Proletarian Academics Or Party Functionaries? Irish Communists At The International Lenin School, Moscow, 1927-1937

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I

An essential component of the 'bolshevisation' – russification – of the international Communist movement from the mid-1920s onwards was the schooling of foreign cadres in the Soviet Union. Educating promising party activists from abroad in the 'socialist sixth of the earth' was seen as a long-term investment by the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI): graduates from Moscow's party schools would return home 'steeled' against all deviations from the Soviet *diktat* and ensure the fulfilment of the 'line' by taking up leading positions in the pertinent national sections of the Communist International (CI, Comintern), as the Communist Parties were officially called. Attention focuses here on the most important ECCI institute of learning for foreign cadres, the International Lenin School (ILS), which admitted students, mainly from the Americas and Europe, between 1926 and 1938. The ILS was a highly clandestine institution, about which relatively little was known until the 1990s. Following the implosion of Soviet Communism, however, historians were permitted to consult the voluminous documentation in the former Central Party Archive of the CPSU, now known under its new Russian initials RTsKhIDNI, including the 811 *dokumenty* (files) of the ILS.[1] Additional references to the school can be found in other RTsKhIDNI archival stocks and indexes,[2] and in published memoirs[3] and monographs.[4] The main emphasis here is on the experiences of Irish ILS students: their transfer from Irish to Russian political contexts and vice versa; the psychological pressures involved in their 'bolshevisation'; and finally, whether the ILS was an effective institute of learning and to what extent it fulfilled the goals it set itself in regard to Irish students.

Compared to other ECCI schools, the ILS was founded comparatively late, instruction there beginning in May 1926.[5] Two years earlier the Agitprop (Agitation and Propaganda) Department of ECCI had called for the organisation of international party courses, referring to the motions passed at the Fifth Comintern Congress (1924), which proclaimed that the 'bolshevisation' of the CI Sections was the international movement's most pressing challenge. Further time elapsed before a suitable building was found and adapted for accommodation and class-work. The house, a former villa of Empress Catherine II, was situated in 25a Vorovsky Street (Ulitsa Vorovskogo), parallel to Moscow's main shopping thoroughfare, Gorky Street.[6] With foreign embassies in the vicinity, the central location of the school soon became a drawback. This site was in obvious contradiction to the top-secret nature of the school, where the students were to remain under a pseudonym and not to reveal their true identity. The rules of *konspiratsiya* were considerably tightened from the early 1930s, but the fact that other ILS buildings were also situated in downtown Moscow (student accommodation in 51 Ulitsa Gerzena, class-rooms, administrative offices and dormitories in the Gogolevskiy Bulvar near the Arbat) showed the contradiction between Soviet bureaucratic measures and the reality imposed by the acute housing shortage in the Russian capital.[7]

Only in the late 1930s could parts of the ILS be moved to a site in the suburbs, and finally, to the new ECCI buildings in Rostokino. By this time, however, the school was in its final phase (it closed in September 1938) and had already abolished courses for students from the 'legal' parties of Western

Europe. The length of instruction offered was also determined by conflicting interests. The communist parties, on the one hand, were interested in having their scarce cadres returned from Moscow as soon as possible and thus favoured courses of one year's duration. Experience with students from abroad had shown the ILS authorities, on the other hand, that the pupils in their charge needed two to three years of indoctrination to be fully equipped for future party tasks, especially as the educational standard of most entrants was low and the theoretical schooling in their native countries negligible. In the last resort, a thorough mix of courses was offered: 'basic' (fifteen months), 'short' (nine months) and 'long' (two to three years), along with special short courses of three months for members of the women's section of the German Communist Party (KPD), the Soviet trade unions (WTsSPS) and other 'clients'. A further category in the allotment numbers was reserved for the Communist Youth International (KIM). Because of the variety of courses taught it is difficult to say how many students actually attended the ILS. The total figure is about 2,500 'regulars' (one-, two- or three-year students), as the school expanded rapidly after 1930, so that the figure of 922 graduates in the years 1926-1931[8] was now exceeded every two years or so.[9] At the height of its expansion the ILS comprised twenty 'sectors', twelve of which were made up of students from a single country. The total for KIM graduates was over 350 in the years 1930 to 1937.[10] Not all the allotted places were filled, courses were amalgamated and again separated, and some students terminated their studies prematurely. In such cases the student in question either found the academic workload too onerous or was recalled at short notice by the 'home' party for political work. A handful of relegations were due to the political views or behaviour of the student; other entrants were rejected as being unsuitable at the beginning of the course. Initially, all English-speaking students were taught together in Sector 'D'. At the beginning of 1933 Sector 'E' was formed,[11] and was henceforth composed of students from England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand. Sector 'D' thus became the preserve of party militants from the USA and Canada. Both sectors seemed to have shared teachers and some activities in the later period as well.

In the twelve years from 1926 to 1937 roughly 140 students from Britain were enrolled in the main ('basic' and 'short') courses, and a further ten were under the tutelage of KIM.[12] The corresponding figure for Ireland is twenty-one, of whom the majority either completed the course or were recalled beforehand by the leadership of the Irish CI Section to work at home. 'John Snail' (yet to be identified), an ex-sailor born in Cloyne, Cork, in 1899,[13] was rejected by the ILS Mandates' Commission in 1934 for being 'too old'.[14] 'Patrick Crutt', a Dubliner considered too fond of drinking, was sent home in disgrace during the same year.[15] The third Irishman to be relegated was Christy Ferguson, the future National Organiser of the Workers' Union Of Ireland (WUI).[16] His sojourn in Moscow, under the code-name 'Christopher Bristol', lasted less than a month. Pleading nervous exhaustion, Ferguson was allowed home, where his comrades in the Revolutionary Workers' Groups (RWGs) later expelled him.[17]

The first, and largest, group of Irish Communists dispatched ('delegated' or 'commandeered' in Comintern parlance) to the ILS went on the recommendation of James Larkin Senior's Irish Worker League (IWL), which was the Comintern's Irish Section from 1924 to 1929. Arriving in Moscow in November 1927 or March 1928, the Irish contingent consisted of Jim Larkin Junior, Pat Breslin, Bill Denn, Seán Shelly, Charlie Ashmore and Dan Buckley. Only Breslin had been a member of the 'first' Communist Party Of Ireland (1921-1924). Denn and Ashmore were leading members of the Irish National Union Of Woodworkers (INUW). Shelly was a member of the IWL Executive, Buckley a Republican from Cork. Seán Murray, later to be the General-Secretary of the Communist Party Of Ireland (CPI) founded in June 1933, joined the group at the school. He had been working in London and was sent to the ILS by the Communist Party Of Great Britain (CPGB).[18] In October 1930 Christy

Ferguson, Tommy Geehan and Tommy Watters arrived at Ulitsa Vorovskogo 25a, and fourteen months later Loftus Johnston, Christy Clarke, Donal O'Reilly and Jim Hale. In the first days of 1934 Betty Sinclair, Jim Prendergast and 'Patrick Crutt' began their schooling at the ILS. The last Irish students (October 1935-January 1937) were Liam McGregor, William Morrison and Val Moraghan. In May 1935 the ECCI Secretariat decided to reduce the number of sectors, re-organise the school and concentrate henceforth on cadres from 'illegal' parties.[19] As a logical next step, the Comintern leadership recommended one year later the establishment of central party schools in the western democracies.[20] This decision, passed on 15 August 1936, was taken during the initial phases of the 'Great Terror', when xenophobia, fears of 'foreign infiltration' and spy-hysteria were rife in the Soviet Union.

II

The ILS was formally under ECCI control and administration. Material and ideological support was supplied by the Central Committee of the All Russian Communist Party Of Bolsheviks (VKP/b), as the Soviet party was then known. As the 'Russian delegation' within ECCI, in the person of Stalin's confidante Dmitry Manuilsky, steered Comintern strategy after Bukharin's removal in 1929, there were few obstacles in recreating within the school itself the Soviet Party's various 'campaigns' and changes of 'line', including the vilification of 'unreliable' or 'hostile elements'. The academic syllabus of the ILS rested on the three pillars of philosophy, political economy and the history of the labour movement. Lessons in the Russian language were obligatory in the early years. Other important subjects were *partrabota* (party work) and *lenderrabota* (country work). The latter was a source of constant grumbling, as the Russian-born teachers, in imparting how the students should carry out agitational or organisational directives in their native lands, leaned too heavily on the experience of the VKP/b. Moreover, they were seldom *au fait* with the political or economic situation in any one country and often lacked a basic knowledge of the foreign language required. For the first course in 1926/1927 seventy-five places were allotted, eight to the CPGB. This first syllabus was designed for the training of full-time party workers (district secretaries), who were to have had a three year-old membership in the Party and work experience in industry. The CPGB selected their candidates well in advance, subjecting them to oral and written examinations. The main items of study in the first academic year of the ILS included history of the Russian party, capitalist and imperialist economies, history of the labour movement, and Leninism.[21]

The second course,[22] which commenced in November 1927, had an allotment of 124 students, including twelve from the CPGB.[23] There were originally no places for Larkin's IWL on the allotment schedule, but the Permanent Commission of ECCI sanctioned in August 1927 the reservation of two places for students from Ireland.[24] Subsequently, some CI Sections did not exhaust their student quota and these free places were distributed to other parties, as were those places occupied by students who were thought to be unsuitable and sent home.[25] The Irish scholars of the 1927-1930 class had to appear before the school's Mandates' Commission, sit entrance examinations and attend a six-week introductory course. It was primarily designed to 'enlighten' the new arrivals on the 'errors' of Trotsky, so the English-speaking neophytes were confronted from the very beginning with the instrumentalisation and falsification of Bolshevik party history. After a stringent medical examination the students began their academic studies: Russian revolutionary politics since the 1820s; *Das Kapital;* philosophy, including dialectical materialism; and the history of the international labour movement, including revolutionary movements in seventeenth century England. Great emphasis was placed on writing papers and consulting sources outside the school; for example, those in the Lenin Library or the Institute Of Marxism-Leninism. The pupil-teacher ratio was favourable, consultations

with tutors were encouraged, but any complaints about the work-load were dismissed: the students were urged to keep their rooms tidy and at the correct temperature for learning. The monthly allowance for personal needs was sixty roubles, and the students were expected to join the Russian party – in the probationary period they were termed candidates.[26]

In the early years of the ILS little restriction was placed on the freedom of the students outside school hours. They visited beer-halls, flea-markets and bookshops, were invited by Russian comrades to speak at meetings or to take part in conferences and seminars. Leaders of the British and Irish Communist movements spoke to the classes in Vorovsky Street 25a; in turn, the students were often consulted by the Anglo-US Secretariat, the ECCI body responsible for the English-speaking world (Britain, Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the Philippines) on particular questions, were invited to sittings of the Secretariat and could participate in the plenums, and even congresses, of the Communist International. On handing in his passport, the individual Irish or British student received a *propusk* (identity card) to enter the Comintern building at Mokhovaya 6, just across from the Kremlin walls. Paramilitary training was a compulsory part of the courses. As members of the Soviet civil defence organisation *Ossoaviakhim*, the students learned shooting on the rifle-range or played 'war games' with Red Army officers or Comintern insurgency experts. The 'freshmen' in the ILS were given pseudonyms for the duration of the course and for correspondence abroad. The code-names were often those of real people, which led to some confusion. For example, one student from Britain was called 'James Maxton' after the left-wing parliamentarian. Fortunately, Maxton did not visit Moscow at the time. One other holder of the real name, however, did: Jack Tanner, a well-known shop-steward and founder-member of the CPGB, rang the school in 1929 and heard his name repeated at the other end of the line. Harry Wicks, known in the ILS as 'Jack Tanner' had answered the phone, speaking his name on picking it up, as is the custom in German and Slav countries.

Conspiracy rules were also inadvertently broken by the practice of early morning rides through the city centre on horseback. This was the main form of sport encouraged by the school directorate in the late 1920s. The sight of horseriding youths, most of them obviously foreign, cantering through the street was another example where Russian *ukazy* were often at cross purposes. Some infringements of secrecy which were not yet strictly punished concerned writing home. Bill Denn wrote regularly to friends on Dublin Trades Council, quoting on the letterhead the school's correct address and signing his real name.[27]

The presence of such a large Irish 'delegation' at the ILS in the years 1927-1930 could not be justified on the grounds of party strength. The IWL was not a party in the Leninist mould, but an electioneering machine totally under Larkin Senior's authoritarian control. As the IWL had done well at the second general election of 1927 and Larkin himself was seen to be neglecting Communist politics and concentrating on the WUI and his lengthy controversy with the Irish Transport And General Workers' Union (ITGWU), ECCI's 'Ireland experts' probably felt it was opportune to create a core of new Irish party leaders by training them in Moscow. At the time relations between Larkin Senior and the Comintern, and indeed with the Profintern, the trade union International, of which he was also a leading member, were extremely strained. Larkin was supported in this negative stance by his trusty lieutenant Jack Carney, who had seen Soviet politics from the inside during a stint as IWL representative to ECCI in the years 1925-1926.[28] Larkin's estrangement from the Moscow 'centre' cannot be explained in any detail here. Basically, Larkin, like older Communist leaders with a strong trade union or syndicalist background, entered Comintern and Profintern politics when discussion in such bodies, as the contemporary congress debates show, was open and vociferous. He hardly fitted into a working relationship which had not been shaped by developments in the capitalist West, but by

the exigencies of Russian politics, namely Stalin's consolidation as dictator in the years 1927-1929. Larkin's immediate reasons for dissatisfaction were threefold: the employment policies of the Soviet-owned Russian Oil Products Co. (ROP)[29], in particular its employment of non-WUI labour; and unfulfilled Moscow promises to fund the Larkinite weekly *Irish Worker*, defunct since 1925; or to send propaganda films (including 'Battleship Potemkin') to Ireland.[30]

The Irish students at the ILS, on Carney's urging, discussed these matters with the Anglo-US Secretariat. They supported Larkin's protests against ROP , but unanimously condemned his threat to break with Moscow.[31] The IWL also interfered with the instruction of its 'delegates' in Moscow, repeating Dublin gossip on the political views or study records of individual students.[32] László Rudas, the Hungarian pro-Rector and Head of the History Department in the ILS, reprimanded Larkin Senior for listening to rumours and advised him in future to 'draw information ... directly from the school'.[33] Considering that the Irish students in this 'long' course had little formal education (only Breslin and Larkin had attended secondary school), they did well academically. Charlie Ashmore ('William Donn') received average rating.[34] Seán Murray ('James Black') was judged to be 'very capable, very active', showing 'independence of thought' and 'a good grasp of Marxist-Leninist methods'.[35] Pat Breslin ('Pat Brennan') was awarded good marks for 'activity', 'capability' and 'academic progress'.[36] Jim Larkin Junior ('James Lawlor') was given equally good ratings, and was held to be one of the most promising young scholar-revolutionaries, but chided for 'not working systematically' in the first months.[37]

The grades given to any one student were, of course, not based solely on academic application, but also on the degree of political participation and acceptance of current ideological norms. This became very clear during the course of three developments which ran concurrently in 1928-1929: firstly, the efforts undertaken to prepare the group with enough ideological baggage to return home and re-inaugurate the Irish Communist movement, with or without the assistance of Larkin Senior; secondly, educating the students in the spirit of the 'Third Period', which in 1928-1929 ushered in an unprecedented and undifferentiated onslaught on the social democratic parties who were now described as 'social fascist', and which was accompanied by messianic left-wing agitation; and thirdly, subjecting the students to the *chistka* (party purge) of 1929, which was designed to rid the Comintern Sections of the 'conciliatory' Right, especially those deemed sympathetic to Bukharin's gradualist programme. This lurch to the extreme left was the ideological expression of what the Stalinist leadership was conducting in the vast country: a war of extermination against the free peasantry and an attack on workers' real wages during the First Five Year Plan (1928-1932).[38] According to the new interpretation of Marxian economics, the 'primitive accumulation' needed to fund the gigantic industrialisation programme had to be amassed at breakneck speed and be paid for by the toilers in factory and farm. Another reason for the abrupt turn-around in Soviet and Comintern politics lay in the realignment in German foreign policy. The German Social Democrats (SPD) had entered a coalition government in May 1928, supporting, as always, Franco-German rapprochement and accepting the Young Plan on German reparation payments. This development increased Bolshevik fears of a Western anti-Soviet bloc.[39] Bukharin, while initially in favour of a more hostile attitude to established labour circles in Western Europe, rejected one important corollary thesis of 'social fascism' – that the left-wing of the social democratic parties represented 'the greatest danger'. More importantly, he did not support Stalin's pseudo-Marxist doctrine which underpinned the widespread oppression in the countryside: that class antagonisms intensify after the proletariat wins state power. Bukharin was removed as Chairman of the Comintern in June 1929, and lost the post of ILS Rector in February 1930.[40]

Klavdiya Kirsanova, the old Bolshevik who replaced him and ruled the school with some interruptions until 1937, had the regulations in connection with the 'purge' of her students authorised

by the Comintern leadership in September 1929.[41] The examining board supervising the *chistka* in Ulitsa Vorovskogo 25a was supplied by central party bodies. The most prominent officials involved were from the International Control Commission (ICC), the arbitration council within ECCI with powers to discipline and remove important foreign Communists and all those from 'fraternal parties' who were living in the USSR. Each ILS trainee had to hand in a sealed envelope with personal data, including social origin, general and political education, all previous political affiliations, length of service in the Communist movement and the date of arrival in the Soviet Union.[42] The 'cleansing' commission sat for weeks, and all school work was suspended. Students delegated from parties with a history of internal wranglings or opposition to Muscovite directives (the German and Czech CI Sections) were made responsible for 'ideological errors' of the immediate and more distant past. The Polish students, young Jim Larkin was to remark years later, received a protracted grilling.[43] Harry Wicks had his VKP/b card endorsed for criticising the highly unpopular obligatory lessons in driving locomotives (!). He was more disappointed by the reaction of his fellow-students: when a Bulgarian trainee denounced him before the 'purge' commission, none of his class-mates came to his defence. Such personally disturbing experiences were repeated million-fold during the period of 'High Stalinism' (1934-1953), in the countless sittings of the particular *yacheika* (party cell)[44] at which denunciations and desperate self-justification were followed by expulsion, loss of employment, and in many cases arrest and death before the firing squad or in the Gulag.[45]

The 'purge' of the Irish students in 1929 was accompanied by political intrigue and the isolation of some of the group from deliberations about plans to re-launch Communist groups in Ireland. Such underhand methods were deemed necessary as the architects of the new Irish policy wished to circumvent Larkin Senior during the re-organisation now under way in Dublin and Belfast. It was taken for granted that such exclusive tactics would not find majority support among the Irish in Sector 'E', hence the subterfuge. Larkin Junior, Breslin, Ashmore and Murray complained about their 'progressive and intentional exclusion ... from discussions on Irish questions', and a commission was set up to investigate these charges. Within the sector the two most important posts were those of *partorg* (party organiser) and *proforg* (trade union organiser). The former was co-responsible for all political aspects of student life and seeing that the trainees in any one group attended their lectures and worked systematically. The latter post was akin to that of a shop-steward in a state industry; someone having a limited say in supervising living conditions, accommodation and canteen meals in the school. In the course of the in-fighting in autumn 1929, young Jim Larkin was removed as *partorg* and replaced by Harry Wicks. This incensed the majority of the Irish students. Harry Hall ('Haywood'), the American Communist who chaired the investigation, ruled in favour of the aggrieved and condemned outright 'the complete ignoring of the Irish students who must form the basis for carrying out the CI line'. The arrival of an Irish labour delegation to Moscow to take part in the twelfth anniversary celebrations of the Russian Revolution caused both sides to call a truce, in order that 'no questions of the difference in the school that was being investigated by the Bureau Commission should be mentioned' to the visiting trade unionists from Dublin.[46]

As was so often the case in the Comintern's policy of assigning to important parties a supervisory role in connection with less important CI Sections, leading functionaries of the CPGB were planning the Comintern's new departure for Ireland. In this instance, Tom Bell and Bob Stewart of the British party, along with the Cork-born ILS trainee Dan Buckley, staged the demotion of the younger Larkin before departing for Ireland to set up the Revolutionary Workers' Groups (RWGs). Stewart, the British representative to ECCI in 1923-1924 and again in the late 1930s had known James Connolly personally and crossed swords with Larkin Senior while on Comintern business in Ireland in 1925.[47] Bell, another example of Scottish domination in the leadership of the British party, knew Connolly in Scotland and met him again in Dublin during the 1913 lockout.[48] At the time of the controversy with

Irish Students At The International Lenin School, Moscow

Jack Carney, Irish Worker League Representative in Moscow, 1925-1926.

Seán Murray, pseudonym James Black.

Pat Devine, Delegate to the 7th World Congress of the Comitern, 1935 and Comintern liaison with the CPI and CPUSA.

William Morrison, pseudonym Liam McMorrow.

Liam McGregor, pseudonym William Citrine.

Jim Prendergast, in the uniform of the International Brigades, pseudonym Garden.

Tommy Watters, photographed c 1980, pseudonym Tom Connolly.

Christy Ferguson, photographed in 1949 when National Organiser, WUI.

Dónal O'Reilly in the uniform of the International Brigades.

the Irish in Sector 'E', Bell was acting on his authority as a member of the Comintern's inner circle: he was a full member of both its Presidium and Political Secretariat.[49] He continued his Comintern career as Chairman of Sector 'E' in the ILS, using the party name 'George Grey'.[50]

During the 1929 'purge' Larkin Junior admitted to have been totally under the influence of his father, sharing his many 'mistakes'. Another charge against him was the opposition he and other students had mounted to the thesis of the school leadership on the policies of the IWL and WUI. His concluding remarks before the inquisition demonstrate the pressures exerted on his filial loyalty:

> 'It is correct that it was difficult to extricate myself from Larkin's influence, but the school has helped me in this. I hope that it will be always possible for me, as a party member, to reach the correct point of view in all questions and that we will only have to take Larkin's influence into account in as much as he shares our views.'[51]

There were minor censures as well. Larkin and Ashmore, for example, were held up for disapprobation because they did not subscribe 'more than 100%' (one month's allowance) to one of the national loans launched to fund the industrialisation programme of the First Five Year Plan. Larkin was in debt to the school administration as a result of a holiday loan.[52] Ashmore, by purchasing a new set of false teeth, had more pressing instalment obligations.[53] Pat Breslin's examination before the *chistka* board led to his expulsion from the course and the list of candidate members for the VKP/b. He was accused of harbouring an 'incorrect assessment' of the 1916 Rising and protesting against the removal of Larkin as *partorg*. The main accusation centred on his rejection of dialectical materialism and his preference for theosophy, astrology and Far Eastern religions. None of his fellow-countrymen spoke up in his favour during the evening party sitting in January 1930, but attacked his philosophical interests and links to left-wing intellectuals in Dublin, in particular Captain Jack White. Breslin remained unrepentant:

> 'Comrade Lawlor [Larkin Junior] stated that I am a bad Party member, that claim has no basis in reality. You may now expel me from the Party, but don't force me to go over to the other side of the barricades. I believe I can still remain a member of the Communist International. If you are of the opinion that what I have explained here is idealism, then I can't do anything about that.'[54]

With the exception of Breslin, all Irish students who completed the course returned home in the summer of 1930. Students from Ireland in subsequent years found a much harsher ideological climate at the school. In 1931 the ILS directorate threatened to reject out of hand any prospective student who 'hid his past', or was an 'opportunist' or 'fractionalist' . The CI Sections were requested to desist from the practice of getting rid of demoted functionaries by sending them to the ILS for a year or two. A minimal financial allowance was granted to the families of the students, but correspondence with them and other foreigners was permitted only if the student's pseudonym and a secret mailbox in Moscow were used.[55] Some Irish candidates for the 1930-1931 course could not leave Dublin because they were needed as breadwinners or had been refused passports by the Cosgrave Government.[56] The new Irish trainees, Tommy Watters ('Tom Connolly') and Tommy Geehan ('Thomas Barry'), both from Belfast, arrived in Moscow in 1930. Geehan was subsequently judged to have worked 'hard and conscientiously' and recommended for a 'long' course. He had to answer questions about court charges brought against him in Ireland, his former political affiliations, military experience, participation in strikes and in civil wars and to what extent he had been involved in 'illegal work' (clandestine party tasks). Like all other students, he also pledged by signature to observe the school's rules governing secrecy and conspiracy.[57] The late arrivals from Ireland for the first term of the 1931-1932 course seemed to have largely escaped inquisitorial party sessions. Hale was considered disciplined and hardworking, despite his lack of theoretical schooling and the three month deficit he had to make up for.[58] His teachers portrayed Loftus Johnston in an equally positive light, while noting

his 'confusion in some questions' and lack of effort 'to understand the fundamentals of Leninism'.[59] Christy Clark was deemed 'satisfactory', if somewhat 'inactive' in party work.[60] Donal O'Reilly stood his ground when accused of refusing to succumb to 'Bolshevist self-criticism'.[61] Consequently, his discipline was termed 'weak', and his attitude towards party and social activities in the school not sufficiently serious, despite good academic grades.[62] When filling out yet another questionnaire (an essential element of Stalinist 'cadre control') on departure, he side-stepped the demand to give details of fractional in-fighting in the ILS and ascribed any disagreements that had arisen to the British comrades' 'inability to struggle', which had been overshadowed by a general lack of 'ideas of comradely attitude and revolution'.[63] O'Reilly's sober resumé of fourteen months in the Ulitsa Vorovskogo was an obvious rejection of petty denunciations and scholastic Marxism.

When the next Irish group (Prendergast, Sinclair and 'Crutt') arrived at the school in January 1934[64] they found it in the throes of a new *chistka*. This 'purge' within the Soviet party went on for two years and led to a national expulsion-rate of over eighteen percent.[65] In addition, the ILS had established a Cadres Department to oversee 'conspiratorial regulations' and serve as a link between the school and the Soviet political police (OGPU).[66] Immediately following the murder of Kirov, the Leningrad party leader, in December 1934, students at the ILS were warned about making acquaintances outside the school, especially with women. Visiting restaurants and bars frequented by foreigners could likewise lead to expulsion from the course.[67]

III

The procedure of profferring charges of political deviancy was initiated by the teachers and/or sector leadership. A meeting of the sector was then called by the school administrative cell of the VKP/b, which usually passed a detailed resolution condemning the 'errors' of the student. He or she was expected to practise 'self-criticism' before the assembly, and if the oral confession was considered inadequate, a written one was demanded.[68] When especially serious infringements were under investigation the file was sent to the ICC. By 1934-1935 this arbitration council frequently made short shrift of the defendant's claims and voted in favour of censure or expulsion. For the English-speaking students such an eventuality meant, at worst, being sent home in disgrace; expelled students from countries under fascist or authoritarian rule were often arrested.

One month into their schooling the Irish students of the 1934-1935 course took part in the winter *praktika* (practical work), visiting the huge AMO car factory in the capital and two collective farms in the Moscow Region. Some students disagreed with the school supervisor about the state of sanitary conditions in the villages, others were shocked by the sight of so many young beggars on the streets, the so-called *bezprizorny* – parentless, homeless children. 'Crutt' from Dublin was censured for general indolence and complaints about the food. The supervisor ('Dexter') was also unhappy about the tendency of 'Crutt' and Prendergast ('Garden') to insist on their right to possess a personal opinion.[69] Both Irishmen were again in trouble soon afterwards. In February 1934 they visited Tom Bell in his room at the hotel *Soyuznaya,* in order to continue a discussion on Irish political problems held in the school the previous day. They later visited a café, returned to the ILS around midnight and found the gate locked. 'Crutt' climbed over the fence, Prendergast had to wait ninety minutes before the porter deigned to open. A heated exchange took place and the matter was reported. Tom Bell's excessive drinking was noted by the officials examining the case, but that was no secret in upper Comintern circles. In fact, the Secretariat of the Irish Revolutionary Workers' Groups had written to the CI three years earlier, condemning Bell's sectarian attitude towards Republicans and Larkinites and calling for 'his expulsion as unworthy of holding membership' in any Comintern Section – he was reported as being drunk at the conference (April 1930) which launched the new Communist paper in Ireland, *Workers' Voice.*[70] After the nocturnal escapades of the young Dublin duo had been duly

debated and censured, the whole group, including the *proforg*, retaliated by writing an article for the 'wall paper', a stencilled news sheet which acted as a notice board for complaints and suggestions. In it they complained that they were not allowed to visit certain Moscow shops or talk to Russians. During the May Day demonstration, for example, the British and Irish students had to play deaf mutes as they marched alongside a delegation from a Moscow factory.[71] School employees attributed these criticisms of *konspiratsiya* regulations to the 'weak leadership' in the sector, and to the fact that instruction was often isolated from the actual problems of the 'home' country – a further reference to the poor quality of teaching staff. A 'bad approach', it was implied, was apparent in the overall dealings with the Irish, their national struggle not being reflected in the syllabus.

Dissatisfaction was again openly expressed by the English-speaking students during the second *praktika* of 1934, a one month visit in August to Kharkov and collective farms in the Ukraine. The sector was divided into brigades in order to write articles. Thirty to forty were subsequently collected for the British Communist press. This was an example of the senseless copying of 'socialist competition' methods which were propagated to boost industrial production. Counterproductive also was the sheer bulk of the programme – the students did not receive one day off during the entire month, a fact which was portrayed by their supervisor as an indication of diligence and enthusiasm. On the credit side, Prendergast and some others were praised for their aptitude for public speaking. Nonetheless, the Irishman's attitude to the whole concept of 'practical work' was still deemed 'unhealthy', but as he was at heart 'a good Party element', he was seen to be in need of 'special attention'.[72] Some English and Scottish trainees faced charges of serious political deviation before a sector meeting in November 1934. 'Crutt' and Prendergast were again charged with an 'incorrect attitude to conspiracy' and roundly censured for not attending a meeting on the Chinese Revolution. Prendergast was the only student to vote against the conglomerate resolution at the end of the sitting.[73]

A far more profound challenge to any internalised loyalties of the students to the Soviet party ensued in connection with the summary executions carried out in Soviet cities, especially in Leningrad, Moscow and the Ukraine, 'in revenge' for the murder of Kirov. Among the Leningrad victims were alleged ex-supporters of Czarism, the bloodbath in the Ukraine was directed at 'bourgeois nationalist' poets and other intellectuals.[74] The membership of Sector 'E' passed a motion in early January 1935 approving of the massacres. Moreover, they transferred the Stalinist fiction of the 'dangers' created by the Zinovievite 'opposition' to British conditions, calling for renewed struggle against all political deviations, particularly the 'Trotskyite and pseudo-revolutionary tactics' of the British Independent Labour Party (ILP).[75] The English-speaking students were drummed together soon afterwards to condemn the statements of the British Labour Party and the *Daily Herald* against the continuing executions of persons without trial. The obligatory resolution praised the 'proletarian firmness' of Russian state organs.[76]

The next investigatory tribunal held in Sector 'E' was to be a day of reckoning for Prendergast and two others. The charges they were confronted with hinged on repeated breaches of security, drinking, returning to the school premises late at night, the untidy state of their rooms, late rising and other 'remnants of petty-bourgeois individualism'.[77] In his contrite statement to the sector leadership, Prendergast explained his recalcitrance by referring to the 'alien ideology' he had brought from Ireland. Before promising to prove his worth in future, the twenty year-old Dubliner linked his 'non-Communist understanding of the role and nature of the Communist Party' to 'mistakes' made by the CPI in supporting the 'minority motion' at the Republican Congress held in Dublin in September 1934. At the Congress Seán Murray and his associates had voted in favour of 'a united front of the working class and small farmers ... to unite the Irish Republic'. The 'majority motion', supported by Nora and Roddy Connolly, Mick Price and others, called for a 'Workers' Republic' . The majority

platform was perceived as the demand for the founding of another left-wing party in Ireland.[78] Murray's preference, arguably in the widest interests of anti-imperialist unity, was severely criticised by the Comintern's Anglo-US Secretariat for promoting 'a line which completely liquidated the identity of the Party'.[79]

Prendergast's next, and last, clash with the guardians of ideological orthodoxy was the gravest to date. In discussions which preceded yet another motion supporting the unabating arrests of so-called Zinovievites, he had expressed 'tactical reservations' and came out in favour of giving them a public trial. The resolution of the sector's party committee called this 'a serious political mistake ... arising from bourgeois-democratic and labourist remnants'.[80] The subsequent confession of Jim Prendergast was presumably dictated to him, so abject was its tone, so distant its translation of Soviet polit-doggerel from normal English. He now interpreted his reservations about the summary sentencing of alleged enemies as 'a misunderstanding of the real essence and position of Trotskyism today'. Prendergast then vowed 'to avoid all traces of rotten liberalism' in future, and lauded 'criticism and self-criticism' *(kritika i samokritika)* as 'the most scientific revolutionary method for the strengthening of ourselves and the Party'.[81]

A resolution passed by the class shortly before its members left for home in summer 1935 contained the usual admonitions about 'sins of omission' (breaches of conspiracy, refusal to buy state bonds at the proscribed deduction rate from the paltry student allowance), but also some sharp criticisms of how instruction had been given. Although the number of subjects taught had been reduced and consultations had helped struggling students, the teachers were once again the butt of caustic commentary – that individual lecturers knew nothing about the lives of the students and could not therefore advise them properly; that the teaching staff needed to acquire a better grasp of English and conditions in the West; and that their part-time employment elsewhere militated against any real commitment to Sector 'E'.[82]

During the Seventh Comintern Congress in the summer of 1935 British, Irish and Australian delegates were invited to meet the ILS leadership and discuss how the school's graduates had fared on their return. Bell, Chairman of Sector 'E', opened the meeting on 27 August by drawing attention to the selection and quality of the students hitherto 'delegated'. He complained of their 'extreme inclinations to individualism, workers' aristocracy and bourgeois culture'. Peter Kerrigan (CPGB) noted that the ILS graduates tended to isolate themselves from party-members. Harry Pollitt spoke on the 'formalism' of students who had completed a 'long' course. Pat Devine (CPI) stated that the five leading comrades in Dublin were ILS trainees. Another five had dropped out of party life, but were not hostile, and a further three were inactive. He was critical of the lack of attention paid to students from smaller countries in the sector and questioned how 'party loyalty' was imparted at the school. Devine aptly termed it 'a model in distorted form', which did not equip party functionaries to work independently. In a reference to the latest Irish graduates (such as Prendergast), Devine mentioned that they had expressed a self-critical attitude on their return and that he personally was at a loss to comprehend why they were considered so bad in Moscow and good comrades in Ireland. The reaction of the Russian-born teaching staff to the criticisms was revealing. Greshenin responded to the British complaint that the school did not make sufficient allowance for the low educational level of the CPGB members sent there by stating that the knowledge which the English-speaking students had brought to the USSR was 'un-Marxist' and 'had therefore to be liquidated'. In her remarks about the graduates, Kirsanova concentrated on the 'bad elements' (including Harry Wicks, by then a prominent Trotskyite), and picked out Prendergast for special recollection. She indulged in self-praise, recounting how she had seen to it that the sector was mobilised to counter his 'lack of vigilance'. However, the ILS Rector did admit that the teaching programme lacked sufficient international content. She requested the foreign party representatives to send teachers, who, in co-operation with

instructors from the VKP/b, would design a new syllabus. She also agreed that separate sectors should be established for the Irish and the Australians.[83]

In the ensuing period the problem of not taking up the assigned number of allotted places continued to annoy the school authorities. The CPGB sent only ten students in autumn 1935. The remaining twelve vacancies were due to problems which all Comintern Sections had in common. The British leadership could not release any more promising cadres due to pressures of party work. In any case, the scope for selection was unnecessarily constricted by the reluctance of the ILS, despite appeals from Pollitt, to subsidise the families of students, hence the predominance of bachelors in Sector 'E'.[84]

The final Irish intake of McGregor, Moraghan and Morrison was in a group of eight for the course between October 1935 and January 1937.[85] The total sector size was smaller than usual, only sixteen in all, including three aspirants.[86] These were promising graduates who continued their studies in order to attain lecturer status.[87] At the close of the first term Tom Bell drew a positive picture of the group's progress, while noting their difficulties in mastering theoretical subjects of which they had little or no previous knowledge. All students were held to have a correct political attitude, despite some 'worker-aristocracy, economist and petit-bourgeois remnants'. On this occasion the Irish escaped being singled out for recrimination. Two English class-mates, however, were criticised for not 'grasping the difference between the roles of the trade unions in the USSR and the capitalist countries'. While not a single student showed 'Trotskyite' or 'Zinovievite' tendencies, some had asked why Trotsky had not been expelled from the VKP/b far earlier. Bell correctly assessed the source of this uncomfortable line of enquiry – the 'History of the VKP/b' course – was notorious for its formalised teaching methods.[88] During the 1935-1937 course it again became apparent that the students had insufficient time to go through the voluminous material. As a consequence, not enough hours were devoted to Irish and Australian agriculture, a particular point of weakness, as the students attending from these countries were all from urban backgrounds.[89] The Irish trainees were awarded excellent marks on completion of the course, especially as regards application to study and active participation.[90] They had received extra tuition from CPGB functionaries who were working either in the school or as advisors in ECCI departments: Max Raylock, Jimmy Shields, Tom Bell, Bob McIlhone and Hymie Lee ('Robson'). A special Irish history course was drafted in February 1936 to cover the preceding two centuries, with special emphasis on the post-1916 period. It is not known if the lectures (seventy-one hours) were actually given in the nine months remaining.[91]

IV

Any assessment of the value of the Lenin School for those offering and receiving training is perforce overshadowed by the relationship between 'centre' and 'periphery' and the efficiency, or even desirability, of conducting a revolutionary movement from a single headquarters with almost military discipline. The tension addressed in the title of this article – between the need to promote 'proletarian' academic scholarship and turn out ideologically conformist party functionaries skilled in agitation and organisational tasks – was really never overcome, at least as far as the English-speaking students are concerned. In other words, a synthesis of these conflicting desiderata was never found. The 'dispatching' CPs were loath to send any of their own few intellectuals to Moscow, where the instruction was really tailored along intellectual lines and far too academic for those actually sent – in the main, young workers with little formal education. The open exchange of opinion among prominent foreign Communists and the ILS leadership on the occasion of the movement's last world congress (August 1935) also demonstrates that the CPGB and CPI spokesmen were politely sceptical about the school's ultimate value and insinuated that the graduates were often unfitted for immediate party duties on return as they did not speak 'the workers' language' any more, but were inclined to parrot

the Stalinist phraseology they had internalised, showing themselves to be mentally and operationally inflexible. A sensible compromise would have been the setting up of schools, financed by the Soviets, in the country in question. The Comintern's recommendation to its sections to set up 'Central Party Schools' in 1936 was, like the promised 'nationalisation' of the ILS syllabus with the help of foreign teachers in 1935-1936 (like the introduction of a special history course for the Irish), a case of 'too little too late'. The proposed reforms should not be interpreted as an indication that Moscow was willing to grant more autonomy to its national sections. By the late 1930s Stalin and his advisors had written off the international movement, its *raison d'être* was at variance with Soviet foreign policy as evidenced by the change from collective security with the Western powers to an accommodation with fascist Germany. In any case, the Comintern central *apparat* was more or less paralysed by 1938, the shutting down of all CI schools went hand in hand with the arrest of the most important Comintern functionaries.[92]

The Irish party made good use of the educational opportunities offered by the ILS, the leading cadres of the post-1933 CPI were Lenin School graduates. In the first years, Larkin and the IWL members he 'delegated' to the ILS had little or no idea of the real purpose behind Moscow's schools. Breslin and Denn, for example, talked of going to study at the 'Lenin University', and the latter was even congratulated on being picked for the course by his colleagues on Dublin Trades Council.[93] Their present to Denn of an inscribed gold watch later led to difficulties at Ulitsa Vorovskogo 25a: the presentation ceremony in Dublin was deemed a grave breach of conspiracy regulations. Why the British party, in contrast to the Irish, was obviously reluctant to make full use of Comintern schooling, or indeed place its ILS graduates in leading positions once they had returned,[94] is not entirely due to the lack of attention paid to British conditions during instruction at the ILS. Perhaps the leadership of the CPGB, in the main working class militants radicalised before or during the First World War and therefore somewhat older than leading Irish Communists, feared that the returned cadres from the ILS might ensconce themselves within the party citadel, to emerge later from their Trojan horse and commit regicide. This is precisely what happened to Larkin Senior, and was uppermost in Togliatti's mind during the same period (1928-1929), when the sitting leadership of the Italian party was at odds with Moscow.[95] Irish and British students differed from other language-groups in the school on one specific level. Few of the English-speaking trainees had been disciplined from an early age by growing up in a Marxist counter-culture (opposed to 'bourgeois values'), as was the case, for example, with Austrian ('Austromarxism') or German contemporaries. An ILS student from Berlin or Vienna could usually refer to a linear political *vita*, a process of political socialisation which had begun in the Kindergarten of socialist or communist-run municipalities, and continued via the left-wing boy scouts or girl-guides movement (*Rote Falken* were co-educational) and the Communist Youth to full party membership at eighteen.

Few students at the ILS from Britain or Ireland could boast of such a political development.[96] This was not a drawback. On the contrary, by having to operate politically under the hegemony of bourgeois, popular mass-culture, British and Irish Communists were compelled to seek points of co-ordination and potential allies outside the narrow party sphere of influence, particularly, and with no little success, in the Minority Movement, among the unemployed, in trade unions and trades councils. Such approaches were more or less closed to German-speaking Communists as the Social Democrats usually controlled such bodies, brooked no rivals and rejected the very idea of cross-party proletarian organisations. In the Irish case, the political socialisation of those who attended the ILS was specific and comparatively unusual. A considerable number of Irish 'delegates' to the Lenin School had acquired the first stirrings of a revolutionary *Weltanschauung* not in the labour movement proper, but in the IRA.[97] The Labour Party in the Irish Free State had not proved attractive, partly because of its quietist rôle during the years 1917-1923, partly because it did not recruit individual members in any

concerted way until the 1930s. It can be argued that by virtue of their experience in clandestine or banned organisations (IRA, Saor Éire, RWGs), the Irish students were well-suited to an equally secret type of schooling in Moscow. Conversely, their strong sense of historical position and tradition made them perhaps more critical of exaggerated notions of 'vigilance', ideological purity and conformism. It may be surmised that, having rejected the native conventional authority of Catholicism, they were sensitive to, and uncomfortable about, the ideological zealotry propounded in Moscow, despite the degree of homage they continued to pay to the Soviet experiment in later life. Another striking feature of Irish Lenin School 'biographies' are the breaks in continuity created by extraneous forces such as emigration or the decline in influence of the CPI after 1936, including its organisational ruptures and re-groupings. Such factors may have influenced the noted preference given by Irish Communists to trade, union affairs as against party activity in the strict sense.

A majority of the Irish students at the ILS comprised ex-IRA men, of whom some were veterans of the War Of Independence and Civil War. They had suffered imprisonment of various lengths, especially during 1922-1923, and, in a few cases, in the last years of the Cosgrave administration.[98] Twelve had been prominent in Dublin left-wing circles, seven in Belfast's unemployed struggles. Individual cases demonstrate the radicalisation of Irish political life in the early 19308. Jim Hale lost his Fianna Fáil membership because of 'communist activities'[99], Loftus Johnston was expelled from the Orange Order for the same reason.[100] Others had been members of the Labour Party in Belfast; Johnston, O'Reilly and Murray had joined the CPGB while working in Britain; Moraghan had emigrated to Australia in 1928 and joined the Comintern Section there.[101] Of those who remained members of the CPI after returning to Ireland, O'Reilly, Prendergast and McGregor later fought in the International Brigades in Spain.[102] Liam McGregor, found by the Cadres Department of the International Brigades in Figueras to be 'sound in every respect',[103] was killed on the last day of fighting, on 23 September 1938, shortly before his twenty-fourth birthday.[104] While detailed information about the political activities of Irish ILS graduates is not available for the later period, the great majority remained active trade unionists, and at least nine (Murray, O'Reilly, Larkin, Prendergast, Geehan, Watters, Johnston, Moraghan, Sinclair) were leading party members for a lengthy period afterwards. An equally large number, however, dropped out of Communist politics entirely. After the dissolution of the Dublin Branch of the CPI in 1941, Jim Larkin Junior and Jim Prendergast, joined the Labour Party. Larkin went on to become Irish Labour's 'lost leader', Prendergast subsequently emigrated to England and became an official of the National Union Of Railwaymen. Betty Sinclair retained until death the vision of 'the new world' she had seen in Russia.[105] The only Irish graduate of the Lenin School to remain in this 'new world' was Pat Breslin, the sole intellectual of the entire Irish school intake. He became a well-known journalist and translator in Moscow. Presumably shadowed as a 'suspicious foreigner' for years, he was arrested in December 1940 and died two years later in confinement.

Notes

1. RTsKhIDNI, *Kratkii Putevoditel'* (short guide, Moskva, 1993), pp.93f. See Barry McLoughlin and Emmet O'Connor, 'Sources on Ireland and the Communist International, *Saothar, 21*, 1996, pp. 101-107.
2. Especially the index-cards (Auszuge) containing the decisions of the main ECCI bodies on the running of the school. Roughly 450 such resolutions were passed between 1925 and 1942 and can be found in greater detail within the stocks of the pertinent body or commission (e.g. Politsekretariat des EKKI, Kleine Kommission des EKKI etc). A great deal of this material is in the German language, the *lingua franca* of the Comintern until the mid-1930s.
3. For example those of Harry Wicks, mentioned below. Of interest for the second half of the 1930s are the reminiscences of the one-time Minister of Defence in the GDR, Heinz Hoffmann. See Heinz Hoffmann, *Mannheim-Madrid-Moskau* (Berlin, 1981).

4. Little has appeared to date on the subject of the Comintern schools. The CPGB leader J. T. Murphy sat on the ILS board and wrote a balance of the school's first year in the *Communist International* (September 30, 1927), pp.267-269. See also Beatrix Herlemann, 'Der deutschsprachige Bereich an den Kaderschulen der Kommunistischen Internationale', *Internationale Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung (IWK)*, 2 (1982), pp.205-229; José Gotovich, 'Ons Sovjetvaderland'. 'Belgische leerlingen op de communistische leersschool (1926-1940)', in Eddy Soles/Emmanuel Waegemans (eds, *Montagnes Russes. La Russe vecue par les Belges)*, (Bercham, 1989), pp.195-210; Leonid G. Babitchenko, 'Die Kaderschulung der Komintern', in Hermann Weber et al, (eds, *Jahrbuch fur Historische Kommunismusforschung 1993*, (Berlin, 1993), pp.37-59; Mike Milotte, *Communism In Modern Ireland. The Pursuit Of The Workers' Republic Since 1916*, (Dublin 1984).
5. The Communist University Of Western National Minorities (KUNMZ) and the Communist University Of Eastern Workers (KUTv) were set up in 1921. Four years later the University For Chinese Workers (KUTK) was established. There were also highly secret 'milpol' (military-political) courses, the graduates of which were later prominent in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War or in the resistance movements in occupied Europe after 1941.
6. RTsKhIDNI, 495/14/500: 50f.
7. For the statistics see Alec Nove, An *Economic History Of The USSR*, (Harmondsworth, 1978), pp.250f.
8. RTsKhIDNI, 531/1/32: 1-34.
9. *ibid.*, 531/1/39: 12-20; 495/30/295: 25.
10. *ibid.*, 531/1/230: 97-111.
11. *ibid.*, 531/l/169: 2.
12. I am indebted to Monty Johnstone (London) for providing me with lists of the students sent by the CPGB, which I checked with those names of British graduates listed in RTsKhIDNI, 531/1/files 32,39, 106.
13. RTsKhIDNI, 531/1/246: 165-177.
14. *ibid.*, 531/1/106: 89.
15. *ibid.*, 495/4/306: 4,19.
16. For Ferguson's subsequent career see Manus O'Riordan, 'James Larkin Junior and the Forging of a Thinking Intelligent Movement', *Saothar 19*, 1994, pp. 53-68, esp. p.57.
17. RTsKhIDNI, 495/4/63: 204; 495/89/63: 6Sf.; 495/89/65: 6, 8.
18. *ibid.*, 495/218/1: 57-63.
19. *ibid.*, 495/18/1085: 4-6,108-110.
20. *ibid*, 495/18/1109: 2,152-153.
21. *ibid.*, 495/164/500: 52-82.
22. Unless otherwise stated, the account of the 1927-1930 class is based on the memoirs of a British participant. See Harry Wicks, *Keeping My Head. The Memoirs Of A British Bolshevik*, (London 1992) , pp.72-125.
23. RTsKhIDNI, 495/3/19: 37.
24. *ibid.*, 495/7/3, Protocols of Meetings, 1 August, 1927; 9 August, 1927.
25. *ibid.*, 495/3/46: 2.
26. Auszüge aus EKKI-Beschlüssen, Beschluss der Engeren Kommission, 23 April, 1926.
27. Two of his letters from Moscow were reproduced in *Labour History News* No.3, (Spring, 1987), p.10.
28. Born in Dublin in 1887, Carney studied chemistry in England, and, on his return to Ireland, became involved in the labour movement. He emigrated to America during the First World War, edited a socialist newspaper and worked for Jim Larkin's release from prison. He returned with Larkin to Ireland in 1923, but broke with him in 1936 and moved to London. For details of his American sojourn see Richard Hudelson, 'Jack Carney and the Truth in Duluth', *Saothar 19*, 1994, pp.129-139.
29. ROP was in competition countrywide with major oil suppliers like Shell and Esso and went out of business in the early 1930s. See Uinseann MacEoin, *The IRA In The Twilight Years*, (Dublin, 1997), p.38.
30. RTsKhIDNI, 495/89/52: 6,9-15.
31. *ibid.*, 495/89/49: 4-11.
32. *ibid.*, 495/89/49: 18-19.
33. *ibid.*, 495/218/7: 12.
34. *ibid.*, 495/218/17: 15.
35. *ibid.*, 495/218/1: 72.
36. *ibid.*, 495/218/7: 13.
37. *ibid.*, 495/218/4: 3,16.
38. Real wages dropped between forty and fifty percent in the years 1928-1930. See Solomon T. Schwarz, *Labor In The Soviet Union*, (New York, 1952), pp.137-139.
39. Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, *The Comintern. A History of International Communism From Lenin To Stalin*, (Houndmills, 1996), pp.98-100.
40. RTsKhIDNI, 495/3/203: 57.
41. *ibid.*, 495/4/2: 19,32,33.
42. *ibid.*, 531/1/14: 166.
43. Information from Dónal Nevin, (Dublin).

44. The classic work on Russian party purges remains J. A. Getty, *Origins Of The Great Purges. The Soviet Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938,* (Cambridge, 1985).
45. Wicks notes that one Jugoslav student was arrested. This practice became more widespread from the mid-1930s. In the Austrian 'Ya' Sector, for example, at least two students and one teacher were arrested in 1936/1937. One survived the murderous camps, the others were shot.
46. RTsKhIDNI, 495/89/54: 53-63a. The delegation included Helena Moloney and P. T. Daly from the Dublin Trades Council. Tommy Geehan, later to study at the ILS, was one of three delegates from Belfast. See the official Dublin Trades Union And Labour Council's booklet, *Union Of Socialist Soviet Republics. Report Of The Irish Labour Delegation,* (Dublin,1929).
47. See his lively memoirs: Robert Stewart, *Breaking The Fetters,* (London, 1967).
48. Thomas Bell, *Pioneering Days,* (London, 1941), pp.47-53.
49. Vilém Kahan, 'The Communist International, 1919-43. The Personnel of its Higher Bodies', *International Review Of Social History,* XXI, (1976), 2, pp.151-185.
50. RTsKhIDNI, 531/1/237: 86.
51. *ibid.*, 495/218/4: 12.
52. *ibid.*, 495/218/4: 10.
53. *ibid.*, 495/218/17: 10.
54. *ibid.*, 495/218/7: 1-2.
55. *ibid.*, 495/20/865, Instruktionen uber die Aufnahmebedingungen in die Internationale Leninschule, n.d., (May, 1931).
56. *ibid.*, 495/89/65: 6.
57. *ibid.*, 495/218/15: 2-10.
58. *ibid.*, 495/218/16: 18.
59. ibid., 495/218/10: 5.
60. *ibid.*, 495/218/12: 11.
61. *ibid.*, 495/218/11: 7.
62. *ibid.*, 495/218/11: 14.
63. *ibid.*, 495/218/11: 5.
64. No 'delegates' from Ireland attended the 1932/1933 courses. (*ibid.*, 531/1/229: 54). Six places were assigned to the CPI for the 1934/1935 intake. (*ibid.*, 495/4/273, Protokoll Nr. 348 der Ausserordentlichen Sitzung der Politkommission des Politsekretariats des EKKI, 21.12.1933).
65. Getty, *op. cit.*, pp.48-57.
66. RTsKhIDNI, 495/4/273: 20.
67. *ibid.*, 531/1/52, Pravila konspiratsii, 9 December, 1934.
68. See the interesting essays by Berthold Unfried on the whole complex of Stalinist criticism and self-criticism: 'Die Konstruierung des Stalinschen Kaders und 'Kritik und Selbstkritik'', *Traverse,* 3 (1995), pp. 71-86; 'Rituale von Konfession und Selbstkritik: Bilder vom Stalinistischen Kader', in Hermann Weber et al (eds). *Jahrbuch fur Historische Kommunismusforschung 1994,* (Berlin, 1994), pp. 148-164.
69. RTsKhIDNI, 531/1/72: 9-13.
70. *ibid.*, 495/89/65: 1-4.
71. *ibid.*, 531/2/62: 17.
72. *ibid.*, 531/1/172: 21-23.
73. *ibid.*, 531/1/170: 14-23.
74. Robert Conquest, *Stalin And The Kirov Murder,* (Oxford, 1989), pp.44-47.
75. RTsKhIDNI, 531/1/171: 1.
76. *ibid.*, 531/1/171: 2-3.
77. *ibid.*, 531/1/171: 5-6.
78. Seán Cronin, *Frank Ryan. The Search For The Republic,* (Dublin, 1980), pp. 56-58.
79. RTsKhIDNI, 495/89/96: 56-64, esp. p.56. The Comintern employees and 'Irish handlers' Max Raylock and Jimmy Shields attended the famous meeting in Rathmines. See *International Press Correspondence,* No. 53/1934, 12 October, 1934, p.1396f.
80. RTsKhIDNI, 531/2/63: 7.
81. *ibid.*, 531/2/63: 8-9. In contrast to Prendergast, Betty Sinclair (Jean Napier) was judged to possess a 'correct political line on all questions'. Notwithstanding her successful acclimatisation, she was accused of showing traits often found in English-speaking students: individualism and a passive attitude to vigilance. (*ibid.*, 495/218/3: 62.)
82. *ibid.*, 531/1/172: 22.
83. *ibid.*, 531/1/171: 27-33.
84. *ibid.*, 531/1/171: 34-35.
85. *ibid.*, 531/1/106: 2.
86. *ibid.*, 531/1/248: 175; 531/1/249: 14,220.
87. Details of the 'Aspirantur' at the Lenin School can be found in *ibid.*, 495/20/865: 212ff.
88. *ibid.*, 531/1/173: 1.
89. *ibid.*, 531/1/173: 2-3.

90. *ibid.*, 531/1/173: 6-8.
91. *ibid.*, 495/14/337: 86-92.
92. For the strategy behind the persecution of the Comintern leadership see Boris A. Starkov, 'The trial that was not held', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 46 (1994) 8, pp.1297-1315.
93. Irish Labour History Society Museum And Archives, Mss 19/DTC/1/12, entry of 13 March, 1928. I am indebted to Theresa Moriarty for copies of the DTC minutes and other information about the Irish ILS group in the years 1928 to 1930.
94. This lack of interest is emphasised by Harry Wicks, *op. cit.*, pp.124-127. Margaret McCarthy, a CPGB-member who worked for the Profintern and attended night-classes at the ILS makes the same point. See her memoirs: Margaret McCarthy, *Generation In Revolt*, (London, 1953), esp. pp.216-218.
95. E. J.Hobsbawm, *Revolutionaries*, (London, 1977), p.50.
96. With the exception, of course, of those who were reared in the 'Little Moscows' of Scotland or South Wales. See Stuart Macintyre, *Little Moscows. Communism And Working-Class Militancy In Inter-war* Britain, (London, 1980).
97. This also explains the orientation of Irish Communists towards winning over members of the IRA, the mass revolutionary movement in independent Ireland. See Emmet O'Connor, 'Reds and the Green: problems of the history and historiography of Communism in Ireland', *Science & Society* (New York), 1 (61), Spring 1997, pp.113-118.
98. According to the RTsKhIDNI files located to date, Murray, Ashmore, Geehan and O'Reilly took part in the War Of Independence. Those who participated in the Civil War and suffered internment included O'Reilly, Clark and Jim Hale. Liam McGregor was expelled from the IRA in 1932 because of his Communist leanings.
99. RTsKhIDNI, 495/218/16: 15.
100. *ibid.*, 495/218/10: 11.
101. Most of the biographical data quoted is taken from the cadre file (RTsKhIDNI, 495/218), supplementary information can be found in official CPI publications: *Communist Party Of Ireland. Outline History*, (Dublin, nd); *Irish Socialist Anniversary Supplement, 1933-1983.*
102. The participation of O'Reilly and Prendergast in the Dublin Branch of the CPI, and later in the Spanish Republican Army, is colourfully described in Joe Monks, *With The Reds in Andalusia*, (London, 1985). See also Patrick Byrne, *Memories Of The Republican Congress*, (London, nd).
103. RTsKhIDNI, 545/6/443: 32.
104. For an account of the battle see Bill Alexander, *British Volunteers For Liberty: Spain, 1936-1939*, (London, 1982), pp.214-216.
105. Hazel Morrissey, 'Betty Sinclair: a woman's fight for socialism, 1910-1981', *Saothar 9*, 1983, p. 124.