

Part of The Club:  
Contextualizing Irish Republicanism in the Era of Global Decolonization  
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Course: HIST 449, Honours Graduating Essay  
Instructor: Dr. Robert Brain

A graduating thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Arts (Honours)  
in  
The Faculty of Arts  
History department

We accept this thesis as confirming to the required standard  
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University of British Columbia  
June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**Table of Contents**

<b>Glossary of Terms</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Ireland and Colonization</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Chapter 2: The Era of Decolonization Begins</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Guerrilla Warfare</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Irish Republicanism in Foreign Affairs</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Epilogue</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>71</b>

## Glossary of Terms

### Organizations based in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland

**IRA** – Irish Republican Army. This name has been given to several militant groups since the early 1900s, including the first IRA in 1914, the militant wing of Sinn Féin, and the PIRA from 1970 onwards. Active periods: 1922-1969 (as the unified IRA prior to the 1969 split).

**PIRA** – Provisional Irish Republican Army. Guerrilla faction in Northern Ireland that split from the Official IRA in 1969. Colloquially referred to as “the Provos”. Also referred to as the IRA in many sources. Active period: 1969-1997.<sup>1</sup>

**OIRA** – Official Irish Republican Army. This term refers to the left-wing guerrilla faction in the Republic of Ireland after the 1969 split with the PIRA. Active period: 1969-1972.

**RIRA** – Real Irish Republican Army. Guerrilla faction that split from the PIRA in 1997 as a rejection of the Good Friday Agreement. Active period: 1997-present.

**INLA** – Irish National Liberation Army. Guerrilla faction that split off from the OIRA following the 1972 ceasefire. Active period: 1974-2009.

**CIRA** – Continuity Irish Republican Army. Split from the PIRA in 1986, but did not become actively militant until 1994. Active period: 1994-present.

**Saor Eire** – Trotskyist guerrilla faction. Formed in 1967 by former IRA volunteers who desired a more aggressive militant campaign. Limited in scope and impact with a smaller membership base than other prominent groups. Active Period: 1967-1975.

### Organizations based outside of Ireland

**PLO** – Palestinian Liberation Organization. Independence movement based in Palestine, allied with the PIRA at times. Active Period: 1964-present.

**FARC-EP** – Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—Ejército del Pueblo. Colombian Marxist-Leninist guerrilla faction. Active period: 1964-2017.

**ETA** – Euskadi Ta Askatasuna. A separatist guerrilla faction in the Basque region of Spain, partner in solidarity with the Irish republican cause. Active period: 1959-2010.

**Red Brigade** – far left guerrilla faction in Italy, one of the “euro-terrorist” organizations of the late twentieth century. Active period: 1970-1988.

**Baader-Meinhof** – Also known as the Red Army Faction. A leftist guerrilla faction in West Germany, one of the “euro-terrorist” organizations of the late twentieth century. Active period: 1970-1990.

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<sup>1</sup> Active periods are given from official founding to declaration of ceasefire or disbandment.

## Acknowledgements

*This thesis was written partially on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Musqueam People, and partially on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut'ina, the Îyâxe Nakoda Nations, the Métis Nation (Region 3), and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta.*

I would like to extend my most sincere thanks to my advisor Dr. Jeffrey James Byrne for his unfailing support and encouragement during this process. I feel incredibly lucky to have worked with Dr. Byrne – he understood my ideas even when I struggled to put them into words myself. I could not have asked for a better advisor.

I would also like to thank the rest of the UBC history department for four years of learning, growth, and community. If I could go back in time and do everything over, there is no doubt in my mind that I would end up here again. I could not have asked for a better program, better department, or better community of scholars to be a part of.

I am also grateful for my honours cohort. Though I will not miss the tribulations of Zoom seminars, I will certainly miss the spirited debates, the commiseration over citation struggles, or the camaraderie of the “We Hate Hegel” club. My special thanks to Kevin for an unending supply of humour and proofreading.

I would like to extend a special thank you to Dr. Martin Melaugh and the other researchers at the CAIN Archive in Northern Ireland, who have put many years of work into creating a digital body of primary source material on the Troubles, without which I would not have been able to complete my research. Thank you as well to the curators of the Irish Left Archive who have worked to preserve materials from left-wing groups throughout Irish history, and to the librarians

at the Linen Hall Library. Making historical documents freely accessible in a digital format is a tireless and often thankless task, but it is vital for historical research – especially in a time when travelling to archives is impossible.

Nothing I have done in the last four years would have been possible without the unwavering support of my family – my mother Kerry, my father John, and my brother Keegan, all of whom have listened patiently to years of semi-coherent ramblings about guerrilla warfare. A special thanks to my sisters in spirit Kat, Stephanie, Erica, Erin, and Anjali, who have been the greatest support network I could ever ask for.

This thesis is more than just the past year of reading and writing – it represents years of study, on my part, and on the part of researchers worldwide who are dedicated to understanding Northern Ireland. Writing history is a continuous process: this thesis did not begin with me, and it will not end with me either. Above all, I am thankful to be able to add my own contribution to the body of work on this part of history.

## Introduction

The Irish republican movement holds a unique position in the historical record. Simultaneously low-level yet explosive, geographically contained yet global, sectarian yet universal. A conflict built on six centuries of oppression and violence, yet condensed in the global historical record to a few decades of civil war. This conflict, known popularly as “the Troubles” began in the 1960s and did not end until the late 1990s. It represented decades of low-intensity armed conflict across Ireland that cost thousands of lives – civilian, guerrilla, and military alike.<sup>2</sup> Though the Troubles ended officially with the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, the conflict has continued, both literally (through sporadic bombings and skirmishes) and in spirit (through the ongoing discourse over its memory and historicity). The Troubles spanned from the late 1960s to the late 1990s, thirty-odd years of low-intensity guerrilla conflict that drew several international parties into its maelstrom. The climate of globalization of the mid-twentieth century, combined with the international links Ireland already possessed (mainly in the form of significant diasporic communities in other countries), led to The Troubles becoming a major topic in international politics during the latter half of the century – a topic that now, more than twenty years after its end, has not truly departed from discussion or culture.

The sectarian conflict that gripped Ireland in the twentieth century went beyond its borders. The conflict was contained to the British Isles, yet the influence of the struggle had a global reach – it was discussed at the United Nations, in the American house of representatives, and beyond. The republicans found supporters in all corners of the world, from Libya to Cuba. It drew solidarity and support from seemingly distant groups – the Irish republicans fell into the same category that groups fighting for autonomy in colonized regions occupied, and the British

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<sup>2</sup> Brendan O’Brien. *The Long War: The IRA and Sinn Féin 1985 to Today*. (Dublin, the O’Brien Press: 1993): 26.

found themselves yet again cast into the role of imperial oppressor. A pattern begins to emerge, one seen frequently in the mid-twentieth century as colonies in the Global South threw off European control and sought self-determination. The Irish republican struggle burst on to the international scene just as similar upheavals were growing in the colonial properties of the Global South – the era of “decolonization”.

This thesis argues for a reassessment of the Troubles not only in Irish history, but in global history. The many similarities between the history of Ireland the histories of colonized nations provide a space where Ireland may be analyzed as a part of the history of colonization and decolonization. The place of Ireland in colonialism is an ongoing controversy in the contextualization of Irish history. It is a debate worth having: understanding Ireland’s position in this part of global history is not only useful for expanding knowledge of Ireland’s history, but also the history of decolonization as an idea and an action.

Decolonization (as it will be defined in this thesis) is the process of dismantling colonial or imperial structures of governance, deconstructing systemic patterns of oppression and control, and working towards full self-determination, recognition, and autonomy for colonized nations. The era of decolonization falls largely between 1960-1980, though its roots can be traced back to the First World War, and new buds have emerged sporadically since the end of this defined period. For my purposes, I will concentrate on the period from 1960-1980 as the “era of decolonization” as a large portion of movements and conflicts centred on this struggle took place during these twenty years. Decolonization is nebulous, and difficult to define as a practical term for analysis. The definition above is vague by choice – the forms and methods decolonization embodied during the given period were wide-ranging, and immense in scope. The definition of colonization, or of a colony, is similarly difficult to quantify. The working definition in this

thesis will be: a nation, community, or region that has been conquered and taken under the control of a foreign metropole for the purposes of settlement or resource use. The process of colonization requires further qualifications: the subjugation of the native population, the assimilation and repression of their culture, and the imposition of the metropole's structures and systems.

Was Ireland ever a colony? In some aspects, yes – after it came under British control, it was divided mainly between British landowners, making the native population effectively second-class citizens. Irish culture was repressed, Irish Gaelic was banned in public places for long periods. The Irish population was largely disenfranchised and thus removed from the governing process. However, there are aspects of Ireland's history that differentiate it from other colonial situations. The Irish people were not enslaved (though they were forced into indentured servitude), they did not experience an event that fits the full criteria for genocide as decided by the United Nations (though the Great Famine fits several of the requirements) and – the most important factor – Irish individuals were able to benefit in some ways from British colonialism in the Global South, often as settlers. However, if not colonization, what can we call the narrative of Irish history?

An unavoidable factor in conceptualizing decolonization is violence. It is a crucial element in the theories of anticolonial philosopher Frantz Fanon, and it is highly visible across the era of decolonization – as though blood was spilling out from the veins of history.<sup>3</sup> It is here that this thesis finds its roots. Risings against colonial oppression rarely lacked in bloodshed – more often than not, a revolution is remembered as a war by at least one side.<sup>4</sup> This kind of

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<sup>3</sup> See “On Violence” in Fanon's text *The Wretched of the Earth*.

<sup>4</sup> Consider here: The Algerian Civil War, the Latin American Wars of Independence, or the Irish War of Independence.



violence often takes the shape of guerrilla warfare, a strategic system well-suited to oppressed populations. Guerrilla warfare in this thesis will be defined as follows: a structure of strategies and tactics based on the techniques of small-scale or hit-and-run attacks, the use of unconventional arms and artillery, and the maximization of limited manpower and resources, all for the goal of combating a larger and better-armed opponent.

Guerrilla warfare can be found in almost every violent deconstruction of a colonial power. It is the ideal strategy: suited to a small and under-armed force, with strategic patterns that maximize damage against a larger army without risking open battle. Anticolonial revolutionaries had no other option for violence – open battle would allow the colonial power to decimate them immediately. Thus, guerrilla warfare became an integral part of decolonization. The same strategic paradigms can be seen in the actions of the forces of Fidel Castro in the Cuban Revolution as in the IRA's various iterations. Guerrilla warfare has become an intrinsic part of decolonization as a tangible movement, even into the period after the main era of decolonization. Guerrilla warfare cannot be ignored in the analysis of these movements – it is as much a part of the history as nonviolent aspects like self-determination and recognition of nation-state status. In defining the position of Ireland and Irish republicanism in the historical sphere of decolonization, guerrilla warfare is key. The patterns of violence seen in the Troubles follow those seen in several African, Latin American, and Asian decolonization movements. Moreover, the Irish guerrilla organizations learned their strategies from their counterparts in the Global South, which demonstrates their position in this legacy of anticolonial violence.

As the Troubles came to an end, Ireland's colonial context has emerged as a topic of debate for historians. This discourse rose in academic journals across Ireland, taking advantage of the postcolonial theories being developed worldwide as the era of decolonization came to a

close. Ireland entered into the scholarship in earnest in the mid to late 1990s, through the work of emerging Irish historians as well as prominent writers from abroad. The application of decolonization and postcolonial theory to the Irish situation is understandably fraught. The history of Ireland under British dominion lacks some of the hallmarks usually ascribed to colonization (and to the act of decolonization). The study of Ireland in the postcolonial began as The Troubles came to an end in the late twentieth century. Several prominent theorists emerged, including Edward Said (who first analyzed Ireland in the 1990s), Clare Carroll, Patricia King, and Colin Graham, who emerged as a critic of mainstream Irish postcolonial theory in the 1990s.

There are multiple factors that complicate the categorization of Ireland as a colonial possession, or as a “decolonized” or “postcolonial” nation. Most obvious among these is a lack of distinction in scholarship over the geographical element of colonization. Ireland’s location in Europe and close proximity to its colonizer sets it apart from overseas colonies that can be more clearly defined.<sup>5</sup> This has generated a grey-area concept of “internal colonization”, which further muddies the classification of Ireland. However, this point of contention rests upon the assumption that a one-size-fits-all experience of colonialism exists, which is not a realistic assessment of history.<sup>6</sup> A further complication lies with the views of Irish citizens under British imperialism, who identified more often with the struggles of European settlers in the Americas and Africa, rather than their indigenous counterparts.<sup>7</sup> The treatment of the Irish population under British rule is comparable in some ways to that of European settlers in the Global South – however, association between the struggles of non-European populations would come into the Irish republican ideology late in the twentieth century (relative, at least, to the connections made

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<sup>5</sup> Clare Carroll and Patricia King, *Ireland and Postcolonial Theory* (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2003): 25.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

between groups in the Global South earlier in the period). The most practical counterpoint to this issue is that European settler populations may have felt more familiar to Irish actors in the early and mid-twentieth century, due to shared language, religion, and general culture. The issue of postcolonialism must also be contended with to fully understand the Irish situation's place in the history of decolonization. On this subject, Irish author Colin Graham defines the theory of postcolonialism as ethical classification of a society based on its history under imperialism, colonization, and the element of "loss" – loss of identity, culture, sense of space or territory, societal integrity.<sup>8</sup>

Of the writers whose names are most often associated with decolonization and postcolonial theory, Edward Said was one of the few to write directly about the conflict in Ireland and its relationship to his previous scholarship. Said's scholarship on Ireland has faced criticism for not recognizing the unique cultural particularities of Ireland's relationship with its imperial overlord, and simplifying Irish history to fit better with his postcolonial theories.<sup>9</sup> A vocal critic of Said, Graham states that "basic to the problems inherent in Said's notion of Ireland's place in the post-colonial world is his unquestioned assumption that Ireland was colonised and decolonised in the same way as all other nations which have been formed from the demise of the British Empire".<sup>10</sup> He also argues that "any post-colonial reading of Irish literature must base itself on a particular version of Irish history, since post-colonial criticism relies on finding its recurrent narrative wherever it turns its gaze."<sup>11</sup> Graham's criticism of Said (and of postcolonial theory in Ireland as a whole) centres on the danger of applying a "universal"

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<sup>8</sup> Colin Graham, "'Liminal Spaces': Post-Colonial Theories and Irish Culture," *The Irish Review* (1986-), no. 16 (1994): 29–30.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>10</sup> Colin Graham, "Anomalous Theory," ed. Edward W. Said and David Lloyd, *The Irish Review* (1986-), no. 15 (1994): 118.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*,

postcolonialism onto any nation for which it was not formulated – similar to the oversimplified one-size-fits-all experience of colonialism described by Carroll and King. However, Graham’s criticism of Said may not be entirely fair. In his essay “Edward Said and Irish Criticism”, Conor McCarthy classifies Graham’s critique as lacking, as he does not acknowledge the innate historical and cultural complexities of terms like “nation” and “nationalism”, and defines them with a sense of rigidity that automatically puts him in conflict with Said.<sup>12</sup>

If Graham’s criticism can be overlooked for the moment, Said’s writing on Ireland can be recognized as having merit in the greater context of situating Ireland in decolonization. The mere inclusion of Ireland in the work of Said is meaningful – he was one of the first prominent, non-Irish writers to describe Ireland in terms of colonialism and decolonization. To have a theorist as influential as Said add his voice to the legitimacy of Irish decolonization should be considered a supporting aspect for the validity of Ireland’s place in the history of colonialism and decolonization. Furthermore, as McCarthy mentioned, criticism of Said’s Irish commentary may be too deeply rooted in rigid concepts of the nation and nationalism that are influenced by the place of English nationalism in the origins of Irish nationalism. If Ireland’s postcolonial identity is considered from an outside perspective, this point of contention does not seem as important. Indeed – it bears similarities to the struggles of other postcolonial nations to separate their national identity from the influence of their former overlords. Said’s commentary on Ireland has faced criticism for overlooking the intricacies of Ireland’s relationship to England and its national identity, but is nevertheless a meaningful source of support for the validity of Ireland’s place in the history of decolonization.

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<sup>12</sup> Conor McCarthy, “Edward Said and Irish Criticism,” *Éire-Ireland* 42, no. 1 (2007): 320.

The debate over Ireland's decolonization is still in its early stages. The short decades since the Good Friday Agreement have slowly peeled away the bureaucratic red tape holding back archival sources, and the trauma of these events may have healed sufficiently to allow for analytical scholarship. It is a debate worth having – especially in the current climate as historians worldwide reckon with decolonization. This thesis will endeavour to analyze Ireland's twentieth century history through a postcolonial lens, with the ultimate goal of finding a space for Irish republicanism in the historical timeline of global decolonization. I will focus specifically on the following aspects of Irish history: the early modern roots of Irish republicanism and their connections to anti-imperialism, the movements Irish republicans took inspiration from, the guerrilla activities of Irish republicans in the twentieth century (simultaneous with similar activities carried out in Global South colonies), and the position of Irish republicanism and Ireland as a state in twentieth century international politics, so as to provide a comprehensive assessment of Irish republicanism as a historical concept.

The structure of this thesis will follow a chronological pattern, beginning with Irish republicanism prior to and in the early 1900s, and following the timeline of its impact until the 1980s. The goal of this approach is to help emphasize the development of Irish republicanism's international connections over time, and to demonstrate the long-term continuities in its engagement with anti-imperialism and decolonization throughout the movement's history. To analyze the place of Irish republicanism in global decolonization, this thesis will focus on the international dimensions of the movement over time, the connections between Irish republicans and anti-colonial organizations in the Global South. And the development of the ideology during the era of decolonization in the twentieth century. The first chapter will explore the foundations of the movement in the early modern period prior to and including the Easter Rising. This will

include the involvement of Ireland in the international arena, as well as the anti-imperial roots of the movement. The second chapter will look to the beginnings of the era of global decolonization through its most notable successes – the Cuban and Algerian revolutions. This chapter will use the enduring influences (and influencers) borne out of these events to understand the interactions of Irish republicanism with decolonization and guerrilla warfare in the nascency of their militarized period beginning in the 1970s. The third chapter will address the guerrilla strategies employed by Irish republicans, along with their relationships to other anti-imperial and anti-colonial guerrilla organizations active at the time to understand the international dimension of their operations. The fourth and final chapter will follow this same thread and consider the activities of Irish republican groups in international affairs during the era of decolonization and the Cold War through the connections they forged with state governments.

In his essay “After History: Historicism and Postcolonial Studies”, postcolonial theorist David Lloyd qualified the significance of Ireland’s colonial identity as a condition for understanding the violence of the Troubles. He states that defining decolonization demands:

“That the phenomenon of violence must be understood as constitutive of social relations within the colonial capitalist state, whose practices institutionalize a violence which, though cumulative, daily, and generally unspectacular, is normalized precisely by its long duration and chronic nature.”<sup>13</sup>

It is the reframing of this violence that is the overall goal of placing Ireland in decolonization – the reconsideration of Irish republicanism as more than a sectarian feud or a terrorist movement, but part of a global tsunami of guerrilla decolonization that grew from the long history of colonial oppression.

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<sup>13</sup> David Lloyd. “After History: Historicisms and Postcolonial Studies” in *Ireland and Postcolonial Theory*, ed. Clare Carroll and Patricia King. (Cork, Cork University Press: 2003): 48.

## Chapter 1: Ireland and Colonization

Though the cause of Irish republicanism became known globally through the actions of Irish republican organizations in the mid-twentieth century, both the cause and the history of Irish global connections predates this period. Prior to The Troubles, the early iterations of Irish republicanism and the IRA were evolving in Ireland and abroad, and setting the stage for their narrative during decolonization. Within Ireland, the centuries of British colonization created an environment in which anti-imperial struggles became more frequent, leading up to the Easter Rising of 1916. The Rising is a watershed in the timeline of anti-imperial action, both in Ireland and globally, as it sent ripples across Europe and the British Empire. Outside of Ireland, there exists a long historical timeline of Irish involvement in conflicts regarding independence, beginning with the Jacobite uprisings and eventually culminating in South American struggles for independence. This chapter will demonstrate how the history of Irish anti-imperialism has roots that extend long before The Troubles, roots that have defined international dimensions.

### Colonizing Ireland

The Irish republican cause predates the period of decolonization in the mid-twentieth century (defined in this thesis as 1960-1979). The imperial colonization of Ireland arguably began in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, simultaneous with Great Britain's first colonial forays into the New World.<sup>14</sup> The traditional markers of colonization are visible: the imposition of settler law, resource control, and settler language and culture.<sup>15</sup> The subjugation of the Irish population continued throughout the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. The British administration restricted the use of the Gaelic language and gave preferential treatment to

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<sup>14</sup> Brendan O'Leary, "The Shackles of the State & Hereditary Animosity: Colonialism in the Interpretation of Irish History," *Field Day Review* 10 (2014): 152.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

Protestants over Catholics.<sup>16</sup> The actions of the British administration in Ireland prior to the twentieth century followed the same pattern exercised in their colonies in the New World and the Global South – cultural suppression and settler domination. Considering the clear pattern of colonialism visible in Ireland, it is reasonable to include them in the ranks of colonial properties, and therefore consider their struggle for independence through the lens of decolonization.

### **The Movement Begins**

The early years of the twentieth century were fraught with conflict and social upheaval in Europe, to which Ireland was no exception. The Easter Rising of 1916, which represents the cultural beginning of the Irish republican conflict, was the explosive culmination of multiple internal and external factors. The Easter Rising came on the cusp of a revolutionary interwar period in Europe spurred on largely by the rise of socialism. The early years of the twentieth century demonstrate a pattern of burgeoning anti-imperialism – take, for example, the formation of the Subject Races International Committee in 1907.<sup>17</sup> This organization united peoples across Europe living under external rule (including representatives from Ireland), along with non-European subjugated populations. The First World War also struck a blow against the imperialist power structure of Europe – the conflict demonstrated the fragility of major European empires, setting the stage for the political upheaval that followed.<sup>18</sup> In this light, the Easter Rising in 1916 can be taken as a part of a long pattern of anti-imperial events that occurred as the First World War drew to a close, including the Russian Revolution.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>17</sup> Enrico Dal Lago, Róisín Healy and Gearóid Barry. *1916 in Global Context: An Anti-Imperial Moment* (London, Routledge: 2017): 6.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.,



Prior to the Easter Rising, the first guerrilla army in Ireland was established in 1913 – the Irish Volunteers. Their manifesto, published that same year, drew on themes that reflect the growing social unrest in empires globally. It referenced the concept of nationhood separate from empire, in saying that Ireland would be “no longer worthy of the name of nation” should they not succeed in overthrowing British Rule.<sup>19</sup> The language used in the manifesto also displayed the cognizance of the Irish Volunteers of the context in which they operated – it states “If ever in history a people could say that an opportunity was given them by God's will to make an honest and manly stand for their rights, that opportunity is given us to-day.”<sup>20</sup> The formation of the Irish Volunteers would be a harbinger of things to come: their anti-imperial sentiment would gain traction throughout the 1910s and 1920s as this wave of self-determination swept through Europe.

The Irish Volunteers were the first iteration of the Irish Republican Army, and their creation initiated the first period of guerrilla warfare in the Irish republican struggle. Aside from their manifesto, one of the few surviving documents from the Irish Volunteers is an internal bulletin titled *An tOglach* (the volunteer(s) in Irish Gaelic). This document, published in 1921, contained several references to factors that would become central parts of the Irish republican movement over the next century. Its first article focused on prioritization of the Gaelic language.<sup>21</sup> This is significant both ideologically and from a strategic perspective – promotion of native language would become a factor in later decolonization movements globally, and the Irish Volunteers recognize its value as a safeguarding method to hide their plans from the British.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The National Library of Ireland, “‘Manifesto of the Irish Volunteers’. First Published in 1913.,” Image, 1913.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>21</sup> Irish Volunteers, “An TÓglách, 21st October 1921” (Irish Volunteers, 1921).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.,

Preservation of the Gaelic language is a significant factor in Irish republicanism – the restriction of its use under British colonial rule was a contributing factor to the rise of the movement, and the language represented a reclamation of Irish culture (a symbol seen in decolonizing states where the colonizing power imposed their own language and culture onto the oppressed peoples.)

This document also contained some of the first references to guerrilla warfare in an Irish republican organization. It mentioned the use of guerrilla tactics by nationalists in India, and uses the term to refer to their recent military operations.<sup>23</sup> The inclusion of this term in 1921 is significant – though the term was extant it had not entered the common English lexicon, nor evolved into the recognized and easily-definable form of strategy it would become by the 1960s. Though the concept of guerrilla warfare predates Irish republicanism, some historians argue that the Irish Volunteers represent the first version of guerrilla warfare as it is known in the modern sense.<sup>24</sup> However, there is debate as to how unconventional their tactics were in the early years – the rigid structures of the Irish Volunteers (likely influenced by veterans returning from World War One) seems at odds with the form of guerrilla warfare seen later on in the century.<sup>25</sup> Despite this, by 1921 the Irish Volunteers were arguably guerrilleros – because of their self-identification in An tOglach, and because of the tactical shift which led then to employ guerrilla methods like terror and intelligence networks.<sup>26</sup>

The Easter Rising is among the first events in a timeline of upheavals across Europe leading up to and coinciding with the end of the First World War, including the Russian

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>24</sup> Charles Townshend, “The Irish Republican Army and the Development of Guerrilla Warfare, 1916-1921,” *The English Historical Review* 94, no. 371 (1979): 318–45.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 328

Revolution of 1918. The spread of socialism and the dissolution of empires during the First World War created a rising tide of self-determination – a proto- form of anti-imperialism. This trend included the dissolution of Austria-Hungary, the Russian October Revolution, and the Easter Rising. The defining factor of this movement is an evolving concept of nationalism that was based in contrast with an imperial overlord. On the continent, the Easter Rising was met with optimism from socialist thinkers, including Lenin, who characterized it as a premature break of the burgeoning wave in Europe.<sup>27</sup>

### **Contextualizing the Easter Rising**

The Easter Rising and the birth of the Irish republican movement both occurred during a period of political evolution in Europe. During and after the First World War, nationalism and sovereignty began to separate from the concept of empire as more “nation-states” declared their independence on the continent.<sup>28</sup> The shift away from empire as a state structure led to a rise in separationist movements that would continue to gain momentum during the interwar period. Irish republicanism had a particular influence on one similar movement: the Basque nationalist movement in Spain. The Basque movement bore similarities to the Irish republican movement in that they both sought freedom from an imperial system, and hoped to establish a nation based on their unique culture. News of the Easter Rising was the catalyst for tension between moderate and radical members of the Basque nationalist movement, leading to the rise of the Basque Nationalist Commune after their 1919 War of Independence.<sup>29</sup> This Irish-Basque connection represents an early relationship between two guerrilla organizations, which would continue into

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<sup>27</sup> Lago et al., *1916 in Global Context*, 4.

<sup>28</sup> Lili Zách, “‘The First of the Small Nations’: The Significance of Central European Small States in Irish Nationalist Political Rhetoric, 1918–22,” *Irish Historical Studies* 44, no. 165 (May 2020): 27.

<sup>29</sup> Kyle McCreanor, “The Irish Revolution and The Basque Nationalist Movement, 1916–23,” *History Ireland* 28, no. 1 (2020): 40.

the mid-twentieth century as both groups developed into militant guerrilla armies during the era of decolonization. The Basque nationalists and the Irish republicans represented a new form of nationhood that was emerging in this period through guerrilla warfare, a form of revolution that would later be seen in decolonizing nations later in the twentieth century.

This early history of Irish republicanism and its links to international events would come to form the foundation of the movement that took place in the era of decolonization in the mid-twentieth century. The crucible of self-determination that gripped several nations as the First World War drew to a close provides important context for the Easter Rising, proving it was not an isolated event relevant only to Irish republicanism, but indicative of an international shift. The anti-imperialist sentiment of the early Irish republicans is also significant in that it represents a tradition that would develop into the anti-colonial sentiment held by Irish republican guerrilla organizations as the era of decolonization took hold.

### **Ireland in the British Colonial Context**

Another British colonial property experiencing upheaval during this period was India. The relationship between Ireland and India is fraught with complex perspectives on imperialism in both countries – the presence of Irish soldiers in the British service and their actions towards Indians are a necessary caveat to any anticolonial comparison. However, the influence of Irish republicanism and the Easter Rising of 1916 in India also cannot be downplayed. In the wake of the Easter Rising, nationalists in India displayed a positive perspective on the actions of the republicans. As Michael Silvestri recognizes in *Ireland and India: Nationalism, Empire, and Memory*, several Indian nationalist figures expressed sympathetic views on the Irish struggle, including future president Varahagiri Venkata Giri, who recalled the “great affinity: that young

Indians felt for Irish and recognized the similarities in their struggle against a shared enemy.<sup>30</sup> Expressions of solidarity in India continued after the Easter Rising. The nationalist *Ghadr* newspaper published a series of articles celebrating and memorializing the rebels involved in the Rising, proclaiming them as martyrs.<sup>31</sup> The culmination of this influence was the Chittagong Armoury Raid of 1930, during which a band of young anti-colonialist fighters attempted to recreate the Easter Rising for their own struggle.<sup>32</sup> The influence of the Easter Rising in India is unsurprising – even before the decolonization movement of the mid-twentieth century took hold, both nations shared a common oppressor under the British Empire.

### **Irish Anti-Imperialism Prior to the Twentieth Century**

Irish involvement in revolutionary independence movements and conflicts related to self-determination pre-dates the Easter Rising. The presence of Irish volunteer fighters in several wars globally was commonplace – no matter their connection to the cause. This was due partially to the steady exodus of Irish workers moving abroad for better opportunities beginning in the eighteenth century.<sup>33</sup> Many of these emigrants found their way to other Catholic nations – Spain, Scotland, and the young Iberian colonies of the New World. Irish participation in certain conflicts is unsurprising – the Catholic faith they shared with other European communities afforded them preferable treatment to that of the British.<sup>34</sup> Irish brigades have been recorded as fighting in several Jacobite conflicts, as well as in the War of the Spanish Succession.<sup>35</sup> Their

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<sup>30</sup> Michael Silvestri, *Ireland and India: Nationalism, Empire and Memory*, Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2009), 10.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>32</sup> Arpita Sen, “The Proscription of an Irish Text and the Chittagong Rising of 1930,” *Indian Historical Review* 34, no. 2 (July 1, 2007): 96.

<sup>33</sup> Tim Fanning, *Paisanos: The Irish and the Liberation of Latin America* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2016): 9.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>35</sup> Pádraig Lenihan, “The ‘Irish Brigade’ 1690-1715,” *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an Dá Chultúr* 31 (2016): 48.

participation in the ultimately doomed Jacobite conflicts is unsurprising, considering the potential benefits for Ireland as a British territory should the Stuart line return to the throne of England. Beyond the continental wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Irish volunteers ventured further abroad to participate in conflicts in the nineteenth century.

The involvement of Irish volunteers in conflicts in the Global South also predates the era of decolonization during the twentieth century. A large contingent of Irish volunteers ventured to South America in the early to mid-nineteenth century, answering the call to join Simón de Bolívar's liberation army.<sup>36</sup> Whether they were attracted by the cause of independence, or by the riches of South America, or by the desire to make a name for themselves, Irish volunteers eventually comprised the majority of Bolívar's foreign regiment.<sup>37</sup> Their presence, along with other foreign recruits, arguably provided Bolívar's army with the bolster it needed to achieve victory.<sup>38</sup> The participation of Irish volunteers in this conflict bears greater significance arguably than even the Jacobite uprisings. Bolívar's war for independence in South America is one of the earliest examples of anti-imperialism. Whether or not it is "decolonization" is debatable, but it represents a struggle against an empire for freedom. Therefore, Irish participation in this war could be characterized as prologue to their own anti-imperial struggle. The writing of Irish volunteers in South America points to this as one of their motives for joining – Francis Burdett O'Connor of County Cork reportedly stated that he came to South America to practice warfare in preparation for Ireland's own anti-imperial struggle.<sup>39</sup> In considering Bolívar's war, there is an element of solidarity between the nascent South American nations and their Irish brothers-in-

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<sup>36</sup> Fanning, *Paisanos*, 120.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

arms. According to the memoir of the aforementioned O'Connor, Bolívar himself expressed support for the cause of Irish liberation and promised to aid in the struggle once his own had been won.<sup>40</sup> The participation of Irish volunteers in Bolívar's forces is representative of the greater trend of Irish presence in global conflicts. The status of this particular series of wars in the timeline of decolonization is also significant – Bolívar's wars represent some of the first successful anti-imperial uprisings prior to the period of decolonization in the twentieth century. Therefore, the involvement of Irish volunteers can be viewed as part of the long timeline of Irish participation in anti-imperialism.

### **After the Rising: Ireland Moves into Foreign Policy**

Following the Easter Rising and its resulting unrest, Éamon de Valera came to power as one of the new Sinn Féin party's first ambassadors. A literal example of the influence of the Irish diaspora abroad, the American-born de Valera experienced a meteoric rise to power within the republican movement. He was one of the few militant participants in the Easter Rising to escape execution (possibly over fears of international conflict on the part of the British administration if they were to execute an American citizen).<sup>41</sup> De Valera went on to be elected President of Sinn Féin, and later *Príomh Aire* (First Minister) of the Dáil Éireann.<sup>42</sup> Between 1919 and 1920, De Valera spoke in several cities across the United States to promote the cause of Irish republicanism, which had previously benefited from the support of Irish diasporic communities.<sup>43</sup> The formation of the Fenian Brotherhood in the United States during the

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<sup>40</sup> Francisco Burdett O'Connor, *Independencia Americana. Recuerdos de Francisco Burdett O'Connor ...* (La Paz etc.: González y Medina, 1915), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/101038597>.

<sup>41</sup> Andrew Sanders. *Inside the IRA: Dissident Republicans and the War for Legitimacy* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press: 2011): 2.

<sup>42</sup> Tim Pat Coogan. *The IRA* (London, HarperCollins: 2000): 23-25.

<sup>43</sup> Darragh Gannon. "Addressing the Irish World: Éamon De Valera's 'Cuban Policy' as a Global Case Study." *Irish Historical Studies* 44, no. 165 (2020): 41.

nineteenth century provided support for the burgeoning revolutionary organizations in Ireland, including the Irish Volunteers.<sup>44</sup> For de Valera, American politics held a particular key to the Irish situation: their diplomatic relationship with Cuba. In a press statement given during his American tour in 1920, de Valera expressed admiration for the Monroe Doctrine's provisions for Cuba:

“If it really were [Britain's] independence and her simple right to life as a national state that Britain wanted to safeguard, she could easily make a provision for that without in any way infringing upon the equally sacred right of Ireland to its independence and to its life. (...) Why doesn't Britain do thus with Ireland as the United States did with Cuba? Why doesn't Britain declare a Monroe Doctrine for the two neighbouring islands? The people of Ireland, so far from objecting, would co-operate with their whole soul in regional understanding of that sort.”<sup>45</sup>

The choice made by de Valera to identify Ireland with Cuba (rather than the United States, despite its large Irish diaspora) is significant. Combined with de Valera's support for Pan-Americanism (which at the time was defined by the United States supporting the independence and harmony of Latin American nations), it represents the growing cognizance of the global south in the Irish republican political view.<sup>46</sup> Earlier writing by de Valera supports this as well – he viewed the establishment of diplomatic relationships and recognition by Latin American republics as a key step to recognition by the United States (and by extension the global community).<sup>47</sup> This comparatively small episode in Irish republican polity would set the stage for their future connections to republics in Latin America, including Cuba.

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<sup>44</sup> Brian Sayers, “Easter 1916 and the Fenian Tradition,” *Journal of Irish Studies* 33 (2018): 66.

<sup>45</sup> Maurice Moynihan, ed., *Speeches and Statements by Eamon de Valera 1917-73* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1980), 33.

<sup>46</sup> Darragh Gannon, “Addressing the Irish World: Éamon de Valera's ‘Cuban Policy’ as a Global Case Study,” *Irish Historical Studies* 44, no. 165 (May 2020): 45.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.



The involvement of Irish volunteers in conflicts abroad prior to the period of decolonization is significant in the overall timeline of Irish republicanism. Even before the formation of the Irish Volunteers or the Easter Rising, there is a defined Irish presence in conflicts relating to nationalism and independence, like the Jacobite uprisings or Bolívar's wars in South America. It demonstrates the historical context in which Irish republicanism was born, situating it beyond Ireland and in a global history of nationalism. These events become even more symbolic when considered in combination with the timeline of Irish republicanism and the Easter Rising. Prior to 1916, there is a prologue of Irish participation in anti-imperialism. As shown in this chapter, the Irish Volunteers had a global element to their ideas and strategies. The Easter Rising also fits into the series of anti-imperial uprisings that occurred upon the end of the First World War within Europe, further solidifying its international role. The historical context of Irish involvement in global conflicts, the colonization of Ireland, and the early years of Irish republicanism are vital to defining Ireland's place in the history of decolonization. Using the information presented in this chapter as a foundation for understanding the contributing factors to the Irish republican conflict of the twentieth century, the global connections to decolonization in the Global South will also become apparent. This international dimension was only the beginning, and can be seen as a harbinger for the relationships Irish republicans formed beyond their shores later in the twentieth century.

## Chapter 2: The Era of Decolonization Begins

The 1960s-1980s represented a veritable “boom” in revolutionary decolonization, as movements the world over began to rise against colonial governments. In this period, two successful uprisings became leaders in the Global South, providing inspiration to would-be revolutionaries and lending credence to the international unity of these movements. The two success stories that would influence the era of decolonization were the Cuban Revolution of 1953-1958, and the Algerian Revolution that took place from 1954-1962. These two events marked the beginning of this era. Cuba positioned itself as a source of power and influence over former colonies who looked to them as an example. Under Fidel Castro, Cuba provided support to several states in the process of revolutionary decolonization, through political solidarity, the supply of arms and fighters, and as a source of ideological inspiration. For the Irish republican movement, Cuba served multiple purposes: the events of the Cuban Revolution (and the writing of its most recognizable star, Che Guevara) were a source of inspiration, and were used to strategize the plans and overall goals of the IRA moving forward. The Irish republican movement therefore fits in with revolutionary decolonization movements in the Global South, in that they took direction from Cuba in both their tactics and their ideological development. The lasting legacy of the Algerian Revolution was not dissimilar to the legacy of the Cuban Revolution – just as Cuba catapulted Guevara to international fame, Algeria did the same for its own scholar of decolonization: Frantz Fanon. This chapter will situate the Cuban Revolution, the writing of Che Guevara, and the thought and influence of Frantz Fanon in the context of global decolonization, and analyze their collective influence on Irish republican anti-imperial theory and guerrilla strategy.

## The Cuban Revolution in the Colonial Context

Cuba served as a profitable colony for the Spanish empire for almost 500 years until it gained independence. Beginning with the founding of the first Spanish settlement in 1511, Cuba was a resource colony, producing raw materials like sugar using slave labour. The economic system created to govern Cuba (called in Spanish the “encomienda”) was a neo-feudal structure in which Spanish conquistadors could own land and profit from the labour of Indigenous enslaved peoples in the manufacturing of raw material.<sup>48</sup> This method of colonization prioritized domination of production first, and domination of culture and society second (though the latter was hampered by the eradication of the Indigenous peoples of Cuba by the Spanish settlers via disease). The structure of the Cuban colony is a combination of exploitation colonialism and settler colonialism – Cuba’s raw material resources were a priority, but were utilized in tandem with the creation of Spanish settlements, which helped to subjugate the Indigenous population under the control of Spanish landowners. The English takeover of Ireland functioned similarly – English landowners controlled resources in Ireland and subjugated the native Irish population with the imposition of English law and culture that favoured settlers.<sup>49</sup> The colonial histories of both states follow similar trajectories. However, they diverge with the eradication of Cuba’s Indigenous population – unlike Ireland, a settler population would create the independence movement that led to decolonization in Cuba.

In the global timeline of decolonization, Cuba’s revolution came relatively early.

Liberated from Spanish control in the nineteenth century following the Spanish-American War,

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<sup>48</sup> Ronald W. Batchelder, and Nicolas Sanchez, “The Encomienda and the Optimizing Imperialist: An Interpretation of Spanish Imperialism in the Americas.” *Public Choice* 156, no. 1/2 (2013): 46.

<sup>49</sup> Brendan O’Leary, “The Shackles of the State & Hereditary Animosities: Colonialism in the Interpretation of Irish History,” *Field Day Review* 10 (2014): 154.

Cuba spent much of the early twentieth century suspended in a nebulous state of waxing and waning American control. In 1952, President Fulgencio Batista took control of Cuba in a coup backed by the United States.<sup>50</sup> The Batista regime was characterized by violent repression of civilian dissenters and corruption causing economic turmoil. Combined with the long-term colonial legacy of limited economic growth and the global spread of socialism, the violence of the Batista Regime pushed Cuba to the same precipice many other former colonies would come to in this period. Fidel Castro took this opportunity to stage his revolution, overthrowing the Batista regime in 1959. Castro's 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement therefore marks one possible "beginning" for the era of revolutionary decolonization. Castro's forces were comprised of the stereotypical young "guerrilleros" that would be associated with uprisings in other states in the 1960s. The Cuban revolution also marks one of the first truly successful instances of guerrilla warfare in its modern form, which would become a blueprint for other guerrilla uprisings in the following decades.

Once Cuba had established itself as an independent communist state aligned with the Soviet Union, it quickly became a resource for other colonized nations, both as a model to aspire to, and as a literal source of intelligence, arms, and manpower for revolutions. In 1960, Castro delivered a speech to the United Nations General Assembly (which still holds the record for the longest speech delivered before the assembly at almost four and a half hours) that made a fierce show of support for the independence of other colonies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Castro spoke proudly of the "wonders which the revolution found after it succeeded, wonders which are no more and no less than the usual wonders associated with imperialism, the wonders

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<sup>50</sup> John Foran, "Theorizing the Cuban Revolution," *Latin American Perspectives* 36, no. 2 (2009): 19.

of the free world for us colonized countries”.<sup>51</sup> This speech set the stage for Cuba in the 1960s – a leader of the decolonization movement who positioned itself to raise up other former colonies to freedom. Cuba supported several revolutionary decolonization movements across the African continent, beginning with the Algerian Revolution in the early 1960s, and expanding into former Portuguese colonies throughout the decade. In Algeria, Castro’s administration expressed solidarity for the cause of the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), and supplied them with arms as early as 1961.<sup>52</sup> After the Algerian Revolution, Cuban forces aided guerrilla militias in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea and Cabo Verde, through the supply of arms and the training of fighters.<sup>53</sup> Cuba’s involvement in Africa, combined with its long-term influence over independence movements in Latin America, solidified their place as the “influencer” of revolutionary decolonization in the Global South during the mid-twentieth century. Though Ireland was geographically separated from the revolutions of the Global South during this period, they were not too distant to be pulled into Cuba’s revolutionary orbit.

### **Cuba and Ireland**

At the same time that the Cuban Revolution was taking place, Ireland was experiencing its own slow shift towards the Troubles of later decades. Since the end of the first Irish republican conflict in the 1920s, the republican faction within the Republic of Ireland had faced multiple internal conflicts over relations with the British government, over the status of Northern Ireland and the prospects of division in the long-term.<sup>54</sup> The IRA also experienced an evolution in the post-Easter Rising era – they fell in and out of favour under successive administrations,

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<sup>51</sup> U.N. GAOR, 15<sup>th</sup> Sess., 872<sup>nd</sup> plen. mtg., U.N. doc A/PV.872 (September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1960)

<sup>52</sup> Piero Gleijeses, “Cuba’s First Venture in Africa: Algeria, 1961-1965,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 28, no. 1 (1996): 160.

<sup>53</sup> Zelbert Moore, “Cuba in Africa 1960-1985,” *Afro-Hispanic Review* 5, no. 1/3 (1986): 33-34.

<sup>54</sup> Sanders, *Inside the IRA*, 3.

and were influenced heavily by socialism.<sup>55</sup> The Second World War alienated militant republicans further from those in power – the lack of an established military for the Republic and the resulting reliance on Great Britain for defense pushed some further into radical republicanism.<sup>56</sup> Armed guerrilla action picked up again in 1956-1962 with the Border Campaign, an ultimately unsuccessful assault on British targets in Northern Ireland.<sup>57</sup> This was the first act by the IRA in Northern Ireland since the end of the conflict in the 1920s, and though it did achieve the goals they had hoped it would, it proved to be harbinger of the return to militancy that would come in the late 1960s. The political climate in Ireland was turbulent throughout the 1950s and 1960s during the Border Campaign and leading up to the Troubles – a burgeoning revolution developing in time with the new era emerging in the Global South.

The events of the Cuban Revolution had a significant impact on Ireland, just as they did on other colonized nations in the Global South. At the time of the Cuban Revolution, Ireland was experiencing new waves of guerrilla warfare during the ultimately unsuccessful IRA “Border Campaign”, which lit the fuse for the explosion of guerrilla action on the part of the IRA from the 1960s onwards.<sup>58</sup> The Irish republican movement was experiencing the same revolutionary awakening as its contemporaries in the Global South – and Cuba was there to inspire it. Cuban influence over Irish republicanism takes two forms: the common influence of Cuban tactics, the use of the Cuban Revolution as inspiration and the support of Cuban forces seen in Africa and Latin America, and the influence of one individual in the Cuban narrative: Che Guevara. Though Cuba under Castro may not have directly aided the IRA, they showed solidarity for the Irish

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>58</sup> Agnès Maillot, *Sinn Féin, ‘Political Wing’ of the IRA, 1948–70, In the Shadow of History* (Manchester University Press: 2016): 10.

republican struggle – Castro praised the Irish republican prisoners who carried out hunger strikes.<sup>59</sup> The suggestions made by Éamon de Valera in his address that Ireland be made Britain's Cuba became prophetic after the Cuban Revolution.<sup>60</sup> The appearance of Cuba on the global stage as an independent, communist former colony rattled the British administration, who feared that the growing discord in Ireland could transform the island into their own Cuba.<sup>61</sup> Cuba may not have tangibly supported the IRA as it did for their contemporaries in former African colonies, the British administration believed otherwise.

### **Che Guevara in the Irish Perspective**

In the global context of guerrilla warfare, the cultural memory of the Cuban Revolution and its influence centres largely around one non-Cuban, whose likeness became an internationally-recognized symbol for rebellion. Che Guevara, an Argentine national who rose to be Castro's second-in-command during the Cuban Revolution, was the quintessential image of the mid-century revolutionary (or "guerrillero" as he was called). Young, charismatic and radical, Guevara put a face to the concept of guerrilla warfare, in Latin America and worldwide. His written work on the subject was shared by guerrilla organizations the world over in the 1960s and 1970s, and his face graced murals in several countries as a symbol of solidarity and support for Cuba, and of the revolutionary spirit he had come to represent. The phenomenon of Guevara as an icon of revolution has been coined "chevolution" and "chesuchristo" (the latter referencing the religious overtones of his iconography in its similarity to depictions of Jesus Christ).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Michael Cox, "Bringing in the 'International': The IRA Ceasefire and the End of the Cold War," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 73, no. 4 (1997): 680.

<sup>60</sup> Maurice Moynihan, ed., *Speeches and Statements by Eamon de Valera 1917-73* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1980): 33.

<sup>61</sup> Cox, "Bringing in the 'International'", 680.

<sup>62</sup> David Kunzle "Chesucristo: Fusions, Myths, and Realities." *Latin American Perspectives* 35, no. 2 (2008): 97-115.

Guevara's image became a global symbol of rebellion followed the publishing of the infamous photograph *Guerrillero Heroico* by Cuban photographer Alberto Korda in 1960.<sup>63</sup> The photograph shows Guevara with a stoic expression that hints at rage, without displaying it outright.<sup>64</sup> He wears a beret over his flowing hair, evoking the "hippie" imagery associated with antiestablishment movements in the western world during this period.<sup>65</sup> After Guevara's death, this photograph began to appear on t-shirts and street art as a pop-art symbol of anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism, socialism, and anti-colonialism, depending on the area in question. This iconographic image of Guevara has been adopted as a revolutionary symbol by artists in several locations worldwide where guerrilla organizations fighting against imperial or colonial regimes were influenced or aided by Cuba – murals of this image can be found in the Derry Bogside in Northern Ireland, as well as Bolivia, Nicaragua, and East Timor.<sup>66</sup>

The Bogside in Derry, Northern Ireland is home to a vast array of political murals painted between the early 1960s and the early 2000s. The murals depict images of the events of the Troubles in the region, as well as symbols and portraits of individuals related to the causes of Irish republicanism, socialism, and anti-imperialism. Beginning in the 1980s (when mural art in Derry and Belfast experienced great popularity) images of foreign icons appeared on the walls of Derry rowhouses in an undeniable display of solidarity.<sup>67</sup> The murals reference anticolonial movements from several countries – the Nicaraguan Sandinistas are honoured down the street

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<sup>63</sup> Alberto Korda. *Guerrillero Heroico*. March 5th, 1960. Photograph. Havana, Cuba.

<sup>64</sup> Kunzle, "Chesucristo", 100.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 103-104 (Bolivia and Nicaragua), Arthur, Catherine. "Painting Their Past: The "Geração Foun", Street Art and Representing Notions of "East Timorese-ness"." *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 31, no. 1 (2016): 186 (East Timor).

<sup>67</sup> *Murals of Derry*, Guildhall press 2008.



from Indigenous American activist Leonard Peltier.<sup>68</sup> These murals are a physical representation of the interconnectedness of guerrilla movements during the mid to late twentieth century. Chief among these foreign heroes is Che Guevara, who has appeared on Derry's walls several times, both alongside Irish figures and alone.<sup>69</sup> The most prominent of the Guevara murals covers an entire wall on Fahan Street in the Bogside, emblazoned with the name "Ernesto Che Guevara Lynch", tying a distant Irish ancestor to Guevara's image. The mural shows a smiling Guevara in front of crossed Irish republican and Cuban flags, alongside a Gaelic phrase ("Thocfadh an réabhlóideach a mharú ach ní an réabhlóid a scríosadh", translated as "the revolutionary may die, but the revolution lives on) and an English quote often attributed to Guevara's father ("In my son's veins flowed the blood of Irish rebels"). The name "Lynch", along with the Gaelic phrases surrounding Guevara's likeness have a tribalistic effect, as though the artist is claiming Guevara as a symbol of the republican movement and naming him as an Irish republican. This is a demonstration of the influence of the Cuban Revolution on the Irish republican cause – it represents the desire to not only align themselves with Cuba, but to claim part of their revolutionary success (in the form of their figurehead, Guevara) as their own. Guevara's visage is plastered on several other walls throughout Northern Ireland, making him one of the most common subjects outside of Irish republican volunteers. His presence in the Irish republican mural tradition further demonstrates the global connections of the movement, and their ties to other decolonization movements during the mid-twentieth century.

Che Guevara's guerrilla strategy handbook *La Guerra de Guerrillas* (first published in 1961) became a landmark text for aspiring anticolonial revolutionaries the world over. This text

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<sup>68</sup> Bill Rolston. "The Brothers on the Walls': International Solidarity and Irish Political Murals," *Journal of Black Studies* 39, no. 3 (2009): 457.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*,

is a tangible example of the Cuban influence – it provided strategic and tactical information based on Guevara’s experiences in Cuba to those who would follow their example. Within a decade of being released, it had made its way into the hands of guerrilla militias in several countries, including Ireland. In 1967, translated excerpts from Guevara’s work appeared in *An tOglach*, the IRA internal newsletter.<sup>7071</sup> The newsletter begins with an analysis of the recent failures of the Irish republican movement, and urges members to look to the future. The final pages of this issue contain translations from the work of “‘Che’ Guevarra”, introducing them as guidelines for volunteers to follow in their armed operations, with a promise to publish more of the text in future newsletters.

The passages from Guevara chosen for this newsletter provide an insight into the mindset of IRA leaders during the late-1960s, on the cusp of The Troubles. The first section quoted contains Guevara’s three fundamental truths about armed insurrection:

1. “Popular forces can win a war against an army.
2. One does not necessarily have to wait for a revolutionary situation to arise: it can be created.
3. In the under-developed countries of the world, rural areas are the best battle-fields for revolution.”<sup>72</sup>

These three principles can be seen in the continued strategy of the IRA during the 1970s and onwards – they were dedicated to the practice of guerrilla warfare which gave advantage to “popular” forces, they created their own “revolutionary situation” during this period that built on decades of low-intensity conflict to become The Troubles, and they relied on their first-hand knowledge of the Northern Irish countryside to conceal their operations from opposing forces.

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<sup>70</sup> Sinn Féin [Pre 1970], “An TOglach, No. 3” (Sinn Féin [Pre 1970], 1967).

<sup>71</sup> This iteration of An TOglach is not to be confused with the bulletin published by the Irish Volunteers in 1921 mentioned previously. The Sinn Féin An TOglach was named in reference to that bulletin, but they are separate publications.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.,

The second page of Guevara's writing included in the newsletter contains his tactical considerations for guerrilla strategy from the first chapter in the original text.<sup>73</sup> Guevara's definition of guerrilla warfare carries an ideological bent that casts guerrilla fighters as representatives of the people (echoing his "popular forces" referenced previously), justified in their struggle against its enemy: "the oppressive oligarchy, with its agent, the professional army".<sup>74</sup> The passage goes on: "why does the guerrilla fight? He is a social reformer. He takes up arms in response to widespread popular protest against an oppressor, impetuously hurling himself with all his might against anything that symbolizes the established order."<sup>75</sup> This demonstrates Guevara's moralization of guerrilla fighters, a theme which may have made his writing appeal even more to aspiring revolutionaries – his philosophy justifies the means of guerrilla warfare with the assurance that they fight for a "widespread popular protest".

The distribution of Guevara's strategies among IRA volunteers demonstrates the tangible impact of the Cuban Revolution on the Irish movement. It is a literal example of the organization taking direction from Cuban strategic initiatives, in the same way that their fellow guerrillas in the Global South were learning from Cuban forces. This example from An TOglach pushes the influence of Cuba past previous examples of international inspiration in the IRA – it represents an explicit call to employ the guerrilla strategy of the Cuban forces in the Irish context. The consciousness of the value of Cuba as an example further solidifies the international dimension of Irish republicanism and the intertwinement of the movement with the global context of decolonization.

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<sup>73</sup> Guevara, Ernesto Che. *Guerrilla Warfare*. trans. J.P. Moray. Monthly Review Press, 1961:1.

<sup>74</sup> Sinn Féin [Pre 1970], "An TOglach, No. 3."

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*,

The actions of the Cuban administration under Castro during the era of decolonization, as well as those of Che Guevara, are significant not only for revolutionary decolonization movements in the Global South (where Cuban forces directly supported militias), but also for the Irish republican movement. The events of the Cuban Revolution were an inspiration for organizations like the IRA, who took direction from their successful application of guerrilla strategy (as can be seen through their use of Guevara's text). Furthermore, the philosophy and idolatry of Guevara had a visible impact on the Irish situation. The adoption of Guevara as an icon for Irish republicans not only strengthens the movement's place in the timeline of revolutionary decolonization, but also demonstrates the connections the movement was forming with the Global South during this period. The foreign relationships of the IRA would become a vital part of its operations in the 1970s and onwards, as the movement expanded its international dimensions and took its place in the nascent global decolonization push.

### **Decolonization in Ireland and Frantz Fanon**

Another influence on Irish republicans that came to prominence in the early 1960s was anticolonial theorist Frantz Fanon, who developed a body of work on revolutionary decolonization based on his experience of the Algerian Revolution. Fanon is arguably one of the most influential anticolonial writers. His work influenced several revolutionary decolonization movements worldwide, including the Algerian Revolution, which stands as one of the earliest in the timeline of decolonization. A psychiatrist by trade, Fanon applied his understanding of the human mind to the issue of colonialism and decolonization to formulate critical theories on the impact of colonial oppression on the individual and the nation as a whole. Fanon's landmark text *The Wretched of the Earth* (originally published in French) provides an analysis of colonial

oppression through a critical lens.<sup>76</sup> Written in 1961 through dictation to his wife, Fanon approaches the disease of colonialism from several angles in a text that has become one of the defining arguments in favour of decolonization. Fanon addresses major aspects of the decolonization process, including violence (which he defines as an inherent aspect of decolonization), nationalism and national identity for colonized and postcolonial nations, and the psychological aspect of colonial societal structures.

Since the main period of decolonization in the mid-twentieth century, scholarship has emerged applying Fanon's theories to the Irish situation. Said builds on Fanon's concept of *négritude* to conceptualize the Celtic nativism of Irish republicanism in *Culture and Imperialism*.<sup>77</sup> Shakir Mustafa also applies theories from *The Wretched of the Earth* to his postcolonial framework of Irish history. Mustafa references Fanon's paradigm of the "native intellectual" shifting to a revival of indigenous culture (and away from the culture of the colonizer), and applies it to the Gaelic Revival of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>78</sup> The Gaelic Revival can be seen as a form of cultural decolonization which coincided with the rise of Irish republicanism – a symbolic recapturing of pre-colonization Ireland without the linguistic shackles of English.

The first published translation of *The Wretched of the Earth* into English was by an Irish woman named Constance Farrington in 1963. Though she was misidentified by her successor Richard Philcox as a card-carrying member of the British Communist Party, Farrington was in

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<sup>76</sup> The version of *Les Damnés de la Terre* used for reference in this thesis is the 2004 Richard Philcox translation. At times the 1963 Constance Farrington translation will also be referenced, and the distinction will be noted.

<sup>77</sup> Edward Said. *Culture and Imperialism*. (New York, Alfred A. Knopf Inc.: 1993): 228.

<sup>78</sup> Shakir Mustafa, "Revisionism and Revival: A Postcolonial Approach to Irish Cultural Nationalism," *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua* 2, no. 3 (1998): 44-45.

fact an Irish citizen.<sup>79</sup> Though not a communist by affiliation, Farrington's involvement in political activism prior to writing her translation is significant. She campaigned for Clann na Phoblacta (an Irish republican political party founded by former IRA volunteers) in 1940s Dublin, she was a member of the Irish Association in the 1950s, which promoted friendly North-South relations, and she was a member of the CGT while living in Paris, then France's largest trade union federation.<sup>80</sup> It also likely that Farrington was sympathetic to revolutionary decolonization movements, based on accounts given by her husband and fellow activist Brian Farrington. The latter Farrington wrote in his memoir that his wife was close friends with a member of the Jeanson Network, a French underground organization that supported the FLN during the Algerian Revolution.<sup>81</sup> It appears that Farrington came to translate *The Wretched of the Earth* through another FLN connection – French historian and noted critic of colonialism Charles-Andre Julien.<sup>82</sup> It is reasonable then to assume that Farrington was supportive of the Algerian cause to some extent – why else then would she set out to translate Fanon's work?

Farrington's translation of *The Wretched of the Earth* has garnered controversy. Richard Philcox, whose 2004 translation of the same text into English is more well-known, criticized her harshly for her "flawed" and overly literal approach to Fanon's voice.<sup>83</sup> Though unfairly critical, Philcox is correct in pointing out Farrington's literal style of translation. Her choice of vocabulary indicates a non-academic lens. Take, for example, her simplification of the French verb "humaniser", which Farrington translates as to "turn into a human being" rather than to

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<sup>79</sup> Kathryn Batchelor, Sue-Ann Harding, and Sue-Ann Harding, *Translating Frantz Fanon Across Continents and Languages* (Routledge, 2017): 41.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-43.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>83</sup> Celia Britton and Richard Philcox. "Frantz Fanon: Retrieving a Lost Voice," *Translation Review* 71, no. 1 (March 2006): 3.

“humanize” as might be more obvious.<sup>84</sup> Farrington’s straightforward, simplified approach does move away from Fanon’s distinctive voice, but to say that she loses it completely is an over-exaggeration. She maintains the spirit of Fanon’s original argument, translated into the English vernacular. A factor that is more difficult to discern is Farrington’s ideological agenda in translating this piece. It is possible that she made the connection between Fanon’s ideas and the Irish situation – she uses terms familiar to the Irish lexicon to translate Fanon. For instance, Farrington translates “insurrection” to “rising” (which Philcox in the same passage translates as “uprising”).<sup>85</sup> She also uses the term “troubles” as a translation of Fanon’s terms “émeutes” and “événements”.<sup>86</sup> Farrington’s lexical decisions show her understanding of the depth of the similarities between the Irish situation and Algeria (and by extension, the colonized world overall). In a letter written to her publisher, Farrington even suggested that the English title of the book be *The Rising of the Damned*, directly referencing the Easter Rising in Ireland and its connection to the global history of anti-imperialism.<sup>87</sup> Farrington’s translation demonstrates how Fanon’s work entered into the Irish anti-imperial mindset during this period in the mid-twentieth century, just as it did for several other nations still struggling under colonialism. Being the first English translation of the text, Farrington’s work also spread throughout organizations in Europe and North America as the first encounter with Fanon for anglophone populations.

Whether through Farrington or other translators, the work of Fanon found its way into republican hands. As early as 1971, republican factions were studying *The Wretched of the Earth*. An issue of *Teoiric* (a periodical focused on political theory published sporadically by

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<sup>84</sup> Batchelor, Harding, and Harding, *Translating Frantz Fanon*, 46.

<sup>85</sup> Frantz Fanon. *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (1963), and Richard Philcox (2004).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, It is important to note that at this time, the term “troubles” was used in Ireland to refer to the period of unrest immediately after the Easter Rising.

<sup>87</sup> Constance Farrington to Grove Press, October 7, 1964, Box 257, Grove Press Records. Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries.

Sinn Féin in the 1970s) from that year includes a Gaelic-language article on the text, titled “Leirmheas as “Dannaithe an Domhain”, a critical reading of *The Wretched of the Earth*.<sup>88</sup> The review is critical of Fanon’s ideas and their applicability to the Irish context, but contends still that there are useful lessons to be learned from Fanon’s theories.<sup>89</sup>

There are several aspects of this article that are significant in understanding the impact of Fanon in Ireland. This issue of *Teoiric* was published in 1971 – just a decade after Fanon’s original text had been released, eight years after Farrington completed her English translation. Therefore, Fanon’s work reached the Irish republicans at the beginning of their period of revolutionary decolonization, which could be indicative of how much attention they were paying to the ongoing decolonization in Africa. This article is also unique in that it is the sole Gaelic piece in this publication – as discussed previously, restrictions on the use of Gaelic under the British administration had drastically decreased the population of Gaelic speakers by this point in the twentieth century. The use of Gaelic in republican writing represents a common theme in decolonization – a symbolic reclamation of cultural autonomy and identity separate from the colonial oppressor.

*The Wretched of the Earth* was shared amongst republican prisoners at the HM Prison Maze complex in Northern Ireland, one of many incendiary texts that the political prisoners kept in a clandestine collection.<sup>90</sup> Fanon’s work was a part of this collection as early as the mid-1970s, when it was read by Bobby Sands, who would rise to be one of the most recognizable

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<sup>88</sup> Sinn Féin [Official]. “Leirmheas Ar “Dannaithe An Domhain” Le Frantz Fanon,” in *Teoiric*. (Sinn Féin [Official], 1971): 7.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-13.

<sup>90</sup> Kirsty Scott, “Men of Letters, Men of Arms” *The Guardian*, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2000. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2000/dec/02/society.politics>. I spoke to the librarians at Linen Hall Library who managed this project – somehow the records of the texts included in the prison library has disappeared. As a result, I cannot give better evidence than this news article at this time.



heroes of the republican movement.<sup>91</sup> The presence of Fanon in the republican sphere of knowledge further aligns the movement with the growing wave of decolonization sweeping across the Global South – by analyzing and taking inspiration from his writing, the republicans demonstrated consciousness of the similarities of their struggle to others fighting back against colonialism.

The Cuban and Algerian revolutions (and the theoretical and strategic literature that emerged from both) were catalysts for the era of decolonization that would emerge in the 1960s-1980s. The events of these revolutions influenced other movements ideologically, both as examples of successful revolutionary decolonization and application of guerrilla tactics, but also through the writings of prominent theorists like Guevara and Fanon that were born out of these conflicts. Like other movements in the Global South, Irish republicanism was included in this sphere of influence. The admiration expressed for the Cuban success and the work of Guevara by republican publications demonstrates how in-tune republican factions were to the upheaval in the Global South. The republication of Guevara's work in *An tOglach* is further proof – the inclusion of that excerpt in their internal newsletter points to a step forward in strategic planning that aligns them even more closely with decolonization movements in Africa and Latin America that were also following Guevara's example. The interactions of republicans with the work of Fanon are also significant – it represents their engagement with the theoretical sphere of decolonization that was emerging during this era. The influence of Guevara and Fanon can be seen as a prelude – the period of guerrilla warfare in Northern Ireland would begin in the early 1970s, not long after these publications were released.

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<sup>91</sup> Sharon Sliwinski. "The Colonial Defense: The Little Rotting Cat Dream." In *Dreaming in Dark Times: Six Exercises in Political Thought*, 93-114. (Minneapolis, London, University of Minnesota Press: 2017): 93.

### Chapter 3: Guerrilla Warfare

In the late 1960s, the Irish Republican movement progressed past political action, and began transitioning into the military arena. The rising tide of civil rights and anti-imperialism sentiments in Ireland and abroad galvanized republicans to more serious action on behalf of their cause, much the same as many colonized states experienced during this period. It was in this turbulent moment that the Irish Republican Army took on its most recognizable form: the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA, or colloquially, “the Provos”).<sup>92</sup> The PIRA was formed by a schism within the movement as a whole, wherein the PIRA split from the former IRA/Sinn Féin. This split was set off by several issues that arose in the Irish Republican sphere in the 1960s: the emergence of a “civil rights” movement that was met with violence from British authorities, the perceived “desertion” of Northern Irish volunteers by the core of the IRA in Dublin, and the issue of political abstentionism.<sup>93</sup><sup>94</sup> The violent response to the civil rights movement galvanized a faction within the movement to desire aggression against the British authority. The shift in Dublin left IRA volunteer groups in the north feeling isolated – a factor further aggravated by the Dublin IRA’s shift towards ending abstentionism in the 1960s. Abstentionism (in which republican politicians refused to take their seats in the Dáil Éireann and the Northern Irish Assembly) began to fall out of fashion in this period, mainly due to the Sinn Féin party moving towards a more cooperative stance. IRA volunteers in the north felt deserted – they saw the cause as far from over, and were incited to diverge from the political goals of the party to a more militant plan of action. After the schism, the PIRA practiced guerrilla warfare in earnest. The 1970s-1980s were arguably the bloodiest period of the Irish republican movement,

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<sup>92</sup> Although the PIRA were not the only group active during this period (as will be explained in this chapter) they were the largest and most well-armed, so they will be the focus of this chapter.

<sup>93</sup> Sanders, *Inside the IRA*, 34, 37.

<sup>94</sup> J. Bower Bell, *The IRA, 1968-2000* (London, Frank Cass: 2000): 74.

due largely to the new PIRA method, that was focused on disrupting and destroying the British establishment through any means. This chapter will analyze the guerrilla tactics employed by the PIRA, their identity as a paramilitary organization through documents produced by the organization, and their connections with similar paramilitary groups outside of Ireland.

### **Guerrilla Strategy**

One of the most definitive factors of revolutionary decolonization militias was the use of guerrilla warfare. As described previously, this strategic technique was used in the first Irish republican conflict following the Easter Rising, and more successfully by the Cuban guerrillas in the Cuban Revolution. Guerrilla warfare as it is known today is a somewhat disjointed collection of tactical and strategic traditions that emerged in situations of asymmetrical conflict, often when a paramilitary faced off against an established state-backed army. Guerrilla strategy was born out of limits: limited arms and artillery, limited soldiers, and limited legitimate support in comparison to the opponent. In most cases of guerrilla warfare, this manifested in certain patterns: the use of a rural or wild environment the guerrilla fighters were familiar with to their advantage, improvised arms and artillery, a strategy of low-level “hit-and-run” style attacks on the enemy (avoiding the typical “battlefield” conflict of symmetrical warfare), and relying on local civilian populations for support, supplies, and shielding. These tactics maximize the few inherent advantages of the guerrilla army: mobility and unconventionality. The guerrilla army is able to strike and retreat faster than their traditional opponent due to their small size and minimal equipment, and they are able to use the familiarity of their environment to maneuver unseen around their opponent. Their avoidance of full-out war and their position in rural and/or wild regions also allows them to avoid the major tactics of traditional armies that would destroy them easily. Most importantly, guerrilla warfare shifted from the strategic goals of conventional

warfare: guerrilla armies did not fight to destroy the enemy or conquer territory – they fought to outlast the enemy.

Though what we can now recognize as guerrilla warfare was practiced as far back as the French Revolution, the strategy gained global recognition during the mid-twentieth century. The use of guerrilla warfare emerged in several colonized and occupied regions during this period, ranging from Japanese-occupied China, to the British colony of Kenya, to revolutionary Cuba. In China, Mao Zedong became one of the first strategists to define the guerrilla technique in the 1930s during the Sino-Japanese War.<sup>95</sup> The theory would be further developed by Che Guevara (who's *Guerrilla Warfare* was printed in IRA newsletters as early as the mid-1960s). Guerrilla strategy was well-suited to the needs of anti-imperial organizations – it suited their limited means and provided a more accessible pathway to autonomous and active participation in decolonization.<sup>96</sup>

### **The PIRA and Guerrilla Warfare**

With the formation of the PIRA, the Irish republican struggle turned to violence in earnest.<sup>97</sup> Though low-level conflict had been employed previously by the original IRA following the Easter Rising, the conflict from 1970 onwards outstripped it in terms of area covered, casualties, arms, and impact outside of Ireland. This period, known colloquially as the “Troubles”, was an asymmetrical conflict that played out over decades between two primary opponents: the British army, and the collection of republican guerrilla organizations scattered

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<sup>95</sup> Sebastian Kaempf, “Violence and Victory: Guerrilla Warfare, ‘Authentic Self-Affirmation’ and the Overthrow of the Colonial State,” *Third World Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2009): 136.

<sup>96</sup> See Fanon's chapter on violence in *The Wretched of the Earth* for further discussion of this concept – the sense of an active self for the colonized individual created through anti-imperial violence.

<sup>97</sup> It is important to note that after the split, the PIRA essentially replaced the official IRA – after this point many documents referred to the PIRA simply as the “IRA” as they were the most active and prominent faction using this title.

across the island. The tactics of the PIRA are largely the same as other anti-imperial guerrilla forces during the period – outnumbered and out-armed by the British army, reliant on the local community for support, focused on hit-and-run attacks on British structures.

First published in 1956 (and republished in 1977), the IRA handbook (known as the “Green Book”) was used by the PIRA as a manual for guerrilla techniques. The handbook’s definition of guerrilla warfare centres around self-containment (the ability of the volunteer to fight with whatever means available and move independently, negating the need for a large army), mobility, and a strong conviction in the justness of the volunteer’s cause.<sup>98</sup> The tactics outlined in the handbook largely follow those laid out in Guevara’s earlier work, *Guerrilla Warfare*, which was known in Irish republican circles.<sup>99</sup> The handbook echoes several of Guevara’s strategies, particularly in describing the role of the individual fighter, and in the organizations of arms and artillery. In describing the individual “guerrilla” Guevara advocates for independent strategy and flexibility – the fighter must be able to adapt to any situation and make tactical decisions independent of higher command.<sup>100</sup> The IRA handbook echoes this – they reference the individual “guerrilla” as an active agent who must be capable of decision-making in the field.<sup>101</sup> The other major point shared by Guevara and the handbook emphasizes one of the defining tenets of guerrilla warfare: the support of the local populace. The handbook devotes a chapter to “The People” – recruiting from the local community, relying on them for supplies and intelligence, and a moral element of providing a cause for the local community to support.<sup>102</sup> This provided the guerrillas with several advantages: it gained them the material

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<sup>98</sup> Irish Republican Army, *IRA Volunteers Handbook, Notes on Guerrilla Warfare*.

<sup>99</sup> Sinn Féin [Pre 1970], “An TOglach, No. 3” (Sinn Féin [Pre 1970], 1967).

<sup>100</sup> Ernesto Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. J.P. Moray (Monthly Review Press, 1961): 14-15.

<sup>101</sup> Irish Republican Army, *IRA Volunteers Handbook*.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*,

support and protection of the community, and encouraged them to believe in the justness of their cause, as it was to benefit their “people”. Perhaps most importantly, the handbook represents the essential guerrilla ideal of knowing one’s limitations. Successive generations of the IRA were well-aware that they were at a distinct disadvantage in almost every aspect compared to the British forces. Their strategy reflects this – it emphasizes constant small-scale attacks (following the hit-and-run method previously mentioned), and focuses on a long-term plan of exhausting the enemy, rather than defeating them outright.

The period that followed the establishment of the PIRA was arguably the most violent in the timeline of Irish republicanism. From 1971-1978, there were 377 recorded deaths of Ulster Defense Force (UDR) officers, 114 deaths among the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), and 1,354 deaths among civilians.<sup>103</sup> This wave of violence is also visible in statistics regarding arms and ammunition use – there were 6,053 explosions recorded during this period, and 26,155 reported shooting incidents.<sup>104</sup> This period also included one of the PIRA’s most high-profile assassinations – the killing of Louis Mountbatten, First Earl Mountbatten and a distant cousin of Queen Elizabeth II.<sup>105</sup> Arguably one of the most well-known successes of the PIRA campaign, it symbolizes the massive uptick in violence during the 1970s, in comparison to the low-level unrest of previous decades. The operations carried out by the PIRA during this period demonstrate their devotion to guerrilla strategy: the near-constant campaign of bombings follows the doctrine laid out in the IRA handbook – it is a continuous strategy of small-scale attacks designed to disrupt and exhaust the enemy, without risking open battle. This would continue through the 1970s and into the 1980s, with bombing incidents occurring with enough frequency

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<sup>103</sup> Coogan, *The IRA*, 382-383.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>105</sup> Sanders, *Inside the IRA*, 59.

to harry the British establishment, and ensure that the PIRA would remain in “breaking news”. Many of the most lethal bombing events occurred in British election periods, a strategy that would draw attention to the British government’s continuing inability to handle the Irish situation.<sup>106</sup> With all of these factors taken into account, the bloodshed of the 1970s displays a pattern of violence that fulfills the guerrilla tactics embraced by the PIRA, as they maintained operations that exhausted the British army within their limited means.

### **Guerrilla Warfare in the Global Context**

In becoming a truly militant guerrilla army, the PIRA joined the global ranks of anti-imperial insurgent groups that were active in the 1970s. These groups have similar backgrounds to the PIRA – they evolved under colonial or oppressive regimes, and they followed the doctrine of guerrilla strategy. In the 1960s and 1970s, another connection began to emerge: these groups began to communicate with each other, sometimes going as far as collaboration. A tradition that began with Castro’s Cuba (which armed and trained anticolonial guerrilla movements in southern Africa), this communication network is an important aspect of the characterization of revolutionary decolonization movements in the mid-twentieth century. The involvement of Irish republicans in this network is a meaningful element of their history that helps to further solidify their place in the global timeline of guerrilla warfare and anticolonial struggle. In *The IRA 1969-2000: Analysis of a Secret Army*, J. Bowyer Bell characterizes the IRA as a “world-class organization” in the eyes of guerrilla organizations in the Global South, referencing their fame in Iran and Palestine as examples of their notoriety in the global network during this period.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Coogan, *The IRA*, 386.

<sup>107</sup> Bell, *The IRA*, 194.

The closest connections of Irish republicans among these groups were the Palestinian Liberation Army (PLO), and the Basque liberation organization Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA). The PIRA got off to a rough start in the international guerrilla arena. Their rejection of soviet socialism initially isolated them from many groups in the Global South. However, over time the PIRA tilted more radical and was able to forge relationships with groups like the PLO.<sup>108</sup> The friendship between the PLO and Irish republican groups began in the early 1970s, as both the IRA and the PIRA were looking beyond Europe to forge alliances with other anti-imperialist organizations.<sup>109</sup> The PLO shared the Irish republican sentiment of being “occupied”, but what they viewed as an imperial invader. In the 1970s and onwards, these shared ideas and strategies translated into a campaign of solidarity both in Ireland and in Palestine. Similar to the idolatry of Che Guevara through murals discussed in the previous chapter, Irish-Palestinian solidarity is visible on the gable-ends of Derry and Belfast. The oldest surviving Irish-Palestinian solidarity mural was painted in Belfast in 1982, and depicts an IRA militant and a PLO militant holding up a grenade launcher together, with the phrase “One Struggle”.<sup>110</sup>

The relationship between the PLO and Irish republican movements runs deeper than murals, however. The PLO, IRA, and PIRA had a tangible link as well, in the form of arms, ammunition, and guerrilla training. The PIRA’s first known interaction with the PLO came in 1970, when members from both groups trained in Lebanon.<sup>111</sup> The PLO also had links with the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), the sometimes-allies-sometimes-enemies of the PIRA. The PLO and INLA carried out gunrunning operations in the Mediterranean, and collaborated to

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<sup>108</sup> Rolston, “The Brothers on the Walls”, 453.

<sup>109</sup> Bell, *The IRA*, 196.

<sup>110</sup> Irish Republican Youth Movement. *PLO-IRA One Struggle*. 1982, Belfast, Palestinian Poster Project Archives, JPEG.

<sup>111</sup> J. Bower Bell. *The Secret Army: The IRA 1916-1979* (Dublin, The Academy Press: 1979).



attack a NATO station in Cork for the benefit of the PLO.<sup>112</sup> The existence of these lines of communication between Irish republican sects and Palestine have also be corroborated by the Irish police and the Israeli delegation to the United Kingdom.<sup>113</sup> Just as their public solidarity demonstrated the connection Irish republicans felt with colonized communities in the Global South (and by extension the place they themselves chose to occupy in this sphere), their interactions with the PLO further cement their place in the arena of anticolonial insurrections.

Irish republicans showed solidarity far beyond Palestine. By the mid-1970s, Irish republican organizations were looking further south, to their fellow guerrilla armies in Africa. One such organization was the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO), a Marxist-Leninist guerrilla movement formed in the 1960s to fight for independence from Portugal. Like many other anticolonial guerrilla groups, the FRELIMO were supported by Cuba, and connected to the global network of leftist anti-imperial organizations.<sup>114</sup> Like the PLO, they too received a show of solidarity from Irish republicans. In a 1974 issue of *An Eochair* (a newsletter featuring the written work of republican inmates at the Long Kesh prison complex in Belfast), an anonymous writer penned an article with scathing criticism of the Portuguese colonial administration in Mozambique and praise of the FRELIMO, who this author called the “brothers” of Irish republicans.<sup>115</sup> The article (published in celebration of the FRELIMO’s success in separating from Portugal) emphasizes the similarity between the Irish struggle under the “jackboot of imperialism” to the suffering of the Mozambican people under colonialism.<sup>116</sup> In recounting the history of Portuguese imperialism, the article employs the traditional language of

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>113</sup> Coogan, *The IRA*, 436.

<sup>114</sup> Zelbert Moore, “Cuba in Africa 1960-1985,” *Afro-Hispanic Review* 5, no. 1/3 (1986): 31.

<sup>115</sup> Sinn Féin [Official], “An Eochair, No. 8” (Sinn Féin [Official], 1974), 8.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.,

decolonization – criticism of the “savage” characterization of Africans, unequal treatment of Portuguese settlers and Mozambican natives, and a focus on the disparity in labour opportunities and compensation.<sup>117</sup> The most telling statement from the article, however, is the author’s optimism towards Irish republicanism in the global arena. The article states, “the Irish people can be sure of one more friend, the new Mozambique, in our struggle against British imperialism.”<sup>118</sup> Though this display of friendship likely did not translate into an open line of communication or the supply of resources, it remains a tangible example of the connections Irish republicans were forging with the Global South during this period.

Another major organization whom Irish republicans aligned themselves with during this period was the African National Congress (ANC). Formed in South Africa in 1912, the ANC was an anti-apartheid organization that militarized in the 1960s, with support from other decolonizing African states.<sup>119</sup> Among its most famous volunteers was Nelson Mandela.<sup>120</sup> Like the PLO, the ANC and Mandela made appearances frequently on the walls of Northern Ireland.<sup>121</sup> Beyond political art, however, there is evidence of communication and collaboration between Irish republican sects and the ANC. J. Bowyer Bell contends that the army council of the PIRA trained ANC fighters, though he does not provide a date or location for this purported event.<sup>122</sup> Northern Irish mural expert Bill Rolston also cites training experiences shared between the PIRA and the ANC in Northern Africa.<sup>123</sup> The solidarity and identification with the South

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>119</sup> Davis, Stephen R. "The African National Congress, Its Radio, Its Allies and Exile." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35, no. 2 (2009): 350.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 351.

<sup>121</sup> Bell, *The IRA*, 213.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>123</sup> Rolston, ““The Brothers on the Walls””, 454.

African struggle for Irish republicans is meaningful – South Africa bears notable similarities to the Irish situation due to its settler-colonial structure prior to independence.<sup>124</sup>

The relationships between Irish republicans and armed insurgent groups on the European continent provide further context for the relationships they developed beyond their shores. One of the closest connections of the PIRA was the Basque separatist organization ETA, whose goals of self-determination and nationhood on the basis of culture, language, and history distinct from the rest of Spain bore many similarities to the republican cause. The Irish-Basque relationship can be traced back to the early days of militant republicanism in 1970s, with members of Sinn Féin visiting the Basque heartland.<sup>125</sup> Around this time, rumours spawned regarding cooperation between the PIRA and ETA. In 1974, German newspaper *Der Spiegel* published an interview with an ETA operative, who asserted that they were in contact with the IRA, and that their relationship was very good.<sup>126</sup><sup>127</sup> The Basque separatist movement shares many of the anti-imperialist hallmarks that define Irish republicanism – a desire for sovereignty and nationhood, and the protection of language and culture that has been repressed by a foreign power. ETA was not as successful as the PIRA in developing international relationships, due in part to the difficulties of operating under the fascist administration that controlled Spain from 1938 to 1975. The ETA operative mentioned previously stated that their ability to forge connections with allies of the PIRA like the Gaddafi administration in Libya and the PLO was hampered by the cordial

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<sup>124</sup> Adrian Guelke, "Ireland and South Africa: A Very Special Relationship," *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 11 (2000): 139.

<sup>125</sup> Agnès Maillot, "Comrades in Arms: Sinn Féin and Basque Separatism." *Nordic Irish Studies* 4 (2005): 1-2.

<sup>126</sup> *Der Spiegel*, "SPIEGEL interview with a leader of the Basque Eta movement." *Der Spiegel* (Hamburg, Germany), March 10<sup>th</sup> 1974.

<sup>127</sup> It is important here to specify that the ETA operative and the interviewer solely refer to the "IRA", without specifying whether they are referring to the PIRA, the OIRA, or another organization. Based on the reference made to the Gaddafi administration, I am proceeding on the assumption that they are referring primarily to the PIRA, who were the most actively militant during this period.

relationships the Spanish administration maintained with Arab nations.<sup>128</sup> Irish republicans also expressed solidarity with the Basque movement as they had with the PLO. *The Captive Voice/An Glór Gafa* was a republican magazine that was written entirely by political prisoners and published by Sinn Féin's prisoner-of-war department. In 1996, they ran an article expressing support for a hunger strike by ETA prisoners in Spain, who had been inspired in part by similar strikes at Irish prisons.<sup>129</sup> The article mentions an established history of communication and solidarity between political prisoners from both organizations, and expresses the same sense of support as the aforementioned publications supporting the FRELIMO and the ANC. The Basque political prisoners quoted in the article expressed a sense of gratitude for the support of the republican prisoners, who praised the friendship they had experienced on a previous visit to Ireland, and how the information from republican prisoners helped prepare them for their own arrest and subsequent strike.<sup>130</sup>

The relationship between Irish republicans and Basque separatists provides another insight into the international stance of the republican movement. During this period, ETA was the only European guerrilla organization for whom Irish republicans expressed public support and solidarity. They consciously distanced themselves from the "euro-terrorist" groups active on the continent, like Baader-Meinhof and the Red Brigade.<sup>131</sup> There is a clear divide between ETA and these euro-terrorists – organizations like the Red Brigade were based primarily on socialist political ideals, rather than the anti-imperialism, self-determination, or nationalism that

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>129</sup> Sinn Féin, "Captive Voices from Brieve", in *The Captive Voice / An Glór Gafa*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 14.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>131</sup> Maillot, "Comrades in Arms", 1.

motivated the PIRA and ETA. In this sense, the PIRA and ETA align more closely with their counterparts in the Global South than with the militant groups who were physically closer.

Beyond their documented interactions with the PLO, and their expressions of solidarity for the FRELIMO and the ANC, the tangible relationships between Irish republican guerrilla organizations and their global peers are limited. There are two major factors that contribute to this beyond their obvious geographical separation: the Soviet Union and the United States. The following chapter will discuss the relationships between Irish republican organizations and the Cold War superpowers in-depth, but it is important to consider the impact they had on the ability of groups like the PIRA to integrate fully in the world of anticolonial guerrilla warfare. Unlike many major guerrilla organizations, the PIRA was not explicitly socialist.<sup>132</sup> They did not forge the same political relationships with the Soviet Union that other guerrilla organizations did, instead relying on diasporic communities in the United States for support. This act limited their ability to form relationships – the PIRA was driven away from socialist sentiments by their desire to maintain American support.<sup>133</sup> Showing solidarity with guerrilla organizations in the Global South and maintaining a good relationship with the United States was a difficult tightrope to walk – for instance, they were forced to “tone down” the intensely socialist and anti-imperialist rhetoric of PIRA volunteer Gerry Adams out of fear of losing American supporters.<sup>134</sup> Overall, the PIRA’s choice to prioritize the support of the United States limited its movements in the guerrilla community.

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<sup>132</sup> Other Republican organizations during this period, including the IRA and INLA, took more explicit left-leaning stances.

<sup>133</sup> Andrew Sanders, ed., “The American Dimension: How Support from America Directed the Path of Irish Republicanism,” in *Inside the IRA: Dissident Republicans and the War for Legitimacy* (Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 120.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*,

The relationships that Irish republicans forged with anticolonial organizations in the Global South represent the continuation of both the movement's international dimensions, as well as the development of an anticolonial ideological sentiment within Irish republicanism. The choice to align themselves publicly with organizations like the PLO, the FRELIMO, and the ANC (and not with European groups like the Red Brigade) demonstrates the movement's connection to decolonization and anti-imperialism, a factor which has been visible since the nascency of Irish republicanism in the early twentieth century. The choice to show solidarity with these organizations furthers this tradition in the republican movement by connecting them to the international wave of decolonization that gripped the Global South in the mid-twentieth century.

The transition into true guerrilla warfare undertaken by the PIRA during this period represents the evolution of the Irish republican struggle into a contemporary revolutionary decolonization. Their usage of guerrilla warfare strategy and tactics as outlined in the volunteer handbook and visible through their low-level attacks on the British establishment during the period discussed. With this in mind, the similarities between The Troubles and revolutionary struggles in the Global South become clearer. The relationships formed between various Irish republican guerrilla organizations and other anti-colonial movements is also significant, considering the visible network of solidarity and aid between anticolonial organizations in the mid-twentieth century. The inclusion of Irish republican groups, even on the limited scale detailed in the previous pages, is indicative of their cultural connections to colonized communities in the Global South, and the ideology of decolonization. The international connections of Irish republican organizations extend beyond their fellow guerrilla movements. The following chapter will expand on the foreign policy situation of the Troubles by analyzing

the links of Irish republicans to foreign states, including the aforementioned relationship to the United States and its lasting impact.

## Chapter 4: Irish Republicanism in Foreign Affairs

The international connections of the Irish Republican movement go beyond their relationships with fellow guerrilla organizations. Throughout the history of the movement, Irish republicans established relationships with foreign governments sympathetic to their cause. This emulates a tradition visible in revolutionary decolonization in the Global South: many anti-imperial guerrilla organizations received tangible support and resources from the Soviet Union and Cuba. In this spirit, several Irish republican groups (including the PIRA) received aid from international supporters in the form of political support as well as physical resources like arms and artillery. However, the foreign relations of Irish republicans were a complicated and often contradictory pattern of strategy, that set them apart from other anti-imperial armed movements in the Global South. As discussed in the previous chapter, some of the connections Irish republicans made with foreign governments isolated them from the greater sphere of anti-imperial guerrilla organizations (specifically their relationship with the United States). However others, like their connections to the Gaddafi regime in Libya, aligned the movement even more closely with organizations in the Global South. A further complicating factor was their relationship (or rather lack thereof) with the Soviet Union, a key factor in the development of many anti-imperial guerrilla organizations that clouds the classification of the Irish republican movement. This chapter will follow the theme of the previous chapter in analyzing the international dimensions of Irish republicanism, but in the context of state foreign relations and international diplomacy, through discussion of the Irish republican relationships with the Soviet Union, the United States, Libya, and the greater context of violence and terrorism on the world stage during the late twentieth century.



## Irish Republicanism and the Soviet Union

The Soviet Union played an active role in decolonization of the Global South. Several revolutionary movements in Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America, drew support from the communist superpower, both in the form of political solidarity and in the supply of arms and training for combatants. Despite the commitment to Cold War non-alignment in many decolonizing states, Soviet support remained a factor in revolutionary decolonization. For the Soviet Union, these conflicts of self-determination provided a stage on which to continue their struggle against the capitalist structure in Europe and North America – a structure which in the Global South was intrinsically tied to colonialism and oppression.<sup>135</sup> This support manifested visibly in Angola, where the Soviet Union openly supported the revolutionary Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) in their war for independence from Portugal.<sup>136</sup> Soviet support was also important to the FLN in Algeria, who saw it as a valuable alternative to western states for support.<sup>137</sup> The Soviet Union's support was valuable for guerrilla groups in the Global South for several reasons: they provided a powerful alternative to the United States and former European colonial powers, and they offered an entry into the global sphere of communism, which was a common political ideology among anti-imperial revolutionary movements.

The relationship between Irish republicanism and the Soviet Union (and on a larger scale, communism) is complicated by aspects of the movement's history and its other connections. Communism in Irish republicanism is a controversial topic: some of the first Irish republican

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<sup>135</sup> Ana Mónica Fonseca and Daniel Marcos, "Cold War Constraints: France, West Germany and Portuguese Decolonization," *Portuguese Studies* 29, no. 2 (2013): 211-212.

<sup>136</sup> Vladimir Shubin and Andrei Tokarev, "War in Angola: A Soviet Dimension," *Review of African Political Economy* 28, no. 90 (2001): 607.

<sup>137</sup> Jeffrey James Byrne. "Mecca of Impatience and Anxiety: Globalizations and the Third World Order." In *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016: 7.

volunteers during the Easter Rising were proponents of socialism (like James Connolly), and the Sinn Féin party that evolved from the early IRA has consistently leaned left.<sup>138</sup> As described previously, the Easter Rising (and by extension the development of the original IRA) are part of a greater timeline of socialist upheavals that came about in Europe as the First World War was ending. However, the continued role of socialism in the movement is complicated – though some republican organizations defined themselves as some sort of socialists, prominent groups like the PIRA did not. There are several influencing factors: the relationships with the Soviet Union, the latent piety still present in all facets of Irish life throughout the twentieth century, and the relationships that the PIRA maintained with the United States. The latter subject will be addressed further in this chapter, after the position of the Soviet Union has been analyzed.

Unlike other anti-imperial movements, Irish republicans did not receive significant support from the Soviet Union. Their involvement with the various iterations of the IRA is scant, especially in comparison to examples from southern Africa where the Soviet Union was more enthusiastically involved in the conflict. Immediately after the Easter Rising, Irish Republicans were intermittently involved with the Communist International, who expressed support for the republican cause at their second world congress.<sup>139</sup> This would eventually lead to a short-lived agreement between the Soviet Union and the IRA that required the former to supply the latter with military aid in 1922.<sup>140</sup> This agreement never came to fruition, and Soviet support for the republican cause dried up just after. The cause of this is unclear, though soviet officials had previously expressed doubt that the IRA would succeed in their struggle against the British.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> James D. Young, "John Maclean, Socialism, and the Easter Rising," *Saothar* 16 (1991): 23.

<sup>139</sup> Emmet O. Connor, "Communists, Russia, and the IRA, 1920-1923," *The Historical Journal* 46, no. 1 (2003): 116–117.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

This lack of faith could explain the loss of Soviet support after the failed aid deal in 1922. A further explanation may be found in the general animosity that European communists in the Comintern and the Soviet Union felt towards Irish republicans, and vice-versa. There were doubts among Soviet officials that the IRA had the ability to utilize their support and resources properly and actually engage in a successful struggle.<sup>142</sup> On the republican side, despite attempts from pockets of socialists within Ireland to connect the republican struggle with the inherent class struggle of socialism, the movement did not take hold.<sup>143</sup> Beyond this, Soviet involvement in the republican conflict was extremely limited. After the guerrilla campaign began in the 1960s, there is little evidence of any Soviet interest in the goings-on of the Troubles. Several armed groups, including the PIRA, were armed with weapons of Soviet origin, though this is not necessarily an indicator of direct support.<sup>144</sup> As the movement progressed through the 1970s and 1980s, the possibility of Soviet involvement was crushed between the competing IRA and PIRA factions – the official IRA coveted Soviet support on the international stage, but were hampered by the Soviet Union’s sympathies to the PIRA hunger strikes.<sup>145</sup> In this sense, the split in the movement that began the era of guerrilla warfare also contains a thread of political opposition. There were significantly more pro-socialist sentiments among the official IRA, which many in the more traditionalist northern PIRA were opposed to.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Coogan, *The IRA*, 93-94.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>144</sup> See Coogan, *The IRA*, 432, and Bell, *The Secret War*, 397.

<sup>145</sup> See John Mulqueen. “‘A Party of the Extreme Left’: Official Republicans Drop Traditional Demands in Favour of Class Politics, Urge Soviet Bloc Not to Back Provisionals’ H-Block Campaign.” In *‘An Alien Ideology’: Cold War Perceptions of the Irish Republican Left*, 169-206.

<sup>146</sup> Mulqueen. *‘An Alien Ideology’: Cold War Perceptions of the Irish Republican Left* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press: 2019): 77.

Regardless of whether genuine material support from the Soviet Union was ever given to Irish republican guerrilla organizations, there was anxiety in the British administration over the possibility.<sup>147</sup>

### **Irish Republicanism in Libya**

Though much of the significant foreign support received by Irish republicans came from sympathizers in the First World, one notable exception provided a tangible connection to decolonization in the Global South. Irish republicans benefited from both public solidarity and material support from Libya under Muammar Gaddafi. Following the successful toppling of Libya's monarchy (which had strong ties to the United States and Great Britain) in a socialist coup d'état in 1969, Gaddafi was installed as leader of Libya. The support his government showed for Irish republicanism stands out in the context of foreign affairs during this period – while the PIRA and IRA failed to gain meaningful public support from most former colonial states in the Global South, Libya offered a rare opportunity for validation in the international dimension. Gaddafi made public statements of support for the Irish republican cause as early as 1972, stating that Libya would stand by the “Irish revolutionaries” and “drive a thorn” into the side of Britain to aid the Irish cause.<sup>148</sup> This expression of support is significant – Gaddafi represented a socialist Global South government that had ousted its British-backed predecessor. Having this kind of support lent legitimacy to their cause outside of non-state guerrilla actors. By 1975, the government of the republic of Ireland was well aware of Gaddafi's outspoken support

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>148</sup> Marie-Violaine Louvet. “Shedding Light on the Arab World: The “Irish—Arab News”, 1975—85.” *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 23 (2012): 200.

for Irish republicanism, as is visible in Dáil Éireann debates from this period.<sup>149</sup> The most tangible aspects of Gaddafi's support were directed towards the PIRA, who benefited from their common animosity towards Great Britain.<sup>150</sup>

Aside from Gaddafi's political support, the PIRA benefited from more tangible resources provided by Libya. The Libyan provisions took the form of arms and artillery, smuggled to Ireland via ship. Libyan arms began arriving for the PIRA as early as 1972.<sup>151</sup> The shipment that arrived in 1972 was the most notorious, and the most unsuccessful. Dubbed the "*Claudia* Affair", after the ship that carried the supplies into the harbour at Waterford. The ship carried five tonnes of arms, as well as PIRA leader Joe Cahill, from Libya to Ireland.<sup>152</sup> Among the cargo were a range of firearms and explosive materials for munition construction. The weapons of the *Claudia* did not reach their intended bearers, however – the ship was intercepted before unloading its cargo by the Irish naval service, and Cahill was charged and imprisoned for his role in the clandestine exchange.<sup>153</sup> However, this loss did not stop the flow of Libyan arms to the PIRA. Shipments continued to reach volunteers through the 1970s and 1980s, slipping past British and Irish defenses until another ship was intercepted in 1987, carrying one hundred and fifty tonnes of arms.<sup>154</sup> The shipments that evaded capture likely carried the same materials as their failed successor in 1987 – rockets, hand grenades, firearms, and large quantities of the explosive Semtex.<sup>155</sup> The materials supplied by Libya were certainly an important factor in the

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<sup>149</sup> Republic of Ireland. Dáil Éireann Debate, December 11<sup>th</sup> 1975 (Ceisteanna—Questions. Oral Answers. - IRA Support). This debate only specifies the IRA, and is not clear on whether they are including the PIRA in this assessment.

<sup>150</sup> Eunan O'Halpin. "British Intelligence, PIRA, and the Early Years of the Northern Ireland Crisis: Remembering, Forgetting, and Mythologizing." In *The Image of the Enemy: Intelligence Analysis of Adversaries since 1945*, ed. Maddrell Paul, 182.

<sup>151</sup> Sanders, "*Inside the IRA*", 53.

<sup>152</sup> Brendan Anderson, *Joe Cahill: A Life in the IRA* (Dublin: 2002): 13.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 272-275.

<sup>154</sup> Coogan, *The IRA*, 589-590.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*,

level of improvised explosive development that the PIRA was able to pursue during this period.<sup>156</sup>

The activities of Irish republicans on the world stage during this period are an expansion on their previous international involvement. As shown in the previous chapters, international influences and connections were a part of the republican movement from its inception. However, the participation of republicans in international relations from the 1970s onwards represents a step further in this trajectory. This further aligned them with contemporary anti-colonial guerrilla organizations, who were receiving support from recognized state allies like the Soviet Union and Libya.

### **American Support for Irish Republicanism**

As mentioned previously, the longstanding support for Irish republicanism in the United States was both a benefit and a hindrance to armed groups as the twentieth century progressed. It hampered their ability to connect fully with socialist and Soviet-backed organizations, and to receive support from the Soviet Union itself. However, it gave Irish republicans the dubious honour of being one of the few anti-imperial guerrilla organizations to have significant American support. As discussed in previous chapters, Irish republican organizations benefited from the support of Irish immigrant communities in the United States. This tradition continued into the era of armed republican action. Aside from Libya, the United States was a significant source of arms and funding for the PIRA.<sup>157</sup> In the 1980s, the bulk of these arms transfers came from individuals

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<sup>156</sup> See Gary A. Ackerman, "The Provisional Irish Republican Army and the Development of Mortars," *Journal of Strategic Security* 9, no. 1 (2016): 12–34.

<sup>157</sup> Coogan, *The IRA*, 436.

or small groups of American Irish sympathizers, and evaded capture by British and Irish authorities much more successfully than their Libyan counterparts.<sup>158</sup>

The most important factor in the American support for the PIRA is the massive diasporic Irish population in the United States. American support organizations like the Irish Northern Aid Committee (NORAI) were formed by Irish emigrants (and the established descendent communities of previous migration waves).<sup>159</sup> This is a unique factor that sets Irish republican groups like the PIRA apart from their guerrilla contemporaries – though large states like the United States have migrant communities from a wide array of backgrounds, the existence of a large, concentrated, and proud diaspora in the United States was unique to Ireland. The narrative of Irish migration is also an important consideration – the Irish diasporic community in the United States retained strong ties to their nation of origin, and were in a position to sympathize with Irish republicanism due to the reasons behind the mass migration of the previous century (Irish emigrants fled events like the Great Famine, which was exacerbated by oppressive British policies). Compare this to the narrative of Cuban migration, in which a large part of the Cuban diasporic community fled after the revolution and the rise of Castro, and thus were not likely to be sympathetic to the that cause. Therefore, the existence of the Irish diasporic community in the United States demonstrates that American support for Irish republicanism is based on pre-existing cultural and ideological roots, rather than the foreign policy methods employed by the United States against similar movements in the Global South during this period.

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<sup>158</sup> Bell, *The IRA*, 182-183.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

## Guerrilla Warfare and Terrorism

The late 1970s and 1980s experienced a global shift of perspective on the new phenomenon of terrorism, a political debate that swept up the PIRA and their global contacts. Since the end of the era of revolutionary decolonization, terrorism has become intrinsically linked to the strategies of guerrilla warfare, to an extent that it arguably should be considered part of the playbook. Many of the PIRA's tactical decisions fit into traditional definitions of terrorism, especially the execution of bomb attacks in civilian areas.<sup>160</sup> The new definition of terrorism that began to take shape in the 1980s was influenced by an increase in international terror-related incidents, many of which were executed by Islamic fundamentalist organizations.<sup>161</sup> Among the first of these was the Black September attack at the Munich Olympics in 1972, which catapulted what was an armed domestic group into the international arena. As the 1970s and 1980s progressed, guerrilla organizations in several countries were viewed in a new light: not just as rebels, but as terrorists, which carried an intrinsically international tone. Popular opinion outside of Northern Ireland began to classify the PIRA as a terrorist organization in the late 1980s and early 1990s, with one commenter called them the "most formidable terrorist group in the world".<sup>162</sup> Various iterations of the IRA would later be included in British government terrorism registries, with many still listed in current documents despite official disbandment.<sup>163</sup> British counterterrorism manifested in the 1980s, a reflection of the changing global attitudes towards guerrilla warfare.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Timothy Shanahan. *The Provisional Irish Republican Army and the Morality of Terrorism*. (Edinburgh University Press: 2008), 5

<sup>161</sup> Thomas Arciszewski et al., "From psychology of terrorists to psychology of terrorism," *Revue internationale de psychologie sociale* Tome 22, no. 3 (2009): 7.

<sup>162</sup> Shanahan, *The Provisional Irish Republican Army*, 4.

<sup>163</sup> United Kingdom Home Office. *Proscribed Terrorist Organizations*. London: Home Office, 2013. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations--2>

<sup>164</sup> Shanahan, *The Provisional Irish Republican Army*, 184.



The international status of the PIRA (and of Irish republicanism as a whole) was a complex issue during the 1970s-1980s. Their interaction with the Soviet Union was limited to a non-starter agreement and some hand-me-down Soviet weapons – sparse, in comparison to the closer relationships enjoyed by other anti-imperial guerrilla organizations during the same period. Their relationship with the United States further clouds the classifications of Irish republicanism among the cadre of revolutionary decolonization movements. Their supportive American diasporic community was a resource few other groups could match, which adds an element unique to them (on the scale of the Irish diaspora, at the very least) among anti-colonial movements. However, their strong connections with Libya align them more closely with contemporary guerrilla organizations. The choice of the Libyan administration under Gaddafi to support the PIRA is significant: it brought Irish republicans even deeper into the fold of Global South anti-imperialism, giving credence to their legitimate place among the major revolutionary decolonization movements of the era.

## Epilogue

As the twentieth century drew to a close (and with it the golden age of revolutionary decolonization) most Irish republican armed groups moved away from violence and began the arduous process of peace. The PIRA went through a series of ceasefires and agreements throughout the 1990s, before eventually disarming in 2005.<sup>165</sup> Throughout the 1990s, the republican movement as a whole began to collapse in on itself – the PIRA, the INLA, and others in Northern Ireland carried out attacks on each other as their formerly organized bombing campaigns became less frequent.<sup>166</sup> Northern Ireland did not experience the grand decolonization process and independence from Britain that republicans had dreamed of for decades, as so many of their contemporaries in the Global South were able to achieve. However, by this time it was a lost cause – the aspect of terrorism (as described in the previous chapter), and the loss of support from international partners like Libya put the PIRA in a difficult position.<sup>167</sup> The original IRA and the PIRA were effectively disbanded by the Good Friday Agreement, though splinter groups like the Continuity Irish Republican Army (CIRA) and Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA) have continued sporadic low-level conflict since then.<sup>168</sup> The conflict is not extinct however – rather, it is laying dormant. In the spring of 2021 riots broke out in communities across Northern Ireland.<sup>169</sup> This wave of violence was mostly stoked by the entry into force of the Brexit decision, bringing the border between the North and the Republic into an uncomfortable spotlight. The unionist community is in particularly vulnerable state – many citing that the post-

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<sup>165</sup> Sanders, *Inside the IRA*.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>167</sup> Coogan, *The IRA*, 595.

<sup>168</sup> See Ross, F. Stuart. “It Hasn't Gone Away You Know: Irish Republican Violence in the Post-Agreement Era.” *Nordic Irish Studies* 11, no. 2 (2012): 55-70.

<sup>169</sup> Rick Gladstone and Peter Robbins. “The Ghosts of Northern Ireland’s Troubles Are Back. What’s Going On?” *The New York Times*, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/12/world/europe/Northern-Ireland-Brexit-Covid-Troubles.html>

Brexit strategies have been geared towards republican factions instead of them.<sup>170</sup> Almost a quarter-century has passed since the Good Friday Agreement – a new generation of Northern Irish youth have lived their entire lives since 1998, with the benefits of peace but also the lasting sectarian sentiments.

Even in the twenty-first century the events of The Troubles and their republican participants have not yet settled into a comfortable space in history. The connections formed over long periods by generations of republicans to the Global South and decolonization add an important and too often overlooked dimension to the understanding of this period. The historical timeline of revolutionary decolonization and guerrilla warfare did not begin, nor did it end, with Irish republicans. Just as they were influenced by earlier movements, so did the Irish republicans enter into a continuity of revolutionary decolonization. The various iterations of the IRA became influences of future generations of guerrilla organizations, providing inspirations and, at times, actual material support at the end of their existence. Similar to how the Cuban revolutionary guerrilla influenced early anti-imperial actors (including the IRA), the strategies and tactics of the PIRA took on this educational role for later guerrilla organizations formed from the 1980s onwards. This influence took multiple forms: the munitions building techniques developed by the PIRA are well-documented for their innovative use of limited resources.<sup>171</sup> The IEDs developed by the PIRA represent progress in the evolution of guerrilla warfare – their tactics spread to other groups working with limited munitions.<sup>172</sup> One prominent group influenced by

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<sup>170</sup> Stephen Castle. “Northern Ireland Sees Spasm of Violence as Old Tensions Resurface” *The New York Times*, April 8<sup>th</sup> 2021.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/08/world/europe/northern-ireland-violence-brexit-covid.html?action=click&module=RelatedLinks&pgtype=Article>

<sup>171</sup> Bell, *The IRA*, 184.

<sup>172</sup> The International Institute for Strategic Studies. “The IRA's foreign links”, *Strategic Comments*, 9, no. 5 (2003): 1-2.

Irish republicanism was the Colombian Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). In 2001, three Irish nationals (James Monaghan, Martin McCauley, and Niall Connolly) were arrested at the Bogotá airport, returning from an area controlled by the FARC-EP.<sup>173</sup> All three of these individuals had ties to the Irish republican movement – Connolly and Monaghan were members of Sinn Féin, and McCauley had previously been imprisoned for the possession of weapons.<sup>174</sup> Around this time, the FARC began using handmade mortars with increasing frequency – a weapon perfected over decades by the PIRA.<sup>175</sup> The Colombian scandal was not an act by the PIRA or any other iteration of the IRA. Rather, it was the action of a ghost – the spectre of Irish republicanism that is still present worldwide, in the aforementioned recent tension in Northern Ireland, and in the use of mortars in Colombia.

Beyond their influence on more recent guerrilla organizations, Irish Republicans left their mark on guerrilla warfare as a strategic system. As Bell describes:

“‘IRA’ can be found scrawled on walls in Soweto and Naples, can be found in the curriculum of the military academies of the orthodox and the guerrilla primers in the outback. The IRA, persistent, romantic, notorious and lethal, composed of Celtic gunmen with a dream, is a constant in the global arena, a player in all revolutionary struggles, a model and a menace.”<sup>176</sup>

The FARC were not alone in drawing inspiration and resources from the PIRA. An article published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies in 2003 alleged that Irish republicans had provided arms and training to guerrilla organizations in Palestine as well.<sup>177</sup> In this sense, the various iterations of the IRA remain present in modern perceptions of guerrilla

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>174</sup> John F. Murphy Jr. The IRA and the FARC in Colombia, *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 18 no. 1 (2005): 76-88.

<sup>175</sup> The International Institute for Strategic Studies, “The IRA’s Foreign Links”, 1-2.

<sup>176</sup> Bell, *The Secret War*, 317.

<sup>177</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, “The IRA’s Foreign Links”, 1-2.

violence and terrorism – just as the recent outbreaks of violence in Northern Ireland bear uncomfortable similarities to the past, the IRA continues to haunt conflicts in the international dimension.

Another international legacy of Irish republicanism is in postcolonial theory. As discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, Ireland holds a controversial position in this field of study, with some scholars (including prominent postcolonial writer Edward Said) arguing for its inclusion, while others still debate its colonial validity.<sup>178</sup> The position of Ireland in postcolonialism, and in the timeline of decolonization, remains clouded by the myriad points that separate the Irish struggle from the generally accepted examples in the Global South. There is the relationship between Irish republican guerrilla armies and the United States, which excluded them from the relationship that other guerrilla organizations enjoyed with the Soviet Union. The thorniest issue is most likely one of culture: Ireland's strong cultural, historical, and religious ties to western colonial oppressors is contrary to its position among its Global South comrades. Irish individuals benefited from the colonial framework put in place by Great Britain – their experience of colonization bears differences from that of India or British Africa that must be acknowledged.

Where does that leave us in terms of understanding the place of the Irish struggle in history? There is value in finding a place for this struggle in the timeline of decolonization – understanding the multifaceted links between Irish republicans and the Global South provides a more comprehensive understanding of the complex, living culture of anticolonial organizations in the twentieth century. It does blur the divide between colony and metropole, Global North and

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<sup>178</sup> Graham, "Anomalous Theory", 118.

South, empire and possession. Defining the Irish struggle as decolonization challenges popular definitions that slot nation-states into comfortable boxes – but this is a boon to the study of history. Irish decolonization as a concept confronts neat categorizations and exposes the history of decolonization in its messy, blurred, contradictory glory. Historicizing decolonization is made more difficult by the presence of Ireland, but if the work of a historian is easy then they are doing something wrong.

The work begun by Irish theorists in the 1990s represents a still relatively unexplored historical field – increasingly historians are entertaining the notion of a colonial or postcolonial Ireland, but research into the reality of this concept remains limited by many factors: the simple lack of resources limited my own research (we certainly cannot expect former guerrilla combatants to publicly share their documents with archives). This is the tragedy of studying violent historical narratives – even after peace has been achieved, primary sources still carry bloodstains. The Troubles live on in the minds of those who were alive to witness them in Ireland and abroad. There is a massive gap in writing history on a traumatic event that occurred centuries ago and one recent enough the living to have witnessed. These are choppy waters for historians to sail, and The Troubles will likely be a difficult field to explore in research for some time to come.

As established on the previous pages, there is legitimate value in situating Ireland in the history of decolonization – it provides an opportunity to explore the complex and at times contradictory nature of national identity, decolonization, and postcolonialism with a unique dimension beyond the traditional categorization of colonies in the Global South. Still the question remains: what value (if any) does this hold for Irish history? In his definition of postcolonialism, Colin Graham emphasizes the element of “loss” still present in culture after the

colonial system is dismantled.<sup>179</sup> There is “loss” in Northern Ireland – the sectarian divide between republicans and unionists still exists (apparent in the recent tensions mentioned previously). There are many who still feel that justice has yet to be served for victims of the conflict. The radar blip of Irish republicanism in Colombia in 2001 is a discomfiting reminder of just how young this period of peace truly is.

Is there value for Ireland in finding its place in the history of decolonization? Historical research cannot right injustices or revive the dead. One possible purpose could be to improve our understanding of the current rise in tensions in Northern Ireland. Perhaps the element of decolonization could provide some clarity as to why this conflict continues to haunt these communities. However, I believe there is value in deepening historical knowledge beyond what it can offer to the present political situation. Confronting perceptions of difficult histories is a worthy goal, even if it only serves to complicate historical understanding further.

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<sup>179</sup> Graham, “Liminal Spaces”, 29-30.

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