mentioned in the JIC paper, White saw the Officials as more orientated towards political than military activity.²⁰ The Official IRA had had internal debates about its ceasefire in October and December 1972, with opposition to the ceasefire revolving around Costello.²¹ While the ‘defence and retaliation’ position remained, the Officials’ were scaling down their paramilitary activities in the North.

The Republican Clubs were legalised in April 1973, and eighty-three candidates later contested local elections on an abstentionist platform. Official republicans secured just 3 per cent of the vote, with ten councillors elected. Some weeks later the Republican Clubs won 1.8 per cent in the election for the new assembly in the North.²² As the Official republican movement sought to acquire electoral support in the North, it furthered its links with the communist bloc. In June, at its Wolfe Tone commemoration in Bodinstown, a wreath would be laid on behalf of the central committee of the French communist party.²³

(iii) Marxism-Leninism promoted within Official republican movement

Official republicans co-operated with the CPI in sending an Irish delegation to the 1973 World Youth Festival, in East Berlin. On 3 August a British official dispatched an account

²⁰ White to Crawford, 31 Jan. 1973, in TNA, FCO 87/177; Henry Patterson, *The Politics of Illusion: A Political History of the IRA* (Hutchinson Radius, London, 1989, new edn., Serif, London, 1997), pp. 155-6; M.L.R. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland?: The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement* (Routledge, London, 1995, paperback edn., 1997), pp. 89-90.

²¹ Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 187-8.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 223-5.

²³ UK embassy (Dublin) to FCO, in TNA, FCO 87/178.

of the 'Irish press conference' which had been 'infiltrated' the previous day. Apparently the only non-journalist present, apart from government officials, the British official wrote that no report of the press conference had appeared in the East German media. This account had been copied to the IRD, White, the 'liaison staff' at Stormont and Blatherwick in Dublin. Madge Davison, CYM secretary and CPI executive member, led the Irish delegation. The Irish highlighted the anti-British struggle in Ireland, with Davison adding that the Dublin government was a puppet of Westminster. Among those with Davison were a recently-released internee; someone with siblings in prison; the leader of the British delegation, Mike Terry; and a representative of the Council of Churches. Dermot Nolan said the Official republican movement had 'friendly relations' with the CPI, and Davison said the CPI had been trying to persuade the Provisionals to stop their bombing campaign. Asked if the Official IRA had changed its policy since the Aldershot bombing, Nolan said that it had been on ceasefire but would retaliate against the British army. He added that since the May 1972 ceasefire several Official republicans had been 'murdered, arrested, or interned' by the army. The former internee said Long Kesh was like 'a Nazi concentration camp' and that internees were tortured 'by a special group of the British security forces'. According to Terry, the presence of 15-20,000 troops in Northern Ireland represented the most important question facing the British people. The day before, the Irish delegation had visited Dresden to lay a wreath on the grave of Frank Ryan, who had led the Irish contingent which had fought against Franco's right-wing forces during the Spanish civil war.²⁴

The Department of State and the FCO took a keen interest in international gatherings that furthered a Moscow agenda, such as that in East Berlin. For example, in October 1970, the State Department informed all diplomatic posts of the upcoming assembly of the World

²⁴ 'Press conference given by the Irish delegation to the World Youth Festival on 2 August', 3 Aug. 1973, and 'Irish press conference on 2 August', in TNA, FCO 87/282.

Federation of Democratic Youth (WDFY) in Budapest. The previous assembly had met in 1966 in Sofia, which had been marked by Sino-Soviet differences. The State Department's information aimed to be useful to embassy officials in responding to questions or 'discussing with returning delegates their impressions of the event'. Expected to be a propaganda exercise, the State Department thought that in-fighting at the 1970 event might be of interest, especially in the unlikely event of the Chinese appearing.²⁵ It asked the US embassy in Budapest to report on the assembly, while recognising that there would be 'limitations' on its 'presence' at the event. But the State Department would welcome information on participation, especially from Latin America and other developing areas, and reports of any conflict on the election of the WDFY president.²⁶ Later in the same year, the State Department requested coverage from the US embassy in Copenhagen of the Danish Youth Council disarmament conference.²⁷

In June 1970 the State Department had written to the US embassy in San José, Costa Rica, concerning the World Peace Council (WPC) and a member of its secretariat, who was also a member of the central committee of the Argentinian communist party. The State Department informed the embassy that the WPC, a Soviet front based in Helsinki, had been set up in 1948 and had achieved little success. The embassy should seek 'appropriate opportunities to provide this background locally'. The State Department did not have any information on upcoming peace rallies, but 'any relevant facts or rumors' were welcome.²⁸ The following year, the State Department responded to a report from the United States Information Service in Nicosia on communist propaganda in Cyprus. As in Dublin the Americans were interested in left-wing student activities. According to the State

²⁵ State Dept. to all diplomatic posts, 12 Oct. 1970, in NARA, RG 59, box 1640, CSM 6 WFDY.

²⁶ State Dept. to US embassy (Budapest), 14 Oct. 1970, in NARA, RG 59, box 1640, CSM 6 WFDY.

²⁷ State Dept. to US embassy (Copenhagen), 13 Dec. 1970, in NARA, RG 59, box 1640, CSM 6 WFDY.

²⁸ State Dept. to US embassy (San José), 30 Jun. 1970, in NARA, RG 59, box 1640, CSM 6 WCP.

Department, the 'general conclusions reached in the report' would provide 'the type of guidelines we need to judge specific communist activities'.²⁹

The IRD also monitored international communist conferences during the Cold War, with the aim of disseminating anti-Soviet propaganda. The IRD had provided information for anti-communist publicity abroad, following a proposal by the foreign secretary, Ernest Bevin, in 1948. One of its earlier successes had been the publication of a Russian edition of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Galsworthy's predecessor in the Dublin embassy, Peck, had headed up the department in the 1950s, and had favoured 'soft propaganda' designed to separate Stalinists from the non-communist Left.³⁰ Moscow's difficulties in controlling the communist world had been highlighted by the IRD in 1968. The ninth World Youth Festival had been held in Sofia and, coming on the heels of the Soviets' crushing of the 'Prague Spring', had been marked by communist disunity. The IRD had been unable to undertake 'much counter-action' on this occasion, but had briefed the media on 'the almost daily clashes and other incidents'. The heroes of the day, according to the IRD, had been the Czechs. The IRD was pleased: 'All the organisers can claim is that they completed their programme, but never before have they had such a large number of disgruntled participants, or such a critical world press.' The IRD would issue a full report for the September 1968 issue of *International Communist Front Organisations*.³¹

Marxism-Leninism was now being promoted within the Official republican movement to develop a materialist ideology championing the working class. Following the 1972 *árd fheis* an educational programme stressed the importance of theory. The movement's Marxist education process would outline the revolutionary destiny of the working class: the overthrow of capitalism and the end of class-based society. Socialist politics required

²⁹ State Dept. to US embassy (Nicosia), 15 Jun. 1971, in NARA, RG 59, box 1640, CSM 10.

³⁰ Twigge, Hampshire and Macklin, *British Intelligence*, pp. 95-96; Craig, *Crisis of Confidence*, p. 96.

³¹ IRD note, 24 Sep. 1968, in TNA, FCO 95/418.

materialist ideology, otherwise republicans' knowledge of Ireland would remain 'at the level of stirring folk tales'. In the past, according to the programme, action had been emphasised to the detriment of theory in the republican movement, but there could be no revolutionary party without revolutionary theory. Thinking in purely nationalist terms, instead of identifying with the working class, meant thinking of Ireland in a romantic way, but 'the nation' as such was meaningless: there could not be a nation without people, and where there were people there were conflicts of class interest. According to this definition of republicanism, therefore, nationalism was being replaced by materialism, on behalf of the only class with an objective interest in revolution. An outline of the education programme stated: 'We are concerned to emphasise that ours is a working class interest.' A revolutionary party would seize power rather than settling for reforms, and Lenin's theoretical contributions to Marxism became recommended reading, such as *What Is To Be Done* and *Imperialism, the Highest Form of Capitalism*. Pro-Moscow orthodoxy had not yet become compulsory for Official republicans, so Leon Trotsky's *Permanent Revolution* made it on to the reading list, as did Bell's history of the IRA, *The Secret Army*.³²

Later in the year, during the autumn session of the UN in New York, FitzGerald concluded negotiations with the Soviet foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko, for the exchange of diplomatic missions between Ireland and the USSR. At a previous meeting, Gromyko had seen a British hand behind the Irish proposal for the establishment of small embassies, but FitzGerald told him Britain had not made representations on this matter.³³ In October the British embassy in Dublin reported that Ó Cionnaith had addressed the annual conference of the Irish Republican Clubs in New York. Galsworthy had read an account of Ó Cionnaith's speech in *The Irish Times*. Ó Cionnaith had spoken of the need to obtain the support of Protestant workers in order to attain a united, socialist republic. Galsworthy

³² Education bulletin and programme outline, for use by Clann na hÉireann, in TNA, DPP/2/5294.

³³ Garret FitzGerald, *All in a Life: An Autobiography* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1991), pp. 125-7.

added that he would welcome additional information on Ó Cionnaith's visit from the British embassy in Washington.³⁴ Earlier in the year, the British embassy in Dublin had reported that the Officials had announced their intention to commemorate Bloody Sunday. These events would include demonstrations by Clann na hÉireann, in Britain, and the Irish Republican Clubs in the US and Canada.³⁵ The latter group had demonstrated outside the British consulate in Los Angeles, in February 1973, over various issues relating to Britain's presence in the North and a US grand jury hearing. According to the FBI, approximately twelve persons were present – 'Caucasians aged in their mid-twenties' – with picket signs, such as 'Ireland is England's Vietnam' and 'Why is Nixon arresting Irish Americans?'. Two 'Irish flags' were also displayed, and a green banner stating 'Irish Republican Clubs, USA & Canada'.³⁶ Shortly afterwards the FBI monitored the visit to Canada of Ó Murchú.³⁷

The Official republican movement's alignment with Moscow became public at its November 1973 árd fheis. Garland defended a reference in a motion to building a world of 'true freedom' similar to the world 'presently being built in the Socialist countries'. The reference should remain, he argued, because it would show that the Official republican movement stood for socialism. The previous month he had visited Moscow for an international conference of 'peace forces', which Tomás Giolla addressed.³⁸ In 1973 the Official IRA army council decided that the movement should be transformed into a Marxist-Leninist party.³⁹ The Officials had 360 delegates at their árd fheis – half the numbers claimed for the Provisionals' árd fheis – according to the British embassy in Dublin. Socialism had been emphasised. The only public sign of dissent came when the

³⁴ UK embassy (Dublin) to FCO, 16 Oct. 1973, in TNA, FCO 87/178.

³⁵ UK embassy (Dublin) to FCO, 9 Jan. 1973, in TNA, FCO 87/177.

³⁶ FBI, Los Angeles, 17 Feb. 1973, in 'Irish Republican Army FBI Files', available at <http://www.paperlessarchives.com/ira.html>

³⁷ FBI, Ottawa, 15 Mar. 1973, in 'Irish Republican Army FBI Files', available at <http://www.paperlessarchives.com/ira.html>

³⁸ 'Seán Garland' and 'Tomás Mac Giolla', in 'Irish Personality Notes', in TNA, FCO 87/601. The Officials' monthly reported the Moscow visit. *United Irishman*, Dec. 1973, p. 4.

³⁹ Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, pp. 162-3.

Derry delegation, allegedly influenced by local Trotskyists, objected to the ‘isolated reforms’ demanded by NICRA. The delegation claimed that the party was dominated by the politics of the CPI. Smullen, who had been imprisoned in Britain for attempting to buy arms, became one of the newly-elected árd chomhairle members. Mac Giolla claimed that FitzGerald had ‘very likely’ assured Heath that Dublin had no objection to NATO or EEC military bases in Ireland, in the event of British troops withdrawing from the North. The embassy’s account of the árd fheis had been gleaned from media reports; the average age appeared to be thirty, and the impression given had been one of ‘a gathering of hairy academics in woolly sweaters’.⁴⁰

Earlier in the month the embassy had been asked by the FCO for an appraisal of the Official republican movement, with particular reference to its strength ‘in the countryside’ – the embassy had previously taken the view that Official republicans would be largely city-based. The RID informed the embassy that it had been several months at least since it had attempted to update its information. At the beginning of the year, it had understood that the Officials were well supported throughout the Republic and had a large membership. ‘We would be grateful for anything you can tell us, and would particularly appreciate a letter that we could circulate to the other interested Departments.’⁴¹ It is not clear how the RID had retained the view that the Officials enjoyed any significant level of support in the South: in the February general election Official Sinn Féin had fielded ten candidates and won a mere 15,000 votes.⁴² The Official republican movement’s level of popular support in the Irish state would be measured again in the local elections of June 1974, when the rival Sinn Féin parties each secured seven (borough/county) council seats, with the Officials improving on their 1973 performance by winning 1.59 per cent of the vote (19,341) and the Provisionals 1.52 per cent (18,540). Costello won a seat in Wicklow

⁴⁰ UK embassy (Dublin) to FCO, 28 Nov. 1973, in TNA, FCO 87/178.

⁴¹ FCO Republic of Ireland Dept. to UK embassy (Dublin), 16 Nov. 1973, in TNA, FCO 87/178.

⁴² Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 261-2.

as an independent. With the exception of Waterford city, Official Sinn Féin had successes in rural areas in counties Cork, Donegal, Cavan, Louth, Kerry and Wexford.⁴³ It had hardly been coincidental that three of these counties were adjacent to the border; the party had a long way to go in appealing to the urban working class.

The Officials had stepped up their international activities. In March it had emerged from media reports that the Official republican movement intended to host an international ‘anti-imperialist’ festival in Dublin and Belfast.⁴⁴ A few months later senior Official republican Mick Ryan attended the annual conference of the German communist party in Cologne.⁴⁵ The British embassy in Dublin kept an eye on the movement’s propaganda. The embassy employed the services of a translator to tell the FCO that Irish language weekly *Inniu* had reported that the Officials might take over the Irish language magazine *Pobal*, which would give Official republicans five publications in total: the monthly *United Irishman*, the *Irish People* weekly, a journal dealing with Marxist theory, *Teoiric*, and *Eolas*, a newsletter for international consumption. The embassy then supplied the FCO with a translation of another *Inniu* piece, which reported that assurances had been received that *Pobal* would not become a theoretical journal for the Officials.⁴⁶

Heath had lost office following the February general election, dominated by the question ‘Who governs Britain?’: the communist-influenced extremists who dominated the striking miners’ union or the elected government.⁴⁷ Attempts by republican groups in Britain, especially Clann na hÉireann, to influence voters in the election had had little or no effect, according to a Special Branch summary of extremist activity. The failure of Bernadette McAliskey (née Devlin) and Frank McManus to be re-elected had left republicans without

⁴³ Statistics in ‘Security Brief’ for visit of minister for foreign affairs to North America, in UCDA, P215/164, p. 27.

⁴⁴ Liaison Staff, Office of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Belfast, to FCO, 14 Mar. 1974, in TNA, FCO 87/285.

⁴⁵ ‘Michael Ryan’, in ‘Irish Personality Notes’, in TNA, FCO 87/601.

⁴⁶ UK embassy (Dublin) to FCO, 19 April 1974, in TNA, FCO 87/285.

⁴⁷ Edward Heath, *The Course Of My Life: My Autobiography* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1998), pp. 511-20.

a friend in Westminster, one supporter had said.⁴⁸ McAliskey had backed the Republican Clubs in the 1973 local elections in the North and had received their endorsement in the February election.⁴⁹ For the Official republican movement, 1974 would be a landmark year as relations developed with the Soviet embassy in Dublin, which believed the former had potential as a liberation movement.⁵⁰

(iv) Alarm over Officials' international connections

Media coverage of subversives alarmed the Irish government, as in 1969 when Berry submitted memoranda on the threat posed by the republican movement. Following the deaths of two Official IRA volunteers, on 15 May, the cabinet suggested that an 'informal' approach be made to editors in relation to coverage. Martin McAlinden and Colman Rowntree had been killed by the army near Newry; they were unarmed, but the Officials stated that the pair had been preparing a landmine.⁵¹ Descriptions of the Official IRA and its structures in subsequent sympathy notices illustrated how newspaper portrayals of republican paramilitaries had significantly changed over the years. Notices had been inserted in *The Irish Independent* and *The Irish Times*, a Department of the Taoiseach memorandum stated, from 'the so-called "Army Council" and by various "officers and volunteers" of so-called "companies" of the IRA'. The memorandum outlined how the IRA had been described by the Dublin-based media arising from the Offences Against The State Act, 1939, which made it an offence to publish any 'incriminating, treasonable or seditious document'. Rigorous censorship of the press had been exercised in relation to these matters during the Second World War, and during the 1950s border campaign media were required to use the term 'illegal organisation' in referring to the IRA. However, media practice had changed. 'Since the early sixties the media have used openly

⁴⁸ Special Branch report, in TNA, FCO 87/285.

⁴⁹ 'Bernadette McAliskey (née Devlin)', in 'Irish Personality Notes', in TNA, FCO 87/601.

⁵⁰ Interview with Seán Garland.

⁵¹ David McKittrick, Seamus Kelters, Brian Feeney, Chris Thornton and David McVea, *Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children Who Died as a Result of the Northern Ireland Troubles* (Mainstream, Edinburgh, 1999, revised, updated edn. 2007), nos. 1095 and 1096, p. 446.

documentation and spokesmen from the IRA and following the events of 1969 in Belfast, the IRA spokesmen secured a form of “legitimacy”.⁵² Lynch had discussed the media’s use of IRA material and spokesmen with the editors of the national newspapers and the RTÉ director general, and suggested they desist from ‘referring to IRA activities’ or ‘using material from them’ or ‘giving time or space to their spokesmen’. The editors, naturally, felt that they should report actual events. The memorandum observed that this attitude, in 1974, prevailed. But it did not recommend that ‘the papers be spoken to on an “informal” basis’ as this would lessen the government’s credibility. The media could be prosecuted for publishing seditious matter, the memorandum stated, or, there could be a continuation of the recently-initiated theme of government speeches on the dangers of ambiguity towards violence. It recommended that stressing the dangers of an ambiguous attitude to violence would be the most effective way to proceed.⁵²

The previous year the government had introduced a ban on the broadcasting of interviews with members of paramilitary organisations and their political wings. Lynch had avoided imposing overt censorship and had attempted to put pressure on RTÉ to voluntarily not broadcast the views of subversives.⁵³

The Officials reiterated a republican solution to the northern crisis at their annual Wolfe Tone commemoration in 1974, and rejected federalism or repartition. Both Fianna Fáil and Official Sinn Féin commemorated Wolfe Tone at Bodenstown on 23 June, the British embassy in Dublin reported, and the Officials obtained more space in *The Irish Times* than the former. A colour party from Newry carried the Tricolour and the Plough and the Stars at the Official republican event, and Clann na hÉireann and republican clubs from the USA and Australia were represented. Ryan was the main speaker – the ‘top brass’ were absent

⁵² Memo, 19 Jun. 1974, in NAI, TAOIS 2005/7/600.

⁵³ O’Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, p. 326.

according to the embassy – and he condemned the Provisionals’ ‘sectarian leadership’. The embassy pointed out that his theme had been the standard appeal to the working class to unite against ‘the occupation of Ireland’, not only by the British army but by foreign capitalists ‘bleeding the Irish people of the profits of their own natural resources’. Ryan also attacked the Provisionals’ bombing campaign and appealed to their rank and file to join the Officials, who had to be ready, he contended, to offer armed resistance to British attempts to legislate for Ireland. The Irish government did not escape censure either. In keeping with his appeal to rank and file Provisionals to join an imaginary republican army under the leadership of the Officials, Ryan called on members of the Garda and the Defence Forces to question their role under a government ‘bent on treachery’.⁵⁴

An NIO official in May informed the MoD that the Official IRA had been organising the forthcoming ‘International Conference of Terrorist Organisations’. Banning the event would be unwise: ‘I agree that to try and ban the conference would be counter-productive and that we should, instead, try to blunt its impact by refusing entry to undesirables from overseas, although we do not have and may not get their names.’ The main problem, in relation to Belfast, the NIO pointed out, would be preventing visitors from the Republic or Britain from attending. Foreign visitors arriving in British ports and airports, however, could be impeded; he suggested a meeting to discuss this question between the NIO, the Home Office, the MoD and the FCO. The Home Office advised that its Immigration and Nationality Department should be involved in any plans to prevent ‘undesirable aliens’ from attending the Officials’ Festival of Anti-Imperialist Struggle.⁵⁵ There would later be angry scenes in the House of Commons over the staging of the event.⁵⁶ During the weekend before it opened eight Germans and one Austrian were sent back from Dover, the

⁵⁴ UK embassy (Dublin) to FCO, 24 Jun. 1974, in TNA, FCO 87/286.

⁵⁵ NIO to MoD, 23 May 1974, and HO to NIO, 26 May 1974, in TNA, FCO 87/286.

⁵⁶ *Irish Times*, 20 Jul. 1974, p. 9.

Home Office stated, and two others from Folkestone.⁵⁷ Justice minister Patrick Cooney had made clear his disapproval of the conference and that foreign visitors arriving to attend it would be prevented from entering the state. In July a Vanguard Unionist assembly member wrote to Cosgrave over this issue and the taoiseach's private secretary replied, enclosing a copy of Cooney's statement. The private secretary pointed out that a number of 'aliens' had been refused entry to the state, because they were believed to be visiting to attend the event.⁵⁸ Invitations had been sent around the world – the festival would not just explain the Irish struggle, but also aim to see how the Irish could aid their 'friends' abroad.⁵⁹

The festival opened in Dublin with condemnation of the Provisionals' bombing campaign in Britain for alienating the working class there from the aims of the Irish struggle. *The Irish Times* reported that more than 160 delegates from more than twenty countries were there for the festival. One French visitor had been turned back at Rosslare. Official Sinn Féin's Tony Heffernan stated that, 'It must be the objective of Irish revolutionaries to win the support of the British working class for our struggle and not to incur their opposition and hatred by senseless bombing campaigns in Britain.' Later in the week an *Irish Times* editorial noted that Cooney was 'obviously worried', but welcomed what it saw as the sensible points that had been made at the festival, such as urging dialogue with loyalists in the North and condemning the Provisionals. But the editorial questioned republicans' understanding of the 'imperialism' term, specifically its exclusive use in relation to the West: 'What does the Festival think of the Soviet Union's version of imperialism? The excesses of capitalism are to be condemned, but so are the excesses of the Soviet Union.'⁶⁰ Visitors from abroad came from Southern Rhodesia (later Zimbabwe), and Basque, Breton,

⁵⁷ *Irish Times*, 22 Jul. p. 6.

⁵⁸ Taoiseach's private secretary to Harvey, 26 Jul. 1974, in NAI, TAOIS 2005/7/598.

⁵⁹ 'Anti-Imperialist Festival in Ireland', in NAA, 'Terrorism – Activity in support of the Irish Republican Movement', Vol. 4.

⁶⁰ *Irish Times*, 23 Jul. 1974, p. 8; *ibid.*, Jul. 25, p. 11.

Québécois, Puerto Rican, Scottish and Welsh nationalists.⁶¹

British press coverage of the festival had been hostile, and headlines in tabloids such as the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror* referred to (Official) IRA 'terror'. The more sensationalist headlines were compiled into a collage by *The United Irishman*, suggesting that these newspapers were believed to be taking their cue here from Whitehall sources.⁶² Press hostility would not be confined to Britain: the ASIO noted that *The Herald* (Melbourne) had reported from Glasgow that 'some of the most dangerous people in the world' were expected for the festival, which would be financed by the KGB.⁶³ The Australians had more than Irish conferences on their mind. There were concerns about stolen weapons, from their large holdings in dispersed locations, ending up in the hands of 'overseas terrorists'. Australian army representatives in London requested information on how a stolen F1 sub-machine gun could be transported to Ireland; a revolver had also been taken during the same raid in 1972 on a Cadet Brigade armoury, but had not been recovered. The Australian Department of Defence (Army) asked the Directorate of Military Intelligence for an assessment of the possibility of this incident being symptomatic of a future trend. 'The possibility of Australia being a source of weapons for overseas terrorists even in small numbers, obviously has serious political ramifications.'⁶⁴

Speculation about the security dangers arising from a Russian embassy in Dublin went beyond the FCO. Now that the mission had opened, it would be the turn of the US administration. In August, the Foreign Affairs secretary, Paul Keating, informed his minister, FitzGerald, that Moore had requested a meeting with Cosgrave to discuss his concerns over the Soviet embassy. There were fears in Washington that the Russian

⁶¹ Millar and Hanley, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 278-9.

⁶² *United Irishman*, Aug. 1974, pp. 8-9.

⁶³ ASIO, 25 Jul. 1974, in NAA, 'Terrorism – Activity in support of the Irish Republican Movement', Vol. 4.

⁶⁴ Department of Defence (Army) to Directorate of Military Intelligence, 23 May 1974, in NAA, 'Terrorism – Activity in support of the Irish Republican Movement', Vol. 4.

mission could be a base for spying on US installations in Britain and Western Europe, and the US government offered to have experts explain counter-espionage techniques to the Irish. Keating had pointed out to the Americans that the Soviet embassy was small in scale and that Dublin had taken precautions. The Irish government would welcome advice on counter-espionage techniques, but Keating had stressed he felt US fears were exaggerated.

The US ambassador had ruffled feathers in Dublin. As Keating wrote to FitzGerald,

‘I am very surprised that the Americans should seek to raise this matter with the Taoiseach and not with you. It is quite uncalled for them to do so unless they have some matter of important and delicate information to convey to us. I see no reason why this should be the case. Consequently I think that while you should yourself see Mr Moore you should discuss the matter with the Taoiseach on your return and put it to him that it may not really be necessary for him to receive Mr Moore.’

While Keating would be open to receiving expert views on counter-espionage techniques, he advised FitzGerald that Dublin should be non-committal in this matter. Accepting US help in security matters raised the issue of political control: ‘We have, after all, to consider to what extent we must protect ourselves from undue American influence as much as we have to protect ourselves from Russian or Communist influence.’ Keating had in mind recent, but unspecified, examples of the influence of certain US agencies in other countries – he may have been alluding to the CIA’s alleged role in the right-wing coup in Chile the previous year. He concluded by reminding FitzGerald that the Irish had not been treated by the Nixon administration with the respect they deserved, and the US request for a meeting with Cosgrave should be regarded in this light: ‘We also have to consider the extent to

which a request of the Ambassador to be received by the Taoiseach should be granted in view of the difficulties the Ambassador in Washington has in being received at any kind of high level by the American authorities and the continued failure of Dr Kissinger to see you.’⁶⁵ Irish diplomacy had not always been attuned to the needs of a potentially helpful superpower – landing rights in Dublin for US airlines had been refused in 1965 – and this could prove costly, as Hillery found when he sought the assistance of the Nixon administration in 1972.

The visitors to the ‘anti-imperialist’ conference in Dublin and Belfast received a message of welcome from the Official IRA’s prisoners – in ‘Britain’s concentration camp’ at Long Kesh, and elsewhere, including the women’s prison in Armagh. The visitors had been told that they would see ‘imperialism’ in action. However, it would be stressed that the fight against the security forces in the North was part of a global struggle: Irish republican rhetoric and the language of international Marxism could mingle as Irish left-wing republicans sought to redefine their ideology in a wider context.⁶⁶ Prison struggle had always been significant for adherents of militant Irish republicanism, and this had been true of the Official republican movement. There had been protests over the imprisonment of republicans for arms offences following the events of August 1969 and, in the North, Official prisoners on the *Maidstone* prison ship had protested to demand transfer to Long Kesh. In Belfast’s Crumlin Road, in May 1972, two Officials, including the future ‘OC’ in Long Kesh, took part in a hunger strike with Provisionals to demand ‘political status’. With over fifty Official IRA prisoners in Long Kesh, Whitelaw granted special category (political) status for paramilitary prisoners the following month.⁶⁷ Thus, as the Officials sought to position themselves in Moscow’s global alliance, the prominence given to prisoners at the 1974 conference established their credentials with other movements and

⁶⁵ Keating to FitzGerald, 27 Aug. 1974, in UCDA, P215/406.

⁶⁶ ‘Message from Irish republican prisoners’, in UCDA, P 29/C/10 (b).

⁶⁷ Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 210-4.

maintained continuity with the Irish republican tradition.

In October 1974, in a spectacular jail protest, Official IRA prisoners in Long Kesh joined the Provisionals in burning their section of the prison during a protest that would be described as the 'Battle of Long Kesh'. *An Eochair* (The Key), the Official prisoners' publication produced outside the jail, gave a vivid account of the confrontation with the British army and demanded the release of 'all political prisoners'.⁶⁸ There was an intense political atmosphere within the prison, and the various segregated groups among the prisoner population were a microcosm of the paramilitary organisations outside. The fact that Official republicans joined forces with their Provisional rivals is significant in that it sheds light on the Officials' ideological predicament at this time. One former Official IRA prisoner recalls that some of his fellow inmates, all housed in Cage 21 (comprising five huts within a compound), had joined the Officials because of geographical accident, or for the 'kudos' of paramilitary involvement. However, the Official prisoners' OC – Peter John Monaghan, a veteran of the 1950s campaign – argued that the Officials' republicanism had to be distinct to that of the Provisionals.⁶⁹ One ideological difference between the republican paramilitary groups would be the promotion of Soviet-led socialism within the Officials' compound. The daily newspapers available included the *Morning Star*, which supported the views of the CPGB, and the flags displayed during a May Day parade the following year were the Tricolour, the Starry Plough and the Soviet Union's Hammer and Sickle?⁷⁰

Out of a total of more than 1,000 prisoners in Long Kesh, in October 1974, only ninety were Officials. Burning the compounds to demonstrate against the prison regime had been the initiative of the much larger Provisional contingent, the former Official prisoner

⁶⁸ *An Eochair*, No. 8, pp. 1, 3; *ibid.*, No. 9, p. 1.

⁶⁹ Interview with former Official IRA prisoner, 4 Mar. 2010.

⁷⁰ Private information.

remembers. While less than coherent in ideological terms, the Officials were disciplined: Monaghan led them into action with their Provisional rivals, but managed to maintain distance from them at the same time. The Official prisoners set fire to the huts in Cage 21 and went over the perimeter wire, using mattresses, onto the football pitches. The next morning the combined republican prisoners on the pitch confronted British soldiers. After half an hour or so, having made a dramatic if vague point over conditions, the Officials marched back to their cage, leaving the Provisionals behind. They approached the UVF compound, whose commander, Gusto Spence, saluted Monaghan; in a strange gesture of jail solidarity, UVF prisoners gave the Officials cups of tea and jam sandwiches. Faced later with baton-wielding soldiers, in what was left of their compound, the Official IRA protest came to an end.⁷¹ This episode in Long Kesh reveals more than a fragment of byzantine jail politics because of the prisoners' relationship with the movement outside, particularly in the North: while still compelled to articulate traditional republican positions, the Officials needed to develop an identity distinct from the Provisionals.

Despite their opposition to the Provisional bombing campaign, in the North and in Britain, Official republicans were deported by the British authorities under new anti-terrorist legislation. Following the no-warning bombing of two pubs in Birmingham, in which twenty-one people died, the Labour government rushed the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill through the House of Commons, which became law on 29 November.⁷² Doherty, a Clann na hÉireann executive member, became the second Irishman to be deported from Britain under the Act in December. He had served a prison term (twenty months) for conspiring to buy arms in 1969. Leading members of Clann had been questioned by police following the passing of the anti-terrorist legislation, and two

⁷¹ Interview with former Official IRA prisoner.

⁷² Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ulster* (Blackstaff, Belfast, 1992, updated, paperback edn. 2005), pp. 722-3. The anti-terrorist legislation was rushed through the House of Commons. See Roy Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre* (Macmillan, London, 1991, Papermac edn., 1994), pp. 393-8.

other members of the Clann executive, James (Jim) Flynn and Danny Ryan, were also deported.⁷³ According to a Special Branch summary of extremist activity, two men associated with Clann na hÉireann in England had received prison sentences for possession of detonators and small-arms ammunition. Shortly before his arrest, in October 1973, Robert John Gallagher had been elected to the organisation's standing committee.⁷⁴

While Official republicans in 1974 had not departed publicly from the standard Irish republican position, an internal document analysing the northern situation in the first half of the year pointed towards an ideological U-turn. Enemies were identified for republicans other than the British state in *The North: From Civil Rights To Class Politics*. This document applied the class analysis, promoted in the Officials' educational material from 1973, to an Ireland dominated by the EEC. The Sunningdale agreement, involving the power-sharing executive and the Council of Ireland, marked a modernisation moment for capitalism with the 'reconciliation' of the Irish bourgeoisie. Uniting the working class would be republicans' priority as a result, not territorial unity. Anyone standing in the way of people's unity 'by proposing the unity of things or symbols' represented a class enemy, according to the document. The (Official) republican movement should attack the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) in a bid to win over Protestant workers. According to this argument, industrial issues would be the bridge to class politics and a Catholic minister for commerce, Hume, would be a good target: 'All general demands and agitations on general industrial employment such as leaflets or speeches in plants or factories should make certain to criticise and denounce any Catholic Minister of the Executive who can be dragged into the dispute.' Republicans had to be prepared to make any concessions that would convince the Protestant working class that their economic interests were being served by the Officials, the document contended. This would

⁷³ *Irish Times*, 5 Dec. 1974, p. 9; *ibid.*, 19 Dec. 1974, p. 10; *ibid.*, 22 Jan. 1975, p. 9.

⁷⁴ 'Summary of Activity by Irish Extremist Groups in Great Britain, 26 February – 4 March 1974', in TNA, FCO 87/285.

temporarily alienate much Catholic support, but so had the 1921 truce; the long-term dividends, like those of the truce, would be immeasurable. The document declared:

‘Sunningdale saw the unity of the Irish bourgeoisie. The next decade will see the unification of the grave-diggers of capitalism: the Irish working class.’⁷⁵

In November the Mallow-based Joe Sherlock, a trade union shop steward, won a respectable 5,363 votes in a by-election in the largely rural constituency of Cork North-East.⁷⁶

Left-wing republicans could denounce Provisional IRA bombing and proclaim their desire to achieve working class unity, but the British and Irish authorities remained hostile not least because of the existence of the Official IRA. The participation of Officials in a prison protest with Provisionals did not fit in with the dramatic changes envisaged for the movement in *From Civil Rights To Class Politics*. If influential figures close to the leadership were determined to foist a new agenda on the Official republican movement, those left-wing republicans influenced by Costello challenged this by forming a breakaway organisation, the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP).

(v) Official IRA action against ‘ultra-leftists’ and ‘fascists’

Having disagreed with the leadership over the question of pursuing armed struggle Costello would be gradually ousted from the Official movement. In December 1974 he set up the IRSP and its military wing, the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA). McAliskey joined the new organisation and a significant number of Officials in Belfast defected, who then claimed they were being attacked by former comrades. The Official IRA commander

⁷⁵ *The North: From Civil Rights To Class Politics*, in private collection, in the care of Prof. Eunan O’Halpin, Trinity College, Dublin.

⁷⁶ Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, p. 278.

in the city, McMillen, had come under pressure from his lieutenants to ensure this rival grouping did not get an opportunity to get off the ground, unlike the Provisionals. A feud with Costello's followers escalated as the Republican Clubs campaigned in the election for the Northern Ireland Convention – a forum for political parties to make proposals on internal government – and the Official IRA inflicted its first fatality on the same day as a planned press conference on policing reform.⁷⁷ The January 1975 issue of *The United Irishman* condemned IRSP members as ultra-leftist, or Trotskyist (and in the same edition eulogised the 'economic miracle' of Hungary, defending the Soviet intervention in 1956). Costello could not control the INLA in Belfast, Henry McDonald and Jack Holland argue, in their detailed history of the organisation. INLA members in the city defied their chief of staff by killing Seán Fox; unbowed by the Officials' show of paramilitary strength at the funeral of Fox, they then tried to assassinate Garland in Dublin. The INLA killed McMillen in April. While its military wing succeeded in assassinating several Officials, the IRSP had been fatally damaged by the circumstances of its birth. It suffered a severe blow at the end of the year when McAliskey resigned. She and her supporters had wanted the party to control the INLA and to form close links with Trotskyist groups. The Derry-based McCann eventually withdrew an application to join the IRSP after several months of arguing with Costello.⁷⁸

The Provisional IRA had declared a ceasefire at Christmas, and although this broke down, it would be resumed in February 1975. The northern secretary of state, Merlyn Rees, then created 'incident centres' in Catholic areas, but the Provisionals' ceasefire did not lead to a reduction in the overall level of violence. Sectarian murder, particularly of Catholics, accounted for a rising proportion of deaths. Jonathan Bardon observes that many local Provisional IRA units in the North 'did not share the enthusiasm of their "armchair"

⁷⁷ Henry McDonald and Jack Holland, *INLA: Deadly Divisions* (Poolbeg, Dublin, 1994, revised, updated edn. 2010), pp. 25-53; Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 282-300; Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, pp. 164-5.

⁷⁸ McDonald and Holland, *INLA*, pp. 54-86, 102-8.

Dublin superiors for the ceasefire'.⁷⁹ The operation and purpose of these 'incident centres' would prove to be controversial. Prior to a meeting with FitzGerald, the leader of the British opposition, Margaret Thatcher, had been advised that the 'incident centres' had been set up to police the ceasefire. According to the note, 'The IRA stated that they had been given permission to "police" republican areas as the army presence decreased (which Merlyn Rees denied).' Arising from the ceasefire process, the Irish government made known its unease about any deal between the Provisionals and the British government.⁸⁰

Meanwhile, in January the CIA had estimated that there were about 600 communists in the Irish state, according to its National Basic Intelligence Factbook. The entry for Ireland, as for other countries worldwide, gave statistics on such things as population, land use, defence forces, and other information, including votes cast for parties in the most recent election. O'Riordan followed Cosgrave, Lynch and Brendan Corish in the entry for (four listed) party leaders. The CIA issued the Intelligence Factbook twice a year for use by US government departments and agencies, with data supplied by the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Department of State.⁸¹ The CIA's January 1975 estimate for the number of communists in the Republic was twice the figure given twelve months previously.⁸²

Goulding explained Official republicans' uncompromising position on their role as revolutionaries in an *Irish Times* interview in March, one week after the unsuccessful attempt on Garland's life. Described as chief of staff of the Official IRA, Goulding blamed Costello's followers for the attack, and reiterated his view that the (Official) IRA should wage armed struggle only in defence of working class gains. Unlike pre-revolutionary

⁷⁹ Bardon, *Ulster*, p. 724.

⁸⁰ Note for Thatcher on NI political situation, 5 Mar. 1975, in CAC, THCR 2/6/1/101.

⁸¹ National Basic Intelligence Factbook, Jan. 1975, in CIA-RDP79-01051A000700010004-6, CIA Records Search Tool (CREST), NARA.

⁸² National Basic Intelligence Factbook, Jan. 1974, in CIA-RDP79-01051A000600010004-7, CIA Records Search Tool (CREST), NARA.

Cuba, for example, people in Ireland could express their opinion at the ballot box. Goulding said that the Official IRA would not stage any ‘offensive campaign’ unless it had the support of ‘the vast majority of the people’. He had outlined this position several times in the past, as in *Pravda* in April 1972. Goulding scorned the ‘incident centres’ – the Provisionals had succeeded in staging the most successful military campaign in Ireland since the War of Independence, but had gained nothing. ‘All they have at this moment is incident centres in the North.’ Goulding dismissed the SDLP and other Irish political parties; there would be no room for compromise. ‘Our job is to do away with the present social and political system that exists and to establish a socialist state.’ Revolutionary struggle included agitation and, in a reference to the Officials’ trade union strategy, infiltration. Reluctant to endorse the Soviet Union or China, Goulding suggested there might be parallels for Ireland’s socialist future in Albania of all places. Involvement in social and economic issues, not violence, would be the key to winning Protestant support in the North. And republicans’ demands in this sphere should be reformist: ‘reform is quite correct if it is led by revolutionaries’ but ‘reformist activity led by reformists stops at reform. That’s where we differ: we are revolutionaries.’⁸³

Mac Giolla outlined Official republicans’ priorities for the North when he visited Iceland later in the month. His views were ‘predictably’ given prominence in the communist newspaper *Thjodviljinn*, according to the British embassy. He presented Official Sinn Féin as a political party promoting peace and socialism, in contrast to the British ‘colonialists’ and Provisional ‘terrorists’. He also met a member of the (communist) People’s Alliance foreign affairs committee.⁸⁴ Mac Giolla’s message followed Goulding’s remarks in being in tune with the *Class Politics* document of the previous year.

⁸³ *Irish Times*, 8 Mar. 1975, p. 5.

⁸⁴ UK embassy (Reykjavik) to FCO, 18 Mar. 1975, in TNA, FCO 87/417.

Ultra-leftists were again dismissed during Goulding's speech at the Bodinstown Wolfe Tone commemoration in June. Appealing to Protestant workers to join the Irish revolutionary cause, Goulding attacked the IRSP and its military wing for perpetuating sectarian violence and bigotry. He described Costello's group as a few 'bitter, self-centred and unscrupulous men and women who wanted sectarian strife and chaos in order to emerge from the ashes to a revolutionary future'. In relation to the Irish government's Criminal Jurisdiction Bill, Goulding denounced the Irish state in liberation movement terms as 'fascist'. (Notwithstanding overtures to the Protestant working class and friendly relations between the Official IRA and the UVF in Long Kesh, a man had been killed when he stumbled upon a UVF gang planting a device on the railway line carrying the Officials' special Bodinstown train).⁸⁵

The British government's security policy in the North again caused disquiet among the opposition, and Rees met the Conservative's Northern Ireland spokesman, Airey Neave, in August. Neave told Rees that many believed he had an arrangement with the Provisionals; a widespread belief existed that the British intended to withdraw from the North. Rees hinted that the Provisional IRA did not constitute his most pressing concern. According to Neave: 'He replied that sectarian murders were the problem and that most of the violence was Orange, the murders being in the proportion of two Protestant to one Catholic.' Furthermore, Neave wrote to Thatcher, the secretary of state did not believe the UDR would be loyal in a crisis, 'as it had been infiltrated by extremists'. Neave and Rees also discussed 'the need for more prison accommodation' – a new jail to replace the Long Kesh camp. This development would have far-reaching consequences: paramilitary prisoners in Long Kesh had enjoyed 'political status' since 1972. Neave concluded his memorandum

⁸⁵ UK embassy (Dublin) to FCO, 24 Jun. 1975, in TNA, FCO 87/417; Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, p. 300. Costello would be assassinated in October 1977. See Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 402-3.

by stating that Rees did not give the impression ‘of being in control of the situation at all’.⁸⁶

In September a forum on Northern Ireland in Amherst, Massachusetts, heard contributions from representatives of several Irish revolutionary organisations, including Costello and Mac Giolla. Unlike Goulding, in 1972, Mac Giolla secured a visa, while the Provisionals’ Joe Cahill had been refused. The UDA sent representatives, unlike the UVF, but the CPI was not represented. The Irish acting consul in Boston, Carmel Heaney, attended as an observer, and dispatched a report as requested by FitzGerald; the information officer at the British consulate general in Boston also attended as an observer. Heaney reported that the two high points of the conference had been Costello’s presentation and the release by the UDA of a policy document on negotiated independence for Northern Ireland. However, unsurprisingly for a gathering of unrepresentative organisations, there had been an air of unreality at the event: ‘It was noticeable that the assumption throughout the conference was more often than not that the established institutions – the Governments, the Convention, the Churches, among them, were irrelevant.’ Mac Giolla’s call for a peace conference of organisations ‘devoted to working class interests’ did not receive a response either from the UDA or the IRSP.⁸⁷ Again, the policy enunciated by Mac Giolla had been very different to the emphasis placed on the British presence heard in Berlin in 1973, or Dublin in 1974. Recognising the power wielded by loyalist paramilitaries over the Protestant working class, the Official republican leadership had been entertaining hopes of a fruitful dialogue with elements within the UDA and UVF, and had met representatives of the latter organisation in Dublin in 1974. Those loyalists interested in discussions with republicans were not representative of their organisations, which engaged in sectarian killing rather than speculation about working class unity. During the UWC strike in May

⁸⁶ Neave to Thatcher, 28 Aug. 1975, in CAC, THCR 2/6/1/180.

⁸⁷ Acting consul general, Boston, to Seán Donlon, Foreign Affairs, 12 Sep. 1975, in UCDA, P215/165.

1974, which led to the collapse of the power-sharing executive, UVF bombs killed thirty-three people in Dublin and Monaghan.⁸⁸

‘Fascism’ or right-wing counter-revolution had been on the minds of many leftists in the West, particularly in the aftermath of the overthrow by the military of Salvador Allende’s left-wing government in Chile, in 1973. One young Irish socialist, at least, overcame his scruples about the Official IRA following the Chilean coup and joined Official Sinn Féin. While the existence of the party’s military wing had been known to ‘the very dumbest of street-dwelling canines’ at the time, Paddy Woodworth writes, as he saw it he had joined the only left-wing group with practical socialist policies. He would be made aware of the Official IRA’s ‘defensive’ role – within a year of joining Costello’s followers had left the Official republican movement. And the role of the Official IRA in the context of any move towards ‘fascism’ in the South would be vividly explained to Woodworth, after he had fallen foul of the movement’s ideologues. He had taken his ‘broad front’ instructions literally and allowed IRSP members in County Wicklow, Costello’s home ground, to participate in public meetings hosted by the Resources Protection Campaign, which called for state control of natural resources. Summoned to the Officials’ head office in Dublin, a leading party (and Official IRA) member rebuked him for his ‘liberal’ and ‘undisciplined’ behaviour. Woodworth heard that the necessary steps had to be taken to defend the (Official) republican movement, the only defence of the working class against Chilean-type counter-revolution. ‘Not for the first time, the terrorism of the Right was being used to justify recourse to “armed struggle” by the Left.’ Woodworth found that ideological deviation within Official Sinn Féin had been judged not by the party, but by a type of paramilitary court.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 226-8.

⁸⁹ Paddy Woodworth, ‘Pinochet and Me’, *History Ireland*, Vol. 16, No. 4, pp. 48-51.

On 29 October the Provisional IRA killed Robert Elliman in a series of attacks that evening on Official republicans in Belfast. Sixteen people were wounded, according to the authoritative *Lost Lives*, and McGurran claimed that the intended victims of another twelve shootings had escaped. As many as ninety Provisionals may have been directly involved in the first wave of attacks. Eleven people would die in this dispute: seven Officials, one Provisional, and three civilians.⁹⁰ People stayed indoors after dark in Catholic areas, and armed men patrolled the streets.⁹¹ In an initial statement, the Republican Clubs contended that the Provisionals had decided to maintain their ceasefire with the army by allowing their volunteers to attack the Official republican movement. Rees described the killings as a battle for 'military control' in Belfast. Shortly after this bout of violence ceased the Officials issued a pamphlet, *Pogrom*, which argued that there had been collusion on the ground between the Provisionals and the army.⁹² Following the first spate of shootings, the CIA noted in an internal circular that the reason for the attacks was unclear, but noted that the Officials had accused the Provisional leadership of allowing their men to 'blow off steam' during the ceasefire.⁹³ Whatever about the truth of the Officials' claims, it had undoubtedly been a one-sided battle.

The RID retained its interest in political developments within republicanism. In November 1975, as White had advocated in 1973, it thought that political ventures could be advantageous for the British government's agenda. Following the violence between the Provisionals and the Officials in Belfast, McCann described Irish republicanism and the IRA tradition as 'fundamentally undemocratic' in an article in *The Irish Times*. 'Republicanism cannot tolerate internal democracy. Thus it has no way of settling disputes except by trying violently to eliminate the advocates of dissident opinion.' This criticism

⁹⁰ McKittrick, Kelters, Feeney, Thornton and McVea, *Lost Lives*, no. 1507, p. 590; Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 315-24.

⁹¹ Ciarán de Baróid, *Ballymurphy and the Irish War* (Pluto, London, 1989, new edn. 2000), pp. 197-8.

⁹² Republican Clubs, *Pogrom* (Belfast, Nov. 1975), pp. 2, 4, foreword.

⁹³ Central Intelligence Agency, Staff Notes: Western Europe, Canada, International Organizations, 31 Oct. 1975, in CIA-RDP79T00865A002000330002-3, CIA Records Search Tool (CREST), NARA.

prompted the British embassy in Dublin to write to the RID, which had already asked the IRD for comment and background. The RID observed that McCann probably represented only a minority view among the Left, but, 'while we should be under no delusions about the real anti-democratic nature of the movement's philosophy', this should not 'inhibit us from seeking to exploit any signs of its developing a more genuine political identity – as McCann advocates'.⁹⁴ The IRD agreed too on the 'essentially undemocratic' nature of Irish republicanism. Provisional IRA spokesmen had never attempted to claim, as McCann had noted, that it derived its legitimacy from the will of the people. Rather, the IRD pointed out, the Provisionals saw their army council as the legitimate government. The IRD made a direct connection between the civil rights movement, which had mobilised the Catholic minority in an exercise in mass democracy, and the Provisional IRA. McCann had helped to radicalise the civil rights movement, 'thus in turn preparing the ground for the current IRA campaign'. This comment suggested a link, for example, between the PD march that had been attacked at Burntollet Bridge in 1969, and the Provisionals' bombing campaign. McCann had had influence over PD, the IRD noted, and had been a regular contributor to the Trotskyist *Socialist Worker*. Now close to the IRSP, 'Presumably he would be one of those who would prefer the IRSP to be more Socialist than Republican, more political than military.' Earlier in the year, with the onset of the INLA-Official IRA feud, McCann had argued that those IRSP members who wished to build a revolutionary alternative would have to 'reassert themselves' or see the party go down 'in bloody confusion'.⁹⁵

The Official republican movement's understanding of its liberation movement role had an inherent contradiction: securing electoral support by promoting reformist policies could always be jeopardised by the activities of a military arm, however much it tried to stay in the shadows. For the leadership, the shadows would be the Official IRA's destination: the

⁹⁴ RID to UK embassy (Dublin), 3 Dec. 1975, in TNA, FCO 87/417.

⁹⁵ IRD comment, 28 Nov. 1975, in TNA, FCO 87/417; *Irish Times*, 18 Nov. 1975, p. 9.

phasing out of special category status for paramilitary prisoners in the North highlighted its determination to promote the movement as a political party free of what had come to be seen as republican baggage.

(vi) Official republicans drop paramilitary trappings

The Gardiner report in January 1975 criticised special category status, arguing that it amounted to a virtual loss of disciplinary control by the prison authorities. In November, Rees announced his intention to phase out special status for those convicted of ‘terrorist’ offences and introduce a new parole scheme. The Official prisoners stated their position: ‘We will not barter political status’.⁹⁶ (The report had been dismissed as a ‘whitewash’ by *The United Irishman*.)⁹⁷ However, two months later, in January 1976, it became apparent that the leadership of the Official republican movement had become uncomfortable with supporting special status. If the existence of the Official IRA could not be admitted, and it was not fighting a war, how could it have prisoners of war? According to this logic, it had no political prisoners, and, naturally, neither could anyone else. If peace and jobs were the Official republican movement’s solution to the crisis in the North, then there could no longer be any political violence. In their message to the Official Sinn Féin árd fheis in January, the prisoners in Long Kesh outlined their understanding of the significance of the NIO’s plan: removing special category status would be an attempt to disguise the political reasons behind the northern conflict.

‘Merlyn Rees has announced the ending of political status for prisoners in Long Kesh. In this way he hopes that the political reasons for Long Kesh will be blurred in the public mind.’

⁹⁶ Hennessey, *Northern Ireland*, p. 213; Bourke, *Peace in Ireland*, p. 232; *An Eochair*, No. 12, p. 1.

⁹⁷ *United Irishman*, Feb. 1975, p. 13.

The prisoners restated their position: 'We assert the right of political prisoners to political status.'⁹⁸

Attitudes within the movement at large had dramatically changed since the Long Kesh protest in October 1974. A statement in the March issue of *The United Irishman* clarified the leadership's departure from the position that all 'political prisoners' should be released. There were no 'special' prisoners whose privileges might be extended to others; all prisoners in a 'corrupt system' were political. The issue should not be a fight for privilege, category or status for some.⁹⁹ Contradicting the argument that 'political status' should be retained, the leadership would allow the loss of special category status. This had not been a mere policy statement: it amounted to an Official IRA instruction to its prisoners in Long Kesh that they should move into the Maze and accept its regime. This approach was unprecedented in the history of Irish republicanism. Official republicans had gone on hunger strike in 1972 to secure 'political status' – Garland had proclaimed solidarity with their struggle from the platform at Bodinstown.¹⁰⁰ The Official republican movement now made demands that non-republicans in the North might support. *The United Irishman* report on the árd fheis highlighted the urgency of peace, jobs and class politics; the unemployed in the North were described as 'the key weapon' there; and a banner proclaiming 'Peace and Work' prominently featured at the movement's Easter commemoration in Belfast.¹⁰¹

As the British government grappled with implementing a new security policy for Northern Ireland, a Working Party on Law and Order considered a paper on future trends in February. According to this analysis, the Provisionals lacked a coherent political

⁹⁸ *United Irishman*, Feb. 1976, p. 3.

⁹⁹ *United Irishman*, Mar. 1976, p. 6.

¹⁰⁰ *United Irishman*, Jul. 1972, pp 6-7.

¹⁰¹ *United Irishman*, Mar. 1976, pp. 8-9, 16; *ibid.*, May 1976, pp. 8-9.

philosophy, but the Official IRA, on the other hand, promoted a coherent Marxist-Leninist policy 'of the Moscow persuasion'. However, the paper noted, this ideology had not taken root: the Republican Clubs had only won 15,000 votes in the May 1975 convention election, and the Official IRA did not pose a serious threat, particularly as a result of recent events in Belfast.

'They have maintained and generally kept a ceasefire against the British since 1972, and it is therefore not possible to say how many gunmen they could now put on the streets. As a result of their long ceasefire Republicans looking for violence have therefore gone elsewhere.'

Furthermore, the Officials' ranks had been reduced by defections to the IRSP. Following the Provisionals' 'all-out' attack in Belfast three months previously, the paper contended, the Officials had lost credibility 'by their inability to retaliate effectively'. However, it observed, the Official republican movement remained a potential long-term threat. The paper concluded that the Provisionals constituted the main security problem in the North. The Provisional IRA was a skilled, well-organised 'terrorist' force, it pointed out, but now exhibited 'some signs of internal argument' and commanded less support from the minority community than it had. The loyalist paramilitary organisations, though much larger, were less well organised and armed, according to the paper, but capable of reacting mainly by 'sectarian murder and mass disturbance'.¹⁰²

Meanwhile, what the NIO described as long-planned reforms in the prisons were coming to fruition. From March, newly-convicted prisoners would be housed in cells, wear prison clothes, and work or undergo training. According to the NIO, paramilitary violence was not politically-motivated:

¹⁰² Paper for consideration by Working Party on Law and Order in Northern Ireland, 19 Feb. 1976, in TNA, FCO 87/545.

‘The ending of special category status is not only an essential step back towards a proper prison administration. It is a corollary of the Government’s emphasis on the gangsterism and hooliganism that characterises much IRA and Loyalist terrorism.’

Recognising the opposition to the ending of special status for newly-sentenced prisoners, the NIO noted the ‘bellicose declarations’ of the Provisional IRA and the loyalist paramilitaries. This commentary was optimistic about the government’s initiative. It stated that the Provisional prisoners in Long Kesh had reluctantly withdrawn co-operation with the authorities, under orders from outside, and, despite widespread vandalism at the end of February, it now seemed likely that the loyalist paramilitaries would be mollified. Official republicans were not mentioned.¹⁰³

There were other indications of British optimism on the strength of the Provisional IRA. The prime minister, Harold Wilson, and Rees met Cosgrave and Corish in Downing Street on 5 March. Rees argued that the Provisionals did not represent anyone in the North, but they could maintain ‘a campaign of terror’ in spite of 15,000 troops, 5,000 police and 5,000 reservists. Wilson, however, said that there were signs of diminishing coherence and solidarity among the Provisionals, and ‘a number of maverick groups’ had emerged. Cosgrave said he intended to raise the question of fundraising for the IRA during his forthcoming visit to the US. Wilson added that there had been a fundraising issue in Canada in relation to loyalists, and he had asked the secretary of state for Scotland to speak on the subject during his visit to Canada.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ NIO, 4 Mar. 1976, and 1 Apr. 1976, in TNA, FCO 87/551.

¹⁰⁴ Note of Cosgrave-Wilson meeting, 5 Mar. 1976, in TNA, FCO 87/497.

The recollections of Harry Donaghy offer an insight into the reluctance of many Official IRA prisoners in Long Kesh to obey the leadership on what had become an important internal issue. Following Rees's announcement, Donaghy remembers, Official prisoners on remand were uncertain and afraid, and the 'OC' did not give them any information on what the new H Blocks entailed. Use of the word 'cell' in relation to the new prison had been frowned on; the approved term was 'cellular accommodation'. The 50 per cent remission element in the NIO's initiative was seen as a 'carrot' to attract acceptance for the H Blocks, and Donaghy believes he was being acclimatized for a move into the cells. Special visits for leadership figures such as McGurran strengthened the impression that the new policy on 'political status' had been decided outside. With rumours that special category status would go, he recalls, the consensus within his compound was that it should not be surrendered, but the prisoners understood that giving it up had become important for the movement outside. Long Kesh prisoners might not have been an 'embarrassment', he says, but they may have been considered an 'impediment'. The prisoners were told, Donaghy recalls, that the conflict in the North – 'this little war' – would have to end, and they could make a contribution to that objective. Another argument for acquiescing in the new policy would be that the Officials could not be seen to weigh in behind the Provisionals on the issue (as they had done in October 1974). After intense debates, he says he became convinced that special status should be retained; prisoners in Long Kesh had not been part of an aggravated crime wave. 'Political status' involved recognition that there were political reasons behind paramilitary violence.¹⁰⁵

As the authorities phased out special category status in Northern Ireland, it did not become an issue within the Republican Clubs. Now released, the former Official prisoner who witnessed the Long Kesh protest in 1974 remembers that ex-prisoners were not concerned. Special category status would be described as 'elitist'. But, more importantly, a strategic

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Harry Donaghy, 16 May, 2009.

argument existed in relation to the Provisionals – ‘we have to be different’. He recalls this realization as a defining moment for the movement: the Officials could not be seen to follow in ‘the Provos’ slipstream’.¹⁰⁶ This did not happen. In September 1976 the first Provisional sentenced under the new regulations, Kieran Nugent, refused to wear a prison uniform (the resulting standoff eventually led to hunger strikes).¹⁰⁷ Within Long Kesh there would be increasing disquiet among Official republican prisoners over special category status. However, their numbers were due to fall to thirty-five by the end of 1977, from a peak of 106 two years earlier, and the leadership decided a confrontation would not be worth the trouble. Following what prisoners perceived as an anti-leadership protest in March, the dispute came to an end. Official IRA prisoners with ‘political status’ could retain it, and that would be the end of the matter.¹⁰⁸ The prisoners’ bulletin, *An Eochair*, appeared once in 1977, and then publication ceased. Despite the importance to them of dropping IRA trappings, the leadership of a paramilitary organisation, run on Marxist-Leninist lines, had compromised with a small, but determined, group.

The Official republican movement had hosted another ‘anti-imperialist’ festival in July 1976. Mac Giolla welcomed the recent national liberation movement victories in Vietnam and Angola, and messages of solidarity were received from the Soviet Peace Committee and Al Fatah. The conference heard that economic issues such as the ownership of natural resources were an integral part of the struggle against ‘imperialism’ in Ireland. On this occasion the role of the movement’s prisoners would not be saluted.¹⁰⁹ Liberation movement struggles in Africa at this time were particularly important in the eyes of the communist bloc. Superpower conflict in the Third World would be at its peak in the 1970s and early 1980s, Westad argues, when developments there ‘had most significance for the

¹⁰⁶ Interview with former Official IRA prisoner.

¹⁰⁷ English, *Armed Struggle*, pp. 190-2.

¹⁰⁸ Private information.

¹⁰⁹ *United Irishman*, Aug. 1976, pp. 4-5.

wider conduct of the Cold War'.¹¹⁰ Some visitors to the 'anti-imperialist' festival were again refused entry by Irish and British authorities. A representative of an Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee had been sent back from Dublin airport; Justice stated that it would keep a close eye on those travelling to attend the festival and might refuse entry to others. British immigration officials arrested two people, thought to be from France, en route to Dublin. Representatives from the MPLA and the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), however, were expected to attend. Later in the week, following the assassination by the Provisionals of the British ambassador, Ewart-Biggs, Official Sinn Féin said the killing could only lead to repressive measures.¹¹¹ When the president, Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh, referred the subsequent emergency legislation to the Supreme Court for a binding verdict on its constitutionality, Donegan's abusive remarks over this action led to Ó Dálaigh's resignation.¹¹²

In another move away from the Officials' paramilitary past, the Irish Democratic Youth Movement replaced Fianna Éireann in October. And the term 'Group B' would now be favoured over 'IRA'.¹¹³ The determination to drop the trappings of the Official IRA would extend to jesuitical denials of links between a renamed party and paramilitary groups. Following the January 1977 árd fheis, Mac Giolla said Sinn Féin The Workers' Party (SFWP) or, in the North, Republican Clubs The Workers' Party, had set itself against militarism. He stated:

'We have completely disassociated ourselves from all paramilitary organisations. We are totally opposed to militarism and terrorism, and we have rooted out that element from our organisation.'

¹¹⁰ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005), pp. 3-5, 207-49.

¹¹¹ *Irish Times*, Jul. 20 1976, p. 14; *ibid.*, Jul 24 1976, p. 11.

¹¹² O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, p. 339.

¹¹³ Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 332-4.

Militarism had been long abandoned; terrorism and violence were not quite the same thing. *The Irish Press* pointed out, correctly, that the Official IRA had an important defence role in the North.¹¹⁴ Just as the party could not disassociate itself from ‘political prisoners’, it could not escape the consequences of association with the Official IRA. In August the British embassy in Dublin would observe that the most recent feud with the Provisionals in Belfast had probably damaged the image of the party as a purely political organisation. Mac Giolla repeated standard denials: ‘Two years ago I made it clear that we were absolutely rooting out from our ranks anybody who had any elements of continuing terrorist or militarist tactics... last year I made it abundantly clear once again.’¹¹⁵ Once more he was jesuitical in his choice of words. Later that month, the party wrote to the British embassy to protest at the detention of Republican Clubs councillor Bernie McDonagh. He had been charged with possession of explosives, following the discovery of ammunition and explosives in his advice centre. The language of class politics would be used to define McDonagh’s political role – his had been a struggle for ‘peace, democracy and redevelopment in West Belfast’.¹¹⁶

The depth of feeling within Long Kesh on the threatened loss of special status, as outlined here in relation to the Official republican prisoners, demonstrated the sensitivities of the issue for republicans. The NIO, viewing paramilitary activity in the North as ‘terrorism’ which did not command popular support, underestimated this depth of feeling. The determination of the Official republican movement’s leadership to abandon the trappings of paramilitarism illustrates that it was prepared to be ruthless in its pursuit of popular support around economic issues that could appeal to the working class.

¹¹⁴ UK embassy (Dublin) to FCO, 31 Jan. 1977, in TNA, FCO 87/601.

¹¹⁵ UK embassy (Dublin) to FCO, 18 Aug. 1977, in TNA, FCO 87/601.

¹¹⁶ Sinn Féin The Workers’ Party to UK embassy (Dublin), 30 Aug. 1977, in TNA, FCO 87/601.

(vii) Officials ‘most serious non-violent threat to Republic’

With the establishment of full diplomatic relations between Ireland and the Soviet Union, the British embassy in Dublin had pointed out that there would be increased contacts between the Soviets and Irish left-wing groups, with the CPI and Official Sinn Féin the most favoured.¹¹⁷ Russian embassy representatives now attended conferences and meetings to bestow approval on various Irish fronts. For example, the Soviet ambassador addressed a meeting of the Irish United Nations Association in November 1975. One of the many hostile questions asked of him, the British embassy reported, was whether republican paramilitaries would receive training in Moscow. The ambassador replied, without irony, that the Soviet Union did not interfere in the internal affairs of other states in this way. The left-wing political correspondent of *The Irish Times*, Dick Walsh, said that Irishmen should question their own institutions and way of life, and referred to the ‘hysteria’ whipped up by some who alleged that the state faced an armed conspiracy. A British embassy official commented: ‘This meeting can hardly have been described as a triumph for Soviet diplomacy. The Ambassador is a very uninspiring speaker although he has a good command of English.’¹¹⁸ The Resources Protection Campaign, in which Official republicans were prominent, also received the favours of the USSR embassy. During a promotion week in November 1975, an exhibition had been attended by visitors from the Transport Workers’ Union of the Soviet Union.¹¹⁹ The following year the Soviet ambassador attended an event to commemorate Michael Davitt, the Fenian and land reform campaigner.¹²⁰ Articles in the Officials’ theoretical publication illustrated the desire of the leadership to be seen to unapologetically follow Moscow’s line. For example, one piece on prominent Soviet dissidents was headlined ‘Solzhenitsyn Serves Capitalism’.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ UK embassy (Dublin) to Eastern European and Soviet Dept., FCO, 15 Jan. 1975, in TNA, FCO 87/420.

¹¹⁸ UK embassy (Dublin) to FCO, 27 Nov. 1975, in TNA, FCO 87/420.

¹¹⁹ Resources Protection Campaign annual report 1974-75, in UCDA, P29a/125.

¹²⁰ Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, p. 334.

¹²¹ *Teoiric: Theoretical Journal of the Republican Movement*, No. 5.

The strategy of the Provisional IRA, in the context of a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) in the North, had been the subject of a speculative Garda memorandum in 1975. A UDI situation would be dominated by the loyalist paramilitaries, the memorandum noted, supported by 75 per cent of the UDR and 50 per cent of the RUC. The Provisionals could then be expected to intensify their 'patriotic war' – threatening the authority of the Irish government. The memorandum recommended the expansion and modernisation of the Defence Forces as the best deterrent against Provisional designs.¹²² Cooney subsequently requested a Garda assessment of the security problems that might arise from an influx of northern refugees. Its conclusions were summarised within his department: a large-scale influx would create enormous problems for the Garda and the IRA (Official and Provisional) would seek to take advantage of the situation. This assessment pointed out that Catholic refugees would almost certainly swing towards 'the various wings of the IRA' (Official and Provisional), and pressure groups with 'communist tendencies' would exploit the situation to the full, as would those 'advocating a 32 county Socialist Republic'. (South) Lebanon provided a parallel: for the host country, the tremendous problems created by dispossessed people, such as Palestinians, were aggravated when they were accommodated in large centres. This assessment recommended that a policy of maximum dispersal be implemented if a major refugee problem should occur. 'Towns such as Dundalk, Monaghan, Buncrana' and so on 'could well become shades of the Bogside, Ballymurphy or the Falls' without a refugee dispersal policy.¹²³ The questions posed by these memoranda, however, remained in the realm of speculation.

A British security assessment of the Irish state in 1976 perceived the Official republican movement as a revolutionary organisation dedicated to the cause of a united Ireland. Since the split with the Provisionals, the paper contended, the Officials had become a

¹²² Assistant commissioner, Garda Síochána, to secretary, Dept. of Justice, 6 Jul. 1975, in NAI, JUS 2005/155/6.

¹²³ Garda Síochána to secretary, Dept. of Justice, 1 Aug. 1975, in NAI, JUS 2005/155/6.

predominantly political movement, and their conditional ceasefire, declared in 1972, remained in effect. The Official IRA retained the capability of 'selective sabotage' in support of political agitation, but, compared with the Provisionals, its military capability remained slight and localised. According to this assessment, the total membership of Official Sinn Féin stood at around 1,000 and an estimated 1,500 had attended the Bodinstown Wolfe Tone commemoration in 1976, evenly divided between north and south. Official republicans had a small but significant following in the unions, the universities and the media, the paper noted: 'As a result they are the most serious non-violent threat to the established institutions of the Republic.' The main threat to the Irish state, the paper observed, came from the Provisional IRA and its subordinate, Provisional Sinn Féin. By early 1976, in the North, there were probably fewer than 400 Provisional IRA members prepared to plant a bomb or fire a gun, the assessment noted, but it had been demonstrated that 'comparatively few volunteers are needed to wage terrorist war successfully'.¹²⁴

As the Troubles continued to spill over the border, the Cosgrave government faced serious problems with the Provisionals and allied maverick elements. It dealt firmly, and successfully, with the kidnappers of Dutch industrialist Tiede Herrema, and the flight carrying the remains of hunger striker Frank Stagg from England was diverted to avoid a Provisional showpiece funeral.¹²⁵ According to an FCO note of the March 1976 meeting between the British and Irish governments, Corish said that the Herrema kidnapping and the Stagg funeral had shown that support for terrorism in the South was minimal. Wilson said that both issues had been handled 'brilliantly'.¹²⁶ Later in the year, following discussions between Cosgrave and Neave, Thatcher wrote to the taoiseach to congratulate him on the successful outcome of the kidnapping of Herrema:

¹²⁴ 'State of Security Assessment: Republic of Ireland', 1976, in TNA, FCO 87/536.

¹²⁵ Lee, *Ireland*, pp. 479-80; Bell, *Secret Army*, pp. 424-5.

¹²⁶ Note of Cosgrave-Wilson meeting, 5 Mar. 1976, in TNA, FCO 87/497.

‘I hope your example will be followed by other countries in their dealings with terrorism. We all admire the courageous action which you and your Government took to uphold the rule of law.’¹²⁷

Before the sixtieth anniversary of the Easter Rising, Cooney contended that the Provisionals’ violence and the Officials’ ‘Sino-Hibernian’ Marxism represented equal threats to the state. In February 1976 an ad hoc alliance of Official Sinn Féin, Labour’s Liaison of the Left and the CPI had launched the (short-lived) Left Alternative. There had been an awareness within the Official republican movement that it could take advantage of the Labour Party’s participation in government, with rising inflation and unemployment. Co-operation with the CPI did not have long to run as it competed with Official republicans for control of the Resources Protection Campaign. The Official republican movement, increasingly under the influence of Eoghan Harris and Smullen, campaigned on its own on economic issues, such as the Dublin Port and Docks Board plan for an oil refinery in Dublin Bay. It saw state control as the answer to all economic ills: ‘we want the state sector to expand until it has obliterated all private enterprise’. In the meantime, industrialisation would be progressive because it strengthened the working class, the gravedigger of capitalism. This deterministic argument would be encapsulated in *The Irish Industrial Revolution* – mainly Harris’s creation, dismissing the ‘mythical’ national question – which appeared at the 1977 árd fheis, graced with a banner declaring ‘Working for Peace, Planning for Progress’. The document widened the rift between the Officials and the CPI, which criticised its ‘massive revision of republicanism’.¹²⁸ The publication of *The Irish Industrial Revolution* represented a seminal moment for the Officials and marked the

¹²⁷ Thatcher to Cosgrave, 14 Nov. 1975, in CAC, THCR 2/6/1/101.

¹²⁸ Hanley and Millar, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 325-30, 336-43.

ideological U-turn mapped for them in *From Civil Rights to Class Politics*, three years earlier.

In August 1976 the Irish embassy in Rome dispatched to Foreign Affairs a translation of a letter from an Official IRA representative in Italy, which had appeared in the Italian Communist Party newspaper *l'Unità*. The ambassador had previously reported that the embassy had not been aware of such a representative in Rome, but would inform Foreign Affairs of any information that came to hand. The letter criticised the fact that news items on the Provisional IRA appeared under headlines referring to the 'IRA', as this created confusion in relation to the various 'anti-colonial' forces in Ireland. The Officials' representative pointed out that the (Official) IRA was a national liberation movement of Marxist orientation, as was its 'political counterpart' (Official) Sinn Féin. The Provisionals' 'anti-communist' policy had reached its logical conclusion the previous November, according to the representative, when they had killed 'ten' Officials and wounded forty in collaboration with the British army. What was described as a 'right-wing pogrom' had involved sixty attacks in the first three days, and eight attacks in ten days, with the usual army patrols absent. The use of 'IRA' in an inexact way clouded analytical thought which 'all of us, as communists' had to employ. Liberation struggles around the world involved various movements – left and right-wing – in the same country, such as in Angola. According to this argument, the Provisionals were the equivalent of the right-wing anti-colonialist forces in Angola.¹²⁹

While the Officials' might describe themselves as communists to the readers of *l'Unità*, such language would not be used when appealing to voters in Dublin. In a June by-election, in Dublin South-West, Mac Giolla more than doubled his 1973 vote, finishing

¹²⁹ Irish embassy (Rome) to Anglo Irish Division, Foreign Affairs, 2 Aug. 1976, and letter from Official IRA representative to *l'Unità*, 27 Jul. 1976, in NAI, DFA 2007/57/2.

fourth on the first count (1,697) ahead of three other fringe candidates: Kevin Boland (1,186); a representative of the IRSP (287); and the Communist Party of Ireland (Marxist Leninist) candidate (113). Labour's Brendan Halligan, the by-election victor, had brushed off the (Official) Sinn Féin challenge to the Labour Party's participation in government with Fine Gael, but Official republicans had demonstrated that they could appeal to working class voters. During the campaign Mac Giolla had appealed to young people, in particular, to support policies on exploiting natural resources and state job creation, rather than 'string-pulling capabilities'.¹³⁰ This by-election performance illustrated how the promotion of reformist demands, and hard work, could later secure council and Dáil seats for SFWP.

As the Soviet embassy openly endorsed various Irish campaigns, the Official republicans pressed ahead in their drive to promote economic issues at the expense of traditional socialist-republican concerns. But reformist demands in the mouth of a revolutionary party unwittingly created a reformist – 'social democratic' – dynamic that would ultimately prove to be destructive for Goulding and Garland's project for an Irish revolution. Mallow and Waterford would prove to be more receptive to social democracy than communism.¹³¹

(viii) Conclusion

From 1973-76 the Official republican movement undertook a Cold War role in Ireland as an ally of the Soviet Union and looked forward to a future as a national liberation movement, at least in the South (a parliamentary democracy for half a century). Soviet mischief-making in Irish affairs – largely confined to supplying arms to paramilitaries –

¹³⁰ *Irish Times*, 12 Jun. 1976, pp. 1, 9; *ibid.*, 8 Jun. 1976, p. 13; *ibid.*, 9 Jun. 1976, p. 6; *ibid.*, 10 Jun. 1976, p. 15. The Communist Party of Ireland (Marxist Leninist) – a sect-like group – had emerged from the Maoist Internationalists and bitterly opposed the pro-Soviet orthodoxy of the CPI.

¹³¹ The WP split in 1992. See Paddy Gillan, 'From the Workers' Party to Democratic Left: Political Change and the Limits of Republicanism', in Richard Deutsch (ed.) *Les Républicanismes Irlandais: Actes du Colloque de Rennes* (Terre de Brume – Presses Universitaires de Rennes, Rennes, 1997), pp. 139-55. See also Rekawek, 'How "Terrorism" Does Not End', pp. 371-2.

had been indirect, although the US expressed fears to Dublin of an espionage threat to NATO arising from the Russian embassy. As American, British and Irish security agencies co-operated to prevent the importation of Soviet-sourced arms into Northern Ireland, Moscow responded to seizures by using Cold War language to denounce Britain. Goulding's description of the Irish state as 'fascist' echoed the rhetoric of Third World liberation movements and, unsurprisingly, Cooney equated the Officials with the Provisionals as being an equal threat to the Irish state. This view of the 'Sino-Hibernian' menace might be seen in terms of Dublin's traditional perceptions of communist/republican subversion. The NIO equated Official republicans with the Provisionals by describing them as 'terrorist', but this might be viewed as employing a Cold War prism in its understanding of the Officials as comprising a component of a Soviet-backed global network. Tarring all paramilitaries as 'terrorist' proved to be simplistic: the NIO's criminalisation policy assumed that paramilitaries could not muster popular support, and the Provisionals would disprove this theory during and following the H Block hunger strikes. Bizarrely, the Official republican movement – seeking to lead the gravediggers of capitalism – effectively aligned itself with the capitalist state consensus on republican 'terrorism'. This included the Irish government, the NIO, the British government and the leader of the British opposition. Abandoning republican demands did not do much damage to the Official movement in the South, but proved disastrous in the North.

CONCLUSION

A distinctive left-wing strand within Irish republicanism began to emerge from 1962, having lain dormant for almost a quarter of a century. Republicans and communists found common cause in opposing Ireland's membership of the EEC, while the Kremlin supported liberation movement struggles in the Third World to undermine the West. Following decades of avoiding contact with communists, the IRA's appointment of Johnston in 1965 as education officer represented a new departure. Identifying the Protestant working class in the North as an ally would be an important aspiration for the left-wing leadership in this new republican project. The captured IRA blueprint in 1966 highlighted the leadership's readiness to break with tradition in prioritising the winning of popular support for the 'army of the people'. Mac Giolla stressed the significance of securing popular support for the leftist strategy when he boasted that the civil rights agitation had shaken the Unionist Party as never before. Garland identified the difference between the Official IRA and the Provisional IRA: the Officials attributed equal importance to armed struggle and political agitation. The Official republicans' ceasefire then highlighted the fact that they prioritised political struggle and sought to avoid sectarian conflict in the North.

The Irish, British and US governments connected left-wing republicanism to the Soviet Union. Berry's inclusive definition of 'communist' took in republicans associated with the movement's interest in agitation, which allowed him to urge the cabinet to consider internment. Less than nuanced perceptions of agitators would not be confined to Dublin. In Stormont, Craig, O'Neill and Chichester-Clark understood the civil rights movement as a republican/communist conspiracy. Gilchrist, informed by his experience in Indonesia, believed that the IRA could manipulate the civil rights agitation. The US embassy in Dublin interpreted the split in the republican movement as the result of a failed communist

take-over attempt. In this viewpoint, the Official republicans were a communist vanguard since the CPI remained ineffectual. When Palestinian hijackers made headlines, the British embassy in Dublin located the Official republican 'demo fringe' within the international context of Soviet-backed liberation movements. Whitehall had Operation Foot in mind as it contended that the Official IRA would be the KGB's natural ally when a Russian embassy opened. *Pravda's* profile of Goulding provided further evidence then that the Official IRA had secured Kremlin approval as Ireland's liberation movement.

NATO powers had a mutual understanding in relation to Irish affairs during the early years of the Troubles. Britain could count on the support of the White House: the London-Washington 'special relationship' saw the Nixon administration express support for British security and political measures in Northern Ireland. The Irish state co-operated with Britain and the US. American, British and Irish security agencies shared intelligence to prevent the importation of (often Soviet-sourced) arms into Ireland for use by paramilitaries, and the US embassy in Dublin received information on subversives from Irish security authorities. British officials in London briefed the US administration on the situation in the North following the introduction of internment and again following Bloody Sunday. Britain's NATO allies received an explanation for the Operation Motorman initiative. However, the Soviet Union did not have a strategic ally in Ireland. Aside from supplying the Official IRA with arms, Soviet involvement in Irish affairs had been largely confined to propaganda attacks on Britain. The Russian embassy in Dublin did not become a centre for Soviet espionage activities, but would confine itself to bestowing ideological approval on various Irish political causes. The maxim 'England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity' does not apply to the Official republican movement's choice of the Soviet Union as its external friend. A Marxist-Leninist link was consistently developed with Moscow from the early 1970s until the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The Soviet Union and its satellites threatened the security of the West during the Cold War and it was natural that there should be common NATO assumptions on the nature of this threat. Such thinking could be simplistic: the Official IRA could hardly be identified by British and US officials as 'terrorist' in the same way as Black September. Maybe this can be understood as a newsworthy line for media consumption. Yet the NIO regarded the Officials' Soviet-orientated conference in 1974 as 'terrorist'. The influence of such simplistic thinking in the making of security policy decisions had consequences in Northern Ireland, as Craig and Freeland had demonstrated. Heath blamed widespread criticism of the introduction of internment on 'the IRA propaganda machine', and republican-inspired opposition to army measures in the North would also be seen in less than nuanced terms within the British security system. Tuzo and Carver saw NICRA as the propaganda wing of the Official IRA and the IRD made similar points in 1972 and 1975. The removal of 'political status' from paramilitary prisoners owed much to the assumption that 'terrorism' constituted the security problem in Northern Ireland. As had happened in the past during the Troubles, this security decision served to make matters worse.

The uniqueness of Northern Ireland's crisis has been over-emphasised. State responses to subversion were influenced by assumptions relating to wider trends during the course of the Cold War – the local and the international were not divorced from each other. 'Bringing in the international' is central to our understanding of the Troubles.

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