

# United Irishman

*Easter statement...*

## TOWARDS THE DEMOCRATIC **1975: In Memoriam** SOCIALIST REPUBLIC



### REPUBLICAN OBJECTIVE

Republicans recognise that British control and exploitation of Ireland North and South is the source of social inequality in Ireland and of the Continuing divisions between the Irish people.

Withdrawal of British political and economic control is essential for peace and prosperity in Ireland.

Only the creation of a Democratic Socialist Republic will ensure that all of the Irish people control their own future and the wealth and resources of their country.

In the Convention, Republicans will raise the option of a Socialist Republic as well as a clear programme of immediate demands which will open the path for Irish workers and farmers towards a Democratic Republic.

## **2015: The Struggle Continues**

This  
Month



NATIONAL WAGES AGREEMENT  
EASTER COMMEMORATIONS

E.E.C. REFERENDUMS  
CONVENTION ELECTIONS

## **Preface to Online Edition**

This pamphlet was originally published five years ago to mark the fortieth anniversary of the 1975 Provisional Sinn Féin / IRA pogrom against the Republican Clubs / Official Republican Movement. Between 29<sup>th</sup> October and 11<sup>th</sup> November this pogrom resulted in the murder of eight members, ex-members, supporters of, or children of members of the Republican Clubs.

This edition has been created using OCR technology to create an exact copy of the original document. The only change made is that the format has been altered from the original A5 format to an A4 format.

We have also added a full sized reproduction of the cover and preface of the original 1975 edition of the Pogrom Booklet but which were not included in the 2015 edition.

We hope that this online edition detailing the events of 1975 will bring clarity and a fresh analysis to a new readership.

The Workers' Party  
2020

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**"Our involvement now encompasses not only agitation for full civil rights in all of Ireland but affairs which might once have been considered beyond the scope of Republicanism. But we know that if we are to succeed in building a revolutionary party, we must be involved in every area of struggle and not confined within the narrow limits which once constricted the movement's development."**

**"They questioned me about the Republican Clubs' Socialist policies and swore at me for being a vice-chairman and a rotten bastard of a socialist."**

**To truly honour our fallen comrades means building the Workers' Party.**

## Preface

This booklet is published by the National Commemoration Committee of the Workers' Party as a contribution to remembering the sacrifices made by our comrades, friends and families in the difficult and bloody year of 1975 when so many were lost.

1975 was a time when our very political existence came under two very different threats. The first sprang from within, and was composed of a dangerous mix of elements who refused to accept the direction and vision laid out by the leadership with the support of the membership, a vision that led ultimately to the adoption of the name The Workers' Party in 1982.

The second was an external threat and came in the form of a fascist pogrom launched by the Provisional Alliance with the cooperation of the British state at a point when they thought they would be able to finish off the Republican Clubs. How wrong they were.

For those of us who were involved in the events covered in the pages of this booklet, it is a time to reflect on lost comrades and friends, on the sacrifices that were necessary to bring us to where we are today.

It is also a time to consider the nature of how best to commemorate them. Gravestones, plaques, publications, events - all these are fitting ways to remember those who gave their lives for our Party not just in 1975 but at any time. They are important, and we take them seriously.

However, we must also remember what exactly it was that the-then Republican Movement was dedicated to in 1975. That will be clear to anyone who picks up an old copy of the United Irishman, who reads any of the press releases or speeches from the time, or who looks at the lives of those killed. The-then Republican Movement was dedicated to transforming itself into a revolutionary party of and for the working class as a necessary step in creating a democratic, secular, socialist unitary state on the island of Ireland - a Republic.

There are those who knew that then who today prefer to forget that, but we in the Workers' Party will never, can never forget that. To do so would be to betray the sacrifices made by our comrades to build the Workers' Party. Therefore, while we commemorate them in a range of ways, we never lose sight of one essential fact.

The best tribute to our comrades is the Workers' Party itself, and its ongoing struggle, to forge the unity of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter, to raise class consciousness, to educate, agitate, organise, and to create an Ireland ruled by the workers, for the workers.

To truly honour-our fallen comrades means building the Workers' Party.

Micheál McCorry  
Chairman  
National Commemoration Committee Belfast, 2015

## Introduction



On May 29th 1972, the Republican Clubs announced that the IRA had decided to call a ceasefire "in view of the growing danger of sectarian conflict" and in recognition of the fact that then "overwhelming desire of the great majority of all the people of the North is for an end to military actions by all sides". The statement made clear that political struggle for the end internment, against state repression, for the repeal of the Special Powers Act, and for full democratic and political rights, particularly for the Republican Clubs, which remained illegal, would continue. The Republican Movement's goal of building a mass movement capable of bringing about a "true revolutionary situation" and a democratic socialist republic was reiterated. This visionary decision to call a ceasefire, taken in the interests of all the working class people of Ireland at what proved to be the worst of the Troubles, represented "an invaluable opportunity for us to avoid sectarian civil war which the Provisional bombing campaign is threatening to provoke".

A few weeks later, on June 18th, at the annual Wolfe, Tone commemoration in Bodenstown, Sean Garland, National Organiser of Sinn Féin, made a major speech reiterating the strategic analysis and goals of the Republican Movement, and calling for the building of a revolutionary party as the only means to establish a democratic, secular, socialist republic on the island of Ireland. It outlined the approach that formed the basis of the transformation of the Republican Movement into the Workers' Party.

Garland's speech rejected terrorism as a means that no-one genuinely concerned with the "revolutionary organisation of the working class" could employ, and stated clearly that the Republican Movement rejected the idea of bombing one million protestants into a republic. Moreover, it was essential to recognise that military actions regardless of their intentions were having adverse consequences, feeding sectarianism and strengthening reaction. "The revolutionary party of the people recognises only the unity of the working class and will not now engage in any campaign which could only have the effect of helping the miserable rulers of the working class to survive."

Garland also made clear the Movement's rejection of elitism and conspiracy, noting that a revolution must be made by the people, not a small group. "We can, we must and we will respond to one imperative and to one imperative only - the will, the popular vision, of the mass of the Irish people ... The Republican Movement has no desire for violence, no preoccupation with bomb and bullet. And let it be understood that the Republican Movement derives no pleasure from illegality, no comfort from being presented as an underground force secretly plotting the overthrow of the State. The illegality has been imposed on the Republican Movement, not by it."

On behalf of the Movement, Garland called for an all-embracing struggle to democratise and revolutionise Irish society, north and south, a struggle to be fought in the schools, the churches, the factories, the fields, the shops and the streets. At the head of that struggle, there must be a revolutionary party, a party dedicated to, as Lenin liked to put it, agitating, educating and organising among the working class and to representing the interests of the workers against the capitalist class at home and abroad. "Our involvement now encompasses not only agitation for full civil rights in all of Ireland but affairs which might once have been considered beyond the scope of Republicanism. But we know that if we are to succeed in building a revolutionary party, we must be involved in every area of struggle and not confined within the narrow limits which once constricted the movement's development."

The opponents of that cause were the imperialists, the capitalists at home and abroad, the clergyman seeking to dominate society, whether Catholic or Protestant, those engaged in sectarian violence, ultra-leftists, and opportunist social democrats who spoke the language of socialism, but only lusted for power. No matter how powerful these forces of reaction, they could not defeat "a people conscious of its rights, determined in its demands and organised to meet the challenge of the oppressor. Let me repeat once more that organisation, education and agitation must, first and foremost, be the means that we employ to fight the people's fight."

***"Let me repeat once more that organisation, education and agitation must, first and foremost, be the means that we employ to fight the people's fight."***

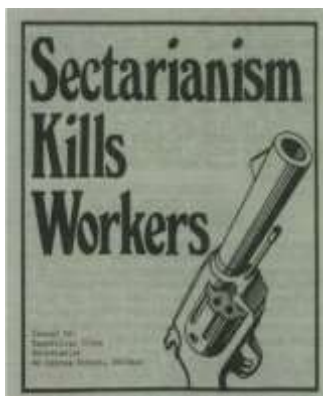
While the Movement maintained the right to take defensive action, and did not discount the possibility that some day a revolutionary situation would result in the need for violence, Garland's speech made clear the primacy of politics, of peaceful work among the people to raise class consciousness and build a revolutionary party capable of taking power and reorganising society in the interests of the working class.

The ceasefire of May 1972 and the Bodinstown speech of June 1972 were watershed moments in the history of the Workers' Party. They are also essential to understanding the context in which the tragic events of 1975 occurred.

Elements led by Seamus Costello within the Republican Movement refused to accept the strategy and analysis adopted during 1972, and democratically endorsed subsequently. Their attempts to overturn by plotting what they could not prevent democratically had tragic results in the spring of 1975. The ceasefire and the Movement's unyielding exposure and criticism of sectarianism and terrorism, and its dedication to the principles and practice of the republican tradition of Tone and Connolly on the ground in Belfast and across the north, exposed the Provisionals for what they were: sectarian nationalists objectively serving the interests of imperialism, not republican revolutionaries. This they could not tolerate, and so they launched the pogrom in October to try and remove the most principled, active, and consistent opponents of their squalid campaign from the political scene.

Despite the great cost, thanks to the determination, bravery and sacrifice of our members and supporters, neither group succeeded, and the political evolution of the Republican Movement continued, culminating in the adoption of the simple title, The Workers' Party in 1982.

## The Road to 1975



Central though the situation in the north was to the Republican Movement, it was never allowed to become its sole focus. Having learnt the lesson that it was essential to address the needs of the people, Sinn Féin in the south was focused on building a socialist alternative, on social and economic agitation, on opposing the gombeen politics of the southern political elite, on trade union work, on the battle for secularism, on advocating public ownership of natural resources, and on the referendum on entering the European Economic Community, while not neglecting issues like internment and the need for peace and democracy in the north.

This was as it should be, given that imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism. Those, be they sectarian nationalists or ultra-leftists like the People's Democracy, trapped in an outmoded interpretation of imperialism could only see it in terms of the north, a mistake that led to misunderstanding the dynamics of northern society and downplaying the role of sectarianism and a focus simply on the role of the London government. In turn, this led to dismissing the potential of the 25% or so of the Irish population that happened to be Protestant and lived in Northern Ireland. Or, worse, to regarding them as colonists, as not part of the Irish people, as the enemy, and so legitimate targets for sectarian murder. This view had nothing to do with the politics of Tone or Connolly, never mind Marx or Lenin.

The Republican Movement continued to pursue the strategy laid out in the 1972 Bodenstown speech, carrying out political, economic, social and cultural struggle to build class consciousness and links with progressive forces at every level, across the island. Of course, this strategy did not begin in 1972. It had been the strategy planned by the Cathal Goulding - Tomás Mac Giolla leadership from early on, and was reflected in developments as diverse as the founding of the Wolfe Tone Directories for the bicentenary of Tone's birth in 1963, the 10 proposals to the IRA convention of 1964, the campaign against Fianna Fail's proposal to abolish proportional representation, interventions on behalf of striking workers, the critical role of the Republican Clubs in the civil rights campaign, the struggle against sectarianism, and the abandonment of abstentionism. That strategy had to an extent been delayed and blown off course by internal resistance, and then by the situation in Northern Ireland from 1969, but the Movement was now committed to following it through, to transforming itself and ultimately Irish society.

***"It declared republicanism to be secular, socialist and separatist, and called on workers across the religious divide to reject sectarianism and unite in their class interests"***

1973 was an important year for the political development of the Movement. The Republican Clubs were legalised in the north, and stood in the Assembly elections, and also in the local government



elections, where a number of seats were won. Sinn Féin stood in a number of constituencies in the general election in the south the same year under the slogan, People Before Profit. The conception of the revolutionary party was clarified, developed, and strengthened. On 23rd March, a prominent advert from the Republican Clubs appeared in the Irish News under the heading Sectarianism Kills Workers (the unionist papers the Belfast Telegraph and Belfast Newsletter refused to run it). It declared republicanism to be secular, socialist and separatist, and called on workers across the religious divide to reject sectarianism and unite in their class interests. It was backed up by a campaign of 80,000 leaflets and 10,000 posters, and set the tone for the Party's struggle against sectarianism ever since.

In October 1973, Sinn Féin's President, Tomás Mac Giolla, National Organiser Sean Garland, and Education Officer Des O'Hagan attended the World Congress of Peace Forces in Moscow. This was an important moment, as it was a clear statement that the Soviet Union had embraced the then Republican Movement as part of the progressive forces in the global struggle against imperialism and for national liberation. It was also a sign of the ongoing refinement of our own understanding of what constituted socialism, and what shape our internationalism would take. Instead of being merely rhetorical, our internationalism would be oriented towards building practical and mutually supportive links with existing socialist states, communist and workers' parties, and progressive movements around the globe. The following month, the Ard Fheis approved a motion approving the forging of such links.

Overall, whether it was in terms of the programme in Northern Ireland, the struggle against sectarianism, the need for peace, and increasing ideological clarity, big strides were being made towards the goal of a Marxist party based on Leninist principles, a party of and for the working class. However, there were those within the Movement opposed to the clear vision that produced the ceasefire, the 1972 Bodenstown speech, and the developments of 1973. Some of these were people who had been members before 1969 and supporters of the shift to the left, but who were not now prepared for its consequences. Others were of more recent vintage, some of whom were adventurists who had joined the Movement because of a fascination with militarism and nationalism, some of whom were ultra-leftists who hoped to use the Movement to gain a following within the working class they could only otherwise dream of, while others should never have been in the Movement, having hidden the sectarian attitudes that began to come out as the Movement pursued the path of peaceful, democratic politics. With the ongoing vicious sectarian tit-for-tat murders, there was pressure from these elements to employ the defence and retaliation policy in a way that would only worsen the sectarian conflict.

***Bernadette McAliskey, a founder member of the IRSP,  
would describe them as every "tupenny, hapenny gangster" in  
Belfast."***

All these elements coalesced around Seamus Costello. Always intemperate, Costello had increasingly become a reckless megalomaniac, impressed with his own importance, his own political understanding, and his own desire to seize control of the leadership of the Movement. As the

momentum towards building a revolutionary party with a strategy shaped by an analysis that understood the true nature of imperialism in Ireland and the importance and danger of sectarianism in the north picked up pace following the ceasefire, Costello became increasingly opposed to the direction being followed. In part, this was rooted in a misunderstanding of the socialist analysis of the nature of imperialism and of sectarianism in Northern Ireland. In part, it was rooted in a refusal to abandon militarism. His ego was being further inflated by admirers with ultra-left tendencies within and on the fringes of the Movement (especially in Derry), and by those who wished to involve the IRA in a renewed and more vigorous military-campaign that would only strengthen the forces of counter-revolution and prevent the development of the Movement into a serious workers' party.

Costello used his position within the Movement to organise a faction that he hoped would allow him to take control or, failing that, that would act as the basis of a new organisation with him as its undisputed leader-cum-Messiah. The central Leninist principle of Democratic Centralism was a threat to Costello's intentions, and anathema to his supporters influenced by the ultra-left, and they waged a failed campaign against it. Aware that Costello was building a faction, and that there were people who would now answer only to him and not the democratically-elected leadership, the Movement began expelling those

in breach of the democratically-established rules of membership. The situation was made more urgent by the fact that these people were carrying out violent actions without permission and under Costello's orders, and that some of them had involved themselves in sectarian attacks.

Costello himself was expelled from the Movement by the summer, and his faction was overwhelmingly defeated at the 1974 Ard Fheis, being capable of mustering only 15 votes. Having been overwhelmingly rejected by the members of the Republican Movement, Costello established the IRSP and INLA in December 1974 from a motley assortment of former republicans, ultra-leftists, ex-Provisionals, along with what even Bernadette McAliskey, a founder member of the IRSP, would describe as every "tupenny, hapenny gangster" in Belfast.



## Militarism, Sectarianism, Gangsterism: The IRSP



There matters could have rested had it not been for the fact that the Costello group sought to systematically seize resources, especially weapons, belonging to the Movement. This inevitably resulted in conflict, especially as the IRSP made clear its true agenda, for example praising the sectarian Provisionals as a "genuine anti-imperialist force". Any group that could say that had abandoned all republicanism, all socialism, and embraced a populist and politically incoherent form of violent sectarian nationalism —the subsequent history of the INLA proved that this was so.

The first death caused by the IRSP's campaign of theft and intimidation was an accidental fatality, and was followed by the INLA murder of Sean Fox on 25th February. Sean Fox was a committed socialist, politically active as well as the quartermaster for the Belfast Command. As a poem published in his honour in the May edition of the *United Irishman* noted, "Ulster's loss is reaction's gain". In his funeral oration, Cathal Goulding reasserted the Movement's commitment to its core principles of working-class unity and its opposition to sectarianism, and stated that "Our tribute to Vol. Sean Fox is our determination to see these policies succeed."

The IRSP continued its violence against members and supporters of the Republican Clubs, causing many injuries, while many others had lucky escapes. They escalated their campaign with an attempt to murder Sean Garland in Dublin on 1st March. He was shot 6 times in front of his wife Mary, and survived against the odds. Costello hypocritically denied any involvement.

The Republican Movement continued its political work despite the attacks on it. Across the country, agitation continued, on issues ranging from jobs, to feminism, to Angola and beyond. This included the launch by the Republican Clubs of an extremely important document on policing, which called for the creation of a democratically-accountable police force that would uphold and protect the rights of citizens and not violate them. At the same time, campaigning for the elections to the Northern Ireland Convention continued. The Republican Clubs were pursuing real politics that affected the daily lives of workers, while others offered nothing but more violence and division.



It was while engaged in political activity that Paul Crawford was murdered by the INLA. He was standing outside Beagon's Bar selling the United Irishman when he was shot on April 12th. As stated by Des O'Hagan at the funeral, it was socialist republicans like Paul Crawford who had kept on the right path, who had avoided being sucked into the morass of sectarianism, and who worked to better the conditions of the people. He noted how Paul had been active on housing issues, and that he died "because he was engaged in one of the most important dimensions of revolutionary activity - education". No matter what happened, O'Hagan said, the work would continue to achieve Paul's goal, "a unified, peaceful, Socialist Ireland".

By 28th April, an agreement was being negotiated to put a permanent end to the violence. This was being done at the behest of Liam McMillen, the man who for more than a decade had been at the heart of republicanism in Belfast, driving the move to the left and directing the Republican Club involvement in civil rights and agitation on social issues, and holding the line against sectarianism in difficult circumstances. Liam McMillen and his wife Mary had been engaged in election work at the Republican Clubs headquarters in Cyprus Street when they went up to buy some nails at a hardware shop on the Falls Road. Liam McMillen was sitting in his van outside the shop when he was murdered by an apolitical, sectarian, militarist from the IRSP.

Cathal Goulding, IRA Chief of Staff, spoke at Liam McMillen's funeral, summing up what he represented in a few simple words: he was, said Goulding, "the authentic voice of working class Belfast". He outlined McMillen's commitment to true republican values, his socialism, his opposition to sectarianism, his commitment to defending democracy and civil rights, his courage, and his humanity. He recalled how Liam McMillen's democratic, socialist, anti-sectarian politics had seen him hounded by the forces of sectarian unionism and the state, targeted for assassination by the sectarian Provisionals, and lamented that he had finally been killed by "the sewer rats of Costello and McAliskey".

"The only way that Liam McMillen would have recognised a mourner for him here, or in any other place, is by the strength of his determination to carry on the fight he fought ... The grief we feel at the grave of Liam McMillen must be matched by our determination to honour this leader, who is dead, by our lives, by our organisation, by our work, and by our belief in the beliefs he held."

Despite the scale of these losses, the decision was taken to honour Sean Fox, Paul Crawford and Liam McMillen by focusing our efforts on the political struggle to which they had dedicated their life.

## Background to the Pogrom: Fascism, Anti-Communism, and Collusion

These events were watched closely by both the Provisionals and the British government. In February 1975, the Provisionals called a ceasefire as a result of secret negotiations they were conducting with the British. In the midst of the Cold War, the two shared a hatred of socialism, and of the then Republican Movement, which they feared as a threat to their counter-revolutionary politics. In 1972, British intelligence had identified our Movement as "the greatest internal subversive threat" to the southern state. This was a view shared by the southern security and political establishment, and had led to the involvement of Fianna Fail in the establishment of the Provisionals. In 1975, with the Republican Movement suffering from defections, especially in Belfast, and from damage by murder, injuries, and imprisonment, they saw a chance to remove this threat.

***"Socialism, it was said, was alien to Ireland, and dangerous to freedom. The Provisional programme, it was stressed, was based on the Papal Encyclical, Mater et Magister."***

The statement released by the Provisionals on their foundation made clear both their contempt for socialism and their view of themselves as a Catholic nationalist movement. This was the authentic voice of the bitter, narrow, sectarian and militarist nationalism of the likes of Billy McKee and Seamus Twomey. The right-wing alliance made between a bunch of malcontents and former republicans on the one hand and Fianna Fail on the other was a deliberate response to the shift to the left under the leadership headed by Goulding and Mac Giolla. The Provisional attempts to undermine and split the civil rights movement, aided by Fianna Fail on the one hand and People's Democracy on the other, was another attempt to bolster sectarianism, to divide the working class, and to undermine support for the secular, socialist politics of the Republican Clubs.



The fascistic streak often found in nationalism, and especially in religious nationalism, quickly became evident. While the Republican Clubs continued to agitate for civil rights, improved housing, and democracy, and the IRA restricted itself to defensive and retaliatory action, the Provisionals embarked on their terrorist campaign, carrying out sectarian - assassinations and beginning the bombing campaign that brought about atrocities such as Bloody Friday in July 1972. The Provisionals targeted people and

premises associated with the Republican Clubs and the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association from early on. In Belfast, one of their early attacks on the Republican Movement, an attempt to kill its local leadership, resulted in the death of one of the Provisionals responsible. In another, in 1972, Desmond Mackin was shot by the Provisionals who then prevented an ambulance from treating him, resulting

in his death. Sporadic attacks and confrontations, including a number of unsuccessful murder bids, continued in subsequent years, including 1975.

***"It is clear from Ruairí Ó Brádaigh's private papers that during the negotiations the Provisionals made clear their intentions to act against their opponents in non-unionist areas "if the shackles are taken off" by the British."***

As part of the deal that resulted in the calling of the Provisional ceasefire in February 1975, a number of so-called Incident Centres were established, ostensibly to allow discussions over any incidents that might have violated or threatened the ceasefire. In reality, they served as headquarters for the Provisionals as they sought to assert control over what both they and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Merlyn Rees, referred to as "their areas". What was stated by the Republican Clubs at the time is now known for certain to be true, thanks to the release of both government and private archives. For example it is clear from Ruairí Ó Brádaigh's private papers that during the negotiations the Provisionals made clear their intentions to act against their opponents in non-unionist areas "if the shackles are taken off" by the British. A deal was indeed struck whereby the British government effectively ceded control of certain areas to the Provisionals, who now began to "police" many non-unionist areas across Northern Ireland, with weapons the British government permitted them to carry.

Provisional "policing" often meant harassing and gathering information on members of the Republican Clubs. The March issue of the United Irishman noted examples from counties Down, Derry and Tyrone of armed Provisional patrols, while in Lurgan one of these patrols had stopped and threatened Republican Clubs members. In Belfast, fines were being handed out by the Provisionals, who wanted to police areas themselves rather than grasp the nettle of establishing an acceptable police force, as the Republican Clubs had done. Attacks on members of the Republican Clubs were also being carried out by the Provisionals in the months leading up to October 1975. The Incident Centres were used to coordinate this activity, as they would be used for the pogrom itself, and were also used, in Derry for example, for the interrogation of Republican Clubs members. Rees's Incident Centres were centres for the Provisionals to exercise control.

The simple fact was that the fascistic mindset of the Provisionals, especially in Belfast, could not countenance the right of the Republican Clubs to promote a radically different political agenda to theirs in what the Provisionals undemocratically believed to be their areas: to promote a socialist agenda that rejected their sectarianism, their abstentionism, and their militarism, and advocated the unity of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter, secularism and working-class unity.

At Easter 1975, a leading Provisional used a speech at Cullyhanna, South Armagh to denounce the Republican Clubs in language that echoed that of fascism in the 1930s. Socialism, it was said, was alien to Ireland, and dangerous to freedom. The Provisional programme, it was stressed, was based on the Papal Encyclical, Mater et Magister. The best that can be said about this speech is that at least they had the good taste not to deliver it at Bodinstown.

To see the Republican Clubs with elected representatives, to see them out working on the ground, selling newspapers, agitating on housing, helping people access public services, promoting civil rights and equality, to see posters stating Sectarianism Kills Workers, to see the Republican Clubs demonstrating that another way forward was possible, enraged the Provisionals.

The Provisionals' leaders had convinced themselves that the British were planning to leave in the foreseeable future, and they saw the deal with the British over "policing" areas as the first step to securing British withdrawal. Given the utterly reactionary and sectarian politics of the Provisional leaders, and their personal jealousies and resentments, they took the presence of the Republican Clubs in areas they expected to control permanently as a personal insult, and wanted them out of the way. That the Republican Clubs refused to be intimidated and were growing stronger in areas where the Provisionals had been the larger group angered them still more.

While the Provisionals seethed, Merlyn Rees had his own fears about our Party, which he regarded as "the gravest long term threat to Ireland, North and South". This was the view of a Cold Warrior, who feared that the building of a Marxist party based on Leninist principles of organisation could prove the key to a socialist revolution in Ireland, which would endanger NATO supply lines in the event of a war between the imperialist powers and the socialist states, and possibly have serious repercussions in Britain. That such a day seemed far off did not make the fear of it any less real, nor make it less of an influence in forming policy - the history of Cold War coups and support for fascist governments by the US, UK and others makes that clear.

## Pogrom

The stage was thus set for the pogrom launched by around 100 Provisionals, male and female, between about 5.30 and 6.30pm on Wednesday 29th October 1975. They used the Incident Centres as the bases from which to launch their attacks. 30 homes were targeted, and the Provisionals targeted people in the Andersonstown, Beechmount, Twinbrook, Turf Lodge, New Lodge, Markets, Ballymacarrett, Whiterock, and Ormeau Road areas. In a clear case of collusion, the British Army was nowhere to be seen. Even where the British army did appear later that evening, it continued to facilitate the Provisionals, as detailed below. The Provisional bloodlust was such that at one home, having failed to find their target, they shot his wife instead. At another, they severely beat a 78-yearold blind man because his son was not home. By the end of the attack, Robert Elliman had been murdered, and 18 other people were injured, three critically.



Robert Elliman was the Public Relations Officer of the Mellows/McCann Republican Club, and a volunteer. He was drinking and watching television with two other members of the Republican Clubs, Jim Millen and Matt Dalton, in McKenna's Bar in the Markets. They had remarked on the absence of the soldiers who were usually present outside the bar. 3 masked gunmen walked in and opened fire on them, killing Robert Elliman with deliberate, aimed shots to the chest and wounding the other two.

The other targets of the attacks on 29th October included a Republican Clubs candidate in the Convention election. Among subsequent attacks, the Provisionals would attempt to kill an elected Republican Clubs councillor, a clear demonstration of their fascistic desire to deny to the Republican Clubs the right to exist.

Tommy Flanagan was kidnapped from his home in Singleton Street and driven to Ardoyne, where he was tortured, questioned, and told he was going to be killed. His captors swore at him for being the vice-chair of a Republican Club, calling him "a rotten bastard of a socialist". By the time the Provisionals holding him drove him away in another car, the British Army had returned to the streets. The car was stopped at a checkpoint, where a soldier noted, he had no shoes on and examined his feet, which had burn marks from the hot tea pot that had been held against them. However, the soldiers, clearly under orders not to interfere, did nothing. Tommy ran off, while the Provisionals in the car drove off.

He discovered just how lucky he had been when he contacted the Republican Clubs headquarters at Cyprus Street.

The Republican Clubs in Belfast advised members to be cautious and to leave their homes, noting that this coordinated attack clearly had the support of the Provisional leadership at both a national and local level. The attack, they said, had different motivations, including the success of the anti-sectarian campaign in eroding support for the Provisionals. They appealed for republicans not to be provoked into any "senseless retaliation for this murderous attack", and stated "the Republican Movement has

survived too many attacks in the past to be diverted now by Provisional bullets from working towards its goal".

In attempting to justify their actions, the Provisionals said they had attacked a criminal element. Tomás Mac Giolla rejected this "outrageous, blatant lie", noting that the Republican Clubs were actually involved in "an anti-sectarian campaign of leafleting, postering and issuing publications and statements about the dangers to the people of Northern Ireland that will come from the activities of the Provisionals, the IRSP and the UVF, who are driving people to the brink of civil war, which our people have been politically trying to stop."

***"We the Republican Club members in the Royal Victoria Hospital who have suffered from gunshot wounds inflicted by the neo-fascist battalions of the Provisional Alliance wish to pledge our full solidarity with the Republican Movement on the outside who continue to suffer attack."***

The press noted that the Provisional excuse was a lie, and that at the heart of the attack lay the growth of the Republican Clubs in areas dominated by the Provisionals.

In the two weeks after October 29th, the Provisionals, often travelling around the city in black taxis, mounted a massive campaign of murder, shootings, beatings, bombings, and attacks on homes and property in an attempt to destroy the Republican Clubs. This intimidation took various forms: an 8 year-old boy beaten and questioned about Republican Clubs members, shots fired into houses, attempts to burn houses, houses of members and supporters of the Republican Clubs marked with white paint as a sign to target them, people intimidated and attacked at work and school, a false death notice was placed in the newspaper for Danny McIlwaine, the home of Anne McCann, widow of Joe McCann, was bombed, and so on, often under the noses of British soldiers who stood and watched. Almost equally criminal was the silence from elements usually so keen to dish out condemnation, especially the Catholic clergy and the SDLP.



*Eileen Kelly*

On October 30th, the onslaught continued, and the Provisionals murdered six-year-old Eileen Kelly when they fired wildly inside her house, where they were trying to kill her father John. Despite the public revulsion at the murder of an innocent little girl, the Provisionals continued their campaign. They issued a hollow apology, made all the more hollow for coming from the mouth of the President of Provisional Sinn Féin Ruaróí Ó Bradaigh, up in Belfast to try and justify the Provisionals' actions and limit the damage to their reputation, while stating that they had his "full support".

Ó Brádaigh's attempt to justify the Provisional campaign shifted from the original accusations of gangsterism as they had no credibility. It was instead rooted in the Cold War, the language of McCarthyism —the Provisionals were fighting against a "Marxist socialist republic. We believe that



would mean totalitarianism." In his hypocrisy, the irony of accusing others of being totalitarian while defending a campaign designed to wipe out a rival political organisation that had embraced peaceful and democratic means obviously passed him by.

The IRA, supported by the Fianna, was forced to take action to ensure the continued political existence of the Republican Movement not only in Belfast, but across the island. The senior Provisional intelligence officer in Northern Ireland, Seamus McCusker, one of those who planned the pogrom, was killed on Friday October 31st.



Tom Berry, a member of the Republican Clubs in east Belfast and a volunteer, was shot dead by the Provisionals outside the Sean Martin GAA club the same night. A report in the Observer on 9th November demonstrated the effects of the Provisional campaign on those who lost loved ones. His five-year-old son, also Thomas, asked his mother, "Mummy, if I join the Provies, will that mean they won't shoot me?" Tom Berry was from a Protestant background, and so knew, as well as any the importance of fighting sectarianism if the working class was to be united, and a secular socialist Ireland was to be build. This was why he had joined the Republican Clubs.

That Friday night, the Provisionals, having failed twice to kill Malachy McGurran chairman of the Republican Clubs in Northern Ireland, as well as a number of others, also began their campaign to purge areas of the families of Republican Club members in earnest, beginning in Clonard and Beechmount. The armed Provisionals ordering people out were ignored by the British army.

As the pogrom intensified, the Republican Clubs made a bold statement on Saturday 1st November. Members were on Royal Avenue, in the city centre handing out anti-sectarian leaflets in defiance of the Provisional pogrom. There could be no stronger statement of their belief in their political ideology and their strategy. Despite the murderous campaign of sectarian nationalists colluding with the capitalist state, the struggle to fight sectarianism, build workers' unity, and raise class consciousness had to go on. They then went to bury Robbie Elliman.

At his funeral, Sinn Féin Ard Comhairle member, Mick Ryan, told the mourners, who included many people from the trade unions and community organisations in recognition of Robbie's political work, that his comrades pledged themselves to see through his cause to its conclusion. "Robbie Elliman was a republican and a Socialist in the tradition of Tone and Connolly and Mellows, in joining the Republican Movement he was committing himself to the struggle for an Ireland where, in the words of Pearse, only the people would be lords and masters".

At the funeral of Tom Berry, the veteran republican and civil rights activist Frank McGlade praised Tom's devotion to his cause, and reiterated that, "those who have savagely bombed and gunned those of the creed of Tone so that they could become Merlyn Rees' sectarian policemen in certain areas of our city will not halt those of us who practice the gospel of Tone and strive against all odds to unite the people, and every inch of this country."

***"The Republican Clubs made a bold statement on Saturday 1st November. Members were on Royal Avenue in the city centre handing out anti-sectarian leaflets in defiance of the Provisional pogrom... They then went to bury Robbie Elliman."***

The Provisionals further showed their contempt for common decency by trying to murder mourners at both funerals.

The Provisionals were now talking of exterminating the Republican Clubs. On 2nd November, a Provisional spokesman in Ballymurphy, one of the areas where the Republican Clubs had a growing presence, told a crowd that they would shoot Officials in what he called "their area", and that no mercy would be shown. McCusker's funeral was told that the Provisionals would "get rid of" the Republican Clubs.



The Provisionals were determined to target anyone with any connection to our Party, including former members. On Monday 3rd November, at 6.27 the British Army was outside the home of Jim Fogarty, an ex-internee who had left the Republican Clubs in 1972. Three minutes later, the Provisionals burst in and shot him dead in front of his pregnant wife. Jim Fogarty's house had been attacked with gunfire two days before. It is little wonder that his brother accused the British soldiers of "fingering" him for the Provisionals.

Tensions were high, fear was stalking the streets, and the attacks continued. The Republican Clubs were under immense pressure. However, a defiant message came from the Royal Victorian Hospital. "We the Republican Club members in the Royal Victoria Hospital who have suffered from gunshot wounds inflicted by the neo-fascist battalions of the Provisional Alliance wish to pledge our full solidarity with the Republican Movement on the outside who continue to suffer attack."

As Malachy McGurran noted in an appeal for the Belfast Victims Fund, "the most important casualty" the Provisionals wanted to make was our "political morale." "Speaking from the heart of the Falls here in Belfast I can assure you that this is the casualty the Provisional murder gangs cannot have."

The Republican Clubs, pointing out that if the Provisionals succeeded with them others would be next, appealed to other political groups for support. There was not much response, an indication that nationalism and anti-Communism trumped commitment to democracy.

The attacks continued at a high tempo. On November 9th, Republican Clubs member and volunteer Mario Kelly (formally named John Kelly) was murdered by the Provisionals in Ponsonby Avenue, shot in the head as he walked from his home round the corner to meet his girlfriend. Another young man dedicated to building a better Ireland lost his life.



John 'Mario' Kelly

A group of women from Belfast had travelled to Provisional headquarters in Dublin on 5th November seeking a meeting with Ó Brádaigh to get him to use his influence to end the Provisional attacks. They were told he was not in, and he attempted to dismiss their visit as a stunt. However, the visit clearly stung the Provisionals, with horrifying consequences. The delegation had been led by Ethel McAllister



from Ballymurphy. At 9.48am on November 11th, which proved to be the worst day of the entire pogrom, her 19-year-old son Jackie was murdered while standing at a bus stop with his fiancée by a Provisional who shot him in the back of the head and ran off. He was not a member of the Republican Clubs. The only explanation is that he was murdered as a response to his mother, and as a means of punishing her for having embarrassed Ó Brádaigh and for having had the temerity to seek an end to the fascist pogrom.

Just before 4pm, a Provisional murder squad of three entered Wilson's upholstery works on the Falls Road. They approached Comgall Casey (right) and accused him of being a member of the Republican Clubs, and brought him to the back of the workshop. He told them that he had left the Republican Clubs the year before, which was true, but they ignored his pleas for his life, forced him to his knees, and shot him in the head, back and chest. It must be noted that Comgall's crime in their eyes - what they accused him of before they brutally murdered him - was not being a member of the IRA, not being someone who might have been a threat to them, but merely being a member of the Republican Clubs. This was a murder rooted in fascism, pure and simple.



*John Brown*

A third man was killed that day in the Grosvenor Road area by the IRA. The fourth person to die that day, and the last member of the Republican Clubs to be killed by the Provisionals during the pogrom, was John Brown, a volunteer who had been in the guard of honour for both Robbie Elliman and Tom Berry. He was shot 15 times on a doorstep by up to 5 Provisionals where he had gone to see his pregnant wife and child, who narrowly escaped injury. His younger brother, a youth member of the Republican Clubs was also wounded. A former Irish boxing champion who trained young boxers, both he and his wife Marie were active members of the McAuley-Millen Republican Club in the Ormeau Road. At his funeral, Seamus Lynch, from the Executive of the Republican Clubs, concluded his oration having reflected on the purpose of the Provisionals in mounting their attack.

"All we can say to them, comrades, is No! We have set our faces on the path to a 32 County Democratic Socialist Republic; John gave his life for that cause. In honouring him and all our fallen comrades, we must re-dedicate ourselves to the fight for socialism in Ireland. This is the only fitting way we can keep him in our memories, as John Brown, Republican, Socialist and Comrade in the fight against the forces of Imperialism, and for peace, freedom and socialism."

Within two days, following the shooting dead of the chair of the Falls Taxi Association on November 12th, public pressure caused the Provisionals to agree an end to the Pogrom. The cost of their fascist pipe dream to the Republican Movement and those who supported it was very heavy: 4 members of the Republican Clubs, who were also volunteers of the IRA; 2 ex-members murdered because they used to be in the Republican Clubs; 1 son murdered because his mother was a member of the Republican Clubs; and a little girl murdered because her father supported the Republican Clubs. Around 50 members and supporters were injured, with many more targeted. Dozens of families were intimidated and/or forced to flee their homes.



The Provisionals thought that the Republican Movement, disrupted as it had been by the defections, deaths and arrests surrounding the formation of the IRSP, was weak, and their confidence was boosted by the knowledge that they were guaranteed the support of the British Army and other right-wing elements in Ireland and America. This was why they boasted of being a "Provisional wedge against Communism" in Ireland.

The Provisionals miscalculated, underestimating the dedication of our members to the goal of building a revolutionary party capable of leading the process of building a democratic, secular, socialist unitary state on the island of Ireland - a Republic. And they underestimated the sacrifices our members would make to ensure the continuation of the struggle for a socialist republic.

The Provisionals acted as the shock-troops of counter-revolution in Ireland when they sought to frustrate the move to the left initiated by Cathal Goulding and others; when they sought to split the civil rights movement; when they raised sectarian tensions with their bombing campaign and their sectarian murders; and most especially when they sought to destroy the Republican Clubs as a political force.

Despite their viciousness, their callous disregard for the lives of innocents, their attacks on ex-members, their targeting of the families of Republican Clubs members, their bombs and their bullets, they had failed. The Republican Clubs remained unbroken, not just surviving but continuing their political activity even in the midst of the pogrom, with their dedication to the cause of working class only increased.

## Conclusion

1975 took a heavy toll on the members and supporters of the-then Republican Movement, who paid dearly for their dedication to what Tomás Mac Giolla termed "working-class politics and working-class unity and anti-sectarian principles". The bold vision for revolutionary politics that produced both the ceasefire and the 1972 Bodenstown speech was the foundation that provided the clarity and the courage to overcome the challenges, the losses, the murders and the intimidation suffered at the hand of ultra-leftists, militarists, sectarian nationalists, and the state: in short, suffered at the hands of counter-revolutionaries of different sorts.

1975 was therefore a crucial year in the development of our Party, a year where those who would have dragged us backwards to militarism that would only have added to sectarianism were rejected and prevented from destroying our organisation and our vision; and a year where the most vicious attack from without was survived because of the steadfastness, courage and determination of our members and supporters to adhere to that vision. It failed because of our determination to fight for it, and to ensure that the anti-sectarian socialist politics of Tone, of Connolly, of Marx, of Lenin had a future in Ireland despite all the efforts of all the counter-revolutionaries, from loyalist assassins to ultra-leftists to fascists to the political elites in both states. They all feared that vision, but they could not destroy it.

Nor could they destroy that vision with the subsequent murders of Party members and supporters, whether that was in 1977 or 1987, nor with the intimidation and harassment that continued for years after 1975. Our Party and our politics were too strong to be broken by fascist attempts to drive us off the streets and out of political life.

Freed from those who would have pushed us in the wrong direction and more determined than ever, the road was cleared to the transformation from Republican Movement to the Workers' Party. Vital though the events and sacrifices in Belfast in 1975 were, we must remember that what they did was buy us the space to continue our political development, a political development that was accelerating at this time. The Resources Protection Campaign, the production of Party policy on economic development, the struggle against gombeenism and corruption, the campaign for peace, the housing campaign, the fight for civil rights across the island, the anti-sectarian campaign and the campaign for secularisation in the south, our growing international activism, our continuing ideological development, as seen, for example, in Des O'Hagan's *The Republican Tradition*, our contribution to the development of feminism and feminist struggle in Ireland - these are what made gave the sacrifices made in the course of 1975 worthwhile, these are what gave them meaning.

The National Commemoration Committee of the Workers' Party remembers with pride those who lost their lives during the terrible year of 1975. It also remembers with pride those who could just as easily have been listed in these pages but who survived, and who dedicated the rest of the lives to the cause of socialism in Ireland. Commemorative events and commemorative booklets such as this one are important. But there is one memorial to those who lost their lives in our cause that stands above all others. That is the Workers' Party itself.

Those who died on behalf of our political vision, the political vision of McMillen, Goulding, Mac Giolla, Garland and O'Hagan, did so in the belief that it was our goal of building a revolutionary party of and for the working class that made us stand in the best traditions of Tone and Connolly. They understood that it was the work of education, agitation, and organisation to promote democratic, secular, socialist principles among the workers that made our Party the true revolutionary force in Ireland.

Much has changed in Ireland since 1975, but the fundamental realities of our society remain the same: the capitalist class remains in power north and south; the workers of Ireland remain divided; the need to build a powerful revolutionary party to mobilise the working class and to act as its voice remains as urgent as ever.

The most fitting tribute that each of us can pay, the best thing we can do to honour the sacrifice of those lost in 1975, is to build the Workers' Party as the voice of the Irish working class.

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### **Members and Supporters Murdered by the INLA and Provisionals during the course of 1975**

Sean Fox, 25th February 1975

Paul 'Cheesy' Crawford, 12th April 1975

Liam McMillen, 28th April 1975

Robbie Elliman, 29th October 1975

Eileen Kelly, 30th October 1975

Tom Berry, 31st October 1975

Jim Fogarty, 3rd November 1975

John 'Mario' Kelly, 9th November 1975

Jackie McAllister, 11th November 1975

Comgall Casey, 11th November 1975

John Brown, 11th November 1975



# POGROM!



Front Cover of the original 1975 Pogrom Booklet



# THE THIRD SERVICE

The Provisionals have performed three major services to Imperialism since their formation in late 1969.

The birth of the Provisionals arose from the first service performed by them. As the leadership of the Republican Movement was rejecting an offer by the Fianna Fail Government to engage in a militaristic campaign in the North the present (and past) Provisional leadership eagerly took the money and the task.

The task was to smash the movement created by the Civil Rights Association and which was putting pressure both on the Dublin and British Governments. The bombing campaign marked this stage of their service to Imperialism.

By 1972 the Provisionals were promoted to the direct service of British Imperialism. The British Secretary for State, Mr. William Whitelaw, faced by the anti-internment unity of "No talks and No co-operation" was casting about for a means to dissolve that unity.

Who would talk to him before internment ended? The Republican Movement would not, the Civil Rights Movement would not, the SDLP could not.....but, surprise, surprise, surprise....Mr. Mac Stiofain and the Provisionals would!

Following the June 1972 talks between the Provisionals and Mr. Whitelaw the SDLP were free to wheel and deal and anti-internment unity was at an end. Within six months the SDLP were in Cabinet jobs and Mr. Mac Stiofain was in gaol in the South. The second great service to Imperialism was at an end.

This pamphlet concerns the third great service to British Imperialism performed by the Provisionals: the murder campaign unleashed against Republicans in an effort to win the approval of the current British Secretary of State for Her Majesty's Provisional Police Force.

How it came about, why it came about and what exactly happened is all recorded in these pages. It is a classic example of the use of a counter-revolutionary force by an Imperial power.

It is an object lesson which Republicans should never forget. And it is a challenge to those individuals and groups who pretend to see the Provisionals as an "anti-Imperialist" or "potentially anti-Imperialist" force.

In the name of our dead and injured and in the name of the many non-involved people who have suffered during the Provisionals latest bloody service to British Imperialism we challenge the "critical supporters" to speak their piece or forever hold their silence.

Having survived a murderous fascist pogrom we speak of the great political truth of our time.



"The only way that Liam McMillen would have recognised a mourner for him here, or in any other place, is by the strength of his determination to carry on the fight he fought"

Cathal Goulding



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