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The Harp and the Hammer:

An examination of Ireland's 1916 Easter Rising in its International Revolutionary context

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## Glossary of Terms

## Introduction

All's changed, changed utterly, a terrible beauty is born.

W.B Yeats' poem *Easter 1916* is often held up as shining example of literature, framing the moment in history when Ireland's destiny was moulded irrevocably by the insurrection in Dublin on Easter

Monday, 1916. Although the Easter Rising has been viewed as the turning point in Ireland's long struggle for independence, this dissertation examines Yeats' subject, exploring the background and implications within an international context of the Rising's legacy of romantic cohesion between nationalism and socialism.

There are a number of instances in the twentieth century highlighting Ireland's influence on emerging independence movements. In 1949, the new Indian state, in homage to Ireland took the same colours for its national flag when it first gained independence. Pan-African leader, Marcus Garvey, named his UNIA headquarters in Harlem 'Liberty Hall' as James Connolly had done in Dublin. Israeli guerrilla leader and future leader, Yitzhak Shamir, used Micael as his codename in fighting the British in homage to Michael Collins who was also studied by Mao Tse Tung.

Scholar, Declan Kiberd has proposed that the slow dismantling of the British Empire began in the GPO in Dublin 1916, emphasising its international significance as a radical act of dissidence in an almost feudal order. Ireland's efforts for independence were often perceived by similar groups within the British Empire and beyond as an example to aspire to.

A famous revolutionary leaflet seized by the Bengal police in 1929 quoted Patrick Pearse and urged Bengalis to imitate his sacrifice: "This is how a nation awakes. Flare up with the fire of vengeance for the annihilation of foreign enemies. You will find that the victory is yours. History bears testimony to this. Read and learn the history of Pearse-the gem of young Ireland-and you will find how noble is his sacrifice; how he stimulated new animation in the nation...Pearse died and by so dying he roused in the heart of the nation an indomitable desire for armed revolution. Who will deny this truth?"

Sean McConville adroitly expresses the interesting ripples 1916 had for a post WW1 world, Coming as it did in the midst of the Great War, the 1916 eruption of Irish republicanism was a tocsin of the modern age-the arrangements and way of life which would follow the fall of centuries-old empires, customs and patterns of obligation, and see the redrawing of many a map and ultimately a complete loss of political innocence. The Irish story, full of interest in itself, is of considerable significance for these wider developments.

It is this significance that is explored in this dissertation, highlighting the Easter Rebel's role not only in modern Ireland's beginnings, but as twentieth century revolutionary pioneers of both nationalism and socialism.

Yeats wrote in the rising's aftermath:

I had no idea that any public event could so deeply move me- I am very despondent about the future. At this moment I feel that all the work of years has been overturned.

For revolutionary contemporaries the work was just beginning, as all changed utterly in Ireland, the terrible beauty of revolution was equally born in Europe too.

## Chapter I-The Revolutionary Underground

...the [Easter] Rising was manipulated by evil-minded men affected by Socialistic and Revolutionary doctrines.

This was the reaction of the Bishop of Kerry to the events in Dublin in 1916. Just how much basis did this contemporary belief in the mutual relationship between socialism and revolution have in an Irish context, and how important was it in the wider battleground of European Revolutionary discourse and activity?

### Portugal's Example

The 1910 Republican Revolution in Portugal brings an enlightening insight into 1916 as it was one of the closest preceding events of its kind in Europe. Analysing Portugal's own clandestine-organised rising highlights the model of the leaders of 1916.

"In 1891, radical sections of the [Portuguese] Republican Party became more influential and appealed to the idea of a "revolution", using imagery from the French Revolution of 1789." The Republican Party, possessed a revolutionary arm, the Carbonária, a secret society, dedicated to a Portuguese nationalist republicanism with the overthrow of the monarchy by revolutionary means. Here in both goals and means, was another clandestine group similar to the IRB (Irish Republican

Brotherhood). Portugal's situation resembled that of Ireland during WW1, as Republican leaders agreed that revolution could only succeed, if they acted promptly. "...until the very eve of the 1910 revolution which overthrew the monarchy, it would still remain a rather small-scale force, addressing a mainly urban clientele and sometimes encountering serious downturns in activity." Much of the final organising was done by the Carbonária, which gathered arms and infiltrated the ranks of the armed forces. The IRB similarly tried to run guns (failing to) but succeeded in infiltrating an armed body, that of the Irish Volunteers. Both insurrections did not go to plan for unexpected reasons such as countermanding orders and were organised by clandestine conspiratorial radical groups. For many this national insurrection was the prelude to social revolution and despite firm emphasis of conservative values by republican spokesmen, it linked socialism and revolution in the minds of many early twentieth century Europeans.

Here was an armed insurrection, organised by a secret society dedicated to republican ideals in Western Europe. In Easter 1916's aftermath comparisons were made with 1910 Portugal in The Roscommon Herald, edited by a Jasper Tully, vitriolic anti-Parnellite not unsurprisingly unsupportive of Irish nationalism. The paper stressed that the Easter Proclamation was to establish a socialist republic and reminded its readers of the case of Portugal where priests and nuns were massacred by 'the Portuguese Sinn Feiners'. Although we should be wary of generalisations such as Tully's, as contemporaries had little information to work with, it highlights underground revolutionary movements in their international context.

### European Models

Clearly ideas and acts of revolution and insurrection against Europe's established regimes had been around for many decades preceding 1916. Ever since France's 1789 achievement, espousing ideas of liberty, fraternity and equality across Europe's nations during the Revolutionary years, many aggrieved, subjugated groups now had both inspiration and models to make ideologically driven bids. The French echo is evident with the adoption of the green, white and orange tricolour above the rebel held General Post Office (GPO) in Easter 1916.

Even though Napoleonic France was ultimately defeated in 1815 at Waterloo, France continued to

light the way for other nations with revolutions in 1830, 1848 and in 1871 (the Paris Commune was particularly important for Bolshevism). 1789's legacy has profoundly moulded Europe and the status of its nations as democracies today, most importantly by its dissemination of ideas and stirring of nationalism in countries like Germany, Italy and Ireland.

J. C Beckett argues that until importation of French ideas in these years, there was no sign of any political move against the framework of government in Ireland. Ireland is perhaps surprising as it has no geographical border with France unlike Germany and Italy which were invaded by the revolutionary armies of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In this period French aid and European ideas led to both the 1798 United Irishmen rebellion under Wolfe Tone and the 1848 "Young Ireland" insurrection respectively. Europe's interest in Ireland in this period is shown by the French Directory's assurance to Tone, noted in his diary that, "...they [France] never will quit England until our [Ireland] independence shall be recognised..." Roger Casement's appeal for German aid on behalf of the Easter Rebels echoed this. Wolfe Tone is a crucial figure in understanding Ireland's struggle for independence. "His story is not that of Ireland and Irish republicanism alone, but of the impact of the French revolution..." Hart asserts that the French Revolution's conspiracy of Equals led by Gracchus Babeuf in 1796 is the chief origin of the secret revolutionary society species. Fenianism owed much to the French achievement in both philosophical and operational terms.

Young Ireland was part of similar nationalist movements in Europe such as Young Italy, started by the famous Italian nationalist Giuseppe Mazzini, part of a new generation of Rebels in the 1830s owing much to Filippo Buonarroti and the Carbonari. Historically, Europe has had a crucial role in framing arguments and providing models for Irish independence struggles. Elliot makes the case of influences not just from 19th century Europe but the classics. New editions of Demosthenes emphasised civic liberty, public virtue which were common values throughout the Enlightenment, particularly attuned to the stranglehold England held over Ireland's parliament. Highlights Wolfe Tone's importance, strongly suggests that European influences from the 19th century on Irish revolutionary tradition have, "...for a century and a half been recognised as the originator of an

ideology which continues to dictate the shape of Irish politics." O'Leary, one of the first members of the IRB, credits Tone greatly, "To my mind, Theobald Wolfe Tone"...had much more to do with Fenianism than any famine or failure."

## Fenianism and Europe

Despite assertions in national commemorations of the Easter Rising as a public declaration of independence, the establishment of the first Dáil in 1919 as an expression of sovereignty, the Fenians or IRB remain best known as a conspiratorial, oath-bound society. Marcus Burke's introduction to John O'Leary's memoirs on early Fenianism (Irish Republican Brotherhood), illustrates that O'Leary and James Stephens' new direction of clandestine conspiratorial republicanism had direct roots Young Ireland's rebellion of 1848, itself part of a wider European nationalist context. When Stephens fled Ireland for Paris in 1848, he intended to soak up the lessons of revolutionary warfare in networks of Parisian secret societies. For many Fenians, acquaintance with European revolutionaries reflected their eagerness to master conspiracy and insurrection theories. The IRB's roots in the continental Carbonari model are further confirmed by Whelehan:

When recounting his experiences of exile for the Weekly Freeman in 1883, Stephens remarked that, once he had established that violent insurrection was the only means of securing an Irish republic, he began 'a particular study of continental secret societies, and in particular those which had ramifications in Italy; for Italians have in a certain way perfected conspiracy, and I thought that with certain reserves they were the best models to follow'.

O'Leary himself writes in his memoirs that, "Fenianism is the direct and, I think, inevitable outcome of '48, as '48 was the equally inevitable, if more indirect outcome of '98, and the immediate origin of the movement is undoubtedly to be found among the '48 refugees in America". The IRB and in the same vein the Carbonari and Bolsheviks, were small, contemporaneous revolutionary groups, formed with the express purpose of overthrowing governments or social orders. Hart's *The Fenians and the International Revolutionary Tradition*, recognises crucial common ground between these widely different groups. "By definition, these were organisations founded in secrecy, whose

membership was supposed to be known only to fellow members. Joining meant taking an oath of loyalty, obedience, silence, and dedication to the cause. Betrayal of that trust was usually declared to be a capital offence."

Louis Auguste Blanqui

Personifying the socialist heirs of the French Revolution was Louis Auguste Blanqui, whose writings were a model that influenced Bolshevik thinking and in which the IRB may have had direct roots. Spitzer writes, "Throughout the nineteenth century, an articulate minority advocated the revolutionary solutions of political problems and actively fostered the resolutions of ideological conflicts by physical violence." Blanqui was vital in the establishing French secret revolutionary societies, similar to the carbonari, where conspiratorial techniques were utilized to form a tightly disciplined and hierarchical organization. "The small isolated cells of the rank and file received orders from subaltern leaders who themselves were unaware of the identity of the mysterious directors of the conspiracy," that Spitzer describes could easily be used of the IRB and its "military council" in the planning of the Easter insurrection.

Stephens' familiarity with the Society of Seasons appears to be borne out by the organisational shape of the IRB in the 1860s. The cellular structure, secret oaths, emphasis on military discipline, commitment to urban insurrection and the presence of a strong leader/dictator were akin to Louis Auguste Blanqui's vision of a revolutionary organisation. Blanqui was a key contributor to the theorisation of insurrectionary warfare in the nineteenth century and his influence on the IRB's plans for rebellion merit consideration.

Studying Revolutionary thought's origins illustrates Blanquist influence and his legacy leads ultimately to the revolutionary triumph of the Bolshevik brand of socialism. It is difficult for scholars, critical or favourable of the October Revolution, to ignore similarities between, "Blanqui's faith in a compact, disciplined, insurrectionist organization and the Leninist concept of a Communist elite" acting as the "advance guard" of the proletariat, as well as their common proclamation of the necessity for a revolutionary dictatorship over the disarmed bourgeoisie." Despite arguments that Lenin was not Jacobin-Blanquist in texts such as *What is to be Done*- but writing in Russia's context;



or that Blanqui had little contact with contemporary international revolutionary communities; his theories bore revolutionary fruit in the pivotal years of 1916 and 1917 in Ireland and Russia.

### Marxism on Ireland

A key international perspective was none other than Fredrick Engels and Karl Marx's, who were very keen to view the Irish struggle as an important part of the framework of revolution in Capitalist Europe. Karl Marx's daughter, Jenny Marx, wrote much on the Irish question with one article in particular holding up the role Ireland had to play in Europe. On Gladstone's attempts to silence the Irish press, Jenny Marx wrote, "What can Mr. Gladstone's narrow-minded, out-of-date policies do against the international spirit of the nineteenth century?" It highlights the forces of Internationalism and its optimism for progress not only in continental Europe but Ireland. Marx's influence on key figures in the Irish revolution can be seen too, with Michael Collins utilising his ideas to make his case against partition in his book *Path to Freedom*.

Capitalism has come, not only to serve Britain's purpose by keeping the people divided, but by setting worker against worker, it has profited by exploiting both...the policy of divide and rule, and the opportunity it gives for private economic oppression-could bring nothing but evil and hardship to the whole of Ireland.

Although there was some sympathy from Engels towards Fenian actions, Marx and Engels condemned the "foolishness which is to be found in every conspiracy" or strictly nationalist, religious sectarian approaches of the Irish radicals. Anderson cites attacks of nationalists such as O'Donovan Rossa against the anti-clerical policies of the Paris Commune as setbacks for internationalism in this period. However the first Internationale in December 1869 messaged sympathy and support to the IRB. Lacqueur analyses a semi-subconscious approval for conspiracy, "But Marx and Engels knew, or instinctively felt, that the masses could not seize power unaided, that they needed a leadership and that in the final analysis 'Blanquism on a higher level' was essential."

Anderson's scholarship on Marx's Irish writings illustrates the changing importance of Irish events in international contexts and Marx's overall thinking about the relationship of core capitalist nations and their periphery. "In this sense, they represent a broader shift in his thinking, toward the notion that

struggles on the periphery of capitalism could become sparks that might very well go off in advance of the workers' revolution in the industrially developed societies. One cannot help but notice that this shift in thinking mirrored or helped frame Lenin's argument for the need for revolution in a less advanced Russia.

### The Underground Cell

Previous radical Irish nationalist insurrections' failures, and the oppressive Russian political climate under the secret police led both Fenians and Bolsheviks respectively to clandestine/secret groups sworn to their causes for much the same reason as Blanqui operated. The political situations and regimes they opposed meant revolution could only be successful if secrecy, military discipline and hard-core doctrines were adhered to vigorously. In Fenianism, Bolshevism and as Spitzer writes on Blanquism, a shared core belief was held that revolution as a will and idea could only be carried out by small groups that embodied both. The enlightened elite were operating in the name of the "masses", despite their involvement or consent to achieve their ends by insurrection. Also the transnational lives of professional soldiers such as Cluseret, Fariola and Orsini [who worked with Stephens towards the 1867 IRB insurrection] with careers spanning from the American Civil War, the Parisian Communards of 1871 and the Italian wars of 1859-60 making them effective vessels for circulation of international techniques of violent action.

Hart raises an important aspect, stressing similarities between the structure of underground movements in Imperial Europe and the IRB. The need for secrecy to avoid discovery meant conspiratorial organisation by "cells". These were not exactly democratic, but strictly hierarchical. "In principle, if not always in practice, they were organised from the top down and run by a small group at the top-or even by a single man. James Stephens was not the only 'dictator', although it was Blanqui above all who epitomised this leader principle." Although it is highly unlikely that circulation of these figures or groups was ever entirely widespread, due to necessary need secrecy, if not geographical difficulties, it would be difficult to imagine that these independent groups never got wind of their revolutionary colleagues' movements, did not read the same conspiratorial literature or have some limited contact and cooperation. Indeed it has also been claimed that the society

Stephens joined while in the Paris underground was the famous Blanqui organisation, the Society of Seasons, with its secret directory, circles and sections resembling the Fenian organisation as Stephens later planned it.

Previous work places 1916 as but an episode in a wider European Revolutionary context, not only of the Portuguese 1910 revolution explored earlier, but of Russia and Poland in 1905, and importantly 1917's Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia. Hart highlights interesting echoes of earlier periods of IRB activities, such as the Invincibles and dynamiters of the 1880s, who were precipitated by Russian Populists in 1870s and anarchists in Spain. Walter Lacquer's writing on systematic terrorism's beginnings in the 19th century with Russian revolutionaries and radical nationalist groups such as the Irish, Macedonians, Serbs and Armenians highlighting larger international trends providing backdrops to Imperial Europe prior to the First World War. "[The IRB] became not only a mainspring of revolutionary endeavour in Ireland, but a definite element in the complex machinery of world-revolution."

When studying the international revolutionary background to 1916 and 1917, it is notable that nineteenth century Irish radicals were very late adopters of the secret society model- a full one or two generations behind those in other European countries. This is perhaps due as Peter Hart asserts to the more open, less oppressive political context of Ireland, compared with Metternich's secret police, Papal Inquisitions and Tsarist Okhrana in continental Europe. Hart also draws attention to the American-Atlantic orientation of Fenianism rather than towards the continent. Buonarroti, Marx and Mazzini's networks did not include Ireland. However, although the anticlericalism and lack of American links from the European revolutionary circles did not identify with Fenianism, the 'fondness' for imprisonment did. In fact it was almost a prerequisite in any professional revolutionary career. Blanqui was the political prisoner extraordinaire, and Tom Clarke's long incarceration and Lenin's brief spells of internment meant they too followed in this revolutionary "rite of passage."

Pearse and Connolly

Although Patrick Pearse was chosen as a useful propaganda figurehead by the IRB military council,

his Spiritual Nation work is important in gaining an insightful perspective to the Rising's aims. The Rising was as much an expression of independence then an actual plan to achieve it. Although his writings frame and compare Irish sovereignty with similar cases in Europe, it is as much about the character of Ireland and Irish tradition alone that provide impetus for action. However Pearse's ideology of symbolic action is found also in the language used by Mazzini the great Italian nationalist. This highly romantic mentality was crucial in understanding the later parts of the Rising, which marks differences with other revolutionary attempts. When the Bolsheviks took power they were fighting under a belief that they would successfully win power. Undoubtedly many of the men of 1916 remained hopeful of martial victory, but there remained this element of biblical, romantic sacrifice for the sins of anglicised Ireland that had given up her nationhood. Much has been made of this in the historiography, but the evidence is also there in Pearse's writings.

Is it too much to hope that after so many centuries the old ideals are still quick in the heart of the Irish youth, and that this year we shall get many hundred Irish boys to come forward and help us to build up a brotherhood of young Irishmen strong of limb, true and pure in tongue and heart, chivalrous, cultured in a really Irish sense, and ready to spend themselves in the service of their country?"

The crucial figure to understand and examine in any analysis of 1916's international implications is of course James Connolly. An ardent socialist, he discovered it during his time in Scotland and is the preeminent figure responsible for much left-wing literature and activism in Ireland and the need for a workers' revolution. Connolly believed it would not take very long for this revolution to occur and was not alone in holding that view:

At the remove of a hundred years it is difficult to comprehend the messianic fervour that motivated left-wing socialists in the first years of the twentieth century as they assumed the imminent collapse of bourgeois capitalism and its replacement by a co-operative organisation of industry and the building of a Commonwealth that would replace the exploitation of Labour and lead to the emancipation of the workers...The time-span envisaged for the coming of the social revolution was a short one...Connolly's writings in the year 1896 to 1903 must be seen in this light.

Calton Younger's book on Arthur Griffith discusses Connolly's early plans for insurrection during the Boer War where he saw a chance to undermine Britain's power in Ireland, drawing a plan to capture certain buildings in Dublin, strikingly resembling the Easter Rising. Younger highlights the disagreement between Connolly and Griffith in the "Transvaal Committee", whose purpose was to enlist public sympathy for the Boers and deter Irishmen from joining the British Army. Griffith, who had no involvement in the Easter Rising other than being assigned blame via Sinn Féin by many including the English, pointed out the lack of arms in Ireland for any insurrection to which Connolly replied, "Have your revolution first and the arms will come afterwards".

Connolly's model for revolution was that of certain European countries. James Connolly was an Irishman, who took direct inspiration from his revolutionary colleagues on the continent and his plans for fairly European style insurrection were used together with the IRB's plot. Examining Connolly's writing, ripe with fraternal language towards the international socialist movement, illustrates his outlook where he provides analysis of history's famous insurrections. *Revolutionary Warfare*, a collection of articles is a fascinating insight into the international dimension of a truly all-round revolutionary. His concise albeit brief analysis are illuminating and in the introduction, Michael O'Riordan places Connolly firmly in the same boat of his revolutionary colleagues on the continent, Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Willie Gallacher and the Bolsheviks in Russia, "Connolly, like Lenin, had no ambiguity about his attitude to the Imperialist war." Connolly was incredibly similar in outlook to Lenin, realising the imperative for action at the crucial juncture of war in Europe, "...we also believe in times of war we should act as in war." With an increasing sense of purpose due to his involvement with the IRB's plot for a Rising, seemingly obvious of his intentions, Connolly wrote, "We are neither rash nor cowardly. We know our opportunity when we see it, and we know when it is gone." Connolly at this point is integral with Fenian planning, and with his involvement, the values and importance of the international revolutionary tradition are clear in the culmination of the Rising on Easter Monday 1916.

Lenin and Self-Determination

As Connolly had to develop independently his own knowledge, not being in the same revolutionary circles, on the great issue of evaluating the Great War, he reached essentially the same conclusion as the leader of the Russian revolutionary movement. P.J Musgrave states, "Although a shrewd observer and critic of working-class struggles in other lands, Connolly, through force of circumstances, was largely deprived of contact with the Bolsheviks' other continental Marxist leaders". Connolly and Lenin however are clearly on the same page-in the article A Continental Revolution, he wrote, "Even an unsuccessful attempt at Social revolution by force of arms...would be less disastrous to the Socialist cause than the act of Socialists allowing themselves to be used in the slaughter of their brothers in the cause. A great Continental uprising of the working class would stop the war..." Lenin's The Right of Nations to Self-Determination essentially an argument against the idea that national tension between groups of peoples, such as the French and Germans over Alsace-Lorraine, boils down to pure Imperialism. He cites the fact that in France and Germany the national struggle is a thing of the past and not of the present as it was in much of the colonial world. Lenin's reasoning, "We must link the revolutionary struggle for socialism with a revolutionary programme on the national question," completely congruent to Connolly's brand of nationalism. Lenin also uses Marx's writing on Ireland in support his case demanding "...from the standpoint of the interests of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat of the oppressor, i.e., British, nation against capitalism". Kevin B. Anderson also cites Lenin's prominent singling out of Marx and Engels on the Irish Question in his 1916 writings on imperialism and national liberation. The struggle for self-determination of smaller nations was integral in Lenin's vision for overthrowing the capitalist system of imperial Europe.

## Summary

Although some research argues that some key factors of European models for revolution were omitted in 1916, examining James Connolly's extensive works illustrates the international perspective that was right at the core of at least the ICA leadership. Connolly's articles examining international insurrections and key lessons to be learned for revolution published in his newspaper "The Worker's Republic" are clear of this European context. It would be hard to imagine that once

James Connolly was brought on board the IRB military council that he neglected to offer advice on his military studies of other insurrections. Hart draws attention to the, "...fascinating circulation of ideas at work, moving outwards from Western Europe towards various peripheries." One contemporary if partisan source cites that any European revolution had an immediate echo in turbulent Ireland without any continental propaganda. Despite this, it is clear that contemporaries were not able to make great comparisons as easily as today between: the internet; mobile phones and social-media; making the 21st century world smaller and closer than ever before. One must appreciate that although these revolutionary groups overlapped in ideology and operational capacities; cross fertilisation of ideas was not as powerful as today. However, in an era defined by Empires, without today's neat ideological boxes, revolutionary groups were free to define themselves in their own terms.

Despite the obvious nationalistic intent of the Easter Rising, as P.J Musgrave points out after formation of the Irish Citizen Army it was, "...three years later to strike the first military blow on behalf of Europe's working class against the first Imperialist World War". In this light, the Rising was crucially the first salvo European insurrections with direct implications for nationalist and socialist revolutionaries across the continent.

## Chapter II-The Irish Revolutionaries

Clarke and MacDermott were the products of a Europe obsessed with the rise and fall of nations, one in which a gloomy Kaiser could muse in 1914 that the great question for Germany was "To be or not to be." They shared the same anxiety for Ireland and were convinced that, unless decisive action was taken in the near future, it might be too late to arrest the ongoing assimilation of the Irish people into a greater British entity."

Early twentieth century Ireland harboured a growing atmosphere of trepidation regarding the ongoing home rule crisis, its implications for Irish Unionism and Nationalism. Before the onset of the Great War, Unionists favoured the continuation of Westminster rule (Ireland remaining part of the

United Kingdom), while IPP Nationalists campaigned for Home Rule, restoring an Irish parliament with limited independence, similar to the UK's devolution today.

However the IRB was an important radical subgroup within nationalism, which never accepted Ireland's ties to Britain, subscribing to a physical force strategy to achieve an independent republic. These republican nationalists were steeped in both ideology and tradition; Ireland's history of launching rebellions against British rule, which always ended in failure, but led to a legacy of "heroic martyrs" which directly influenced generations to similarly join in the struggle for independence.

In 1914 the Great War had caused the split in Ireland's nationalist movement with Redmond's famous "Woodenbridge" speech into moderates and radicals, mirroring the shattering of the second international-the European Socialist movement. Similarly to the National Volunteers of Ireland, the German SPDs and other mainstream socialist parties supported their respective governments in their war efforts. Both the revolutionary figures James Connolly and Lenin rallied against this shattering of socialist solidarity. Thus this was the political context in which nationalists and socialists were operating when Ireland, along with the rest of old Europe, was engulfed by the First World War.

### Blood-Sacrifice

Patrick Pearse and his 'Blood-sacrifice' ideas, despite optimistic and perhaps naive beliefs of many Easter Rebels in military success, were crucial in 1916's legacy for Irish revolutionary nationalism. Blood sacrifice and idealised nation literature was very much a part of European culture in this period. Pearse's ideas were formulating when Yeats' produced serial Cuchulainn plays glorifying violence, almost Irish adaption's of similar poems that inspired English troops with equally idealised versions of England to go 'over the top' at the Somme-the very same year as Pearse.

Peter Hart describes 1916 as a possibly unique example of insurrectionary abstract art. Although there were proclamations, tricolours seizing buildings like other insurrections of Europe, the targets seem symbolic such as the GPO and Stephen's Green public park. Tom Clarke, Sean MacDermott, James Connolly and other signatories of the Proclamation did have martial rationale. However, the mistakes and countermanding orders reduced their chances of success, and ultimately, without any



real conscious decision, their goal was no longer a practical seizure of power, but theatre.

The Rising was in essence a work of art, an inspiring drama-the ultimate street theatre. In military terms, the men and women in arms against the might of the British Empire were involved in a ridiculous, arguably insane enterprise. The rising proved to be a brilliant theatrical success; the rebels who might have been expected to produce a farce or at best a tragic-comedy instead created an inspirational drama of epic proportions. The choice of Easter week to enact their dramatic attempt to resurrect the nation was of course an apt one. The 1916 leaders' sensitivity to and ability to capitalise on the symbolic, emotional and historic-political impact of their actions far outshone their actual military achievements.

The Rising had turned into a blood sacrifice, although it had not been planned that way from the outset. Pearse's literature and discourse on purifying bloodshed were always in the background, and the Irish tradition of martyrdom meant the executions of May 1916, would affect a substantial change of mood in the country, initiating a chain of events culminating with the Irish Free State in 1922.

Much of Pearse's advocacy of physical force and glorification of violence was tactical in 1915 and 1916 to counter UVF threats. "Nevertheless, his intense nature did rebel against exclusively tactical argument. He therefore exalted force as potentially noble in itself." The idea of symbolic action was not new, it had been highlighted in revolutionary literature by Mazzini, Blanqui and others. Despite having little affinity for Irish nationalism himself, Mazzini's reference to the "triumphant fact" in his revolutionary rhetoric ties in completely with the legacy of 1916; not outright victory, but a spectacular event, capable of inspiring others even in defeat. The IRB's belief in the necessity of action as a principle was shared by Blanqui and Mazzini illustrating thus that Pearse and other proponents of a 'blood sacrifice' were not alone in their vision of revolutionary nationalism.

It is important to stress that this was a link to other international revolutionary philosophy, and not the sole basis of the IRB's plans. J.J Lee writes, however much blood sacrifice doctrine spatters the pages of MacDonagh and Pearse and however retrospectively relevant they appear, it seems unhistorical to interpret these ideas as the nucleus of the Rising. The most important aspect of the

blood sacrifice doctrine was the common theme of symbolism in action that many insurrections represented and the prevalence of this idea at the time in Europe. O'Donoghue writes adherence to this doctrine, according to balanced appraisal, suggests that if the Rising were to fail, then it should fail not only with honour, but with effect.

### IRB & ICA Overlaps

Although Pearse has never been regarded as anything approaching a socialist figure, as none of his writings show any familiarity with the theory, his intense nationalism was able to meld fairly well with the teachings and influence of James Connolly. Pearse, along with Ceannt, MacDonagh and Clarke (on the IRB Military Council) were all to the left of Irish bourgeois nationalism, with Pearse moving instinctively towards a socialist position, admiring Jim Larkin; striking up a friendship with James Connolly. Erich Strauss points out the convergence of the politics of the IRB's left exemplified by Pearse, Clarke and others as important and not simply an overlapping of nationalist aims.

There were Irish Republicans and social revolutionaries among the Irish-both working primarily to promote social revolution.

Ireland was a lot smaller then, and the same people tended to be involved in everything, many who were interested in the Irish language were also involved in the trade unionism. It is probably too far to say the IRB wanted to destroy the entire national bourgeoisie but there was definitely antipathy towards aspects of it. Both the IRB and Connolly regarded the bourgeois nationalist IPP as worse than British government-as the enemy within. Connolly and the Republicans agreed that there were fundamental social and economic changes needed which could only be addressed in an independent Ireland. The nationalist newspaper 'Irish Freedom' sided with the workers during the Dublin lockout dispute explored later. Moreover, included articles likened the employers to Marie-Antoinette, inferring revolutionary echoes. Eamon Ceannt also lectured on several occasions for Connolly's socialist party. Ellis demonstrates in Pearse's last major work, "The Sovereign People," that he began to challenge the concept of private property.

Physical freedom...is necessary to sane and vigorous life; for physical freedom means precisely control of the conditions that are necessary to sane and vigorous life. It is obvious that these things

are partly material, and that therefore national freedom involves control of the material things which are essential to the continued physical life and freedom of the nation. So that the nation's sovereignty extends not only to all the material possessions of the nation, the nation's soil and all its resources, all wealth and-producing processes within the nation. In other words, no private right to property is good as against the public right of the nation.

From these writings, it is clear that via Connolly, international socialist ideas were permeating Pearse's vision; in substance, separation from England would be valueless unless it put the people, not the ruling classes, in effectual possession and ownership of Ireland and her resources. "Pearse felt that the 'right to the control of the material resources of a nation does not reside in any individual or in any class of individuals; it resides in the whole people and can be lawfully exercised only by those to whom it is delegated by the whole people, and in the manner in which the people ordains.'" Connolly's socialist principles as hugely important as they are transparent in the words of the Proclamation of the Easter rebels, highlighting the equality of the sexes with the words "Irishmen & Irishwomen:

The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities of all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing the children of nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority in the past.

However, it would be quite incorrect to suggest this Pearse's chief concern. He had been primarily a spiritual nationalist, where his almost messianic ideas for the salvation of Ireland originated. Townshend makes reference to the play "The Singer," which Pearse wrote before the rebellion, largely deemed unremarkable except for the salient matter of Pearse's death as Joseph Plunkett suggested. At the play's climax the hero declares, "One man can free a people as one man redeemed the world." Thompson writes that in this instance one can clearly see 'Pearse the rebel' as the perfect imitation of Christ, or as Townshend amends, Christ in the role of Cuchulainn, the defender of the race, a religious hybridisation that was distinctly unorthodox.

Irish Labour and Nationalism

Dublin was not unfamiliar with social and political crisis in 1916, as its experience during the 1913 lockout and its intense conflict was crucial in fermenting an atmosphere for national and social rebellion. A tramway strike from the 25th August had developed into a full scale showdown between the Irish Transport and General Workers Union headed by Jim Larkin and a coalition of employers led by William Martin Murphy. By 22nd of September 25,000 men had been locked out from their work and Dublin city was in paralysis. Jim Larkin, a monumental figure on the left in Irish history, indirectly contributed to the Rising, highlighting the lack of social justice and the plight of the workers in the current system and establishing the Irish Citizen Army (ICA).

The Lockout, the most dramatic example of labour action pre-Easter 1916 highlighted the depth of syndicalism and socialist ideals among the proletariat of Dublin as it produced this key body-the ICA, crucially involved in the Rising. The ICA was ultimately headed by the socialist theoretician, printer, editor, poet and revolutionary James Connolly. Its establishment was also an important episode in the Irish and British Trade Unions' relationship. Larkin was released after public protest and on 14th November, James Connolly, his deputy, issued a dramatic call to arms:

Next time we are out for a march; I want to be accompanied by four battalions of trained men with their corporals and sergeants,

The ICA was formally announced a week later. The left-wing basis of the Dublin outfit was epitomised by Larkin's assertion that it was a "new Army of the people, so that Labour may be able to utilise that great physical power which it possesses to prevent its elementary rights being taken away." The enrolment form for new recruits to the ICA explicitly states the aim to support the movement towards the establishment of a workers' republic. In some way the Bolshevik militias formed in the drama of 1917-the Red Guards in Petrograd resemble this episode, with General Korniloff substituting William Martin Murphy and the rest of the capitalist employers as the right-wing "antagonist."

James Connolly, a key figure of the period, fundamentally entwines the international socialist aims with the Rising with his signature on the Proclamation. "Connolly was in a class of his own by the standards not only of Irish socialist but of Irish capitalist thought of his generation." His nationalist

aspirations are clearly demonstrated:

Paradoxical as it may seem, I am a patriot because I am a socialist and a socialist because I understand the true meaning of the word patriotism.

Connolly's stance on the marriage of nationalism and socialism may seem unexceptional in the light of post-colonial socialist based national liberation struggles, but it was little understood by his contemporaries. Similarly to critics of Lenin's support for national movements, the ISRP's agitation for Irish independence was considered by many socialists to be mere "chauvinism" that served to only "perpetuate national rivalries and race hatreds." However, when examining Connolly's Russian counterpart Lenin's support for nationalism, it must be understood that for neither was it the sole objective but a facet (albeit a crucial one) of their socialism. Connolly stated that he would do all he could to achieve Ireland's rightful heritage of independence, but with the critical stipulation:

...if you ask me to abate one jot or tittle of the claims of social justice in order to conciliate the privileged classes, then I must decline.

Even as early as 1897, as highlighted by WK Anderson, Connolly was writing on the futility of nationalism sans socialism:

If you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin castle, unless you set about the organisation of the Socialist Republic, your efforts will have been in vain. England will still rule you...through her capitalists...landlords...financiers, through the whole array of commercial and individualist institutions she has planted in this country.

### Continental Parallels

What is remarkable about these assertions is how far they mirror Lenin's much venerated work, "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism," and other writings. Lenin in 1915, writing on topic of a United States of Europe, concluded that,

From the standpoint of the economic conditions of imperialism-i.e. the export of capital and the division of the world by the "advanced" and "civilised" colonial powers-a United States of Europe, under capitalism, is either impossible or reactionary.

Although the United States of Europe is very different from an "Independent Ireland", the premise is

the same-that any new national states or entities cannot be viable without the reorganisation of those states into a fundamentally socialist structure. Just before WW1 Lenin wrote:

...the bourgeois nationalism of any oppressed nation has a general democratic content that is directed against oppression...it is this that we unconditionally support.

Lenin demonstrated the same support for national movements to help achieve social revolution. During one exchange between Connolly and William Walker (leader of Belfast Independent Labour Party) on the subject of internationalism, Connolly's conception of the idea is one of a free federation of free peoples, where the Belfast branch seems scarcely distinguishable from Imperialism, the merging of subjugated peoples in the political system of their conquerors.

I hold that every class conscious worker should work for the freedom of the country in which he lives, if he desires the political power of his class in that country.

This imagined free federation of principles could be construed as that envisaged by Lenin during the Georgian Affair of 1921-22. On the subject of Georgia's incorporation into the new Soviet State and its federalist structure he said we must achieve, "a federation of Republics enjoying equal rights." Connolly's views were shared on the continent by his revolutionary contemporary Karl Liebknecht, The proletariat knows that the fatherland, for which it must fight, is not its fatherland, that in every country it has only one real foe-the capitalist class which oppresses and exploits it.

Connolly an intellectually rigorous Marxist would never have allowed his personal attachment to national culture and identity to distract him from the commitment to the class war. He used his inside nationalist knowledge quite clinically in his socialist education and propaganda work. 1914's outbreak of war was crucial for Connolly's increasing penchant for physical force.

An eminent Irish historian has written that from the moment war broke out and Connolly 'realised that all the fraternal declarations of international socialism had been powerless to stop it, [he] bent all his considerable powers of persuasion and organisation towards the Irish insurrection.

The Rising was a vehicle to realise his socialist aspirations, never forgetting the real goal throughout his involvement as highlighted in his speech made to the ICA just prior to the rising,

...the odds are a thousand to one against us, but in the event of victory, hold on to your rifles, as

those with whom we are fighting may stop before our goal is reached. We are out for economic as well as political liberty. Hold on to your rifles.

The line of Connolly's arguments can be found explicitly in Lenin's (Bolshevik familiarity with Connolly's writings will be examined later) who was one of the few contemporaries to consistently espouse support for nationalism. These men were writing when empires dominated Europe & the world's political landscape, but also clearly recognised the ability of capitalism to expand both within and beyond these imperial frameworks.

Furthermore, imperialism means that capital has outgrown the framework of national states; it means that national oppression has been extended and heightened on a new historical foundation. Hence, it follows that...we must link the revolutionary struggle for socialism with a revolutionary programme on the national question."

For Lenin, the European national questions were of establishing democracy and through it allowing the best conditions for class struggle. Bew and Gibbon have highlighted in Lenin's anti-imperialist international outlook, that he had in effect added another principle to those of Marx's: that no abstract absolute judgements could be made about nationality or nationalism.

There are only specific national questions requiring concrete analyses. Both questions and analyses are political in character, not economic or even ideological. As such, their solution lies purely at the political level.

It was on this basis that classical Marxism gave its support to Irish self-determination between 1867 and 1920 (encompassing both the IRB and Connolly's messages).

Connolly's rising

A number of contemporary socialist advocates were hostile to Connolly's ideas on the inseparable aspects of fighting British rule and socialism, some such as playwright Sean O'Casey, charging him with defection to the enemy camp of Irish Nationalism. The English Marxist, T.A Jackson took exception to this charge:

...[Connolly's] theoretical proposition that Nationalism and Socialism in an oppressed country, were not opposites-as mechanical pseudo-Marxism supposed-but were complementary...was treated as a

'dangerous heresy'...by reformist socialists'...It was however, accepted and applauded by a group of young men on the 'left' of English and Scottish Marxism, and was finally vindicated by the teachings of Lenin...

Connolly's participation in the Easter Rising was logical, perhaps inevitable due to his changed perception on the role of violence in the struggle for socialism. In this he was in union with the IRB's physical force tradition. Initially he had planned an insurrection independently of the nationalists with sole ICA support. In January of 1916 the IRB kidnapped him, curbing his impetuosity and after some days co-opted him into the military council planning the rising to prevent him from bringing down a British avalanche upon all of them.

Connolly shared the IRB's sense of urgency in the need for action during the war and the urging of rebellion in 1915. War had been considered necessary by European socialists since the Paris Commune's existence being due to the Franco-Prussian war. Lenin's call for the Imperialist war to become an internal civil war complemented the IRB maxim "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity. Where Pearse wanted to redeem Ireland's honour, Connolly equally strove to make a bid for the working classes of Europe suffering from the imperialist war. This meeting of insurrectionary minds represented a union of national and international revolutionary traditions. The Fenian legacy of the Canadian raids and bombing campaigns met Connolly's knowledge from the Dublin lockout and his focus on urban risings abroad. The ICA and IRB controlled Irish Volunteers would strike a blow for Irish independence with very different agendas but fundamentally shared interests. ICA veteran John O'Keefe's description of the events on 1916's golden jubilee demonstrates how well instilled the lessons of street-fighting were into the ranks of the Citizen Army by Connolly and his credentials as a key international socialist revolutionary.

### The IRB's Rising

The IRB's role in Irish revolutionary thought and history cannot be understated. It was the IRB which planned the Easter Rising when the Irish Republic was proclaimed in 1916, and it was Michael Collins' Fenian elite who guided the Irish Republican Army's campaign during the War of Independence." The Military Council's planning for the Easter rebellion went very much along the



lines of Blanqui:

First there is the clandestine agitation and propaganda among the masses undertaken simultaneously with the organisation of the conspiracy and the formation of a pre-revolutionary cadre.

The IRB worked subversively to convince and agitate the Irish people against the British government during the war, while organising its insurrection.

The IRB leadership prior to WW1 held a mirror opposite view to the Ulster Unionists during the crisis of home rule and gun-running in Ireland. Tom Clarke and Sean MacDermott felt home rule would erode Irish identity entirely, making the union between Ireland and Britain permanent. This was the basis for their justification of insurrection. Foy and Barton emphasise Imperial Europe's international situation which Clarke and MacDermott were in. The leadership was quite elitist, believing that they best knew the interests of the Irish nation and were not going to be "constitutionalised" out of insurrection. They possessed a Leninist distaste for sharing power, compulsive needs to control any organisation within their orbit and to drive out those that dissented. Bulmer Hobson, initially part of the triumvirate "Supreme Council" IRB leadership with Clarke and MacDermott but opposed to unnecessary insurrection, saw his former comrades as narrow partisans, inclined in distrust anyone not in their circle. In some ways this rift bares a parallel with that between Lenin and Bogdanov for the soul of the Bolshevik movement. That Clarke, MacDermott and Lenin won these philosophical-political arguments within their respective conspiratorial movements is fundamental to the radical physical force nature of their respective insurrections.

#### The International Dynamic

Supporting the case for links between Easter 1916 and October 1917 is the involvement of the Germany, with the dispatch of 'the Aud' with arms requested by Roger Casement, and Lenin's passage back to Russia in a sealed train, secured by German General Staff. Ireland's Fenian tradition had a long history of American links and Lenin and the Russian Social Democratic Party held congresses abroad and were in exile for long periods. This transnational part of these revolutionary movements is nothing unusual, as most revolutionary figures were exiles at some point

or another, with Hart putting James Stephens in the same company of Mazzini, Garibaldi, Bakunin and Lenin. Tom Clarke, co-architect of the Easter Rising was radicalised in the USA. Hart stresses international aspects of revolutionary careers, subsided by émigré communities, foreign sympathisers-even by government pensions in London, Paris or Milan. Germany was common to both 1916 and Lenin's plans: the Proclamation references Ireland's "gallant allies in Europe"; Kautsky's SPD influences on Lenin's politics and his re-entry to Russia. The circumstances of the European War, with Germany as a foreign enemy of both Britain & Russia, meant that these revolutionary groups (ICA, IRB and Bolsheviks) would be favourable towards German aid.

Connolly's stand on the war, a stand which has most frequently been compared with Lenin's, was unequivocal: he opposed the war totally and with passion, taking what can be termed a revolutionary defeatist position; to the extent that he involved both himself and his daughter Nora in espionage activities in favour of Germany.

For the IRB, Connolly and Lenin, the German Empire was integral to their vision of revolution. Lenin owed much intellectually to the German Social Democratic Party. Germany was the most industrialised nation in continental Europe with a highly concentrated socialist presence, presenting the best chance of instigating a "conventional" social revolution. Connolly and the IRB viewed the war as both a criminal tragedy and an opportunity. Britain's weakness caused by the war was Ireland's chance. Although Roger Casement's German expedition was ultimately unsuccessful when the Aud bearing German arms was scuttled and he was captured by the RIC in Co. Kerry, the attempt demonstrated the revolutionaries' international dimension. When Lenin and his fellow Bolshevik exiles boarded the sealed train to return to Russia, they too sought and received the aid of Germany.

## Summary

The Rising was a collection of week-long street fighting and heavy artillery shelling, with the republicans facing Britain's overwhelming military might in the centre of Dublin. The battleship in the Liffey River bombarded key buildings at close range with much of city centre reduced to rubble. It caught the Britain's Irish administration completely by surprise as they mistakenly believed they had

prevented a Rising, and soon was in complete disarray. The British establishment was shocked, at a time when their backs were turned towards the impending Somme offensive later that year. Consequently, due to the circumstances of war, the rebels were regarded as traitors. The backdrop of the Great War meant that the charge of treason was particularly poignant, with Bolshevik echoes.

However, despite any gradual British government disapproval of continued executions of the Proclamation signatories and other figures, it is clear the mood of Irish people changed considerably. Public sympathy for the rebels increased considerably over the next few weeks with many sources including General Maxwell himself showing the growing unpopularity of martial law and executions.

The Rising and its aftermath were set in an interesting context internationally, especially when Britain desired to bring the United States into the war as allies. It was crucially relevant for those involved in international socialist actions, as it was part of their wider struggle against imperialism. Lenin hailed the Rising as a crucial anti-colonial blow from within Europe itself:

A blow delivered against the power of English imperialist bourgeoisie by a rebellion in Ireland is a hundred times more significant politically than a blow of equal force delivered in Asia or in Africa.

Irish radical labour movements were a potent force in Ireland at the time, with much of the protest against partition suggestions coming from the left and not nationalist groups such as Sinn Féin. The main voice of labour, the 'Irish Worker' newspaper, had 10-15 times more circulation than the nationalist 'Irish Freedom'. Clearly socialist rhetoric was commonplace in Irish public life at this time. Captain H.B.C Pollard, an MI6 officer at Dublin castle, who advised the RIC between 1920 and 1922, brings an interesting contemporary perspective held about IRB actions. Although meandering regarding global conspiracies and mired in racial ideas, Pollard highlights confluences of Ireland's international dimension, the Fenian movement, being, "...obviously the Irish Carbonari and eventually a wing of the International Working Men's Association. The scheme, of course, was world revolution and its success was fully predicted on targeting Ireland as the "weak spot in the solid armour of Britain." Clearly this perspective mirrored Lenin's and earlier observers such as Marx, who

viewed peripheral countries as capable of sparking socialist revolution across the continent. Pollard even cites fervid revolutionary Gaels claim that James Connolly was in effect the founder of modern Bolshevism. This potent suspicious view of Irish clandestine activity means that whether the IRB was aware or not, they were being placed by Pollard and the "establishment" in the same league as Marxists, anarchists and social revolutionaries, playing a role in an international drama of revolution.

The events which unfolded in Dublin 1916 were not only important for Irish nationalist aspirations, ultimately resulting in the Anglo-Irish War of 1919-21 and the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, but a beacon for other revolutionaries in Europe, permeating their experiences and outlook. Had Lenin's Comintern existed at this time, James Connolly would have been a prime candidate for Soviet aid as he was posthumously adopted by it. Even without the left-wing character the ICA provided, a sole IRB insurrection would appeal to Lenin's espoused national self-determination writings.

There is no doubt that Connolly's greatness and most endearing legacy to Irish Socialism lies in his recognition that the struggle for national independence was an inseparable part of the struggle for socialism, and that by combining the forces of socialism and nationalism both would be strengthened.

From the outset of the Rising, it was clear that although there were fundamental caveats; such as the Atlantic orientation of Fenianism. However it was a European insurrection, not simply nationalist, also representing a successful case of militant labour forces taking a lead in 'the real nationalist movement' of which Connolly preached. Unforeseen circumstances such as Eoin MacNeill's countermanding orders to volunteers not to muster for manoeuvres and the scuttling of the Aud bearing German arms ensured the rising was far more limited in scope than the revolutionaries had intended. According to Pollard, revolutionary nationalists and socialists attract each other by their common militancy. On 24th April 1916, socialist and nationalist aspirations coalesced, marrying the IRB and ICA bodies into the Irish Republic's Provisional Army taking to Dublin's streets. These events were to provoke debate amongst European contemporaries, whose business was revolution.

Despite some inconsistencies this analysis sheds light on Ireland's implications for revolutionaries generally and how Irish matters could shape Lenin's own ideas for the overthrow of Imperialism. As Nicholas Mansergh attests:

As a model for Communist policy elsewhere the Marxist interpretation of the Irish question remained of enduring interest. It was for this reason that Lenin was so concerned to defend the validity of Marx's interpretation against all criticism...

### Chapter III- The Revolutionary Reaction

This movement which called itself 'Sinn Fein'...was a purely urban petty bourgeois movement which - despite the great noise it made - had little social backing. Hoping for German help, Sinn Fein...let itself inspire an uprising leading only to a putsch the English government could easily manage.

To imagine that social revolution is conceivable without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices, without a movement of the politically non-conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against oppression by the landowners, the church, and the monarchy, against national oppression, etc. - to imagine all this is to repudiate social revolution. So one army lines up in one place and says, 'We are for socialism', and another, somewhere else and says, 'We are for imperialism'... Only those who hold such a ridiculously pedantic view could vilify the Irish rebellion by calling it a 'putsch'.

The Easter Rising and its dramatic message occurred not only amid international forces such as syndicalism and the world labour movement but were also juxtaposed with the Gaelic revival and rising nationalism of the early 20th Century. 1916 in Ireland represents a key example of socialism and nationalism's crucial interactions. These extracts on the Rising's implications illustrate the debate in contemporary revolutionary thought. Easter 1916 was a fundamental juncture-how far were socialists to go in supporting nationalism in achieving their objective of a socialist republic? This issue of national self-determination, with particular implications for Eastern Europe (with its many ethnic groups living under empires) preoccupied the second International from its 1896 London Congress to its 1914 disintegration. It was hotly debated between leading Marxist thinkers

such as Kautsky and Radek, not to mention Mensheviks or Bundists. In the Rising's aftermath varying stances were highlighted principally by the figures Karl Radek, Rosa Luxemburg, Leon Trotsky and Vladimir Lenin.

### Differing Positions on Nationalism

There were various differing radical left-wing revolutionaries in this period, often in direct competition, although many adopted similar positions to figures such as Radek and Luxemburg. At the turn of the century, imperialism was the great concern of many, and subsequently nationalism and imperialism were often linked in revolutionary perspectives. Consequently "national" wars in Europe were opposed. Rosa Luxemburg opposed Bolshevik "national self-determination," arguing that independent national governments would still be controlled by imperialist powers through economic means. For these figures on the left, national movements were fundamentally a part of capitalist society, the other side of Imperialism's coin and to be opposed.

Lenin's position on nationalism could seem somewhat contradictory. It was not in a pro-Russian sense, as during the Great War, he consistently advocated a defeatist position, in direct opposition to whom he termed "social-chauvinists" such as the German SPDs. They had supported their own Government in the war as did the vast majority of socialists within their respective nations and were responsible for shattering the second International.

Lenin saw nationalism as a vehicle to spread socialism. On the Right of Nations to Self-Determination, explicitly highlights common interest between socialism and what his opponents saw as conservative or reactionary nationalism. It is sometimes difficult to analyse 'a Bolshevik position' on self-determination as one can talk about Lenin's position, and about the party's programmatic position, but looking at the broader party itself, it is clear that Lenin's ideas had not been completely assimilated.

The great part of Lenin's writings on the national question are composed of polemics with those, both inside the party and within the broader international social democratic movement, who disagreed with him. His position had even been challenged by a sizeable current, whom Lenin dubbed 'imperialist economists', within the party on the eve of the revolution.

When examining these contemporary European socialists, one must be aware of the classical Marxist position. It is important to realise that the Irish question and its complex nuances particularly provided a context into which Marx and Engels could define their general position on self-determination. Marxist commentary on Ireland is invaluable, providing insight into the long vision of revolutionary communism and how Ireland presented an opportunity for testing the validity of the precepts of dialectical materialism as a whole.

### Leon Trotsky

Leon Trotsky, a leading socialist thinker of the age, perhaps the most identified revolutionary figure in the twentieth century other than perhaps Che Guevara, contributed an analysis of the Easter Rising. His discourse on its repercussions, examined also in both a European and British political context, contained profound foresight. In his opening paragraphs, Trotsky instinctively recognises the difficulties which the execution of Roger Casement poses for British rule in Ireland in light of the blood of the insurrectionists. On the Rising itself however:

In so far as the affair concerned the purely military operations of the insurrectionaries, the government, as we know, turned out comparatively easily to be master of the situation. The general national movement, however it was expressed in the heads of the nationalist dreamers, did not materialise at all...The Irish bourgeoisie, as also the upper, more influential layer of the Irish intelligentsia, remained on the side-lines. The urban workers fought and died, together with revolutionary enthusiasts from the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia.

In this extract Trotsky shows his immediate interpretation, a failed uprising by urban proletarians led by petty-bourgeois revolutionaries. Trotsky examined the rising in the light of Marxist doctrine:

The historical basis for the national revolution had disappeared even in backward Ireland. In as much as the Irish movements in the last century had assumed a popular character, they had invariably fed on the social hostility of the deprived and exhausted pauper-farmer towards the

omnipotent English landlord.

Trotsky is dismissive of the Rising's character as he perceives it, that most Irish people had been satisfied by British concessions towards Irish tenant farmers. However, the point must be made that Trotsky, along with vast majority of observers, were unaware of the crucial countermanding orders and the failure of arms procurement in determining military defeat as the final outcome. Their stinging criticisms of nationalism fail to take account of this. Therefore for Trotsky it was an elitist rising. Although he later comes to recognise the potential of nationalism within the confines of the class struggle:

The young Irish working class, taking shape in an atmosphere saturated with the heroic recollections of national rebellions, and clashing with...egoistic, narrow-minded, imperial arrogance of British trade unionism, naturally swing between nationalism and syndicalism, ever ready to unite these two concepts in their revolutionary consciousness. It attracts the young intelligentsia and individual nationalist enthusiasts, who in their turn, supply the movement with a preponderance of the green flag over the red. In this way, the 'national revolution' even in Ireland, in practice has become an uprising of workers, and the obviously isolated position of Casement in the movement only serves to emphasize this fact still deeper.

This analysis clearly identifies potential overlap between nationalist sentiments and labour interests. Trotsky recognises the role self-determination struggles play within oppressed classes or peoples. Although disparaging in parts with comments such as "backward" Irish peasants unable to see beyond their own plots of land, Trotsky keenly emphasises the importance the Rising held for the future,

But the historical role of the Irish proletariat is only beginning. Already into this uprising - under an archaic banner -it has injected its class resentment against militarism and imperialism.

Trotsky's prediction of the transference of labour angst to Scotland is insightful, as the Red Clyde Crisis and Battle of George Square of 1919, which the British Government feared as its own Bolshevik style Revolution, fulfilled his prophecy. Trotsky is a clear voice, recognising some potential for national self-determination issues to spark and ignite proletarian parts of society into social



revolution.

...it will find an echo throughout Great Britain. Scottish soldiers smashed the Dublin barricades. But in Scotland itself coal-miners are rallying round the red flag, raised by Maclean and his friends. Those very workers, who at the moment the Hendersons are trying to chain to the bloody chariot of imperialism, will revenge themselves against the hangman Lloyd George.

### Karl Radek

Karl Radek was a very active socialist thinker of the period, involved with Polish, German and Russian social-democratic parties. He was well acquainted with Rosa Luxemburg and after his meeting with Lenin and Zionev in 1913, which established unity on most positions; divergence came between them over national self-determination only. Daily contact with Lenin convinced Radek that the Bolsheviks were the only revolutionary party in Russia. He was part of the sealed Bolshevik train to Russia in 1917 alongside Lenin. He has been described as a fully seasoned conspiratorial Communist, crucial in forming the German Communist Party in 1918. Contemporaries were aware of his reputation as an intelligent, witty political writer. The End of a Song article is his contribution to the wider discourse about self-determination's role in international socialism.

The extinction of the Irish fire is part of the so-called national question. That national movement is only a real force when it is backed by strong class-interests.

Radek's vision of nationalism as legitimate only when motivated by labour and proletarian ideas could be taken as akin to Connolly's: that the national and socialist struggles were inextricably linked. However, Radek went much further with his sceptical analysis, crucially at odds with Lenin's position, as the former did not recognise nationalism as a force for its own sake.

For Radek, the reason the 1916 Easter Rising failed was that it was primarily a bourgeois insurrection. With Trotsky too, there was initially limited knowledge both outside or in the country, most had little to no information on the Rising's planning. Radek compares the situation with that of Poland and its oppression under Tsarist Russia. Here the Polish bourgeoisie was presented as "contented" with incorporation within Russia's Empire as economic development was "paramount." Radek deemed this "coup" as nothing more than Ireland's petty bourgeois seeking similar objectives

such as opportunity for economic development. Ultimately the author writes off the nationalist dreams of those involved in the Rising as nothing more than the "lulling to sleep," of those who were victims of the Imperialist war.

What is interesting about Radek's work is his commentary on the new social basis of the nationalist movement. Undoubtedly hindered by lacking relevant insights into Fenianism and the activities of Jim Larkin, James Connolly and Dublin's high volume of labour activity, it paints an intriguing picture of Irish intellectual ambitions. The Marxist prism of man's relationship to the methods of production, perhaps failed Radek to see any coalescence of ideas in Easter 1916.

### Rosa Luxemburg

Rosa Luxemburg was another highly admired socialist intellectual of her day, vicious in attacks and intense criticisms of Germany's SPD, the First World War and its shattering of socialist solidarity. In her work, *Either Or*, she argues against "imperial economists," and sets out her ideas on the role of nationalism for social democrats.

Here again, Comrades, it is a question of either-or! Either we nakedly and shamelessly betray the International...or we take the International in deadly seriousness and attempt to extend it into a firm stronghold, a bulwark, of the international socialist proletariat and of world peace. Today there is no longer room for any middle way, for vacillation and indecision.

She outlined a number of principles for international socialism and its nationalist interactions' implications for revolution. While scorning social-imperialists, she outlines a guide to her comrades, an application of the Erfurt Programme to contemporary problems of international socialism:

The world war serves neither the needs of national defence nor any of the economic or political interests of the masses. It is solely the result of imperialist rivalries between... capitalist classes of various countries for world domination and for a monopoly to impoverish and oppress the territories not yet ruled by capitalism. In this era of unfettered imperialism, there can no longer be national wars. National interests serve only as a method of deceiving the working masses in order to make them useful to their mortal enemy, imperialism.

For no oppressed nation can freedom and independence blossom forth from the politics of the

imperialist states and from the imperialist war. The small nations, whose ruling classes are appendages and accessories of their class comrades in the large nations, are only pawns in the imperialist game played by the great powers. They too, like the working masses, are being misused as tools during the war, and will be sacrificed to capitalist interests after the war.

Luxemburg's argument opposing self-determination shares a theme with Radek's: the vitality of small nations oppressed by imperialism has already been sapped; support of their purely national aspirations would lead to nothing. For these writers, the 1916 Rising was an almost mirror opposite of the social chauvinism involved in the support for war between Europe's powers. In other words, Germany's SPD and other socialist parties supported war for the same reason the IRB and other groups in European colonies such as India and Vietnam were against it-for nationalist dreams. Pyatakov and Dzerzhinsky were among other Bolsheviks at this time, also arguing along these lines that any nationalist revolution would necessarily be a reactionary one. Apart from Lenin, who saw the Rising as a popular movement against imperialism amidst an imperialist war, only Trotsky to some extent recognised the potential for nationalist misgivings to aid proletarian revolution.

## Vladimir Lenin

When examining Lenin's analysis of the national question in general, it must be acknowledged that he differed vastly in the style of his arguments against his contemporary theorists. His writings have almost kept absent any attempt to develop or begin from abstract definitions of nationalism. A very crucial aspect of Lenin's vision was his equating resolution of national questions in oppressed countries with attainment of full political democracy. Bew, Gibbon and Patterson's analysis of the long period of Marxist debate on Ireland provides important examples within Lenin's works of his favourable disposition to independent bourgeois states as opposed to Empire. Lenin makes the point in both *The Right of Nations...* and *The State and Revolution*,

The national question in most western countries...was settled long ago...Rosa Luxembourg has lost sight of the most important thing-the difference between countries where bourgeois-democratic

reforms have long been completed, and those where they have not...

...in a democratic republic no less than a monarchy, the state remains a machine for the oppression of one class by another...[but this] by no means signifies that the form of oppression makes no difference to the proletariat...a wider, freer more open form of class struggle and class oppression vastly assists the proletariat in its struggle..."

Lenin's reasoning for supporting small nations' independence is completely through his Marxism. A bourgeois revolution, free from foreign oppression is necessary in order to then realise a proletarian one. Lenin is stating that nationalist grievances could be tied with socialist goals, adding further impetus for social revolution. One can see from this argument, Lenin's realisation; that any social revolution would not be simple. If the capitalist system were to be overthrown, it would be necessary for Europe's small nations under Imperial hegemony to rise up. In his commentary on Easter 1916, he draws comparisons with the complexities involved in the 1905 Russian Revolution. These disparate interests coalesced to bring about opposition to the established regime:

The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a bourgeois-democratic revolution. It consisted of a series of battles in which all the discontented classes, groups and elements of the population participated. Among these, there were the masses imbued with the crudest prejudices, with the vaguest....most fantastic aims of struggle; there were small groups which accepted Japanese money, there were speculators and adventurers, etc. But objectively, the mass movement was breaking the back of Tsarism and paving the way for democracy; for this reason the class-conscious workers led it.

Lenin's analysis provides insight into his understanding of the origins of Revolution, highlighting his pragmatic tendencies and utilising seemingly incongruent factors to work towards his objectives. His views on nationalism operated from Marx's principle that no absolute judgements could be made on the subject and that each national question required unique concrete analysis on a purely political level. Lenin puts it in uncertain terms that a coalition of bourgeois democratic nationalist elements with proletarian forces is necessary as a matter of almost Machiavellian practicality:

The socialist revolution in Europe cannot be anything other than an outburst of mass struggle on the part of all...sundry oppressed and discontented elements. Inevitably, sections of...petty bourgeoisie

and of the backward workers will participate in it - without such participation, mass struggle is impossible, without it no revolution is possible - and just as inevitably will they bring into the movement their prejudices, their reactionary fantasies, their weaknesses and errors.

Lenin stresses the Easter Rising's importance in the face of dismissal by Radek and others, arguing an armed insurrection in Europe, within the territory of the oldest industrial capitalist state, Britain, as profoundly more significant than a rebellion outside of Europe. The parallels of this argument with his strategy of orchestrating a European-wide proletarian insurrection with the October Revolution are evident. Even a glancing observation of contemporary Irish and Russian circumstances highlights obvious similarities in the relative backwardness and agrarian basis of Russia and Ireland on industrialised Europe's periphery. Proletariat actions in these countries could provide a shining beacon for the masses of the continent to rise up. Lenin's April thesis and letters to the Bolshevik Central Committee in October 1917 on the urgency for action against the Provisional government were in line with Marx's later ideas. Lenin made his revolution in 1917 not just for Russia but for the sake of Europe. Although James Connolly, ever the internationalist was largely deprived of contact with his continental contemporaries which we shall later explore, when he wrote in his newspaper the Worker's Republic, the opportunity Ireland had for Europe, imagining Lenin as the author of this statement below would not have been too implausible:

...Ireland may yet set the torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last throne and the last capitalist bond...will be shrivelled on the funeral pyre of the last war lord.

The Early Comintern?

The important aspect of these discourses is how they outline preliminary positions and discussions in the early Comintern on national questions. In 1917, focus changed for Lenin and his Bolsheviks from such questions as they prepared for revolution in Russia. However, connections between Ireland's status as a discontented nation under foreign rule undergoing violent turmoil in the years ahead with the world's first socialist state-the Soviet Union, were important as a model this new state's stance regarding the overthrow of imperialism. Stephen White highlights this connection as the object of close attention in British government and intelligence circles, between reports of loans

in November 1920 of four million roubles sent to Sinn Fein from Soviet Russia (ironically it was actually the opposite) and fears of British communists aiding the Irish movement in order to adopt a "programme of common action." Although this was misinformed, it stresses the perceived overlaps and cross-fertilisation of ideas prevalent in this age of post WW1-Europe.

Lenin's career was bounded in realism and had little propensity for extreme philosophical and abstract arguments. His ideas on nationalism were borne out of similar arguments against Bogdanov's ideas about collective class conscientiousness; that uprisings of small nations were just as necessary for world revolution as material conditions in measuring social democracy's progress. Lenin's conception of Imperialism is crucial in any understanding of his revolutionary strategy. In addition, Lenin (flexible enough not to be defined a dogmatist), developed his position on the national question in relation to concrete situations. One can thus see shifts in his position: his views on the national question before and after his work on imperialism, for example, are significantly different. Also the experience of 1917 and soviet power changed his views towards federalism. Nevertheless, there are constants in Lenin's thoughts: his defence of the right of self-determination, his insistence in posing questions concretely rather than abstractly, and a notable sensitivity towards national demands. The gravity with which Lenin particularly, viewed the national question is illustrated by the Bolshevik leadership's interventions in regional parties in the course of the Russian Civil War, sometimes overturning entire leaderships.

Again Lenin's similarities with Connolly's position are evident in his attacks on Stalin's handling of the Georgian affair. Connolly's exchanges with William Walker highlights their congruency on this issue:

Such, in brief, is the real position of International Socialism towards subject nations. It is a concept based upon the belief that civilisation needs free nations just as the nations need free individual citizens, that the internationalism of the future will be based upon the free federation of free peoples, and cannot be realised through the subjugation of the smaller by the larger political unit.

Lenin's attitude to the Easter Rising could very well be appraised by anyone familiar with his prior writings. His interest in Ireland was similar to that of Marx and Engels; that Ireland was politically and

socially discontented, with the political and social system deriving their authority from the same place-England. On the eve of the World War, Lenin still maintained that the fall of British Government in Ireland would prove the prologue to a Communist Revolution. However flawed or naive this idea seems with hindsight, it is indicative of the initial importance of Ireland's status in classical Marxism's vision for International Socialist revolution. The ideological discourse examining the events in Dublin in April 1916 are significant in the formulation and synthesis of future attitudes of Comintern upon its formation in 1919 by the Bolsheviks.

### Summary

In James Connolly's last moments before his execution, he told his daughter Nora, "The socialists will never understand why I am here. They will forget I am an Irishman." Despite the obvious doom and emotional turmoil in his predicament, he was concerned with the reactions of fellow socialists analysing the Rising. His fear that his involvement in a 'national insurrection' would not be understood by his revolutionary counterparts was based on an understanding of their perceptions and limitations, shown by some of the extracts above and the reaction of his British contemporaries in the weeks and months ahead. The important exception to Connolly's fear was Lenin:

The general staffs in the current war are doing their utmost to utilise any national and revolutionary movement in the enemy camp: the Germans utilise the Irish rebellion, the French-the Czech movement, etc. They are acting quite correctly from their own point of view. A serious war would not be treated seriously if advantage were not taken of the enemy's slightest weakness and if every opportunity that presented itself were not seized upon, the more, so since it is impossible to know beforehand at what moment, where and with what force, some powder magazine will "explode". We would be very poor revolutionaries if, in the proletariat's great war of liberation for socialism, we did not know how to utilise every popular movement against every single disaster imperialism brings in order to intensify and extend the crisis.

Easter 1916 was at worst a convenient union between the forces of nationalism and socialism, with both overlaps and contradictions within its component parts. Important left-wing analysis disagreed with Lenin as one has seen.

Where the majority of the establishment and public immediately identified the Rising as a radical-left revolution, many of the left equally attacked it as bourgeois-elitist putsch. These differing views on the national question illustrated in this chapter were subsequently evident in the immediate post WW1 period.

Chapter 4 will explore echoes of the Easter Rising in Europe. Whatever legacy it had on figures internationally, its legacy within Ireland as a red rising is perhaps not so lasting, despite the ICA's role.

Sean O'Casey fits neatly with 1916's continental critics, whose stinging attacks in his literary works are equally as memorable as those of Yeats. O'Casey, a lifelong socialist and former IRB member, demonstrates this in an exchange between the characters of Juno and her Johnny in the play *Juno and the Paycock*, with the Easter week veteran losing his best principle when losing his arm as "them's the only sort o' principles that's any good to a workin' man." For O'Casey the real struggle for human freedom was taking place not in Ireland but in Soviet Russia; the Irish were fighting for freedom of the soul, but in Russia the Bolsheviks were fighting for freedom of the body and the mind.

Dublin's Easter Rising was a kaleidoscope; varying observers often saw vindications of their own values. The sentiment O'Casey expresses in his writings ponders real-life consequences of high minded causes, fitting well with left-wing criticisms. Pollard, firmly an establishment figure writes revolutionaries' pursuit of "great experiments" or "inner vision" is not wonderful self-sacrifice but rather perverted forms of self-gratification. Despite charges of anti democratic militarism laid at Tom Clarke and Sean MacDermott, they were hardly any different from other revolutionary insurrectionists of the 19th or 20th centuries in acting without majority support. They were people of frightening simplicity, comparable to the great socialist Auguste Blanqui and Italian nationalist Garibaldi. Yeats' dialogue between Pearse and Connolly in the *Rose Tree* highlights the inalienable relationship between both criticisms and praises of the Rising, that any "worthwhile" revolutionary harvest requires tremendous sacrifice:

But where can we draw water,'



Said Pearse to Connolly,

'When all the wells are parched away?

O plain as plain can be

There's nothing but our own red blood

Can make a right Rose Tree.

Ultimately in this pursuit of higher causes such as the Bolshevik 'dictatorship of the proletariat', ordinary people suffered along the way. Easter Week in Dublin was but the prologue to this new revolutionary drama which dismantled the fabric of old Europe.

#### Chapter 4-The European Revolutions

...Nashe Slovo was...reporting the discontent in Ireland around the Easter Uprising of 1916 ...an article of May 1916...discussed the place of Ireland within the United Kingdom. It outlines special factors which made Ireland the most volatile component of the Union, the one most likely to mount a successful challenge to the power of the British Protestant aristocracy.

After Easter 1916, not only was much of Europe still engaged in war but many places were occupied with revolutionary turmoil. Towards the war's end, there were two revolutions in Russia and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian and German Empires in the "German Revolution." November 1918's armistice did not bring peace to these places as the nationalist and socialist "genies" had been let out of the bottle with the central powers' collapse. Germany's Spartacists, March Action, Ruhr Red army and Bavarian separatists; Glasgow's Red Clyde-side; Bela-Kun's Hungarian Bolshevik Revolution; the Finnish Civil-War; Anglo-Irish War and Russia's own civil war all showcased the end of Imperial Europe. The power vacuum which following WW1 set the stage for ideological battles of left and right that gripped the world for much of the 20th century. There were somewhat similar events to the Easter Rising in these subsequent insurrections, but its real importance was as an opening prologue to this new Europe's revolutionary drive in both nationalist

and socialist worlds.

## The Bolshevik Revolution

In November 1917, having already undergone one revolution that year, the Russian state was again in upheaval with the Bolshevik coup d'etat. Common linkages such as organisation, methods and aims of the revolutionary underground groups; their shared roots in Blanquiesque cells has been explored in chapter one and below we shall compare the October Revolution with Easter 1916 directly.

Lenin's role as instigator does not hold up to a direct correlation with Clarke and MacDermott's plotting of the Rising. Although it was Lenin who urged action, it was up to Trotsky and others to formulate and implement a plan. When Lenin returned to Smolny on the morning of the insurrection, it was Trotsky who informed him of its initiation.

The Bolsheviks benefitted from increasing support in the country itself, whereas in Ireland mainstream support for an IRB agenda only really manifested after the rebel leaders' executions. When the Rising occurred it was without popular support, whereas Lenin during the 1917 July days argued that it was impossible to act so long as a majority still believed in the "petty bourgeois capitalist controlled policy of the Mensheviks and SRs." Although both groups were clandestine minorities, the Bolsheviks seemed to at least pay attention to public sentiment. The Bolsheviks had effective support in many important areas. Their position was strengthened by the establishment's weaknesses: Russia's heavy defeats to Germany; the Russian infrastructure's collapse and threats from the right represented by Korniloff. John Reed's descriptions of Russia's circumstances far from resembled 1916 Ireland:

It was against this background of a whole nation in ferment and disintegration that the pageant of the Rising of the Russian Masses unrolled...

The interesting point to analyse is the IRB's old maxim of "England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity," a sentiment which Lenin seemingly shared. Although the IRB military council had agreed in 1915 to make an insurrection by the end of the war, Lenin in contrast was met with numerous setbacks in convincing his comrades that now was the time to strike right through from his

April thesis until mere days before the revolution. However Lenin shared the Irish sense of urgency in September 1917:

History will not forgive us if we do not assume power now.

Dividing their respective insurrections was the symbolism dynamic. The Easter Rising was fundamentally theatre, demonstrating the Irish nation's sovereignty, independent of Britain. Russia's revolution was a determined example of physical force, seizing the reins of power from the provisional government and placing it into the hands of the social revolutionary party.

This dissertation has explored interesting international links between revolutionary brotherhoods prior to 1916. Before exploring Scottish socialism's interest in Ireland and diplomacy between Bolshevik Russia & Irish Republicanism, one must also examine German and Hungarian socialist orientations towards nationalism. These various groups had different attitudes and therefore competing visions. Difficulty to distinguish between divergent brands of revolutionary communism had always existed, but has been concealed since this early 1920s period, largely due to the Bolshevik Revolution's success and subsequent Soviet domination of most non-Russian communist groups.

#### Germany & Hungary: socialist cross-section

Post-WW1 German events provide historical examples of basic visions of socialism. January 1919's Spartacist Uprising; the April Bavarian Soviet and "March Action" are indicative of the varying views on socialism. The Spartacist Uprising represented revolutionary socialist movement 'sans' nationalism; Bavarian separatist leanings highlighted a more nationalist orientated approach. "As late as 1916, Munich had been one of the centres of extreme nationalism; the peace resolution of the Reichstag in July 1917 had not met with much response in Bavaria." Germany provides a case study of radical left polycentrism. According to Bassler, both "leftism" and German communism of 1918-19 appear in this perspective as two variations of a type of communism, which cannot be understood solely in terms of the Bolshevik model. Despite their different attitudes, Germany's socialist revolutions were eventually put down by forces of the right- the Freikorps. Differing

historical circumstances lead to differing movements; comparative analysis and classification of various types of communism must take account of the actual historical situation against which they rebel. Marx wrote:

Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence.

The German Revolution showcased different visions of German socialism. With revolution in November 1918, German communist movements appeared as a diversity of often rivalling groups and tendencies, embracing different tactics; advocating various immediate objectives. When Kurt Eisner overthrew the state government of Bavaria with the Munich revolution, it contributed revolutionary success in Berlin on November 9th 1918. Some Bavarian separatist sentiments espoused were undoubtedly tactical, as Bavarians hoped to make better peace terms independently of Germany with the allies. Perhaps the Spartacists were most important in Germany, led by Luxemburg and Liebknecht, who professed loyalty to the International as the true "class organisation of the proletariat," which should have "priority over all other organisational duties."

Liebknecht rejected "any form of organisation which obstructs agitation in the spirit of internationalism and the initiative of the revolutionary masses." For Luxemburg and Liebknecht national considerations were to be avoided although, with the extreme left's growing power in Berlin up to January 1919, provincial conservative elements believed Bavaria and other south German states would better protect themselves from bolshevism, if they separated their destinies from those of Prussia. Bavarians felt misused by Prussia in a number of ways and bitter words against north Germany could be heard everywhere. The Ruhr industrial region was also a focal point of left-radical restiveness. Hungary's Soviet Republic led by Bela-Kun was more radical than even the Bolsheviks and yet pursued also a nationalist agenda. Bela-Kun did not come to power through insurrection, but his communist party was co-opted with social-democrats into government. The Hungarian Soviet Republic pursued nationalistic military exploits against Romania and Czechoslovakia, while simultaneously instituting often hasty nationalisation policies.

The "Spartacist Uprising" and Bavarian Soviet Republic were both eventually put-down by the Freikorps para-military, and the Hungarian Soviet Republic met a rural counter-revolution. These communist movements, with different agendas and methods are remarkable samples of wider Europe's varying revolutionary groups in this period bringing attention to nationalist-separatist ideas often linked with socialism, particularly in subjugated nations.

#### John MacLean-Red Clyde

Larkin and Connolly in Ireland's labour movement parallel somewhat to socialist John MacLean, later Scotland's Soviet representative for the USSR. Despite initial wariness of Irish separatism, the subsequent Irish War of Independence and time in Dublin led MacLean gradually to a "Connollyesque" position. Trotsky's words on Easter 1916's Scottish implications rang true with the Red Clyde crisis and the so-called battle of George Square in 1919. John MacLean was a Marxist anti-war activist; prominent in Scottish radical politics until 1923. His programme for a Scottish socialist republic was of the same vein of Connolly's "Celtic Communism," and that traditional Scottish society should be structured along these lines. MacLean argued that communism of the clans must be re-established on a modern basis, using a slogan "back to communism and forward to communism. He sounds markedly similar to Connolly's Labour in Irish History, referring to Celtic subjugation to England. Connolly commented on "birth-marks" of slavery; hailed by some as 'the native characteristics of the Celt.' "One of these slave birth-marks is a belief in the capitalist system of society; the Irishman frees himself from such a mark of slavery when he realises the truth that the capitalist system is the most foreign thing in Ireland."

Writing that the reaction beginning was inspired by Ireland and Russia,

...Maclean...had come to feel that the best way to support the Bolsheviks was by 'keeping capitalism busy at home', Irish republicans' campaign of resistance to British Rule had profound implications for the revolutionary struggle within the British Empire.

This argument is akin to Lenin's reaction to Easter 1916 and was later adopted by the Comintern in 1920 during the Anglo Irish War. Initial signs that Maclean was more receptive to forging Irish separatist connections came in a piece published on the occasion of James Connolly's birthday

celebrations in Ireland. He pledged Scotland to help fund a Connolly Memorial Workers College. Here Connolly's message clearly permeated to the leadership of the Scottish labour movement. MacLean's shared Connolly's belief that true Irish liberty would come only through Ireland being wholly independent of English economics.

In his 'Impressions of Dublin', Maclean recounted a speech he gave there in which he indelicately asserted the inadequacy of a Sinn Fein republic for the emancipation of Irish labour because Ireland's freedom 'depended on the revolt and success of British labour'.

Foster has highlighted the framework in which MacLean worked at this time of international strife. The Red Clyde happened in the same year as the Anglo-Irish War began, when Left-wing insurrections were fought in Germany, Belá Kun's Hungarian Soviet Republic, and the Finnish Civil war together with growing counter-revolution violence in Russia.

Maclean's conversion to Irish republicanism, while genuine, must ultimately be seen in the context of the deeper motives and political considerations that informed it. Chief among these was his Marxism, which committed him to advancing the cause of international socialism. Thus for Maclean, the future Irish Republic must be a 'workers' republic' set up along socialist principles and fully engaged in the worldwide struggle against capitalism. This harnessing of Irish republicanism to a socialist agenda had an obvious precursor in James Connolly.

At particular instances Maclean appeared to regard Irish republicanism as an intrinsically progressive force. He believed physical force against Britain made the "Sinn Feiners", who made no profession of socialism or communism, appear to be doing more to help the Russian Revolution than all professed Marxists in Britain'. At the 1920 Comintern Congress, Ireland's struggle was discussed in more detail. When Connolly's son Roddy (Roderick) addressed the fifth session of the congress on 28th July 1920, he exclaimed that Ireland was a constant hotbed of revolution in the very heart of the Empire with decisive significance for world revolutionary movements. Until the later stages of the Irish civil war, the Communist International took a strongly pro-IRA stance, and Soviet Russia gave the CPI (Communist Party of Ireland) a potential far in excess of its size. With MacLean's support, Lenin was not the only radical figure placing Ireland's role as pivotal in the

Revolutionary cause.

Whatever about his place in the history of European socialism or Scottish nationalism, his passionate engagement with Ireland's struggle for independence-In particular his insistence on its imperial context and potential global significance-deserves consideration in any thorough examination of the Irish Revolution.

#### Anglo-Irish War and Comintern

Both establishment and revolutionary figures saw possible links between Irish separatism and international socialism:

For the most part, the marginality of the CPI cannot be gainsaid, but in other respects a different perspective emerges from British, communist, and Russian sources. A British intelligence campaign to associate the Irish independence movement with Bolshevism was not entirely groundless. Republicans had sought aid from Moscow during the War of Independence and it was not impossible that they would do so again in a civil war.

In the years 1919-1923, there was very active engagement between Irish Revolutionaries and the Comintern. Remarkable examples of cooperation and diplomacy stressing ties between revolutionary groups with mutual interests can be found. One interesting episode highlights James Connolly's status as a truly international influence is the exchange between one Bolshevik and Irish Left-wing figures in 1918 Belfast.

D.R. Campbell and W.O'Brien had met Litvinoff in January 1918 and had been very pleased when he 'showed himself to be well informed about Irish affairs, and mentioned that both Lenin and Trotsky were conversant with the writings of James Connolly', whose name, according to Litvinoff, 'was favourably known to the Russian Revolutionary movement'

Such evidence hardly places Connolly as pre-eminent in continental socialism as it could have been mere flattery. Litvinov's assurance that the Bolsheviks had long been students of James Connolly's writings may be exaggerated. However it heavily implies the highly congruent positions Irish and Russian socialist leaders held and surely suggests that had these men been in the same circles, they would have worked very well together.

Another key episode in Soviet-Irish relations was the negotiation of a loan from the Irish Revolutionary movement to the Soviet government. In 1920 De Valera was with Harry Boland in the U.S raising funds from American sympathisers for the new Irish republic, serving to obtain diplomatic aid and sympathy. After immense success, they were approached by Soviet agents for financial aid at a time when the Soviet government was largely insolvent. Irish Foreign policy documents of the period illuminate the international situation of Ireland's Independence movement; its efforts to both obtain recognition and material aid. Russia proved the best candidate. De Valera's letter to Boland authorising the loan is one such example,

You are hereby authorized to advance to the representative of the Russian Government the sum of \$20,000.00 (twenty thousand dollars) on condition that arrangements are made so that its equivalent may be made available later for the duly accredited representatives of the Irish Republican Government at Moscow.

The loan granted by the Irish Republic's President to the still-new Russian state (the Romanov crown jewels served as collateral) albeit self-motivated for international recognition, provides a prime example of revolutionary linkages, echoing Wolfe Tone and James Stephen's involvement with revolutionary French factions. Europe's "pariahs" shared underground natures allowed cooperation. For the Irish it helped formalise their sovereignty, strengthening their claim to self-government. For the Bolsheviks it was vital fiscal aid. Desires for further ties are evident from Patrick McCartan, Irish envoy to the Soviet Government. A possible treaty was discussed in this period but due to circumstances was never ratified.

While the Russians were keen on a treaty in 1920, President Eamon de Valera hesitated, apprehensive about the impact on the bigger prize of winning recognition from the USA. When he finally decided to send McCartan to Moscow, the Soviets had gone cold on ties with the republic, for fear of jeopardizing trade negotiations with Britain.

De Valera cut his losses holding for American recognition, instead pursuing further relationships with Russia. His timing was off however: just when the USSR was beginning to come out of the diplomatic wilderness and Narkomindel was unwilling to jeopardise this new economic relationship



with Britain. Russia was consolidating its own position with its civil war and no doubt soviet leaders sought stability and less risk. McCartan's records illuminate the closed door discussions on cooperation:

If Russia gave us recognition would the Irish people not expect more assistance than they could give us? They (the Russians) fought their enemies largely with arms and munitions captured from them. I assured him that we only expected moral support. If material assistance were possible it would be very welcome and we would be very grateful for it but we would not be disappointed if none could be furnished to us. The mere act of recognising our Government would have a great effect on the morale of our own people and was certain to have effect all over the world. The people of the world recognised the Soviet Government as the Government of a great country though the Governments of the world withheld that recognition. Recognition of Ireland would make every genuine sympathiser with Ireland an active advocate of recognition of the Soviet Government.

The draft treaty highlighted shared revolutionary values, idealistic in wording with realpolitik subtext: Desirous of promoting peaceful and friendly relations between all nations of the world and especially between the people of Russia and the people of Ireland, and striving to co-operate in the interest of the advancement of the human race and for the liberation of all people from imperialistic exploitation and oppression.

Articles of the proposed treaty included pledges of recognition, preventing proliferation of arms in use against either country, sharing of resources and fostering of friendship. Although historian E.H Carr has said discussions were not taken very seriously on either side, it does illustrate the nature of world revolutionary movements and some evident overlapping interests.

Soviet Russia's relative sensitivity to national questions is highlighted in Lenin and Trotsky's stance during the Civil War regarding the Ukrainian national question. At this time the Hungarian and Bavarian Soviets were isolated and crushed, and positions adopted by the Bolshevik leadership imply high importance upon answering national questions (albeit soviet nation questions). In an order to Red Army troops advancing into the Ukraine, Trotsky stated:

Keep this firmly in mind: your task is not to conquer the Ukraine but to liberate it. When Denikin's

bands have finally been smashed, the working people of the liberated Ukraine will themselves decide on what terms they are to live with Soviet Russia. We are all sure, and we know, that the working people of the Ukraine will declare for the closest fraternal union with us...Long live the free and independent Soviet Ukraine!

Bolsheviks were again in control of Kiev by December 1919 and in following years, the Ukrainian language was introduced into schools; knowledge of local history and culture was fostered. Indigenous personnel were trained for positions of responsibility within the Party. The Ukrainian language was raised from its marginal, minority position within its own territory. 1921-22's Georgian Affair again demonstrates Lenin's sensitivity to nationalities. Lenin was concerned with guaranteeing equality between the national republics of the future Soviet Union, deleting Stalin's planned paragraph relating to the adhesion of republics to the RSFSR, instead proposing "a formal union with the RSFSR, in a Union of Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia."

Lenin's rhetoric on self-determination pre-1917 continued advocacy of aid to other European Soviets during the civil war illustrates this contemporary international perspective. In the same terms, Lenin and other international socialists had a deep sympathy for Irish affairs; his acquaintanceship with Roddy Connolly is shown in a photograph during the Comintern Congress of 1920 almost assuredly demonstrating familiarity Ireland's situation. MacLean demonstrated the largely adopted view of the Congress,

At root, Maclean understood Ireland's significance for the socialist cause in anti-imperialist terms. He regarded Ireland's struggle for independence as the gravest threat to the British Empire, the destruction of which was a prerequisite for the liberation of the workers of the world. The achievement of independence for Ireland would act as 'the inciting influence to British labour', bringing the empire 'crashing to the ground' and producing global revolutionary shockwaves.

We cannot however hold MacLean and Bolshevik positions on self-determination issues as the wholesale opinion of world socialism as examined above. Indeed McCartan's notes on Russian views of Ireland highlight discrepancies among between Bolshevik leaders and members. According to McCartan there was interest in Ireland's revolution but generally people felt it was, "a national one

and hence it was concluded had little or nothing in common with Communism or the 'world revolution'." Russians drew on Soviet experience with their war with Poland; after gaining their national freedom the Poles set out on a crusade of imperialism. Russians had admiration for Irish fighting qualities but held to stereotypes that Irishmen everywhere are reactionaries...not usually Socialists.

As a rule they are Catholics, and God and the Churches are the opponents of Communists. Religion is the opiate of the workers'. It seems to me that it is impossible to do any propaganda for Ireland in Russia but had I not been there I'm certain I should have thought otherwise and no doubt others will also think so.

This evidence strongly suggests a very cynical but perhaps not inaccurate attitude towards the Anglo-Irish War.

### Summary

Russian, German, Hungarian and Scottish socialist movements demonstrated varying positive approaches to self-determination from sympathetic to outright support. Bolsheviks had supported Finnish independence despite the ultimate defeat of the Red forces in the bitter civil war. Bavarians had demonstrated a separatist and socialist agenda. John MacLean espoused increasingly nationalist rhetoric, desiring to almost replicate the Sinn Féin example in Scotland to help break up the British Empire. There was a middle-ground in these revolutionaries, where they were often reading each other's messages. However, when the seven leaders of the Easter Rising signed the Proclamation, they not only strode into history as fathers of Irish freedom, or the first revolutionaries of the post WW1 world. They were crucially the first revolutionaries to have the twin forces of both socialism and nationalism at their heart, showcasing for the rest of Europe that these forces need not antagonise each other. Lenin's Bolshevism was of the same relationship, linking the national question to the revolutionary movement. Ultimately his conclusion on the Easter Rising was:

The misfortune of the Irish is that they rose prematurely, when the European revolt of the proletariat had had time to mature.

However, Lee speculates on different circumstances of an alternate Irish Rising. Perhaps better

armed rebels would lead to a more severe British repression, resulting in Irish mutinies along the front. Perhaps a withdrawal to quell the rebellion in Ireland would lead to Germany winning WW1; turning on Russia with a vengeance to exact a tribute making Brest-Litovsk appear magnanimous. "Lenin might then have had second thoughts as to whether the Easter Rising had occurred 'prematurely!'" Lenin, chiefly concerned with the mechanics of power did not recognise the rising's significance for revolutionaries generally. Borrowing from Easter 1916 yet again, Yeats' sentiments did not apply only in an Irish context. For working classes and subjugated nations across the globe:

All's changed,  
changed utterly,  
a terrible beauty is born.

## Conclusion

We were probably the most conservative minded revolutionaries that ever put through a successful revolution.

Ireland's post independence conservative government led by Cosgrave that included Kevin O'Higgins was not one that James Connolly or the Comintern would have appreciated. In retrospect the Irish independence movement that became the pro-treaty side of the Civil War was described by Soviet Russians to McCartan earlier in 1921:

They think we are good organisers and good propagandists...that we should join forces with [English communists] and thus contribute to the world revolution. To their minds humanity would gain nothing even if the Republic of Ireland were recognised. They believe the proletariat of Ireland would have to begin in the new in order to establish a workers republic.

In this respect they were perhaps vindicated, although with crucial caveats. It was not for want of trying that Connolly's vision of united nationalism and socialism were not realised. Although orthodox republicans concluded that the workers were doing their Irish patriotic duty, it was industrial resistance to Britain which proved to be so important. The general strike against conscription, the

Limerick Soviet, and blacking of the British Army by railwaymen were all organized by the working-class movement. These were the important aspects of the class dimension of the anti-imperialist struggle.

Connolly's warning to the ICA on the eve of the Rising, not lay down their arms after initial success anticipated fundamental obstacles between aspects of Irish self-determination and labour forces. With the Anglo-Irish Treaty's subsequent civil war, notables of Irish society, transferring loyalty from Home Rule to Sinn Féin when the tide of nationalist opinion was unstoppable, would accept a settlement that fell short of republican goals. Conservative elements would never risk further upheaval for Partition or the Oath.

A small number of socialists in the anti-treaty camp saw the class nature of the split, and IRA commander Liam Mellows was grasping towards the same view...he identified the 'stake in the country' people as the bedrock of support for the Treaty, before his execution by the Free State in 1922.

Mellows, Ernie O'Malley, Roddy and Nora Connolly were significant left-wing figures involved in the anti-treaty movement and the Comintern expressed desires to aid them. However, the anti-treaty leadership proved unreceptive, as Liam Lynch, IRA Chief of Staff showed:

...when the fledgling [CPI] urged him to adopt a programme of political and economic demands that would certainly have polarized opinion along class lines, Lynch simply retorted that he was a soldier, not a politician, and carried on with a purely military, moralistic resistance to the Treaty that was certain to fail."

Despite the first Dáil's reneging on the radical Democratic Programme announced in January 1919, described as mere poetry by O'Higgins-keen to paint it as communist doctrine, that same poetry was responsible for the Irish Revolution with Pearse and Connolly's 1916 Proclamation. These radicals' aspirations stemmed from poetic dreams. Pearse's oft quoted graveside oratory exemplified revolutionary zeal:

The fools, the fools, the fools, they have left us our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.

These words illuminate the Easter Rebels's immutable legacy for those who trod similar paths. The Rising has been described as a poets' rebellion, and poets with or without guns can be dangerous, communicating ideas through symbolism and imagery, fermenting revolution within the minds of audiences.

In essence the Rising was sheer poetry, appearing...as the poem of nationhood writ in blood and martyrdom. Like Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, the full impact of the Rising was in the first instance not appreciated by its audience. Time was needed to assimilate the full emotional import of the experience and still longer to construct an intellectual political response.

Pearse's addressed his Court Martial on the 2nd May 1916 after the Rising:

We seem to have lost. We have not lost. To refuse to fight would have been to lose; to fight is to win. We have kept faith with the past, and handed on a tradition to the future.

The tradition of Irish republicanism for which 1916 was intended, through James Connolly and sheer example had equal implications for European and Colonial revolution. Perhaps this entwining of socialism and nationalism is most epitomised as recently as 7th February 2014, where the current Sinn Fein Irish nationalist party, self-proclaimed heirs of 1916, are ever identified as Marxists in the minds of ordinary people. Even if the 1916 rising evoked sympathy only, it at the very least presented a transcendent juxtaposition of the juggernaut 20th century forces of nationalism and socialism.