

INTERNATIONAL

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BULLETIN

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Ireland

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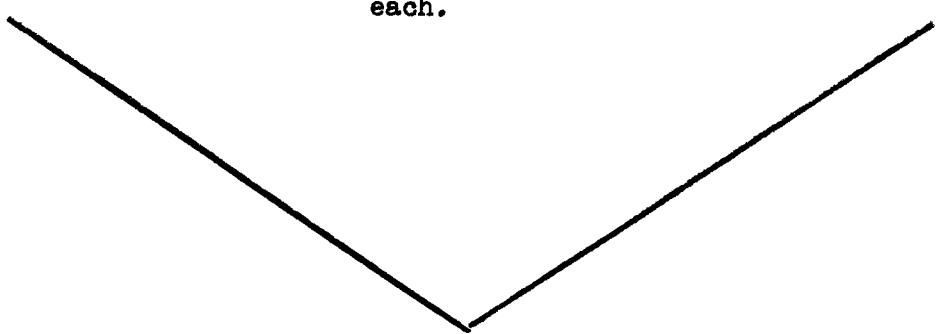
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Ireland

The name Ireland, or Eire, applies to the whole island, which is the second largest of the archipelago which lie off the coast of north-west Europe.

The first three letters of the English name (Ire-land) are obviously derived from the Irish name. This in turn is said to be derived from one of the most important Celtic peoples which inhabited it in early time -- the Erinn.

/ See : O'Rahilly : Early Irish History and Mythology /

History Human remains dating to 10,000 B.C. have been found in Ireland, but the earliest people whose name is known are the Cruithin (variously spelled) whose Scottish congeners were called by the Roman propagandists the "Picts". After them came the Erinn, and subsequently the Gaels, who unified the island under the High Kingship of Tara in the early years of the Roman era. The date is disputed.

Three specific historical features should be noted :

1. Ireland was never part of the Roman Empire and subsequently the transition from primitive communism to feudalism proceeded in a quite different way from that in Britain.
2. Ireland was unified centuries before England existed, and its community consciousness is enshrined in a literature going back centuries before English was known.
3. Native institutions never completed the full transition to feudalism, and consequently the Irish struggle for national independence has always possessed a communal element.

(cf. Marx Letter to Engels 30/11/1867
Engels to Marx 27/11/1869.)

The invasion of Ireland by the Normans in 1169 A.D. took place before the partial conquest of Wales in 1284, which was completed with the "Act of Union" between England and Wales in 1536. But the conquest of Ireland was not formally completed until the year 1691. Five hundred years of almost unbroken warfare left its mark on Irish geography, literature and national character.

From 1691 followed the age of rebellions, with approximately one in each generation. Following the final dispersal of the native aristocracy these were marked by their popular leadership and links with revolutionary developments in Europe, Britain and the U.S.A.

The most famous revolt was the revolt of 1798. As a counter-revolutionary measure the British Government extinguished the separate Irish Parliament while continuing to maintain a colonial system of Government. (Cf. Algeria under the French).

The first revolt in which the working class played a part under its own distinct banner was that of Easter 1916. The counter-revolutionary measures adopted by British imperialism (after several years war) included the partition of the country, twenty-six counties being allowed a limited Dominion status (which they subsequently broadened) and six being retained as an "integral part of the United Kingdom" (established in 1801) but given a local administration.

Hence today there are two states in Ireland, and a conflict of law. The Government of the twenty-six counties (now outside the Commonwealth and called the Republic of Ireland) claims jurisdiction over the whole island. The name "Republic of Ireland" does not mean the Republic in Ireland. But the British Government claims "jurisdiction over every person and thing" in the six counties of what is termed "Northern Ireland" (See: Bunreacht na hEireann /Irish Constitution/ Article 2. Government of Ireland Act, 1920, Section 75. These are in direct conflict).

The effects of partition colour the whole subsequent development of Irish affairs. First note the neo-colonial nature of the imposed settlement. The six counties retained possess approximately 40% of the wealth of Ireland. They have a surplus trade balance in industrial products, even though their industry is completely unprotected against British competition. Their total balance of payments is however, only kept stable by constant British capital investment -- the progressive buying up of the economy by British monopoly.

The control of the six northern counties by the imperial Government meant the exclusion of the area with an industrial surplus. This necessitated over-reliance on regressive types of agricultural development (cattle-rearing) and once again the balance of payments contains a constant and increasing factor of British investment.

NOTE : frequent scare stories in the British press about German and other investment in Ireland are exaggerated. The overwhelming foreign investor is Britain.

The effect of partition has been to prevent Ireland from developing her own balanced economy, and thus make each part of Ireland dependent on Britain.

It has been suggested that under Versailles and the Washington Naval Treaty of 1921 the powers recognized Ireland as a special British sphere of influence where there would be no intervention.

NOTE ALSO : Although for purposes of discussion it is now necessary to deal with developments in the six and the 26 counties separately, the politics of the six counties is almost completely, and that of the twenty-six largely determined, by the fact of partition, which gives its special form to the continuing independence struggle.

Modern
IRELAND

The following dates may be of interest :

April 24th, 1916	Easter Rising.
May 12th, 1916	Execution of James Connolly.
April 23rd, 1918	General strike against conscription in Ireland.
January 21, 1919	Declaration of Independence by Dail Eireann (Irish constituent assembly).
July 12, 1921	Truce between Britain and Ireland comes into effect.

- 21 July 1921 Lloyd George offers settlement based on partition.
- 6 December 1921 Irish negotiators in London accept partition settlement under threat of immediate war.
- 28 June 1922 Civil War in twenty-six counties.
- 24 May 1923 Civil War ends. Republicans dump arms.
Communist Party formed, with Roddy Connolly as leader.
- 16 May 1926 De Valera founds Fianna Fail, constitutional bourgeois republican party.
- 9 March 1932 General Election. Fianna Fail takes power.
- June 1933 Communist Party of Ireland re-established.
- 10 March 1937 New Constitution introduced in Dail, revising previous position in twenty-six counties in direction of independence.
- 3 September 1939 Twenty-six counties declare neutrality in war.
- 1941 Communist Party confined to six counties.
- 7 January 1944 Irish trade union movement split, producing two Congresses and two Labour Parties.
- 4 February 1948 Fianna Fail defeated in election, coalition of Fine Gael, Labour and Clann na Poblachta takes over.
- 1949 Irish Workers' Party founded (26 counties).
- 18 April 1949 Twenty-six counties withdraw from Commonwealth.
- April 1949 Britain recognizes withdrawal, but introduces the Ireland Act making partition permanent, though delegates in 1921 had only accepted it on promise it was temporary.
- 7 May 1951 Fianna Fail returns to office.
- 13 May 1955 Second coalition Government.

5 March 1957 Fianna Fail again returned.

17 June 1959 Referendum on Proportional Representation.
Proposal to revert to British electoral
system defeated.

 1959 Trade Union and Labour movement reunited.

1 May 1965 Amalgamation plans for largest trade unions
announced.

 1966 Gerard Fitt (Republican Labour) elected to
Westminster.

Summer 1967 Labour Party in Dublin proposes to re-insert
socialism in its programme.
National Council of Labour for all Ireland
under discussion.

December 1967 Sinn Fein (Republicans) insert socialism in
their programme.
Developing unity of Workers' Party, Sinn Fein
and left Labour on housing agitations.

Summer 1968 Fresh referendum on proportional representation
promised.

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THE REPUBLIC

Area : about 16 million acres.

Population : just under three million inhabitants.

Persons employed in various industries (1964)

:	Agriculture	376,272
	Manufacturing	179,436
	Building	59,587
	Commerce	143,195
	Transport	54,167
	Professions	85,952
	Public administration (including defence)	40,580

Of those engaged in agriculture, nearly two-thirds are on farms of from 15 to 100 acres, i.e. regular labour is not employed. The 33,000 with holdings less than 15 acres give a rough measure of the modest size of the rural proletariat.

The average number of persons engaged in industry (including clerical and administrative staff) has risen from 154,056 in 1936, to 238,964 in 1962. In the same period the index of production has risen from 52.1 (1953 base = 100) to 138.2. The volume of output per wage-earner engaged has risen on the same basis -- from 77.9 to 130.3.

Over the same period average earnings for males have risen from 1s.3d. an hour in 1938, to 4s.10d. an hour in 1962. The consumer price index (taking that of 1953 as 100) stood at 157 in 1962, and 173 in 1964. A rough and ready calculation shows that while the working class have gained some benefit from increased productivity, a large margin has accrued to the employers.

Agricultural price movements (taking 1953 as 100) show 1948 as 78.5, and 1962 as 101. This illustrates the operation of the notorious "scissors", and is the basis of the amalgamation and mechanization of farms, and the enforced emigration of thousands of Irishmen and women every year.

The total "national" (i.e. 26 county) income is given as £672 million in 1963, having been £483 million in 1958.

Classification of capital

- (A) Infrastructure of state industries : electricity, public road and rail services, Post Office, turf (equivalent of coal in British economy), sugar, parts of banking, insurance and shipping.
- (B) Old-established industries connected with former ascendancy families : once important, but now largely bought up by British monopolies.
- (C) British (and to a lesser degree U.S., Canadian, West German and Japanese) monopoly investments. British exceed all others together many times over. Oil, banking, and insurance milling (Ranks), mining, light engineering (branches of foreign concerns) and increasingly marketing.
- (D) Numerous, very small, mostly family firms.

POLITICAL PARTIES

Fianna Fail

Traditionally based on state aid to native industry. Protection through tariffs and state-sector infrastructure. Has held power with two brief interludes since 1932. Traditional opponent of the 1921 partition settlement. Over the past ten years the great penetration of British (and to a lesser extent other) foreign capital has produced branches of monopoly in which local Irish capital participates. Thus Fianna Fail now speaks for the larger native capitalists with foreign connections. Large banking and merchant houses who used to give funds to Fine Gael now give them to Fianna Fail.

Fine Gael

Traditionally the treaty party, based on merchandising export of cattle, import of commodities, but this party began the nationalized infrastructure with the Shannon scheme. Old ascendancy industrialists and merchants, etc., backed Fine Gael (formerly Cumann na nGael), which was connected with O'Duffy's "blueshirts", a pro-British extremist element of the thirties, not exactly parallel with continental or British fascists. Recently the old ascendancy capitalists have been largely gobbled up by foreign-linked capital. The basis of this party has shrunk. A type of superficial radicalism has appeared, designed to appeal to workers and others with just grievances against Fianna Fail.

L a b o u r

Founded by resolution of James Connolly at Clonmel in 1912. A British-type Labour Party with trade union affiliations, but less so than in Britain. Recently a number of additional trade unions have affiliated. Representation in Dail has increased to 26, and the party has included (undefined) socialism in its aims and objects. The party has no strong constituency organization, nor any firm philosophy of politics. This is illustrated by continuing talk of coalition with the "new", "radical" Fine Gael in certain Labour circles. Whereas Fianna Fail and Fine Gael are strongly for the Common Market, the Labour Party is indecisive and confused on the matter. It has developing links with the six-county Labour Party.

Sinn Fein

This is the original party of national independence, which led the revolutionary struggle of 1917-1921 in loose alliance with Labour. It was from this that Fianna Fail broke away. Still tied by rigid traditions derived from stands taken in the counter-revolutionary years when it stood as the party of "no compromise", Sinn Fein has of late moved sharply left and has adopted a united Irish "socialist republic" as its objective. It is linked by personnel to the Irish Republican Army which made the effort to recapture the six counties in 1956.

Its newspaper the "United Irishman" has increased its circulation by about 40% in the last year. It is strongly against the Common Market, and increasingly reflects the interests of petit-bourgeoisie and small independent capitalists, but has support from many workers on grounds that ending partition will greatly increase employment possibilities.

Irish Workers' Party

The parallel party to the Communist Party in the six counties, and still containing some of the old leaders of the Communist Party of Ireland which divided during the second world war. Over the past few years it has adopted a strong republic line and has established loose working arrangements with Sinn Fein and the left of the Labour Party on immediate issues such as housing and the Common Market. The outlook of the Irish Workers' Party is increasingly permeating the outlook of the Labour Left and the Republican movement. The Connolly Youth Movement, while not formally Irish Workers' Party, is linked with it by ideology and personnel.

Splinter Groups

There are a number of small splinter groups, of a variously leftist orientation. They have little influence, and come and go.

NORT
IRE

T R A D E
UNIONS

The total number of workers organized in trade unions is given in 1962 as being 286,382. Of these, 196,134 were in unions of over 10,000 members. The giant TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS' UNION founded by Jim Larkin, dominates the scene with over 100,000 workers. Thus, 193,711 workers are recorded as in TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION, in official statistics.

There are not so many transport workers. The discrepancy is explained by the vast non-transport membership of this T.G.W.U., as also in the WORKERS UNION OF IRELAND, and the AMALGAMATED T & G.W.U. (London based). There is no border in trade unionism.

All Irish trade unions are affiliated to the IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS with headquarters in Dublin. Owing to the special problems existing in Northern Ireland, there is a NORTHERN IRELAND COMMITTEE OF THE IRISH CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS (ICTU), which holds an annual consultative conference.

British trade unions operate in Ireland, and this factor has been a stumbling block for many years. In most cases, working arrangements for Irish membership (often inaugurated before 1921) have been arrived at. The subject is complex.

In general, the trend of Irish trade unionism is to the left of that in Britain. There is no such thing as an "unofficial" strike. Notable struggles proceeding at present include that at the E.I. works at Shannon where an American company is refusing trade union recognition to its employees.

NORTHERN
IRELAND

Area

: About 5 million acres containing 40% of total national wealth.

Population

: About one and a half million inhabitants. Thus one third of the population has about 40% of the wealth. Living standards are thus not widely different.

Persons employed in various industries (1951)

Agriculture	:	98,916
Engineering	:	36,118
Textiles	:	73,678
Building	:	40,448
Public administration	:	31,986
Professions	:	33,397
Transport	:	33,677

As in the Republic, nearly two thirds of those engaged in agriculture are on farms from 15 to 100 acres. The 22,000 on holdings of less than 15 acres give the measure of the smallness of the agricultural proletariat. Agriculture in the six counties does not differ radically from that in the twenty-six counties.

Statistics for Northern Ireland must be treated with the following reserve. The overall picture is arrived at by taking an average of two artificially-created regions -- the industrially developed north-eastern corner (based on Belfast), and the rural south and west.

Generally speaking, conditions in the undeveloped areas are more backward than the average in the Republic. In the north-east the level is higher than the average in the Republic. The division is based on policy. The opponents of the Government are for the most part (a third of Belfast excepted) in the outlying hinterland, and it is a deliberate policy to keep these areas backward in order to encourage emigration and to prevent their greater population fertility from reversing the political majority.

General economic developments have been parallel in the north to those in the south : somewhat slower concentration in agriculture, thanks to British food policy which applies there; somewhat slower development of infrastructure, and more rapid influx of British and other foreign capital.

Thanks to free trade with Britain, opening the area to unrestricted competition, the trade surplus in engineering products is converted into a total trade deficit which increases year by year.

Political Situation

The entire situation in the six counties is dominated by the politics of partition.

The UNIONIST PARTY has been in office continuously since 1921. It has consistently sent eleven or twelve members to Westminster. Its social base is in large-scale manufacture for world markets, as well as the traditional compradore interests. A host of inefficient, small industries, mainly family concerns, are variously dependent on the big British-owned monopolies.

The basic policy of Unionism is to remain part of the United Kingdom. But there is no objection to co-operation with the twenty-six counties provided this does not threaten the constitutional position. Basically this area is occupied by Britain in order to protect it from the national revolution that took place in the south.

The complete insecurity of Unionism is shown by its injection of religious sectarianism into the situation. It is closely linked to the Loyal Orange Order, a militantly Protestant association, and Catholics are discouraged from joining the Unionist Party. In practice it is 100% Protestant.

It would be a mistake to think that there exists a widespread tension between Protestant and Catholic Ulstermen which the UNIONIST PARTY makes use of. On the contrary, it is artificially stirred up, a number of extremist sects (i.e. the Paisleyites) performing this function.

The NATIONALIST PARTY. The principal opposition in the local Parliament at Stormont. This Parliament has control of only local affairs, and only 10% of the finance of the area.

The Nationalist programme is for a United Ireland, but in practice they are forced to act as a Catholic defence party. There is widespread discrimination by the Government against Catholics in jobs and housing. The south-western areas are denied industrial development. There are further forms of discrimination in the fields of health services and education.

This mingling of national and Catholic-defence functions has hindered the development of the party as an alternative to the UNIONIST Government.

NORTHERN IRELAND LABOUR PARTY. This is a local breakaway from the original Irish Labour Party founded by Connolly -- the break occurring on the issue of recognizing partition.

Of late, the N.I.L.P. has entered the struggle for democratic rights, and against anti-Catholic discrimination, increasingly, and is evolving towards a neutral position on partition from which it will no doubt advance. It is mainly a Protestant party, but Catholics are now joining.

COMMUNIST PARTY. For many years this Party was stronger than the Northern Ireland Labour Party, but has probably not been so now for some time. The Communist Party is very well rooted in the trade union movement and has developed unity on specific issues (often loose unity) with practically all the anti-Unionist forces. It recruits Protestants and Catholics.

REPUBLICAN LABOUR PARTY. This is confined to the nationalist area of Belfast, where the somewhat rural flavour of the Nationalist Party disqualifies it. It sends the only non-Unionist M.P. (Gerard Fitt) to Westminster. He describes himself as "a Connolly man", and in outlook and policy would probably sit somewhere between the Communist Party and Sinn Fein.

SINN FEIN and its paper the "United Irishman", are illegal in the six counties. The attitude of the Unionists is undoubtedly in part genuine fear of a non-sectarian Nationalist Party which would attract the traditional republican sentiments of the Ulster Protestants (once the greatest republicans in Ireland), but also partly, it is the desire to create a scapegoat and divide the people. Hence the Special Powers Act (1922 onwards) which abrogates 20 out of the 30 provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

These Acts are mainly directed against Republicans, but they have been used to imprison without trial trade unionists, leaders of the unemployed and Communists.

The "Republican Clubs" which are stated to hold the personnel of Sinn Fein have also been declared illegal (1967).

There are a number of smaller parties, "National Democrats", a more conservative breakaway from the nationalists, and certain leftist groupings.

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The main political parties are the Unionist Party, the N.I.L.P., the Communist Party, and the Republican Party (illegal), Gerard Fitt, M.P., being elected in effect as a result of an anti-Unionist coalition which is supported by many Protestant voters.

PERSPECTIVES

The line of development of the progressive forces in Northern Ireland is for unity on immediate issues, especially democratic rights and workers' economic demands, leading to the formation of a non-Unionist coalition government.

This might well be expected to come into conflict with the imperial diktat and look to the Republic for support; this, alongside the work of unifying the working class and progressive forces on an all-Ireland basis.

In the Republic the call is to defend and extend the measure of independence secured by the revolution, working likewise to a coalition of progressive forces, based on the immediate needs of the people, and holding hands across the border at all times.

BRITAIN IN THE PICTURE

Since Ireland is not a completely independent country, Irish politics is British politics.

The British working class has the responsibility for supporting the struggles of the Irish people for independence and against the consequences of imperialist rule.

In relation to the North, the full demand is for a British withdrawal, and the Irish people to determine their own future.

The immediate issues relate to the anti-democratic regime in the six counties of Northern Ireland. The British Parliament has the power under Article 75 of the Government of Ireland Act to restore proportional representation (abolished by the Unionists), to enfranchise non-property owners in local government elections, to abolish the business vote, to gerrymander electoral boundaries, and the Special Powers Act.

The right-wing Labour Government has declined to use these powers. They have refused to extend the Ombudsman to Northern Ireland, or to extend the Race Relations Act to the area, and to include religious discrimination.

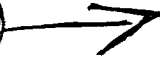
They shelter behind a non-legal "convention" that the British Government "does not interfere" in the affairs of Northern Ireland, 90% of whose finances it directly administers !

British progressive organisations have participated in a campaign to change this situation, and the National Council for Civil Liberties and the Movement for Colonial Freedom have been to the fore, as well as the Irish immigrants ' organisations -- the Connolly Association and the Campaign for Democracy in Ulster (mostly Irish members of the British Labour Party).

In relation to the Republic, solidarity action naturally takes a different form, e.g. opposition to the Anglo-Irish Trade Agreement signed by Mr Wilson's Government and the Fianna Fail Government, which is a prelude to E.E.C. membership. This removes tariff protection from Irish manufactures, and was condemned by all progressive forces within Ireland.

— End —

See o v e r l e a f f o r
Connolly Specials



Connolly Specials

CONNOLLY SPECIALS have been issued by the "Irish Democrat" (May), the "United Irishman" and the "Irish Socialist".

Mr Donal Nevin's "Trade Union Information" publishes a special number (April) which gives a chronology of Connolly's life and writings, and a list of Books on Connolly.

The London monthly journal "Marxism Today" has issued a special number unique in its history. The Editors of the "Irish Democrat" and the "Irish Socialist" both feature in it. Mr Desmond Greaves writes on "Connolly the Marxist," and Mr Alasdair Raftery on Connolly's views on Nationalism and Socialism.

Together with these articles is the story of Connolly the Trade Unionist by Elizabeth Sinclair, Secretary of the Belfast Trades Council. In the same issue Idris Cox discusses the newly-awakened national independence movements in Wales and Scotland, much of whose inspiration has been Irish.

"Labour Monthly" carries an article on "Connolly and the British Labour Movement" in its June issue. The article is by Mr Joseph Deighan. "Comment" carries an article by Desmond Greaves on "Connolly and Socialist Tradition." The "African Socialist" carries an article by Sean Redmond on "Connolly's Socialism and Nationalism."

All the works of Connolly are obtainable at the Irish Democrat Bookshop, 283 Grays Inn Road, London, W.C.1. just a few yards from Kings Cross Station.

The periodicals listed can be obtained either from 283 Grays Inn Road, or from Central Books Limited, 37 Grays Inn Road, down by Theobalds Road.

In order to facilitate the purchase of these writings by men and women who may be working during the week, it has been decided to keep the bookshop open for the whole of the weekend of June 29th and 30th from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on both Saturday and Sunday.

The Irish Democrat Bookshop has the best stock of Irish books, pamphlets, maps, etc., to be found outside Ireland itself.

As fast as any new paperback of Irish interest comes out, it is in Grays Inn Road. But more expensive standard works are also kept, and when not in stock can be ordered. Provided postage is paid, books can be sent anywhere.

How many have read Dorothy Macardle's famous classic, "The Irish Republic" ? It has been out of print and almost unobtainable for years and years. Dorothy Macardle spoke at the Connolly Association's annual Commemoration of Easter Week in 1944, along with Peadar O'Donnell and Michael MacInerney, and with her on that occasion was James Connolly's youngest daughter, Fiona, who acted as her secretary and typed the manuscript.

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