Irish Women and Radical Internationalism: From Suffrage to Antifascism, 1916-1939.



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Short Abstract

This thesis is a transnational political history of Irish women who proceeded from the suffrage campaign into the networks of interwar radical internationalism, grounded in the personal relationships and spatial contexts which shaped their careers. The project provides a detailed analysis of Irish women's engagement with internationalist movements such as international communism and antifascism. Adopting an inclusive definition of Irishness, activists born in Ireland are included in the study alongside those with Irish ancestry who identified with Irish political causes later in their careers. Figures prominent in the analysis include Charlotte Despard (1844-1939), Katherine Gillett Gatty (1870-1952), May O'Callaghan (1881-1973) and Hanna Sheehy Skeffington (1877-1946). The thesis offers a history of the Irish left that expands its focus beyond the island of Ireland, encompassing activism in locations such as East London during the First World War, Moscow in the late 1920s and continental European antifascist networks. In doing so, it offers insights into a broad spectrum of Irish radicals and their international counterparts.

The thesis demonstrates how a focus in the historiography of the Irish radical left on prominent socialist republican figures and organisations has marginalised women and obscured revealing case studies. Challenging a tendency in British and Irish women's history to consider women's internationalism as synonymous with liberal internationalism, my approach explores how radical communist-inspired internationalism influenced many activist women during this period. Responding to recent methodological insights in histories of international communism, particularly a turn towards transnational and biographical approaches, my project demonstrates how looking beyond formal Communist Party members can highlight hitherto obscure activists involved in Irish leftist groups and in the Comintern. Exploring a diverse set of Irish radical women alongside their comrades, this thesis ultimately argues that their profoundly transnational post-suffrage careers were sustained by connections to the initiatives and comradeships fostered by radical internationalism.

Long Abstract

This thesis is a transnational political history of Irish women who proceeded from the suffrage campaign into the networks of interwar radical internationalism, grounded in the personal relationships and spatial contexts which shaped their careers. The project provides a detailed analysis of Irish women's engagement with internationalist movements such as international communism and antifascism. Adopting an inclusive definition of Irishness, activists born in Ireland are included in the study alongside those with Irish ancestry who identified with Irish political causes later in their careers. Figures prominent in the analysis include Charlotte Despard (1844-1939), Katherine Gillett Gatty (1870-1952), May O'Callaghan (1881-1973) and Hanna Sheehy Skeffington (1877-1946). The thesis offers a history of the Irish left that expands its focus beyond the island of Ireland, encompassing activism in locations such as East London during the First World War, Moscow in the late 1920s and continental European antifascist networks. In doing so, it offers insights into a broad spectrum of Irish radicals and their international counterparts.

While the thesis is centred on the careers of Irish radical women with a background in the suffrage movement, it also details the lives of Irish and international comrades who had important ties to the central research subjects. The thesis therefore illuminates hitherto unknown aspects of the biographies of prominent figures, such as the Irish author Liam O'Flaherty (1896-1984) and the American literary Marxist Joseph Freeman (1897-1965). The project also highlights Irish connections within the post-suffrage careers of prominent feminists such as Sylvia Pankhurst (1882-1960) and Alice Park (1861-1961) while providing the first details on the post-suffrage careers of activists such as Eugenie Bouvier (1865-1933), a Russian immigrant who took part in one of the earliest acts of militancy in the British suffrage movement, and Nellie Cohen (1892-1980), a communist from an East London Jewish background who worked as Pankhurst's secretary.

The project adopts a methodology grounded in transnational and biographical approaches. Paying attention to the subjective side of historical experience, the project explores Irish radical women's identity formation and self-representation. Placing this analysis against a transnational backdrop allows the project to pursue further research avenues. First, it encourages us to understand the importance of cross-border connections and flows of ideas and people in shaping radical careers. Second, the transnational approach invites us to take seriously how operating in a movement that encouraged its adherents to navigate transnational spaces could transform activist trajectories. This project does not offer an extensive gendered analysis of Irish radical femininity and masculinity. However, it does explore how gender norms and relations were an important factor determining the space of political action open to women and men involved in radical internationalism.

The project draws on documents from a wide variety of archives, including numerous collections never before cited in a historical study of the Irish left. In particular, extensive use has been made of personal papers based in Irish, UK and US archives alongside documents from archives in the Russian Federation. While previous histories of the Irish left have drawn on the microfilmed Comintern documents now held in Queen's University Belfast, a further survey of the archival material in Moscow was conducted for this project that revealed material not included in this microfilm series. This includes several personnel files on Irish radicals and a subject file on Ireland maintained by the Comintern's International Women's Secretariat, which are herein analysed for the first time. Where the sources allow, the project prioritises ego-documents – such as diaries and personal correspondence – which are better capable of providing insights into Irish radical subjectivities than the political memoranda and surveillance material more commonly consulted in histories of the Irish left.

The opening chapter traces Irish women's entry into the networks of radical internationalism by examining the interactions between Sylvia Pankhurst's East London

socialist feminist group and Irish feminist and socialist circles in Dublin. This chapter introduces core research subjects who are traced throughout the thesis – women such as O'Callaghan, Despard and Sheehy Skeffington - by examining how they responded to the world revolution via the tumult of an insurrectionary Ireland. Paying close attention to the exchange of ideas and people between the East London Federation of Suffragettes and the Irish Women's Franchise League allows us to trace a departure point from which the Irish radical women central to this thesis entered into a wider revolutionary world. This world was shaped by the establishment of the Comintern in 1919, which marked a watershed moment in the history of internationalism. The first chapter contextualises the origins of the social-political networks and modes of organising that would influence how Irish women navigated radical internationalist networks in the decades to come.

The second chapter explores Irish radical women's activities in 1920s Dublin and beyond to illuminate the tensions between liberal and radical strands of women's internationalism, focusing in particular on Despard. Short-lived radical experiments and initiatives such as the Radical Club and the Workers' Party of Ireland are explored against the backdrop of a growing interest in transnational radicalism among a section of Ireland's intelligentsia. Through an extended discussion of Despard's engagement with Comintern front groups and a detailed analysis of the 1926 Fifth World Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Dublin, the chapter demonstrates that by the late 1920s the initiatives of the Comintern had become a central means of funnelling the activist energies of the Irish radical women who emerged from the suffrage-socialist network of the first chapter.

The following chapter continues the biography of O'Callaghan, an important figure in the opening chapter due to her work as Sylvia Pankhurst's sub-editor. While it has previously been noted that Kathleen O'Brennan, an Irish republican, worked in the Comintern's press

department, this chapter reveals that this was a misidentification. O'Callaghan was the only Irish woman to ever occupy a prominent role in the Comintern headquarters. This chapter provides a detailed examination of her Comintern career, offering an extended analysis of the lived experience of a Comintern technical worker. O'Callaghan was involved, both directly and indirectly, with conducting the Soviet tours of leading western intellectuals during the formative years of Soviet cultural diplomacy. Examining her remarkable Moscow career in detail can suggest how certain instructive political histories of Irish leftist women have been neglected by a focus on socialist republicanism in Ireland. This chapter also outlines the hitherto unknown context surrounding the birth of O'Flaherty's second daughter, making a significant contribution to the biography of one of Ireland's leading early 20th century writers.

Globally, 1929 signalled a crisis of capitalism which encouraged transnational radical initiatives and influenced the Comintern to adopt its fraught 'Third Period' analysis of world events. The fourth chapter explores how this context shaped Irish women's continued engagement with radical internationalism, focusing in particular on political tourism and British-Irish communist relations. Charlotte Despard's 1930 tour in the USSR is analysed against the backdrop of her own activist past and strained British-Irish communist relations. An extended analysis of Charlotte Despard's 1930 visit to the USSR demonstrates how the 'socialist-sixth-of-the-earth' underpinned radical enthusiasm among those who had to once more return to the capitalist world after their Soviet sojourns. Finally, the chapter examines how State and Church responses to a flowering of interest in communism in the Irish Free State provided a gamut of legislation and arrests that hindered women in Ireland and their counterparts abroad from engaging with radical internationalist initiatives.

The fifth and final chapter traces an arc towards disillusionment through examining Irish women's involvement in antifascist networks. Opening with an account of how Fermanagh-raised suffragette Gillett Gatty navigated the networks of feminist antifascism,

this chapter studies how these networks came to encompass a wide spectrum of internationalist women at the dawn of the Spanish Civil War. Gillett Gatty's activities as an operative for a feminist antifascist network are examined, in addition to Irish women's responses to the Spanish Civil War. This chapter also offers the first attempt to analyse the gender composition within various Irish radical groups, such as the Communist Party of Ireland, launched in 1933. This chapter concludes with a discussion of how Irish radical women were influenced by the and contributed to the cultural initiatives of the Popular Front era.

Two social network visualisations in the appendices offer an illustration of an argument threaded throughout the thesis: although the post-suffrage careers of the Irish women at the centre of this thesis were profoundly transnational, comradeships sustained over decades of activism proved remarkably durable and were defined by interconnectedness. A social network visualisation reveals that subjects of this thesis consistently operated within overlapping social and political circles.

The thesis demonstrates how a focus in the historiography of the Irish radical left on prominent socialist republican figures and organisations has marginalised women and obscured revealing case studies. Challenging a tendency in British and Irish women's history to consider women's internationalism as synonymous with liberal internationalism, my approach explores how radical communist-inspired internationalism influenced certain activist women during this period. Responding to recent methodological insights in histories of international communism, particularly a turn towards transnational and biographical approaches, my project demonstrates how looking beyond formal Communist Party members can highlight hitherto obscure activists involved in Irish leftist groups and in the Comintern. Exploring a diverse set of Irish radical women alongside their comrades, this thesis ultimately

argues that their profoundly transnational post-suffrage careers were sustained by connections to the initiatives and comradeships fostered by radical internationalism.

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I owe thanks to all those who have supported my research through friendship and hospitality. The Sheridan family provided wonderful cooked breakfasts and a place to stay on research trips to Dublin. My sister Annmarie, brother-in-law Phily and friends Barry Ó'Séanáin and John Cantwell generously provided me with places to stay while carrying out research in New York. In Palo Alto, Jack O'Sullivan and Mike Breger provided much-appreciated companionship. Misha Nakonechnyi helpfully proofread my Russian-language emails to archivists. In Moscow, James Ryan provided invaluable advice on navigating the archival bureaucracy. Dan Healey also assisted me in obtaining the correct visa for Russian archival research. Amid the heaviest snowfall that the city of Eugene had witnessed in decades, Bobbie Cirel provided a sanctuary from the blizzard. My Russian language tutors Natalia Keys and Andrey Belobra were essential in making sure I had sufficient knowledge of obscure Soviet vocabulary to tackle the Moscow archives. Rob Quinlan has been a constant source of friendship, encouragement and haute cuisine during my years at Oxford. Priyav Shah has been both a wonderful friend and an inspiration. Jack Doyle is not only a wonderful friend, but a brilliant comrade.

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A Note on Transliteration and Russian Sources

I have adopted the Library of Congress system without diacritical marks for Russian transliteration into English. The Russian ь (soft sign) is rendered with an apostrophe. Alternative spellings are used where there are commonly recognised English alternatives. For example: I write Trotsky rather than Trotskii and Mayakovsky rather than Maiakovskii. I have maintained the original spelling in cases of transliterations quoted from primary documents. All translations from Russian are my own.

The major archives of the Russian Federation adopt a standardised archival system, with repositories organised by a hierarchy of subdivisions: *fondi, opisi,* and *dela*. A standard reference to a Russian source will therefore take the following form: RGASPI (*Rossiiskii Gosudartsvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politischeskoi Istorii* Russian State Archive for Social and Political History) 495/218/31/1. The first three numbers refer to the *fondi, opisi* and *dela* respectively. The last number refers to the page or pages where the cited information can be found.

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List of Abbreviations

Archives

BAN	Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley
BLMC	British Library Manuscripts Collection
BKP	Breslin-Kelly Papers (Private Possession)
BOD	Bodleian Library, Oxford University
CUML	Columbia University Manuscript Library
DCLA	Dublin City Library and Archives
DDA	Dublin Diocesan Archives
GARF	*Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii* (State Archive of the Russian Federation)
HILA	Hoover Institution Library and Archives
IISH	International Institute of Social History
ILHA	Irish Labour History Archives
ML	Mitchell Library, University of New South Wales
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NLI	National Library of Ireland
NYPL	New York Public Library
PHM	People's History Museum
PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
QUB	Queen's University Belfast
RCPIHC	Royal College of Physicians in Ireland, Heritage Centre
RGALI	*Rossiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Isskustva* (Russian State Archive of Literature and Art)
RGASPI	*Rossiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsialno-Politicheskoi Istorii* (Russian State Archive of Social and Political History)
RP	Rathbone Papers (Private Possession)
TCDA	Trinity College Dublin Archive
TL	Tamiment Library, New York University
TNA	National Archives of the United Kingdom
UCDA	University College Dublin Archive
UOSC	University of Oregon Special Collections
WLLSE	Women's Library, London School of Economics

Journals

IC	*Irish Citizen*
WD	*Women's Dreadnought (until 1917), Workers' Dreadnought (after 1917)*

Organisations

Comintern	Communist International
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
CPI	Communist Party of Ireland
ECCI	Executive Committee of the Communist International
ELFS	East London Federation of Suffragettes
FOSR	Friends of Soviet Russia
ICA	Irish Citizen Army
ICWPA	International Class War Prisoners Aid
IIL	Irishwomen's International League
IRA	Irish Republican Army
ICPP	International Committee for Political Prisoners
IWS	International Women's Secretariat of the Communist International
IWWU	Irish Women Workers' Union
LBC	Left Book Club
LAI	League Against Imperialism
LRD	Labour Research Department
NTG	New Theatre Group
RILU	Red International of Labour Unions
RWG	Revolutionary Workers' Groups
SDF	Social Democratic Federation
SPI	Socialist Party of Ireland
VOKS	All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries
WFL	Women's Freedom League
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WIMC	Women's International Matteotti Committee
WIR	Workers' International Relief

WPI	Workers' Party of Ireland
WSPU	Women's Social and Political Union
WPDL	Women's Prisoners' Defence League
WWCAWF	Women's World Committee Against War and Fascism

‘The Future of Feminism’: Introduction

Introduction

In January 1937, Katherine Gillett Gatty, the Irish delegate at a Paris meeting convened to express support for Republican Spain, delivered a message of solidarity from the Irish left.[1] Describing the meeting to her comrade in Dublin, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, Gillett Gatty noted that she and several other women present ‘made a real suffragette shindy’ by heckling a speaker who cut short a Portuguese delegate’s contribution.[2] ‘The whole of the Spaniards *loved me* for leading this rowdy mess’ she noted ‘I know you in Ireland will approve of my “misconduct”’.[3]

A curious path led this Irish representative to heckling on a Paris platform in 1937. Gillett Gatty was born in 1870 in India, the daughter of a British army captain and the scion of a wealthy Fermanagh family. She spent much of her childhood on her Unionist family’s estate in Enniskillen, before moving to London on a permanent basis sometime in her teen years. During the campaign for women’s suffrage in Britain she was a member of the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU), and later the Women’s Freedom League (WFL), serving several sentences in Holloway prison as a result of her militancy.[4]

A lifelong socialist, she became women’s organiser for a Glasgow-based trade union in 1913.[5] After the war, she retained her connections to suffrage circles and hosted several

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[1] Katherine Gillett Gatty to Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, 14 January 1937, National Library of Ireland (Hereafter NLI) Sheehy Skeffington Papers (Hereafter SSP) MS 41,177/17.
[2] Katherine Gillett Gatty to Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, c. January 1937, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/17.
[3] Ibid. Emphasis in original.
[4] Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women’s Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide, 1866-1928* (London, 1999), pp. 241-242.
[5] Ibid, p. 242.

feminist 'At Homes' for members of the WFL.[6] In 1935, she spent several weeks travelling through the Soviet Union. Gillett Gatty was impressed, perceiving an abundance of pro-government sentiment and none of the supposed persecution trumpeted by the capitalist press.[7] The following summer, Gillett Gatty's return to Ireland came under the surveillance of the Irish Special Branch, who described her as a polyglot communist 'interested in all movements aiming at the destruction of Fascism.'[8] While reconnecting with Irish comrades from her suffrage days, such as Sheehy Skeffington, Gillett Gatty became involved in an Irish committee for solidarity with the leftist Spanish Republican cause. Conversant in French and Spanish and widely networked with socialists operating at an international level, Gillett Gatty was a natural choice to represent the Irish committee at the Paris conference in January 1937. This trajectory may appear unusual. Yet this thesis reveals that Gillett Gatty's activist career was far from unique for Irish women or their international counterparts.

From suffrage, through socialism, to anti-capitalist solidarity - this brief account of one woman's route to representing Ireland at an international gathering of antifascists provides a window onto the history of interwar internationalism explored in this project. Understanding networks qualitatively as 'fluid groups that served as vehicles for activists both to change the world and to change themselves', this project examines hitherto overlooked Irish women's engagement with the transnational networks of radical internationalism.[9]

What separates radical internationalism from other internationalisms? Radical internationalism was a revolutionary counterpoint to what has been termed 'new internationalism' or 'feminist internationalism': the liberal and pacifist initiatives which

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[6] *The Vote,* 4 January 1929, 11 January 1929, 18 January 1929.
[7] Katherine Gillett Gatty to Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, 7 November 1936 NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/17.
[8] 'Madame Gillet Gatty, Journalist and Authoress – Communist', report signed by P. Colleran, 14 October 1936, National Archive of Ireland (Hereafter NAI) Department of Justice (Hereafter JUS) JUS/2008/117/726.
[9] Robert Gildea, James Mark and Anette Warring, *Europe's 1968: Voices of Revolt* (Oxford, 2013), p. 5.

emerged in the post-Great War world that proved particularly appealing to feminist campaigners.[10] Yet, as this thesis explores, the initiatives of the Communist International (Comintern), the revolutionary organisation established by the Bolsheviks in 1919 which offered an alternative to the liberal League of Nations, the feminist Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and the reformist Second International, would also influence the political destines of many women activists. Utilising the term 'radical internationalism', as opposed to other related terms deployed by historians - such as 'proletarian internationalism' and 'communist internationalism' - allows this project to encompass other political strands distinct from but connected to international communism, such as antifascism.[11] This term also reflects how many activists tied to international communist networks were neither card-carrying Communists nor proletarians.

This thesis is a transnational political history of Irish women who proceeded from the suffrage struggle into the networks of interwar radical internationalism, grounded in the personal relationships and spatial contexts which shaped their careers. To situate the narrative within cross-border flows of ideas and people, this project selects its subjects not from a movement that operated within national borders but from the shared world of a transnational cause: the early twentieth campaign for women's enfranchisement, particularly its militant strands. In doing so, the thesis demonstrates that the current historiographical focus on Irish radicals who sought to link the Irish national question to the workers movement has rendered invisible to our historical sight line certain Irish activists who did not follow this well-worn path from Irish nationalism to socialist republicanism. Adopting an inclusive definition of

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[10] Glenda Sluga, 'Women, Feminisms and Twentieth-Century Internationalisms', in Sluga and Patricia Clavin (eds.), *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 61-84; Laura Beers, 'Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism Between the Wars', in Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James (eds.), *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics Since 1500* (New York, 2016), pp. 202-221.

[11] Bernhard Bayerlein, Kasper Braskén and Horgan Weiss, 'Transnational and Global Perspectives on International Communist Solidarity Organisations', in Weiss (eds.), *International Communism and Transnational Solidarity: Radical Networks, Mass Movements and Global Politics* (Leiden, 2017), pp. 1-27; Andreas Wirsching, 'Some Thoughts on Communist Internationalism', *Moving the Social,* 55 (2016), pp. 39-54.

Irishness, this project encompasses activists born on the island of Ireland in addition to those with Irish ancestry who identified with Irish political causes later in their careers.

This project explores Irish women who were involved in significant phases in the history of interwar radical women's internationalism – such as the wave of revolutionary activity at the close of the Great War, the global spread of an idealised vision of Soviet society in the late 1920s and antifascism in the 1930s. Recognising that any history of the early twentieth century Irish left that threads its argument through trade unions, paramilitary organisations and their aligned parties will inevitably marginalise women because women were often marginalised in such organisations, this project is grounded in the lives of women activists and their social-political networks. The emphasis on such women obliges the researcher to look beyond institutional and official records and to look instead at a larger variety of archives than is usual. By looking to a myriad of archives and emphasising the personal and political links connecting these women, this project reconstructs their multifaceted and resilient networks in the interwar period.

Some women appear in this thesis fleetingly, but at its core is a study of several women committed to internationalist causes whose careers have been under-studied or have not featured in current histories of the interwar Irish left, chiefly: Charlotte Despard (1844-1939), the ancestrally-Irish founder of the WFL who committed herself to promoting the communist cause in Ireland during the interwar years, May O'Callaghan (1881-1973), the Wexford-born sub-editor of an East London suffrage weekly who later became head of a translation department in the Comintern's Moscow headquarters, and Gillett Gatty (1870-1952), the aforementioned Fermanagh-raised suffragette who assisted antifascist initiatives in the 1930s. Hanna Sheehy Skeffington (1877-1946) is another important figure in this thesis who, although a ubiquitous presence in leftist Irish politics during this period and regularly

cited in historical accounts, has not before been situated within the transnational framework adopted in this study.

The events of this thesis are located between cities such as Dublin, Moscow, London and New York – occasionally encompassing several or all of these locations in a chapter. Although every women central to this thesis shared a background in the suffrage struggle, some pursued careers disparate from one another and took part in struggles that were disconnected from events in Ireland. However, tracking their distinctive routes through interwar radical internationalism reveals the multiplicity of political paths open to Irish women and their comrades during this period. Throughout the thesis we will encounter recurring figures, locations and campaigns, thereby demonstrating the overlapping webs of interaction that structured the broader network traced in each of the five chapters. Indeed, all of the activists prominent in this thesis were interlinked through both subtle and direct connections throughout these years.[12] This thesis emphasises how Irish radicals were not merely comparable to international counterparts, but profoundly interconnected with their global comrades through both formal and informal networks.

All of these connections were created and maintained within a world of Irish radicalism which can be imagined as a shared cultural space that overlapped with other internationalist cultural spaces. Mo Moulton notes that an accomplished transnational history 'upends established notions of centre and periphery, large and small, significant and marginal.'[13] By focusing on the micro-historical and the macro-historical and exploring marginal figures alongside the well-known, this project follows Moulton's call to play with the scales of historical enquiry. This task involves narrating this history through the various layers of social-political networks and the locations and moments where the line dividing

[12] See the Social Network Visualisation graphs in Appendix A and B of the thesis for an illustration emphasising this point.
[13] Michael de Nie, Mo Moulton, Ciaran O'Neill, 'Roundtable Discussion: Teaching Transnational Irish History', Éire-Ireland, 51:1&2 (Spring/Summer, 2016), p. 276.

political ideals and personal life became blurred, from participation in vast congresses to intimate interactions in private residences, from the act of organising antifascist resistance to the task of helping a comrade navigate a personal crisis.

A transnational history of the interwar Irish left that foregrounds women and the sources which allow us to reconstruct their world can both illuminate and challenge existing historiographical orthodoxy. My approach demonstrates how a focus in the historiography of the Irish radical left on prominent socialist republican figures and organisations has marginalised women in this historical narrative and obscured revealing case studies. Challenging a tendency in British and Irish women's history to consider women's internationalism to be synonymous with liberal internationalism, my approach demonstrates that a radical communist-inspired internationalism influenced certain activist women during the interwar period. Responding to recent methodological insights in histories of international communism, my project demonstrates how looking beyond those who operated through formal Communist Parties can highlight the careers of hitherto obscure activists involved in Irish leftist groups and in the operation of the Comintern. Exploring a diverse set of Irish radical women alongside their comrades, this thesis ultimately argues that their profoundly transnational post-suffrage careers were sustained by connections to the initiatives and comradeships fostered by radical internationalism.

Literature review

This project is situated at the historiographical intersection of Irish labour history, Irish women's history and histories of women's internationalism and international communism. Adopting this wider perspective can helps us to contextualise Irish history within wider historiographies and to make the case for the relevance of Irish case studies in histories of internationalism and transnational radicalism. What follows is an overview of the relevant historiographical interventions in these fields.

The years between the Irish revolution and the Second World War have prompted several studies from historians of the Irish radical left.[1] Biographies charting the contributions of individual activists have also proved a popular genre.[2] The historiography of the interwar Irish radical left in the 1920s and 1930s has largely centred on the debate surrounding why socialist republicanism - which can be concisely defined as an attempt to link the Irish national question to the labour movement - failed to gain major political support. For Richard English, socialist republicanism failed as a viable project due to the ideological incompatibility of republicanism and socialism. English perceptively outlines the insurmountable obstacles that Irish radicals faced in promoting socialist republicanism

[1] See for example: Seán Byers, *Seán Murray: Marxist-Leninist and Irish Socialist Republican* (Sallins, 2015); Richard English, *Radicals and the Republic: Socialist Republicanism in the Irish Free State, 1925-1937* (Oxford, 1984); Adrian Grant, *Irish Socialist Republicanism, 1909-1936* (Dublin, 2012); Fearghal McGarry, 'Radical Politics in Interwar Ireland, 1923-39', in Fintan Lane and Donal Ó'Drisceoil (eds.), *Politics and the Irish Working Class, 1830-1945* (London, 2005), pp. 207-228; Mike Milotte, *Communism in Modern Ireland: The Pursuit of a Worker's Republic Since 1916* (Dublin, 1984); Emmet O'Connor, *Reds and the Green: Ireland, Russia and the Communist Internationals, 1919-1943* (Dublin, 2004); Donal Ó'Drisceoil, 'The "Irregular and Bolshie Situation": Republicanism and Communism, 1921-36', in Fearghal McGarry (ed.), *Republicanism in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 42-60; Matt Treacy, *The Communist Party of Ireland, 1921-2011: Vol 1: 1921-1969* (Dublin, 2012).

[2] See for example: Seán Byers, *Seán Murray*; Fearghal McGarry, *Frank Ryan* (Dublin, 2010); Charlie McGuire, *Roddy Connolly and the Struggle for Socialism in Ireland* (Cork, 2008); Donal Ó'Drisceoil, *Peadar O'Donnell* (Cork, 2001), Emmet O'Connor, *Big Jim Larkin: Hero or Wrecker?* (Dublin, 2018); Emmet O'Connor and John Cunningham, *Studies in Irish Radical Leadership: Lives on the Left* (Manchester, 2016).

within a national context, such as the cohesive strength of Catholic nationalism.[3] Henry Patterson concluded similarly that interwar 'social republicanism' failed to provide a political message that could supersede Fianna Fáil's populism.[4] English defines the international links of Irish republicans throughout the 1920s and 1930s as 'essentially utilitarian', further stating that 'it is far from clear' how seriously republican rhetorical references to international contacts should be taken.[5] While some Irish republican connections with international allies were premised on utilitarian desires and, as English points out, not all those engaged with international contacts were 'socially radical', this thesis argues that there is a more idiosyncratic reality occluded by this position.[6] International connections provided the Irish Republican Army (IRA) with arms, for example, but such links to a wider radical world could also provide activists with a mobilising sense of political community.

The opening of the Soviet archives in 1991 offered new sources that provided fresh perspectives on communism and socialist republicanism in Ireland. The most relevant work for this project is Emmet O'Connor's thorough 2004 study charting the asymmetrical relationship that developed between the Comintern and Irish communists. O'Connor explores how the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI), itself increasingly subservient to Stalinist foreign policy demands, acted on its Irish national sections to dominate their structures and activities.[7] His argument that the Comintern had a fundamental and mostly positive impact on Irish communist organisations through providing funding, tutelage and legitimacy is certainly the case. In noting that communists

[3] English, *Radicals and the Republic,* p. 40.
[4] Henry Patterson, *The Politics of Illusion: A Political History of the IRA* (London, 1997).
[5] English, *Radicals and the Republic*, pp. 58, 112-113
[6] Ibid, p. 112-113.
[7] O'Connor, *Reds and the Green*.

and republicans were inspired by the formidable revolutionary mythos of the Comintern, O'Connor suggests that Irish radicals looked to their international counterparts for more than simply finance and arms. Yet O'Connor does not systematically explore the Comintern's influence on Irish women activists or address in detail the subjective benefits that Irish radicals derived from living internationalist lives, such as the exciting opportunities for travel and radical networking or the vindicating experience of being part of a wider revolutionary cause. It is notable that O'Connor misidentifies the only Irish woman who played a leading role in the Moscow headquarters of the organisation in his otherwise authoritative account of the Comintern and Ireland.[8]

The republican-communist nexus in Ireland is outlined in detail in O'Connor's further work and also explored in Adrian Grant's 2012 study of Irish socialist republicanism.[9] Complementing Brian Hanley's exploration of the IRA's left-wing as the impetus for socialist republicanism in the late 1920s, Grant integrates contributions from the Irish trade union movement from the foundation of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union in 1909 onwards.[10] Grant argues that the combination of socialism and republicanism was predicated on pragmatism. He seeks to counter English's assertion of socialist and republican ideological incompatibility through arguing that socialist republicanism was 'destroyed because of organizational incoherence, strategic inconsistencies and disagreements over practicalities.'[11] But this discussion of the 'pragmatism' and 'practicalities' of the movement can obscure the broader picture of the

[8] O'Connor notes that Kathleen O'Brennan was the head of a translation section in the Comintern, see: O'Connor, *Reds and the Green*, p. 75, fn. 89. This was May O'Callaghan, see Chapter 3 of this thesis.
[9] Emmet O'Connor, 'The Age of the Red Republic: The Irish Left and Nationalism, 1909-36', *Saothar,* 30 (2005), pp. 73-82; Grant, *Irish Socialist Republicanism*. O'Connor's 2005 essay provides the structural framework for Grant's work.
[10] Brian Hanley, *The IRA: 1926-1936* (Dublin, 2002).
[11] Grant, *Irish Socialist Republicanism,* p. 17.

limited political space open to the Irish republican left during these decades. As Seán Byers notes in his biography of leading Irish Communist Seán Murray, socialist republicans were outflanked on land policy and republican credentials in the Irish Free State by Fianna Fáil while competing for a miniscule urban working-class vote with Labour parties in the north and south of the island.[12] The cumulative effect of these historiographical debates has been to nuance our understanding of leftists political shifts in this period of Irish history. These Irish labour histories rarely cite non-Irish scholarship exploring the wider internationalist moment that framed the actions of the Irish left, resulting in a methodological insularity. Approaches adopted in histories of radicalism in other countries, such as transnational, emotional or spatial approaches have therefore had little influence on this scholarship.

This thesis does not directly address the question of why socialist republicanism failed to take hold as a viable political movement in Ireland. Rather, I am interested in exploring the research avenues left largely unconsidered by historical narratives charting the disputatious political history of the Irish left through the leading men of the movement and male-dominated organisations. In past studies of interwar Irish radicalism, figures that are ubiquitous in the primary documents, such as Sheehy Skeffington and Despard, are regularly cited when listing the names of meeting attendees or committee members but their politics are rarely considered in their own right. This thesis asks: what is revealed when we decentre the history of the Irish left by focusing not on unions, the IRA or other leftist parties operating across the island but instead hone in on individuals, specifically Irish women, who navigated an internationalist movement? What might we learn if instead of unpicking organisational disputes or tracing electoral stratagems we prioritised a

[12] Byers, *Seán Murray*, pp. 87-88.

question less commonly foregrounded in Irish political history: what provided Irish radicals with the morale to continue seeking out new initiatives? Answering this question requires that this project look beyond the historiography of the Irish radical left and the history of Ireland more broadly.

The historiography of the interwar left in Ireland is marked by two omissions: an infrequent recourse to ego-documents (diaries, correspondence, etc.) and an absent analysis of women's role within the movement. The former, I argue, is partly to blame for the latter. Ego-documents reveal how internationalist engagements were far from simply utilitarian and how the ideological framing of socialist republicanism can occlude a radical world that was more heterogenous in ideals and gender composition than previously assumed. Biographies provide some recompense for omissions in histories of Irish socialist republicanism. Several women who feature in this thesis, such as Sheehy Skeffington, Despard, Helena Molony, Maud Gonne and Rosamond Jacob, have been the subject of biographical studies, but these biographical accounts rarely place the internationalism of their subjects within the context of a transnational movement.[13]

Biographical approaches are also important in the Irish historiographical trend that James McConnel has defined as 'generationism'.[14] This project responds to insights from this trend. Foster's 2014 study of Ireland's 'revolutionary generation' focused on the lives of men and women from the generation that rejected the constitutional politics of their

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[13] See for example: Leeann Lane, *Rosamond Jacob: Third Person Singular* (Dublin, 2010); Andro Linklater, *An Unhusbanded Life: Charlotte Despard, Suffragette, Socialist and Sinn Féiner* (London, 1980); Margaret Mulvihill, *Charlotte Despard: a Biography* (London, 1989); Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, 'This is a Case in which Irish National Considerations Must be Taken into Account': The Breakdown of the MacBride-Gonne Marriage, 1904-8', *Irish Historical Studies,* 38:145 (November 2010), pp. 231-264; Margaret Ó hOgartaigh, *Kathleen Lynn: Irishwoman, Patriot, Doctor* (Dublin, 2006); Nell Regan, *Helena Molony: A Radical Life, 1883-1967* (Dublin, 2017); Margaret Ward, *Hanna Sheehy Skeffington: a Life* (Cork, 1997). Ward's biography of Sheehy Skeffington was recently republished in a substantially revised form, see: Idem, *Fearless Woman: Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, Feminism and the Irish Revolution* (Dublin, 2019).

[14] James McConnel, '"Out in the Cold"?: The Children of the Irish Parliamentary Party and the Irish Free State', *Irish Historical Studies,* 42:161 (2018), pp. 87-114.

parents to bring about the Irish revolutionary period.[15] This thesis shares several recurring figures with Foster's study and further extends the arc of post-revolutionary disenchantment charted within it. Writing of Sheehy Skeffington, Foster notes that she spent the post-revolutionary period speaking 'a language of radicalism which had died away around her, and would not be rediscovered for some decades.'[16] In this thesis, I dissect how this language of radicalism, common to Sheehy Skeffington and many of her contemporaries, evolved during the interwar period in response to developments in a wider radical world. Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid's ongoing project uses a history of emotions framework to trace the careers of the children of the Irish revolutionary generation.[17] Nic Dháibhéid's work reflects a wider 'emotional turn' in the discipline that has also influenced my own project.

In addition to these works on the Irish revolutionary generation, scholars interested in women's contribution to Irish radical movements during the revolutionary period can turn to a growing scholarship that has arisen from the development of Irish feminist history in the 1970s. Irish women's history of this period has naturally and fruitfully traced women through the streams that flowed into the Irish revolution.[18] For example, Pašeta's *Irish Nationalist Women, 1900-1918* suggests that sex discrimination provided a point around which women activists of varying Irish nationalist hues could rally.[19]

With the notable exception of Kate O'Malley's study of Indo-Irish radical connections, a work that dedicates a chapter to women's role in Indo-Irish solidarity, most

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[15] R. F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland, 1890-1923* (London, 2015).
[16] Ibid, p. 316.
[17] Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, 'Fighting their Fathers' Fight: The Post-Revolutionary Generation in Independent Ireland', in Senia Pašeta (ed.), *Uncertain Futures: Essays About the Irish Past for Roy Foster* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 149-160; Idem, 'Children of the Rising: A Traumatic History of Easter 1916', Paper Delivered 15 February 1918, Modern History Research Seminar, University of Oxford.
[18] See for example: Ann Matthews, *Renegades: Irish Republican Women, 1900-1922* (Cork, 2010), and Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (London, 1983).
[19] Senia Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist Women, 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 2013).

works exploring how Irish revolutionaries constructed ties and imagined parallels between their cause and struggles in other nations have tended to focus on the male dominated world of high politics and diplomacy.[20] Recently, scholarship on the activism of Irish American women and Irish women in America has challenged this tendency. Tara McCarthy has outlined Irish-American women's contributions to the labour and suffrage campaigns from 1880-1920 while Catherine Burns has studied the patriotic rhetoric of Irish-American women and Irish women activists who navigated transatlantic careers from 1912-1925.[21] Elizabeth McKillen's ongoing project explores women of the transatlantic Irish left and the importance of 'Sinn Féinism' for American radicalism, particularly within the labour and women's movement.[22] Dianne Hall's recent article on Kathleen Barry and Linda Kearns' Australian tour of 1924-1925 has also served to expand the study of women-republicans-on-tour to the Southern Hemisphere.[23] Another more recent exception to the national-focused study of small socialist republican groupings is the work of Jimmy Yan, whose methodologically innovative studies of Australian leftists and Ireland have conceptualised the 'Irish Question' as a 'transnational social movement', one

[20] Kate O'Malley, *Ireland, India and Empire: Indo-Irish Radical Connections, 1919-1964* (Manchester, 2008); Róisín Healy, *Poland in the Irish Nationalist Imagination, 1772-1922* (Basingstoke, 2017); Bruce Nelson, *Irish Nationalists and the Making of the Irish Race* (Princeton, 2012); Jason Knirck, 'The Irish Revolution and World History, Nation, Race, and Civilization in the Rhetoric of the Irish Revolutionary Generation', *Éire-Ireland,* 52:3&4 (Winter, 2017), pp. 157-189.

[21] Tara McCarthy, *Respectability and Reform: Irish-American Women's Activism 1880-1920* (Syracuse, 2018); Catherine M. Burns, *American Identity and the Transatlantic Irish Nationalist Movement, 1912-1925* (PhD Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2011); Idem, 'Kathleen O'Brennan and American Identity in the Transatlantic Irish Republican Movement', in David T. Gleeson (ed.), *The Irish in the Atlantic World* (Columbia, 2010), pp. 176-194. For a descriptive account of Irish republican women's tours of America, see: Joanne Mooney-Eichacker, *Irish Republican Women in America: Lectures During their United States Tours, 1916-1925* (Dublin, 2003).

[22] This is the subject of McKillen's forthcoming book and a recent article, see: Elizabeth McKillen, 'The Irish Sinn Féin Movement and Radical Labor and Feminist Dissent in America, 1916-1921', *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas,* 16:3 (September 2019), pp. 11-37.

[23] Dianne Hall, 'Irish Republican Women in Australia: Kathleen Barry and Linda Kearns' Tour in 1924-5', *Irish Historical Studies,* 43:163 (2019), pp. 73-93.

defined by much more than utilitarian overtures to solidarity.[24] Yan's work shows how solidarity could be more than simply functional and how cosmopolitan figures represented Irish concerns to a wider radical world.

However, Irish and diasporic women's activism after the Irish Civil War is less commonly considered. Marie Coleman, for example, has noted a general trend to ignore the after-lives of both male and female revolutionary veterans 'aside from some who were prominent in Irish public life.'[25] This reflects a broader trend in British and Irish women's history in the early twentieth century, which often conclude with the post-war enfranchisement and subsequent abeyance of the suffrage struggle. One exception is a thesis by Elizabeth Kyte, recently competed at University College Cork and embargoed until 2021, which also explores Irish feminism and socialism during the interwar period, but with a different framing from my own project and focused on a differing set of biographical case studies.[26]

While a growing historiography charts British and Irish women's engagement with liberal internationalism in the interwar period - activism through groups such as the WILPF - much less has been said about British and Irish women's involvement with radical, communist-inspired internationalism.[27] The major exceptions to this are

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[24] Jimmy Yan, 'Revolutionary Ireland and Transnational Labour Solidarity on the Victorian Railways: The Case of Alex Morrison and Tom Wilson, 1921-22', *Labour History,* 114 (2018), pp. 17-36; Idem, 'Settlers, Socialists and Sinn Féiners: Ireland, Social Movements and Racialised Imaginaries in "White" Australia, 1912-1923', Paper Delivered at the Activist Histories of Ireland Conference, Hertford College, Oxford, 12 July 2019.

[25] Marie Coleman, 'Compensating Irish Female Revolutionaries, 1916-1923', *Women's History Review,* 26:6 (November 2016), p. 918.

[26] Elizabeth Kyte, *Feminist Fusions: Irish Socialist Feminists, 1900s-1940s* (PhD Thesis, University College Cork 2018, Embargoed Until 2021).

[27] The foundational text in the field of women's internationalism is Leila Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (New Jersey, 1997). For British and Irish examples see: Rosemary Cullen Owens, *A Social History of Women in Ireland,* 1870-1970 (Dublin, 2005), pp. 108-154; Margaret Ward, 'Nationalism, Pacifism, Internationalism: Louie Bennett, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, and the Problems of "Defining Feminism"', in Anthony Bradley and Maryann Gialanella Valiulis (eds.), *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Ireland* (Amherst, 1997), pp. 60-84; Beers, 'Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism Between the Wars', pp. 202-221; Krista Cowman, 'The Women's Movement and

explorations of women within the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), such as Sue Bruley's 1986 study and a 2004 article by Karen Hunt and Matthew Worley.[28] This literature reveals that the CPGB inherited from its 19th century antecedents a fear that 'women's issues' would distract from organising workers along class lines.

There is no study of women within the Communist Party of Ireland (CPI) during the same period. This is unsurprising, however. As this project demonstrates, only a handful of women joined the miniscule CPI during its brief existence in the early 1920s or during its revival from 1933 until the Second World War. Nevertheless, a focus on capital-C Communist Party members has obscured the influence that international communism had on the political trajectories of activists beyond the Party fold. Indeed, the underdevelopment of an internationalised history of twentieth-century 'left-feminism' and the existence of a 'red taboo' in women's history has recently been considered.[29] This thesis argues that the scholarly emphasis on British and Irish internationalist women's engagement in liberal internationalist organisations has left their engagement in radical movements largely overlooked. Yet similar to Pašeta's challenge to the notion that separatist and constitutional feminists occupied entirely distinct strands of the Irish

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Internationalism in the 20th Century, *Moving the Social,* 55 (2016), pp. 55-74; Marie Sandell, *The Rise of Women's Transnational Activism: Identity and Sisterhood Between the World Wars* (London, 2015) and Ann Marie O'Brien 'Locating Women Within the Irish Department of External Affairs: A Case Study of Irish Women at the League of Nations and United Nations, 1923-76', *Irish Historical Studies,* 43:163 (2019), pp. 94-110.

[28] Sue Bruley, *Leninism, Stalinism and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1920-1939* (New York & London, 1986); Karen Hunt and Matthew Worley, 'Rethinking British Communist Party Women in the 1920s', *Twentieth Century British History,* 15:1 (2004), pp. 1-27.

[29] Francisca de Haan, 'The Global Left-Feminist 1960s', in Chen Jian, Marin Klimke, Masha Kirasirova, Mary Nolan, Marilyn Young, Joanna Waley-Cohen (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties: Between Protest and Nation-Building* (Abingdon, 2018), p. 230; Julia L. Mickenberg, 'The Red Taboo in American Women's History: On Not Seeing Revolutionary Russia', *American Communist History*, 14:3 (January 2016), pp. 221-230. See also: Marylin J. Boxer, 'Rethinking the Socialist Construction and International Career of the Concept "Bourgeois Feminism"', *The American Historical Review,* 112:1 (2007), pp. 131-158.

nationalist movement, my own contention is that the boundaries between liberal and radical women's internationalism were more porous than previously assumed.[30]

Irish case studies are rarely considered within the wider historiography of the international left. Lara Green's history of transnational Russian terrorist networks, which devotes a chapter to the limited co-operation between late 19th century Russian and Irish terrorists along with their mutual media representations of each other, is an exception.[31] Scholars working on other national leftist cohorts have apparently deemed Irish figures too peripheral to merit exploration. For example, In June Hannam and Hunt's work on British socialist women, the authors do not extend their discussion to Ireland and describe the Irish Question as being regarded by most British socialists as 'a separate matter' to be resolved by the Irish people.[32] But the idea that any internationalist movement could successfully extricate its activism from national questions, let alone in the dynamic case of the debates that raged between activists in Ireland and the United Kingdom, is questionable.

Yet while histories of the global left often ignore Ireland, Irish historians can nonetheless enrich their studies by paying attention to such works. Recent histories of international communism have undergone a methodological revolution that can provide fresh insights. Scholars such as Studer, Lisa Kirschenbaum and Julia Mickenberg have used biographical approaches to open new research avenues in the history of the Comintern-era.[33] Categories such as 'subjectivity' 'experience' 'emotion' 'space' and

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[30] Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist Women*.
[31] Lara Green, *Russian Revolutionary Terrorism in Transnational Perspective: Representations and Networks, 1881-1926* (PhD Thesis, Northumbria University, 2019), esp. pp. 83-113.
[32] June Hannam and Karen Hunt, *Socialist Women: Britain, 1880s to 1920s* (London, 2002), p. 7.
[33] Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *International Communism and the Spanish Civil War: Solidarity and Suspicion* (Cambridge, 2015); Idem, 'The Russian Revolution and Spanish Communists, 1931-5', *Journal of Contemporary History,* 52:4 (October 2017), pp. 892-912; Studer, *The Transnational World of the Cominternians* (Basingstoke, 2015); Julia L. Mickenberg, *American Girls in Red Russia: Chasing the Soviet Dream* (Chicago, 2017). For further examples of innovative biographical approaches to international

'gender' are common framings in this emergent historiography. In a recent review essay describing this historiographical trend, Oleksa Drachewych coined the term 'the Communist Transnational' to describe how scholars are exploring Comintern history beyond its national sections through 'diaspora networks, transnational radical networks, transnational front or sub-organizations, and transnational solidarity.'[34] Drachewych rightly terms Studer's 2015 book *The Transnational World of the Cominternians* a 'landmark study' that demonstrated 'how best to track the lives' of individual communists and revealed how the Comintern, through its transnational movement of 'personnel and cultural and ideological exchanges across borders' created a shared cultural space.[35] An interest in the point at which personal life and political activism collided is central to these studies and to mine. Kirschenbaum, for example, describes international communism as 'not only a political movement but also a way of life.'[36] Kirschenbaum's work, according to Drachewych meshes the two prominent trends in this historiography 'biography and transnationality'.[37] The biographical trend might also be termed a subjective turn. These two trends – transnationality and subjectivity – also structure the methodology of this project in fundamental ways.

communism, see: Elizabeth McGuire, *Red at Heart: How Chinese Communists Fell in Love with the Revolution* (Oxford, 2018) and Brigid O'Keeffe, 'The Woman Always Pays: The Lives of Ivy Litvinov', *Slavic and East European Review,* 97:3 (2019), pp. 501-528.

[34] Oleksa Drachewych, 'The Communist Transnational? Transnational Studies and the History of the Comintern', *History Compass,* 17:2 (February 2019), p. 3.

[35] Ibid, p. 7. *Cf.* Studer, *Transnational World*.

[36] Kirschenbaum, *International Communism*, p. 2.

[37] Drachewych, 'The Communist Transnational?', p. 7.

Methodology

Writing a history of the Irish left that foregrounds women activists requires us to rethink conventional methodologies and sources. Following recent histories of radical internationalism, this project prioritises people rather than parties in its narrative. This project also heeds James R. Barrett's call for labour historians to 'raise the subjective side of our subject's historical experience' which Barrett defines as relating particularly to identity 'personal as well as group, and to issues of personality, personal relationships, and emotion.'[38] This subjective approach to history has been central to gender and women's history since the earliest articulation of the feminist dictum 'the personal is political' and has become increasingly influential within histories of transnational radicalism. Conceiving of the personal as encapsulating personal identity, representation and lived experience and the political as encompassing ideology, organisation and action can help us understand how one influenced the other.[39]

Paying attention to the subjective experience of Irish radical women, this thesis demonstrates how their political and personal identities were often in flux. 'To be human' as Joan Scott notes, 'is to be endlessly entwined in complex relationships of difference that don't settle comfortably into neat, prefabricated categories'.[40] To be human is also to be shaped by 'experience', a term central to gender and women's history approaches and which Martin Jay concisely defines as 'the self's encounter with existence outside the self,

[38] James R. Barrett, *History from the Bottom Up and the Inside Out* (London, 2017), p. 2.
[39] James R. Barrett, 'Revolution and Personal Crisis: Communist Politics and Personal Narratives in the Life of William Z. Foster', in Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen & Andrew Flinn (eds.), *Agents of the Revolution: New Biographical Approaches to the History of International Communism in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Oxford, 2006), p. 112
[40] Joan W. Scott, 'Storytelling', *History and Theory,* 50:2 (May 2011), pp. 206.

especially the "encounter with otherness" which can change us in unpredictable ways.'[41] The experiences of the activists foregrounded in this thesis were shaped by their common identity as women. This project does not offer an extensive gendered analysis of Irish radical femininity and masculinity. However, I do explore how gender norms and relations were an important factor determining the space of political action open to women and men involved in radical internationalism.

While the activists central to this thesis share a common identity as women and as veterans of the suffrage campaign, they also share something more atypical: they all spent time in the Soviet Union ranging from a few weeks to several years. This points to the transnational nature of their activist careers. The transnational perspective helps to uncover the globe-spanning location in which Irish radicals conducted personal relationships and enacted solidarity. Transnational history, denoting historians' concerns with ideas, materials and people who crossed borders, is now established as a valuable lens through which historians perceive the past.[42] In the field of Irish history alone, a number of studies have emerged championing transnationalism – although the idea of transnational history as an entirely new departure has been critiqued.[43] Transnational history must argue for more than simply stating that international connections are under-researched and interesting.[44]

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[41] Martin Jay, quoted in Mark D. Steinberg, *The Russian Revolution, 1905-1921* (Oxford, 2017), p. 2; On gender history and experience, see: Joan W. Scott, 'The Evidence of Experience', *Critical Inquiry,* 17:4 (Summer 1994), pp. 773-797.

[42] For an oft-cited outline of transnationalism which relies on a definition of the transnational that focuses on civil society actors, see: Patricia Clavin, 'Defining Transnationalism', *Contemporary European History,* 13:4 (2005), pp. 421-439.

[43] See for example: Enda Delaney 'Our Island Story? Towards a Transnational History of Late Modern Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies,* 37:148 (November 2011), pp. 599-621, Niall Whelehan, *The Dynamiters: Irish Nationalism and Political Violence in the Wider World, 1867-1900* (Cambridge, 2012). For a recent edited collection that adopts the approach, see: Niall Whelehan (ed.), *Transnational Perspectives on Modern Irish History* (New York, 2015). For a critique of the approach within Irish historiography, see: David Fitzpatrick, 'We are all Transnationalists Now', *Irish Historical Studies,* 41:159 (May 2017), pp. 123-127.

[44] Michael Goebel notes a fad for finding 'fascinating and invisible anecdotes' but critiques transnational history's failure to highlight 'big structural changes', see Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 291.

What makes the transnational approach useful for a study of Irish radical women? First, it encourages us to understand the importance of cross-border connections and flows of ideas and people in shaping radical careers. Second, the approach invites us to take seriously how operating in a movement that encouraged its adherents to navigate transnational spaces could transform activist trajectories. While there has been a broader reticence within Irish historiography to engage with the 'spatial turn', it has influenced histories of women's activism and transnational radicalism. Kathryn Beebe, Angela Davis and Kathryn Gleadle have provided a neat summation of the spatial turn as an effort by historians to understand how environments, '"places" and "spaces"… have affected the nature and scope of political power, cultural production and social experience.'[45] This project is not concerned with delving into the debates surrounding the theorisation of space or focused specifically on exploring what has been termed a 'spatial history of ideas'.[46] Rather, I am interested in understanding radical internationalist solidarity as a practice that could be encountered in concrete spaces, such as an East London office staffed by globe-hopping revolutionaries, a Dublin meeting hall or a Moscow parade.

The initiatives of the interwar radical left during this period were usually couched in the term 'solidarity'. As Michael Goebel notes, during this period the term did not yet denote the relationship between nation states that it often implies today but instead reflected individual actors operating within a broader frame of transnational solidarity.[47] Solidarity can embody multiple meaning simultaneously, as Kasper Braskén thoughtfully

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[45] Kathryn Beebe, Angela Davis & Kathryn Gleadle, 'Space, Place and Gendered Identities: Feminist History and the Spatial Turn', *Women's History Review,* 21: 4 (September 2012), p. 523.
[46] For debates about the approach, see: Leif Jerram, 'Space: A Useless Category for Historical Analysis', *History and Theory,* 52:3 (October 2013), pp. 400-419. For an outline of the 'spatial history of ideas' see: Laura C. Foster, 'The Paris Commune in London and the Spatial History of Ideas, 1871-900', *The Historical Journal* (2019), pp. 1-24.
[47] Michael Goebel, 'Geopolitics, Transnational Solidarity or Diaspora Nationalism? The Global Career of M. N. Roy, 1915-1930', *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'Histoire* (September 2014), p. 486.

demonstrates in describing solidarity as 'not only a political weapon in the struggle, but also an alternative identity, culture, emotion and even a goal in itself'.[48] The malleability of the term solidarity marks its usefulness for our purposes, allowing it to act as an umbrella term to encompass how a range of distinct practices were shaped by the fact that they were enacted as part of a shared political cause.

This methodology – which draws on the transnational, biographical and spatial turns in the wider historiography - is a means of keeping all of the aspects necessary for my analysis within my historical sightlines: ranging from social bonds to transnational networks and from intimate correspondence to participation at international congresses. This methodology allows us to trace how Irish radical women enacted solidarity across decades and continents. It also allows us to uncover sources a rich array of sources in a wide variety of archives that provide new perspectives on Irish radical identities and self-representation.

[48] Kasper Braskén, *The International Workers' Relief, Communism and Transnational Solidarity: Willi Münzenberg in Weimar Germany* (Basingstoke, 2015), p. 234.

Sources

As noted above, the methodology for this project has been inspired by histories which explore intimate histories of radical internationalism by placing concepts such as identity and self-representation against a transnational backdrop. In an essay on identity and self-representation in Irish communism, O'Connor notes that it 'hardly exists' outside of internal party journals and memoirs of the Spanish Civil War.[49] If this were the case, my project would be profoundly difficult if not unviable. Fortunately, however, adopting a methodology grounded in transnational and biographical approaches has allowed this project to uncover a wide variety of sources that illuminate Irish radical identities, self-representations and transnational connections.

Reconstructing Irish women's engagement with radical internationalism has required an approach to sources that differs from the conventional reliance on organisational documents, police surveillance, newspapers and, more recently, Comintern memorandums in writing the history of the Irish left. Writing on histories of the American left, Kathleen Brown and Elizabeth Faue have noted that studying a political movement through documents such as personal correspondence can allow us 'to see social networks in action' and 'show the importance of going beyond the Left's written texts and political narratives to the culture, context and community from which the texts emerge.'[50] To achieve this in an Irish context, I have sought to prioritise ego-documents such as letters and diaries which are more likely to reveal women's contributions and to answer my

[49] Emmet O'Connor, 'Identify and Self-Representation in Irish Communism: The Connolly Column and the Spanish Civil War', *Socialist History,* 34 (April 2009), p. 36. Surveying the limited autobiographical literature of Irish communism, he notes that the only examples of communist autobiography relating to the interwar period are the memoirs of Jim Phelan and Liam O'Flaherty along with the published transcripts of interviews with Betty Sinclair, Joe Deasy and Andy Barr.

[50] Kathleen A. Brown and Elizabeth Faue, 'Social Bonds, Sexual Politics and Political Community on the U.S. Left, 1920s-1940s', *Left History,* 7:1 (2000). pp. 11, 36.

research questions than other sources more commonly deployed in Irish political history. I have read newspapers, surveillance reports and memorandums 'against the grain' for evidence of women's activism and the social-political world that fostered it. Tracking the research subjects of this thesis, women who led multilingual cross-border lives, has required the use of more than thirty separate archives in six countries – several of which have never before been consulted in histories of the Irish left. This global paper trail is the first marker of the remarkably international scope of the activism herein considered.

Biographical treatments will inevitably privilege particular case studies as few early twentieth century activists left paper trails, especially if they were women. Yet, where possible, I have recovered hitherto ignored activists from the archives. To a great extent, digitisation has made this possible. Julia Laite notes that digitisation has made 'complicating stories' much easier by bringing into view individual lives that help us 'to find exceptions, disrupt stereotypes, dismantle tropes, question stock characters, and challenge assumptions based on big data'.[51] Obscure figures, women and men, flicker into view in diary entries or in anecdotes retold in letters. In these sources, we find glimpses of Irish activists in disparate corners of the radical world. Detailed correspondence and reminiscences allow us to reconstruct crucial facets of living an internationalist life that a purely political history might otherwise ignore: such as reading habits, the affective impact of attending meetings or the romantic trysts that rerouted careers. Although I focus on women in this thesis partly to counterbalance a historiography that has tended to focus on men, I argue that the approach to sources herein adopted can help create a history of Irish radicalism that accurately reflects the import of women *and* men.

[51] Julia Laite, 'The Emmet's Inch: Small History in a Digital Age', *Journal of Social History* (2020), p. 20.

Structure

The transnational nature of the methodological lens and source base has shaped the project's chronology. I have chosen a hybrid of the Irish revolutionary chronology beginning in 1916 and the ending point of the standard interwar left history, concluding in 1939 with the combined disillusionment ushered in by the Republican defeat in the Spanish Civil War, the Comintern's demobilisation of antifascist politics in deference to the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and the return to a European state of conflict. This chronology suggests that a transnational perspective can help us to question the standard bookends of Irish history.

The opening chapter traces Irish radical women's entry into the flow of the world revolution by examining the interactions between Sylvia Pankhurst's East London socialist feminist group and Irish feminist and socialist circles in Dublin. This chapter introduces core research subjects who are traced throughout the thesis by examining how they responded to the world revolution via the tumult of an insurrectionary Ireland. Paying close attention to the exchange of ideas and people between the worlds of the East London Federation of Suffragettes and the Irish Women's Franchise League allows us to trace the original departure point from which the Irish radical women central to this thesis entered into a wider revolutionary world.

The second chapter explores Irish radical women's activities in 1920s Dublin and beyond to illuminate the tensions between liberal and radical strands of women's internationalism, focusing in particular on Charlotte Despard. Featuring extended discussion of the 1926 Fifth World Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Dublin and short-lived radical initiatives such as the Workers' International Relief and the Radical Club, the chapter argues that by the late 1920s, the

initiatives of the Comintern had become a central means of funnelling the activist energies of the Irish radical women who emerged from the suffrage-socialist network of the first chapter.

The fourth chapter continues the biography of May O'Callaghan, an important figure in the opening chapter due to her work as Sylvia Pankhurst's sub-editor. This chapter provides a detailed contextualisation of O'Callaghan's Comintern career to uncover intimate experiences of life in the crucible of the world revolution. O'Callaghan, a hitherto unresearched Irish woman who worked in the Comintern headquarters in Moscow, illuminates how a seemingly peripheral figure can impact wider network. Examining her Moscow career in detail further suggests how broader histories of Irish leftist women have been neglected by a focus on socialist republicanism in Ireland.

Globally, 1929 signalled a crisis of capitalism which encouraged transnational radical initiatives and influenced the Comintern to adopt its fraught 'Third Period' analysis of world events. The fourth chapter explores how this context shaped Irish women's continued engagement with radical internationalism, focusing in particular on political tourism and British-Irish communist relations. Charlotte Despard's 1930 tour in the USSR is analysed against the backdrop of her own activist past and strained British and Irish communist relations. The chapter also examines how state and Church responses to a flowering of interest in communism provided a gamut of legislation and arrests that hindered the activism of Irish radical women and their counterparts abroad.

The final chapter traces an arc towards disillusionment. Opening with an account of how Fermanagh-raised suffragette Katherine Gillett Gatty navigated the networks of feminist antifascism, this chapter studies how these networks came to encompass a wide spectrum of internationalist women at the dawn of the Spanish Civil War. This chapter

concludes with a discussion of how Irish radical women were influenced by the cultures of the Popular Front era.

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In May 1919, Margaret Connery, a left-wing member of the Irish Women's Franchise League (IWFL), lectured on the 'future of feminism'.[52] 'Social revolutions', Connery noted, 'offered an opportunity for reforms which go nearer to the heart of things and affect the lives of women more closely than mere political revolutions'.[53] In the lexicon of Connery and her contemporaries, social revolutions were societal transformations that were not merely political transitions of power, but revolutions in everyday existence. As we will see in the first chapter, Connery's lecture responded to a transnational context defined by revolutionary struggles in her native Ireland and beyond. Yet the transnational lens can risk becoming so wide that it loses sight of the biographical material often required by historians of global movements. Connery outlined the future of feminism in a specific space, an IWFL meeting hall, and spoke as an embodied historical subject living through a period of dynamic domestic and global radicalism. Of course, we can assume she had an audience too. In order to keep each of these spatial, subjective and transnational aspects in my historical sight-line, I follow Seth Koven in adopting an approach that 'borrows from both micro- and macro- histories while challenging the distinctions between' and plays with the scales of historical enquiry.[54] A political history of Irish radical women complemented by the biographical and transnational turns in the wider history of radical internationalism can prompt new research avenues in Irish historiography and make the case that Irish examples matter to broader historiographical

[52] *Irish Citizen* (Hereafter *IC*), 3 May 1919.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Seth Koven, *The Match Girl and the Heiress* (Oxford, 2014), p. 10.

debates. Ultimately, the interwar revolutionary dream of a total transformation of the existing social order that Connery referenced in her 1919 lecture was never realised. Yet, as Foster reminds us, some of the most illuminating history records those who 'acted in the expectation of a future that never happened'.[55]

[55] R. F. Foster, *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making it Up in Ireland* (London, 2001), p. 34.

Chapter 1: 'A Nest of Revolution': The *Workers Dreadnought,* the *Irish Citizen* and the World Revolution, 1916-1921

Introduction

In the summer of 1920, the Jamaican poet Claude McKay attended a Trafalgar Square rally in solidarity with Irish republicans. Wearing a green necktie, McKay sold newspapers and pamphlets to Sinn Féin supporters who greeted him enthusiastically as 'Black Irish.'[1] As a West Indian, McKay perceived himself to be more closely aligned with the 'passionately primitive' demands of the Irish than 'English revolutionists,' whom he castigated for being more eager to 'link up the Irish national revolution to the English class struggle' than understand the Irish question within its national context.[2] McKay, who belonged to the small socialist organisation centred around the revered suffrage fighter Sylvia Pankhurst, was selling a pamphlet entitled *Rebel Ireland* – co-written by Pankhurst along with Patricia Lynch and May O'Callaghan, two Irish staff writers on her newspaper the *Workers' Dreadnought*. The pamphlet reflected Pankhurst's attempt to present Irish issues to her audience in an international context which remained sensitive to the peculiarities of the Irish experience. As a production authored by radicals each with their own biographies and political trajectories, the pamphlet reminds us of the importance of paying attention to the role of the individual personalities that bring a collaboration – whether it be a publication, organisation or even a revolution – into fruition.

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[1] Claude McKay, 'How Black Sees Green and Red', in Cathy Bergin (ed.), *African American Anti-Colonial Thought 1917-1937* (Edinburgh, 2016), p. 69. Originally printed in the American socialist monthly *The Liberator,* 4 June 1921.
[2] Ibid, pp. 70-71.

The crowd surrounding McKay in Trafalgar Square represented a long gestation in Irish advanced nationalism and stood within the context of a wider mobilisation of international radical activity which emerged in the wake of the Great War. The eclipse of the constitutional wing of Irish nationalism by a more militant one, one outcome of these parallel processes, represented the dawn of an increasingly global effort to present the Irish nationalist case before the world. In the decades preceding the Easter Rising, such demands were normally funnelled through the House of Commons via the elected representatives of the Irish Parliamentary Party. Following widespread disenchantment with constitutional nationalist methods, Irish radicals propagandised and courted extra-parliamentary audiences with a growing frequency. Their appeal to the wider world was shaped by competing definitions of self-determination advanced by the US President Woodrow Wilson alongside his diplomatic apparatus on the one hand and the Bolsheviks, supported by their revolutionary conception of diplomacy, on the other.

This chapter examines an audience particularly receptive to the more radical opportunities offered by this new world revolutionary context: the feminists, socialists and clandestine subversives who gathered around Sylvia Pankhurst and their comrades in Dublin. The organisation that Pankhurst established in 1913, the East London Federation of Suffragettes (ELFS), would gradually transform in response to political shifts, first, in March 1916, becoming the Workers Suffrage Federation, then, in 1917, the Workers Socialist Federation and, finally, in June 1921, the Communist Party of Britain (British Section of the Third International). As suggested by McKay's report cited above, Pankhurst's organisations attracted adherents from across the globe, from East London to the West Indies, creating a hub for itinerant revolutionaries. This chapter also focuses on the closest Irish analogue of Pankhurst's group: the network surrounding the main militant

suffrage organisation in Ireland, the Irish Women's Franchise League (IWFL), home to many politically radical Dublin activists who found one means of expression through its journal the *Irish Citizen*.

The historiography tracing the ties between British and Irish socialist women is limited. Biographers of Sylvia Pankhurst have discussed her Irish connections but have not attempted a systematic treatment.[3] Geoffrey Bell, in his recent history of British labour responses to the Irish revolution, marks Pankhurst's paper as the most sympathetic of all British left periodicals to the 1916 rebellion.[4] Yet he does not detail the London-Dublin social-political network that, I argue, largely explains why this was the case. Bell's solitary reference to Charlotte Despard, who would become one of the most ubiquitous organisers in support of Ireland to emerge from the British left, as 'Charlotte Despot' is also unwittingly revealing.[5] Indeed, Lauren Arrington, reviewing Bell's work, marked his failure to pursue the Anglo-Irish nexus of women on the radical left as a substantial omission.[6] More recently, Sharon Crozier de-Rosa has argued that the 'divided sisterhood' between British and Irish militant suffragettes was grounded in a sense of Englishness framed by Empire that directed the political priorities of the WSPU.[7] Unusually for an essay in a special issue of *Contemporary British History* devoted to the British left and Ireland, Crozier de-Rosa did not consider how Pankhurst and the East London group disrupt her conception of an English feminism defined by pro-imperial sentiment. It is worthwhile therefore to examine an overlooked *undivided* sisterhood stemming from both

[3] See for example; Barbara Winslow, *Sylvia Pankhurst: Sexual Politics and Political Activism* (London, 1996); Mary Davis, *Sylvia Pankhurst: A Life in Radical Politics* (London, 1999); Katherine Connelly, *Sylvia Pankhurst: Suffragette, Socialist and Scourge of Empire* (London, 2013).
[4] Geoffrey Bell, *Hesitant Comrades: The Irish Revolution and the British Labour Movement* (London, 2016), p. 12.
[5] Bell, *Hesitant Comrades*, p. 43.
[6] Lauren Arrington, 'Out of Step?', *History Workshop Journal,* 84 (April 2017), p. 280.
[7] Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, 'Divided Sisterhood? Nationalist Feminism and Feminist Militancy in England and Ireland', *Contemporary British History,* 32:4 (October 2018), pp. 448-469.

East London and Dublin that formed part of the transnational movement that developed around the Irish Question and the wider events of the world revolution.

This chapter measures the reception of revolutionary tremors in intimate spaces such as Pankhurst's East London Headquarters on 400 Old Ford Road and the meeting halls of revolutionary Dublin. In this chapter, my chief measuring tool for these revolutionary tremors will be the journals the *Workers Dreadnought* and the *Irish Citizen.* Delving behind the by-lines to discover personalities that produced these journals and the spaces in which their ideas were debated demonstrates that the degree of coverage and connection between Pankhurst's paper and Ireland was the product of durable interpersonal connections. Although Irish radical women frequently debated and fixated upon national particularities, it was their projection of a revolutionary future onto Ireland, one indelibly influenced by the contours of the new society being built in Russia, which ultimately connected their domestic radical politics to an international revolutionary network. 'The subtle process by which imagination is set free is difficult for an historian to reassemble' noted David Fitzpatrick.[8] The East London-Dublin socialist feminist nexus offers us a useful vantage point to chart the hopes for a revolutionary world that expanded the transnational political horizons of Irish radical women.

[8] David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-1921: Provincial Experiences of War and Revolution* (Cork, 1998), p. 109.

Suffrage, Socialism and Nationalism: Transnational and Interpersonal Contexts

In November 1913, the Herald League, an organisation attached to the British socialist *Daily Herald* newspaper, organised a meeting at the Royal Albert Hall in solidarity with striking workers in Dublin. The *Manchester Guardian* described speakers such as James Connolly, Delia Larkin, Sylvia Pankhurst and Charlotte Despard addressing the audience of a crowded theatre.[9] 'Quite a large attendance of the audience were women,' noted the *Freeman's Journal*, many of whom 'wore Suffrage badges and sashes.'[10] This conflagration of socialists and militant suffragettes from both Ireland and Britain was not an anomalous scenario, but rather the product of links fostered and sustained across the Irish sea over previous years. This section examines the initial personal links connecting Pankhurst and her paper to Ireland before the Easter Rising of 1916 which, in turn, influenced the nature of her organisation's Irish revolutionary connections. Pankhurst's group can be contrasted with the WFL, another suffrage organisation that harboured members with socialist sympathies and Irish backgrounds, as a means of understanding why Pankhurst's organisation became the most forceful of all groups on the British Left in its advocacy of Irish republicanism.

First, however, it is important to contextualise the overlapping worlds of suffrage, socialism and nationalism as they existed before the ELFS became an independent body in 1913 and the outbreak of war a year later. Margaret Ward notes that British suffragists had a long-standing interest in the 'Irish Question' due to the Irish Parliamentary Party, which advocated Irish Home Rule at Westminster, holding the balance of power between the

[9] *Manchester Guardian*, 2 November 1913.
[10] *Freeman's Journal,* 3 November 1913; cited in Connelly, *Sylvia Pankhurst*, p. 57.

Conservative and the Liberal Parties.[11] Yet the ties between Irish and British suffragists, which existed from the earliest years of the women's movement, were always complex and extended beyond the Irish Question. Neither movement was ever homogenous within its own national context and thus differing and constantly evolving agendas on both sides of the Irish sea ensured a multiplicity of Anglo-Irish suffrage dynamics. Margaret Cousins, a founding member of the IWFL, noted 'we had no desire to work under English women leaders: we could lead ourselves.'[12] But such blunt statements of independence can obscure the fact that even during moments of acute tension and discord between Irish and British suffragists, channels of cooperation remained open. For example, the IWFL's desire to conduct their own campaign independent of their English counterparts was endangered in 1913 when WSPU members used militant tactics in Dublin, throwing a hatchet at the then-visiting Prime Minister Asquith and attempting to set a theatre on fire.[13] Despite this encroachment on IWFL territory by the WSPU, Senia Pašeta notes that the two organisations maintained 'public harmony'. [14]

The Pankhurst family split precipitated by Sylvia's engagement with Irish socialists allows us to outline a narrowing of opportunities for political collaboration between Irish and British suffrage campaigners. The aforementioned Royal Albert Hall meeting where Sylvia Pankhurst declared her support for the Irish workers would act as catalyst in the final break in the Pankhurst family. Sylvia noted later that her sister Christabel referenced this gathering as the basis for expelling Sylvia's East London federation from the organisational umbrella of the WSPU.[15] The ELFS had, from its beginnings, differed in

[11] Margaret Ward, 'Conflicting Interests: The British and Irish Suffrage Movements', *Feminist Review,* 50:1 (July, 1995), p. 130.
[12] Margaret and James Cousins, *We Two Together* (Madras, 1950), p. 164.
[13] Senia Pašeta, *Political Irish Women, 1875-1918* (Forthcoming, 2020).
[14] Ibid.
[15] Davis, *Sylvia Pankhurst*, p. 41.

tactics from its parent organisation. As June Purvis notes, the East London organisation allowed men into its ranks and refused to attack the Labour Party or any of its parliamentarians who were sympathetic to women's suffrage.[16] Expulsion allowed Sylvia to act without the oversight of her disapproving family. She fortified her group's links between suffrage and organised labour while encouraging the development of her organ the *Woman's Dreadnought*. This ELFS journal became a dynamic means of presenting the organisation's new direction. First printed for International Woman's Day in March of 1913 and later retitled the *Workers' Dreadnought* on 28 July 1917, it is referred to hereafter as the *Dreadnought* to prevent confusion.

The Dublin radical world that best reflected the animating causes of Pankhurst's East London circle – namely feminism and socialism – was also galvanised in the wake of the 1913 Dublin Lockout. Anglo-Irish revolutionary Constance Markievicz, who had previously criticised the IWFL for advocating Irish women's engagement with a foreign parliament, embraced the organisation as part of a wider attempt by the Irish left to unite trade unionists, suffragists and nationalists in opposition to the Third Home Rule Bill.[17] The IWFL fostered a wider spectrum of opinion than the explicitly working-class oriented Pankhurst group. Yet within the IWFL were members of a suffrage-socialist nexus to be found in the Dublin cafés and drawing rooms during the early twentieth century who held similar political ideals to those found in Pankhurst's London. The *Irish Citizen*, the journal of the IWFL established in 1912, was, as Foster notes, 'specifically feminist' but also a 'strong voice for trade-union rights'.[18] In the IWFL, women trade unionists, nationalists, pacifists and vegetarians all overlapped with the circles of feminism. Although Margaret

[16] June Purvis, 'The Pankhursts and the Great War', in Alison S. Fell and Ingrid Sharp (eds.), *The Women's Movement in Wartime: International Perspectives, 1914-19* (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 142.
[17] Lauren Arrington, *Revolutionary Lives: Constance and Casimir Markievicz* (Princeton, 2016), p. 99.
[18] Foster, *Vivid Faces*, p. 173.

Cousins claimed that the IWFL was a cross-class organisation, the assertion of Margaret Connery, another leading member of the group, that it was predominantly middle class appears more convincing.[19] Like Pankhurst's group, the IWFL held regular gatherings in its meeting rooms and fostered social life in addition to supporting a political programme. Throughout this period, IWFL dances and evenings of song were regularly held, many organised by the French socialist Madame 'Toto' Bannard Cogley, whose cabaret, the Studio Arts Club at 41 Harcourt Street, would later become a Dublin radical haunt in the 1920s.[20] Meetings and lectures took place in the IWFL meeting room in Westmoreland Chambers on central Dublin's Westmoreland Street.

The IWFL was closely tied to the small circles of Irish socialism through prominent figures such as the Sheehy Skeffingtons and fellow travellers such as Helena Molony, the Quaker activist and novelist Rosamond Jacob and Kathleen Lynn, a socialist and a prominent physician who was a guarantor of the *Citizen*.[21] Ireland's socialists never enjoyed the popularity of mass workers' parties such as Germany's Social Democratic Party. Part of the weakness of homegrown socialism was rooted in the strength of Irish socialism's key opponent in winning over the support of the masses: the Catholic Church. In his account of the origins of Irish socialism, Fintan Lane notes that Irish religious sensibilities 'provided an enormous impediment for socialist organizers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries'.[22] This situation would not change in the decades that followed.

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[19] Louise Ryan, *Winning the Vote for Women: The Irish Citizen Newspaper and the Suffrage Movement in Ireland* (Dublin, 2018), p. 132.
[20] For Cogley's organisational talents, see: *IC,* 7 April 1917, 6 July 1918, 5 April 1919. Cogley's cabaret is discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, see: pp. 110-117.
[21] Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist Women*, p. 228.
[22] Fintan Lane, *The Origins of Modern Irish Socialism, 1881-1896* (Cork, 1997), p. 118.

Despite such impediments, Irish socialism gradually developed in the first decades of the 20th century, partly under the guidance of leading figures such as James Larkin and Connolly, both of whom were influenced by the syndicalist tactics of the Industrial Workers of the World. Connolly was a particularly important theoretical contributor to socialist republicanism, conceptualising Irish independence as a pre-requisite to a socialist state. A radical conceptualisation of socialism tied to industrial action, separate from the 1890s artisanal approach and the development of co-operative enterprises, had become increasingly associated with Irish anti-imperialist thought during the early twentieth century.[23] In moments of crisis, an Irish nationalist intelligentsia found itself capable of coordinating with feminists and socialists under the banner of a broad anti-British front.[24] This section of Irish political society amplified its voice in the aftermath of the Lockout and in the early months of the First World War, when individuals such as the Sheehy Skeffingtons, Larkin, Connolly and Constance Markievicz led counter-demonstrations against establishment figures encouraging Irish support for the British war effort.[25]

Given her profile, Pankhurst was well placed to establish a network with this Irish circle that reflected many of the same ideals that mobilised her own group. In her history of the suffrage movement, Pankhurst recalled a visit to the Dublin office of the *Irish Citizen* where she met Francis Sheehy Skeffington, whom she described as an energetic 'citizen of the world' with 'broad views and a quick intelligence'.[26] The interpersonal network that would underpin the shared response of the East London-Dublin nexus to the

[23] Arrington, *Revolutionary Lives*, p. 65.
[24] R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London, 1988), pp. 444-445.
[25] Mark Phelan, 'World War I and the Legacy of the Dublin Lockout, 1914-16', *Éire-Ireland*, 51:3&4 (Fall/Winter 2016), p. 64.
[26] Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement: An Intimate Account of Persons and Ideals* (London, 1931), pp. 381-382.

revolutionary events in the latter years of the Great War was already in place before the conflict had even begun.

The developing militancy of organisations across Ireland also provided Pankhurst with a stimulus for practical organisation. In December 1913, members of the Metropolitan Police arrested Pankhurst at a gathering of 'several hundred men and youths from Bow' gathered 'for the purpose of forming a local company of the "People's Army"'.[27] The People's Army was a militant group attached to the ELFS that provided defensive training for the local community. Mary Davis maps the lineage of the People's Army to the militaristic WSPU structure.[28] Though WSPU inspiration is likely, evidence points to a more powerful Irish influence. In June and November 1913, Pankhurst referenced the Ulster Crisis in open meetings, arguing that suffragettes must 'do precisely what Sir Edward Carson was doing; they had to get an army.'[29] Yet the closest analogue to the People's Army in terms of social composition and aims was not Carson's Ulster Volunteers but the Irish Citizen Army (ICA), which was formed a month before the establishment of Pankhurst's group as a means of defending workers from police offensives during the 1913 lockout.[30] There is significant reason to suspect synchronicity between the establishment of the ICA and the People's Army. Sir Francis Fletcher Vane, an Anglo-Irish military officer, Dublin native and sympathizer with socialist causes was involved with the ICA and was soon after appointed leader of Pankhurst's People's

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[27] 'Report of Inspectors McNamara and Sandercook,' 19 December 1913, The National Archives of the UK (Hereafter TNA), Home Office (Hereafter HO) 144/1558/234101, Part II.
[28] Davis, *Sylvia Pankhurst,* p. 52.
[29] 'Transcript of Shorthand Notes of Speech by Miss Sylvia Pankhurst Made at the Limehouse Town Hall on Friday June 20th 1913', 20 June 1913, TNA HO 144/1558/234101, Part II; *Irish Independent*, 4 November 1913.
[30] Nelson O'Ceallaigh Ritschel, 'Shaw, Connolly, and the Irish Citizen Army', *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies,* 27 (2007), p. 121.

Army.[31] The militarisation of Irish and British politics, embodied in organisations such as the Ulster Volunteer force and its rival the Irish National Volunteers, or to a lesser degree the ICA and the People's Army, was soon outpaced by the descent of Europe into total conflict.

The Great War rendered acute existing tensions in international socialist and suffrage networks and inaugurated devastating new ones by forcing already unravelling movements to take definite stands on the conflict. On the eve of the war, Pankhurst was in Dublin investigating the fatal shooting of civilians - the result of a clumsy intervention in a gun-running operation by British soldiers stationed in Dublin. This smuggling operation was undertaken by the Irish Volunteers who landed arms at the North Dublin harbour in a response to gun-running successfully carried out by the Ulster Volunteer Force months earlier. The city, Pankhurst noted, was 'seething with anger'.[32] Travelling back to London immediately after Britain's declaration of war, Pankhurst returned on a boat carrying the first batch of soldiers from Ireland.[33]

Fearghal McGarry notes that the onset of war in 1914 'transformed the political atmosphere in Ireland, at a stroke postponing the implementation of Home Rule, defusing the impending crisis in Ulster and forcing nationalists to take a stand on the war.'[34] In tandem with this nationalist obligation to articulate a position on the war came a debate within the international suffrage movement regarding the role of feminists in wartime: whether the principles of the movement demanded patriotism or pacifism. The *Irish Citizen* released an issue shortly after the war's declaration with a striking front page

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[31] James Quinn, 'Vane, Sir Francis Patrick Fletcher', *Dictionary of Irish Biography,* http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a9804 (Accessed 5 September 2017).
[32] Pankhurst, *Suffragette Movement*, pp. 589-590.
[33] Ibid, p. 590.
[34] Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising: Ireland, Easter 1916* (Oxford, 2010), p. 79.

declaring 'Votes for women now! Damn your war!.'[35] Alice Park, a California-based suffragist and supporter of both the *Citizen* and the *Dreadnought,* wrote to Sheehy-Skeffington of her joy upon reading the declaration and learning that 'they [the IWFL] were staying rebels!'.[36] In Belfast, the socialist Margaret McCoubrey founded a branch of the IWFL to 'keep the suffrage issue to the fore' once the WSPU withdrew from Ulster following the outbreak of the war.[37] Amongst the 101 British and Irish women who publicly declared their opposition to the war in an open letter published in the 1914 Christmas edition of *Jus Suffragi* were Eva Gore-Booth and Sylvia Pankhurst.[38] Meanwhile, Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel, commanding the dominant militant suffragette body the WSPU, led their movement into support for the British war effort framed as a patriotic stance.[39] By the time the conflict ended in 1918, the Vatican, Sinn Féin, international finance and Quakers had all been labelled 'pro-German' by Christabel Pankhurst in the WSPU press.[40]

Within international socialist circles too, the anti-war position was marginalised. Socialists who held pacifism as an absolute principle received a crushing blow when the Second International collapsed. Constituent parties committed themselves to national self-defence rather than defiance of the war, thereby breaking the bonds of international socialist solidarity. As Marc Mulholland notes: 'invasion, either actual or imminent, convinced many socialists that they were obliged to support the waging of war and to rally

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[35] *IC*, 15 August 1914.
[36] Alice Park to Hanna Sheehy Skeffington (Hereafter HSS), 9 September 1914, NLI, SSP, MS 22,689; *Woman's Dreadnought* (Hereafter *WD*)*,* 19 August 1916; *IC*, 8 May 1915.
[37] Myrtle Hill, 'Ulster: Debates Demands and Divisions: The Battle for (and Against) the Vote', in Louise Ryan and Margaret Ward (eds.), *Irish Women and the Vote: Becoming Citizens* (Newbridge, 2018 [2007]) p. 224.
[38] Sonja Tiernan, *Eva Gore-Booth: An Image of Such Politics* (Manchester, 2012), p. 149.
[39] Purvis, 'The Pankhursts and the Great War', pp. 141-157.
[40] Angela K. Smith, 'The Pankhursts and the War: Suffrage Magazines and First World War Propaganda', *Women's History Review,* 12:1 (2003), p. 109.

behind their government.'[41] Anti-war socialists, like their suffragist counterparts, found themselves in a minority position within their wider movement. The political fates and thus the personal networks of those committed to feminism, pacifism and socialism became more tightly intertwined as a result of the conflict. The divide in the international suffrage and socialist movements between pacifism or support for the war would result in the ideological dividing lines of these movements becoming more clearly drawn. However, the war also stimulated the growth of women's and socialist groups that were opposed to the conflict.

The suffragettes who gathered around Pankhurst were not the only London-based suffrage campaigners to maintain ties with Ireland. The WFL also emerged as a splinter from the WSPU that hosted numerous activists with socialist and pacifist backgrounds. The decision taken by Charlotte Despard, Teresa Billington-Greig and Edith How-Martyn in 1907 to found the WFL was premised on their opposition to Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst's perceived autocratic streak and the WSPU's increasing distance from organised labour. Although the WFL adopted an official stance of neutrality towards the war, Despard maintained prominent and virulent opposition to the conflict.[42] One of the tenets of the WFL, as Kay Whitehead and Lynne Trethewey note, was to allow affiliates 'space to pursue their own agendas'.[43] Each of the founders had a background in socialist politics through engagement with the Independent Labour Party (Billington-Greig and How-Martyn) or the Social Democratic Federation (Despard). Moreover, Despard, who will occupy a prominent place in this thesis as an important cog in the workings of Irish

[41] Marc Mulholland, 'Marxists of Strict Observance'? The Second International, National Defence, and the Question of War', *The Historical Journal*, 58:2 (2015), p. 639.
[42] Mulvihill, *Despard*, p. 133.
[43] Kay Whitehead and Lynne Trethewey, 'Aging and Activism in the Context of the British Woman's Suffrage Union, 1914-1922', *Women's Studies International Forum,* 31 (2008), p. 34.

communism, had distant Irish ancestry. Another member of the WFL with more direct ancestral Irish links than Despard was Katherine Gillett Gatty, a militant suffragette raised in Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, who moved between membership of the WSPU and the WFL in the years preceding the war.[44] Why, if the WFL fostered similar political confluences to the East London suffragettes and had a latent thread of Irish ancestry running through its membership, did it not also emerge as a supporter of the Irish cause?

In part, the answer lies in the WFL's neutral position - but there was another factor at work: while the Irish ancestry of certain WFL members was latent, some Irish and even non-Irish ELFS members were actively engaged with events in Ireland. This can be shown through a close study of Pankhurst's paper, the *Dreadnought* and its headquarters. The paper's primary market was East London, an ethnically diverse area that became a laboratory for a new form of women-dominated social activism that sought to encourage working class communities to take an active role in resisting their own oppression. Such transitions amongst those feminists who were converted to this model of community-organising meant, as Seth Koven notes, 'seeing the poor not as downtrodden subjects with duties, but as rights-bearing citizens.'[45] In this vein, Pankhurst's choice of headquarters was important. East London identity was marked by its migrant communities, notably Eastern European Jewish families who began arriving in the late nineteenth century and an Irish migrant community remembered for the decisive role it played in the 1888 Bryant and May matchwomen's strike.[46] Indeed, the office of the *Dreadnought,* managed for much of its run by an Irish immigrant and her friend, the daughter of Polish Jews who had fled antisemitic violence in the Russian Empire, reflected the makeup of local identity.

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[44] See pp. 245-246 of this thesis for further information on Gillett Gatty's background.
[45] Koven, *Match Girl*, p. 181.
[46] Louise Raw, *Striking a Light: The Bryant and May Matchwomen and their Place in History* (London, 2009), esp. pp. 169-170

Through its provision of amenities to this multi-ethnic East London community, the ELFS staked its aspirations to function as a socialist local government. Israel Zangwill, the prominent Anglo-Russian Zionist, referred to Pankhurst's organisation explicitly as a 'government' and referenced its wartime community amenities as products of a 'Distress and Welfare Bureau.'[47] At one point, Pankhurst even staged a mock women-dominated parliamentary session in her offices on 400 Old Ford Road. True to form, Pankhurst, as the 'Labour spokesman' and Miss O'Callaghan and Miss Lynch, the Members for Killarney Lakes and Cork respectively, caused 'great disturbance' and 'heated interruption' in their opposition to the war policy of this ersatz government.[48] The ELFS responded to its surroundings by drifting leftward and by March 1916 defined itself explicitly as a 'working class organisation' supporting suffrage for all groups disenfranchised by their class position.[49] The particular locational context of East London provided the constituencies of working-class migrants connected to the diasporic politics of their homes that would underpin the future directions taken by Pankhurst's organisation.

Besides the figure of Pankhurst herself, whose interest in Ireland pre-dated Despard's re-discovery of her Irish ancestry by several years, the *Dreadnought* had something that the WFL journal did not: Irish staff playing prominent roles in its production. A crucial and hitherto unappreciated aspect of the support of Pankhurst's East London group for Ireland was located in the *Dreadnought*'s office. Norah Smyth, who provided financial support for Pankhurst and who would travel to Moscow in 1921 as a representative of her organisation, was the Chester-born daughter of a wealthy Anglo-Irish family originally

[47] *WD,* 16 December 1916
[48] *WD*, 9 October 1915.
[49] *WD*, 18 March 1916.

from Derry.[50] Two other women who contributed to the *Dreadnought* were of more direct Irish extraction, including the aforementioned Irish members of Pankhurst's parallel parliament: Patricia Lynch and May O'Callaghan. Lynch was born into a working-class Cork family in 1894. During her late teenage years and her early twenties she worked as a freelance journalist in London. [51] She became involved with Pankhurst through this work.[52] Lynch later recalled becoming attracted to Pankhurst's politics when watching her speak about the position of women, 'especially poor working women'.[53] Reflecting a recurring motif in admiring accounts of suffrage orators, Lynch contrasted Pankhurst's 'frail and charming' appearance with the legends of her sacrifices 'on hunger strike for her principles.'[54] Socialism also ran in the Lynch family. Lynch and her older brother Henry were members of the Herald League which had organised the Albert Hall meeting in solidarity with the Dublin lockout in 1913.[55] Lynch's later career as one of twentieth century Ireland's best-known children's authors has ensured that her life story is well known.

In contrast, May O'Callaghan, who wrote more prolifically on Irish issues than any other *Dreadnought* contributor, is practically unknown to scholars. One of the few academic references to O'Callaghan describes her simply as 'a mystery woman'.[56] The

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[50] H. Morrison to David Mitchell, 24 April 1965, Museum of London Archives, David Mitchell Papers, 73.83/21; Letter from 'TW', 31 June 1921, *Rossiiskii Gosudartsvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politischeskoi Istorii* (Russian State Archive for Social and Political History, Hereafter RGASPI) 495/198/824/2.
[51] Robert Dunbar 'Lynch, Patricia Nora Fox' *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a4951 (Accessed 22 August 2019).
[52] Ibid.
[53] Untitled and Undated Typescript, Patricia Lynch, NLI, Patricia Lynch and R. M. Fox Papers (Hereafter PLRMFP), MS 40,308/2.
[54] Ibid.
[55] R. M. Fox, *Smoky Crusade* (London, 1937), p. 214.
[56] In 1968, M.W.H. Schreuder, a Dutch academic who catalogued Pankhurst's personal papers, interviewed May O'Callaghan. Though initially deposited in the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, this interview is now lost (Huub Sanders of the IISH to the author, email, 9 March 2017). In 1972, Lucia Jones, a graduate student at the University of Warwick, interviewed O'Callaghan while researching an MA thesis on Sylvia Pankhurst. However, O'Callaghan was 'old and frail and not really engaged.' The recording has been lost. (Lucia Jones to the author, email, 11 March 2017); for the 'mystery woman' quote, see: Mary

daughter of a Royal Irish Constabulary inspector, O'Callaghan was born into a middle-class Catholic family residing in the Irish coastal town of Wexford in 1881.[57] The youngest of four children, she moved to Vienna at the end of the nineteenth century, following an older sister married to an Austrian businessman. There, she attended the University of Vienna.[58] During her studies she tutored in English and lectured in Vienna on Irish literary topics.[59] In the summer of 1914, O'Callaghan travelled towards New York to deliver lectures promoting her brother-in-law's shipping business.[60] However, the outbreak of war forced O'Callaghan to remain in London. In order to finance her stay, she responded to a job posting placed by Pankhurst seeking assistance with the *Dreadnought*.[61] Although she initially intended to stay only a few months, O'Callaghan would remain in London until 1924.[62] Pankhurst later memorialised O'Callaghan in her 1932 memoir of the war years as possessing a 'gift of humour' and a keen admiration for George Bernard Shaw.[63] She became a prolific writer for suffrage, socialist and eventually communist causes.

The *Dreadnought* was a lively paper with greater influence than Pankhurst's contained constituency of the East End would initially suggest. Throughout the *Dreadnought's* existence the editorial line appears to have been placed firmly under Pankhurst's personal guidance. Nellie Cohen, who worked as personal secretary to Pankhurst from 1913-1917

A. Nicolas and Cynthia A. Ruder, 'In Search of the Collective Author: Fact and Fiction from the Soviet 1930s', *Book History*, 11 (2008), p. 228.

[57] 'Register of Births - Wexford,' Vol. 19, p. 972, General Registry Offices Dublin.

[58] May O'Callaghan, 'Things I Have Done and Know', February 1932, , Hoover Institution Library and Archives (Hereafter HILA), Joseph Freeman Papers (Hereafter JFP), Box 32, Folder 9.

[59] Ibid; *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, 17 April 1913; *Neue Freie Presse*, 16 January 1914.

[60] Interview with Nellie Rathbone (née Cohen), conducted by Lucia Jones, 27 June 1972, Appendix A, Lucia Jones, *Sylvia Pankhurst and the Workers' Socialist Federation – the Red Twilight, 1918-1924* (M.A. Thesis, University of Warwick, 1972).

[61] Ibid.

[62] See Chapter 3 of this thesis for a discussion of May O'Callaghan's activities between 1924 and 1929.

[63] Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Home Front: A Mirror to Life in England during the World War* (Plymouth, 1932), p. 235.

and assisted O'Callaghan in the office of the *Dreadnought,* recalled that Pankhurst controlled the paper's content and operated without an editorial board.[64] But the journal was more than a Pankhurst sounding-box. Her connections and those of her staff brought a plurality of views to the publication. The contained world of the team working on the paper can be illustrated by the fact that Pankhurst lived at her offices at 400 Old Ford Road while O'Callaghan and Cohen shared a flat with Daisy Lansbury, daughter of the *Daily Herald* editor George Lansbury.[65] This team steadily grew the *Dreadnought* into a respected journal of the Anglophone Left. At its peak in the summer of 1917, the *Dreadnought* boasted a circulation of 10,000, with June sales in the Bow district alone amounting to 3,000.[66] As we will see, the paper would become a dynamic place of discussion for those interested in Irish republicanism and socialism.

The Irish journalists on the *Dreadnought* staff created further interpersonal links between the paper and Dublin's suffrage-socialist set in the months preceding the Easter Rising. Both Lynch and O'Callaghan followed the activities of the IWFL. In September 1915, Lynch affirmed to Hanna Sheehy Skeffington that she and O'Callaghan would be 'pleased to represent the IWFL' at a meeting of the WSPU.[67] In light of the IWFL's explicit desire to retain a distinct identity, using two Irish women resident in Britain to represent it to the WSPU would have been a desirable compromise. This incident also reveals that the wartime divide between pacifist and pro-war suffrage organisations was, occasionally, capable of being bridged. The interaction also helped Lynch commune with her Irish identity. In a follow-up letter, Lynch asked Sheehy Skeffington to detail the opinions of 'those at home so that I should not misrepresent them' and thanked the Irish

[64] Lucia Jones, *Red Twilight*, p. 30, Appendix: Interview with Nellie Rathbone.
[65] Scotland Yard Report on Nellie Cohen, 25 March 1916, TNA, MI5 Personal Files (Hereafter KV), 2/1395.
[66] Jones, *Red Twilight*, p. 23.
[67] Patricia Lynch to HSS, 27 September 1915, NLI, SSP, MS 33,604 (10).

feminist for her assistance in helping Lynch 'to be properly Irish.'[68] Moreover, several weeks after Lynch and O'Callaghan offered to represent Irish feminist interests in Britain, O'Callaghan wrote to Francis Sheehy Skeffington asking for a contribution to the upcoming Christmas edition of the *Dreadnought*. Praising him as a 'real Irish thinker', O'Callaghan noted that she had mentioned to Pankhurst 'how nice it would be to be more in touch with the *Irish Citizen*.'[69] Lynch and O'Callaghan regularly took part in street meetings and lectures organised by the ELFS. Taking one fortnight in October 1915 as a representative example, O'Callaghan spoke at five engagements and Lynch at seven.[70] On one occasion, O'Callaghan and Lynch spoke in January 1916 at an anti-conscription meeting in Hyde Park, during which their 'unmistakably Hibernian vigour' was noted by a *Daily Mirror* reporter as the 'chief attraction.'[71] In the coming months, Lynch and O'Callaghan's presence on the *Dreadnought* staff would prove pivotal to its coverage of Ireland as seismic events gripped the country.

On the morning of Easter Monday, 1916, members of the Irish Volunteers, Cumann na mBan and the ICA marched through Dublin, occupying several locations in the city centre. The Easter Rising, a key moment for historians of modern Ireland, has been outlined in a wide variety of accounts and it is not necessary to rehearse it here. Yet, it is worth noting that from within the Irish socialist-suffrage nexus outlined above would arise the most radical aspects of the 1916 Proclamation.[72] Unsurprisingly, therefore, these actions struck a chord with Pankhurst – who knew many of the chief protagonists personally. The Rising, an act of visceral street-theatre that reduced the second city of a

[68] Patricia Lynch to HSS, 8 November 1915, NLI, SSP, MS 33,604 (13).
[69] May O'Callaghan to Francis Sheehy Skeffington, 18 November 1915, NLI, SSP, MS 33,604 (13).
[70] *WD,* 16 October, 23 October 1916.
[71] *Daily Mirror,* 10 January 1916; *WD*, 15 January 1916.
[72] Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist Women*, pp. 192-193.

warring Empire to rubble, attracted international attention as reporters entered the city attempting to decipher the meaning of the Dublin ruins. There was one periodical that was better positioned to capitalise upon, interpret and report on this event than most - the *Dreadnought*.

The *Workers' Dreadnought* and 'Rebel Ireland', 1916-1917.

When news broke of the Easter Rising, Sylvia Pankhurst was attending a meeting of the Independent Labour Party in Newcastle. In the *Home Front*, she recalled that James Connolly on the 1913 Royal Albert Hall platform 'came back to my eyes; his voice, restrained and deep, with its undercurrent of strong emotion, rang in my ears.'[73] Constance Markievicz and her pacifist sister Eva Gore Booth were on Pankhurst's mind as 'day by day came news of amazing doings.'[74] This sense of a personal connection to the events is evident in how the *Dreadnought* reported the Irish revolution as it happened.[75] Charting the response of Pankhurst and her comrades to the Easter Rising and its aftermath through these connections provides a means of examining the origins of a radical internationalist worldview within a Dublin-East London feminist nexus.

In a lead article published less than a week after Irish republican forces surrendered in Dublin, Pankhurst provided her first analysis of the events. Pankhurst's opening line set the tone: 'Justice can make but one reply to the Irish rebellion and that is to demand that Ireland shall be allowed to govern herself.'[76] Pankhurst placed the events within a lineage of militarisation that began with Carson, continued with the Home Rulers and was followed by the ICA.[77] The violence in Dublin, in Pankhurst's view, was a natural response to the government's inept handling of the Home Rule Act, which had allowed the

[73] Pankhurst, *Home Front*, p. 321.
[74] Ibid.
[75] There exists an ongoing debate regarding whether or not the sequence of events which gripped Ireland from 1916 amounted to a revolution, strictly defined. Although not addressing this debate directly, this study is sensitive to the terms that actors used in understanding historical events as they unfolded. For many, this period was certainly considered an era with the potential for revolution in Ireland. For a recent intervention on this debate see: Aidan Beatty, 'An Irish Revolution without a Revolution', *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 22:1 (March 2016), pp. 54-76.
[76] *WD*, 6 May 1916.
[77] Ibid.

militancy of both unionists and nationalists to develop, though she nonetheless regretted that the 'old position of Larkin and Connolly' which affirmed 'neither race nor creed should separate the workers of the world' was now obscured.[78] Pankhurst's analysis faltered in a superficial reading of her comrades Larkin and Connolly. A detailed analysis of their past positions would have unearthed a steady shift towards an accommodation of socialism and national particularities that was particularly evident in Connolly's case. Indeed, Pankhurst would revise her previous position on Connolly in a 1919 article for the American socialist press, asserting that his support for nationalist insurrection was consistent with his prior stances.[79] The May 1916 article nonetheless clearly drew upon Pankhurst's personal connections to those involved with or sympathetic to the insurgents. Comparing the conditions in Dublin tenements and the West of Ireland with the apathy of the British authorities, Pankhurst concluded her piece with a plea for sympathy for those weeping in solidarity with 'rebels who have been shot.'[80]

In the first *Dreadnought* issue to explore the Rising in detail, Pankhurst relied on her Irish staff to provide accurate portrayals of the events. Beneath Pankhurst's editorial, O'Callaghan contributed an effusive profile of Markievicz which described her as 'one who has sacrificed everything for her country' and whose 'one impulse has always been to help those in trouble.'[81] An impression of British brutality against the rebels was depicted with arguments of proportional violence. Pankhurst spoke of untrained rebels with a 'job lot of rifles' faced by 'machine guns, bombs, bayonets, and cannon', while O'Callaghan followed with descriptions of volunteers armed with 'antiquated guns' that Britain 'turned

[78] Ibid.
[79] *The Socialist Review,* April 1920.
[80] *WD*, 6 May 1916.
[81] *WD,* 6 May 1916.

machine guns loose' upon.[82] The Rising provided Pankhurst with ideal propaganda, allowing her and her staff to level claims of hypocrisy against the British government arguments for a war in defence of 'small nations.' But being an anti-war socialist did not inevitably result in support for Irish independence. Few British leftists followed Pankhurst in taking such a stridently pro-rebel stance. For example, George Lansbury, perhaps Pankhurst's most prominent ally on the British left following the death of Keir Hardie, described the rising during its immediate aftermath as 'fighting between men of the same nation.'[83] Pankhurst's personal investment in Ireland made her into a valuable, and uniquely sympathetic, British socialist commentator on the Irish question.

This immediate coverage by the *Dreadnought* was starkly different from that found in *The Vote,* which provides a useful comparison given that its editor Despard would emerge as an indefatigable republican and communist. Initially, the paper adopted a condemnatory tone. An editorial published on 28th April 1916 declared that the rising, a 'crass muddle', should 'never have occurred'.[84] A week later, Despard described the 'disturbances in Ireland' as 'pitiful and tragic' events which would not have occurred but for the government's failure to sanction Carson and his Ulster volunteers.[85] Yet just over three months after the *Vote* had termed the Rising a 'muddle', Despard wrote with cautious optimism that in Ireland, 'land of many sorrows', a new era was dawning.[86] The seeds of her later growth into an Irish radical woman were being sown, but revolutionary events in Russia would capture her enthusiasm before she would develop her Irish republicanism. Pankhurst ultimately proved herself best prepared out of all the other journals of the

[82] Ibid.
[83] Bell, *Hesitant Comrades*, p. 11.
[84] *The Vote,* 28 April 1916.
[85] *The Vote,* 5 May 1916.
[86] *The Vote,* 14 July 1916.

British women's movement or the socialist press to channel the voices of the Irish themselves.

With a military cordon in place surrounding the city in the immediate aftermath of the Rising, journalists had limited capabilities to enter the city. Yet the *Dreadnought* managed to publish an exclusive account through the use of an Irish staff writer. Lynch arrived to the offices at 400 Old Ford Road after learning of the Rising, where it was decided that she should be sent to cover the events because she was young, Irish and unknown.[87] In her report, Lynch noted two reasons given to her by influential commentators as to why the rebellion took place. The first was that the rebellion was engineered by those who wished to 'rob Ireland of Home Rule' and the 'idealistic, pure-minded, high-souled' leaders of the Rising had acted as 'their unconscious tools.'[88] The other commenter, a 'poet and philosopher', argued that the inability of the Dublin working class to 'live like human beings' made violence inevitable but, given a chance, organised labour would bring about the 'end of armed rebellion.'[89] To surmise the situation, Lynch counterpoised the feminine images of a 'heroic girl marrying her lover on the morning of his execution' and 'a beautiful countess giving up the advantages of her position to live with the working people' with the militarised world of imprisonment, shootings, spies and informers.[90] For Lynch, and for the *Dreadnought* more broadly, Dublin was ruined by capitalism but could be resurrected through socialism and opposition to the war. Lynch's eye-witness account of the Rising provides an indication of the unique attributes of the journalistic apparatus Pankhurst had assembled, which was capable of providing a

[87] 'An Easter Monday', Typescript, Patricia Lynch, 24 April 1962, NLI, PLRMFP, MS 40,308/2.
[88] *WD*, 13 May 1916.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.

sympathetic, eye-witness analysis to an audience on the left - an audience that was becoming increasingly international.

The tragedy of Easter 1916 given the most attention on the pages of the *Dreadnought* was the death of Francis Sheehy Skeffington, who, while carrying out first aid tasks and attempting to prevent looting, was murdered by Captain John Bowen Colthurst. While attention has been paid to the reverberations of Connolly's execution, little has been said of the wider left response to the death of Francis Sheehy Skeffington.[91] The Sheehy Skeffington case was both a clear instance of unsanctioned execution (Sheehy Skeffington had no connection to the Rising aside from personal acquaintance of leading figures) and a litmus test for the strength of Anglo-Irish interpersonal suffrage and socialist networks. The first news of his death was reported in the same 13 May 1916 issue of the *Dreadnought* that contained Lynch's eye-witness account. The report utilised his familiar name 'Frank' and cited as its source a letter received by the ELFS from Mary Bourke-Dowling, the Honorary Treasurer of the IWFL.[92] Several weeks later, the *Dreadnought* published on its front cover a memorial poem for Sheehy Skeffington written by his editorial collaborator on the *Irish Citizen* James H. Cousins, a portrait of Francis and Hanna Sheehy Skeffington together at their graduation and an update on the condition of Hanna Sheehy Skeffington by Australian suffragist Muriel Matters.[93] Matters' piece in particular, which reads more like a personal letter than an article, reflected the level of interpersonal intimacy within the suffrage press. Indeed, taken as a whole, the coverage of Francis Sheehy Skeffington's murder is one example of what Barbara Green terms the

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[91] Jerome aan de Wiel, 'The Shots that Reverberated for a Long Time, 1916-1932: The Irish Revolution, the Bolsheviks and the European Left', *International History Review* (October 2018), pp. 1-19; Charlie McGuire '"They'll Never Understand Why I'm Here": British Marxism and the Irish Revolution, 1916-1923', 32:2 (June 2018), *Contemporary British History,* pp. 147-168.
[92] *WD*, 13 May 1916.
[93] *WD*, 5 August 1916.

'importance of affective identification' in the suffrage press which invited readers to develop an emotional identification with the cause.[94] Sympathetic coverage of Sheehy Skeffington's death invited sympathy with the Irish rebels through eulogising the murder of a stalwart of the Irish suffrage struggle and detailing the conditions of his widow.

A British military officer of Irish extraction who commanded the detachment of forces that included Sheehy Skeffington's executioner contributed a *Dreadnought* article discussing the case. This author was Sir Francis Vane, former leader of Pankhurst's People's Army and adviser to the ICA, who led a group of soldiers that suppressed the rebellion in the area surrounding Portobello Barracks.[95] A scouting enthusiast and political adventurer, Vane had previously participated in the suffrage campaign, speaking from platforms and joining processions, including one led by Despard. [96] Vane also once smuggled Pankhurst through a police cordon to attend a meeting.[97] Vane's *Dreadnought* article opened with an account of his visit to Hanna Sheehy Skeffington.[98] He criticised the conduct of the soldiers involved in quashing the Rising, noting that a number of senior officers 'lost their heads, or their morality, or both' and that many English soldiers 'were completely ignorant of the struggle, and looked upon all the Irish as rebels.'[99] Vane also contributed articles outlining his position in the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Irish Independent*.[100] The *Dreadnought*'s ability to corral together such an array of authors

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[94] Barbara Green, 'The Feel of the Feminist Network: *Votes for Women* after *The Suffragette*', *Women: A Cultural Review,* 27:4 (2016), p. 363.
[95] *WD*, 26 August 1916.
[96] Sir Francis Fletcher Vane, *Agin the Governments: Memories and Adventures of Sir Francis Fletcher Vane, Bt.* (London, 1929), p. 189.
[97] Ibid.
[98] *WD*, 26 August 1916.
[99] Ibid.
[100] James Quinn, 'Vane, Sir Francis Patrick Fletcher', *Dictionary of Irish Biography,* http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a9804 (Accessed 5 September 2017).

involved with Irish events - including socialists, feminists and their British sympathisers - spoke to the breadth of its network.

Throughout the remainder of 1916, the *Dreadnought* continued to provide detailed commentary on parliamentary discussion of Irish issues in the regular 'Parliament as we see it' feature, usually authored by O'Callaghan.[101] In discussing rumours that Irish disturbances were to be resolved by the establishment of devolved government, the *Dreadnought's* programmatic contribution was that 'a purely democratic Government, including men and women, must form the basis of whatever system the British Government forces on the country.'[102] This vague proposal may have resulted from an awareness of the limited political horizons open to Irish radicals in this moment or simply a shallow understanding of Irish conditions - but it was also tactful, wittingly or unwittingly. We will see throughout this project that Irish radicals often rebuked British leftists who applied their own programmes to Ireland's problems.

A letter published in the *Dreadnought* at the end of 1916 provided further evidence of how the political nexus surrounding the interlocking worlds of Irish feminism and socialism interacted with the *Dreadnought* and its readership. Maud Eden, an Irish socialist republican and founding member of the Irish Women Workers Union (IWWU), wrote that *Dreadnought* readers would be glad to hear that the 'organisation of Irish women workers' was proceeding at Liberty Hall, Dublin and appealed to 'friends for orders for our shirts made in the "Connolly" Co-operative Workrooms.'[103]

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[101] For example, see parliamentary notes sections on 10 June 1916, 8 July 1916 and 15 July 1916, *WD* O'Callaghan's authorship of this section was noted by Pankhurst in a draft memoir of this period, see: Katherine Dodd (ed.), *A Sylvia Pankhurst Reader* (Manchester, 1993), p. 203.
[102] *WD,* 24 June 1916.
[103] *WD*, 23 December 1916; Mary Jones, *These Obstreperous Lassies: A History of the IWWU* (Dublin, 1988), p. 24.

The *Dreadnought* also carried an article from Irish socialist women within a British prison. That Irish women involved in revolutionary activity saw Sylvia Pankhurst as a sympathetic ally from an early stage is attested to in the Bureau of Military History Witness Statement of Helena Molony, another founding member of the IWWU. Imprisoned in Aylesbury Jail alongside two other republican activists Nell Ryan and Winnie Carney, Molony wrote an article about the conditions of the prisoners, focusing in particular on those from outside the British Isles.[104] Molony recalled that she smuggled the article out of the prison during a visit from Alice Ginnell, wife of the MP Laurence Ginnell, by concealing the article in her slipper.[105] Although Molony later claimed that Pankhurst rumbled the identity of the article smuggler when publishing it, the piece itself displays extreme caution in this regard.[106] Published under the title 'A Cry from Interned British Women', placing a smokescreen over the real nationality of the author, the article was prefaced with the sentence: 'The following pathetic communication has reached us. Comment is needless.'[107] To publicise Ginnell's role in extricating the document would have contravened information given in the article itself, which stated the 'absolutely Russian' methods of repression employed in the prison included loss of correspondence and visiting privileges upon discovery of uncensored notes being passed.[108] The *Dreadnought* provided Irish revolutionaries not only with a paper capable of drawing attention to a smuggled note from an Irish prisoner, but an editor with the resources and expertise to extract such a document.

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[104] Helena Molony, Witness Statement No. 391, Bureau of Military History, pp. 41-42.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid, p. 42; *WD,* 25 November 1916.
[107] *WD,* 25 November 1916.
[108] Ibid.

How impactful was *Dreadnought* coverage of Ireland? Writing in 2003, Angela K. Smith noted that it was 'difficult to say for sure what kind of public impact' the various press initiatives of the Pankhurst family made.[109] The advent of digitisation has somewhat changed this situation. Without regular distribution figures it is difficult to systematically analyse the paper's reach. Syndication and the reprinting of stories was, of course, common during this period. But it is worth noting that as distant a periodical as the Melbourne *Tribune* quoted from O'Callaghan's 1916 profile of Constance Markievicz to affirm that the Countess was 'animated by the highest ideals' and not 'a notoriety seeker.'[110] In 1922, British intelligence intercepted correspondence between Pankhurst and B. S. Pathik, president of an Indian nationalist organisation known as the Servants of Rajastan Society.[111] Pathik sought old issues of the *Dreadnought* as 'some of our workers of this side are anxious to know the methods of Irish organisations with all their subtleties and detailed notes about their famous warfare.'[112] Pankhurst evidently obliged, as Pathik replied noting that the *Dreadnought* extracts 'proved of great use to me.'[113] Clearly, the *Dreadnought* could move through the Empire's information flow and attract the attention of anti-imperialists. Lynch's first eyewitness report of the scenes from Dublin in the aftermath of the Rising proved so popular that the issue carrying the article sold out and had to be reprinted several times.[114] R. M. Fox, a contemporary chronicler of the Irish left who eventually married Lynch, testifies to this particular issue of the *Dreadnought* circulating widely in the Parisian Irish colony.[115]

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[109] Smith, 'The Pankhursts and the War', p. 114.
[110] *Tribune*, 6 July 1916.
[111] Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, 19 October 1922, TNA, Cabinet Office (Hereafter CAB) 24/139/90.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Adam Hochschild, *To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914-1918* (New York, 2011), p. 185.
[115] Fox, *Smoky Crusade,* p. 216.

Less than a year after the transformative events in Dublin occupied space on the pages of the *Dreadnought,* a seismic transformation in Russia poised itself to become the new fixation of the journal. In May 1917, the front page of the *Dreadnought* published a poem by socialist poet William Norman Ewer entitled 'Laggard Spring', which invoked the state of world revolutionary politics as perceived by Pankhurst and her comrades:

> Over a year ago, flaming to westward,
> Spring came to Eireann: the dark Rosaleen
> Clad in white cloud, golden gorse and green meadow
> Rose in a glory of gold, white and green,
> Now once again the old earth is a tremble,
> With the joy and the passion and the pulse of the spring:
> Far to the eastward the new buds are blossoming
> Fruitful, O God, be the promise they bring.[116]

Revolutionary Russia would never entirely eclipse Rebel Ireland on the pages of Pankhurst's journal. Rather, as the next section will discuss, the two issues began to meld together as supporters of the respective revolutions would, partly under Pankhurst's guidance, begin to interact more directly.

In the aftermath of the Easter Rising, the *Dreadnought* became a singular publication in the landscape of the British left-wing press. This journal regularly and sympathetically broadcast not only the voices of Irish rebels but more specifically Irish women. The *Dreadnought's* personal and political links to events in Ireland through its staff underpinned this reportage. But the location in which it was published is also of central importance. Reporting sympathetically on Irish issues held the potential to appeal to a sizeable East End market of Irish migrants living in the area. In the aftermath of the Easter Rising, Irish republicans began to make their case before the world through growing

[116] *WD*, 5 May 1917.

liberal internationalist institutions and radical organisations. Pankhurst's East London meeting hall would become one stop on the itinerary of radical Irish speaker that included spaces in cities such as Glasgow, New York and San Francisco. As the revolutionary events that toppled the Russian Empire in 1917 gripped the radical world, Pankhurst and her organisation would become one important intermediary between Irish women and the world of radical internationalism.

The *Workers' Dreadnought*, the *Irish Citizen* and the Russian Revolution, 1917-1921.

On the 31 March 1917, representatives of the East London Jewish community hosted a meeting to welcome the overthrow of Tsarism in Russia. The *Dreadnought* evoked scenes of political intoxication as crowds broke forth 'into cheers and cries of enthusiasm for the coming freedom or groans of hatred and contempt for the tyranny that is overthrown.'[117] According to the report, the crowd greeted the first speaker, Lord Sheffield, with a measured response, but 'showed infinitely greater enthusiasm' for the women speakers, an East London comrade who had suffered imprisonment and an Irish woman, for she too 'belonged to a race which is oppressed.'[118] The pages of the *Dreadnought* and the *Citizen*, along with the meeting halls frequented by their contributors, became a point of convergence for the proponents and ideas of the Irish and Russian revolutions. For Pankhurst, this was the dawn of a period she termed, in an unpublished memoir of the post-war years, the 'Red Twilight.'[119] Through examining the networks surrounding the *Dreadnought* and the *Citizen* as they responded to the Russian Revolution, we can study the formative years in the wake of the First World War which moulded a radical movement that would operate into the 1920s and 1930s. The October Revolution provided momentum to a section of international radicalism which, cast into marginality during the early years of the Great War, found a mobilising sense of broadened political horizons as Romanov reign ended and workers' power appeared to rise.

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[117] *WD,* 31 March 1917.
[118] Ibid.
[119] For drafts of this memoir, see: International Institute of Social History (Hereafter IISH), Estelle Sylvia Pankhurst Papers (Hereafter ESPP), Manuscripts Non-Fiction, Folders 76-80.

Given the divergent outcomes of the Irish and Russian revolutions, it may seem curious that a socialist revolution would spark the Irish revolutionary imagination. Yet the Storming of the Winter Palace, like the Storming of the Bastille before it, signified a transformative declaration of political potential. Importantly, all of the Irish radicals central to this thesis understood Russia's development through a particular historical frame. In the decades before the Revolution, figures across the western European political spectrum viewed Russian Imperialism as a byword for barbarism. Rival Empires considered the reign of the Tsars as a benchmark of tyranny against which they could minimise their own authoritarianism, while international anti-imperialist campaigners held Russia up as a starker version of the iniquities they railed against in their own societies.[120] 'Tsarism' or 'Tsarist' tactics, as Daniel Renshaw notes, was a cry raised by the British Left whenever the government or employers 'acted with particular brutality, be it towards trade unionists, suffragettes, or Irish nationalists'.[121] Early Irish enthusiasm for the Russian Revolution usually signified the expansion of the political horizon: if the reign of the despotic Tsar's could come to an end, what else might be possible? Yet often this enthusiasm was more a celebration of an imperialist system's collapse than an endorsement of the ideological program of worldwide workers' revolt and central planning that arose from the ashes of Tsarism.

Ideological sympathy with the Bolsheviks was rare among Irish nationalists more broadly. Conor Kostick's argument that Ireland during the revolutionary period held the potential for a popular working class insurgency that was diverted into narrowly nationalist

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[120] Choi Chatterjee, 'Imperial Incarcerations: Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaia, Vinayak Savarkar, and the Original Sins of Modernity', *Slavic Review*, 74:4 (Winter 2015), pp. 850-872.
[121] Daniel Renshaw, *Socialism and the Diasporic "Other": A Comparative Study of Irish Catholic and Jewish Radical and Communal Politics in East London, 1889-1912* (Liverpool, 2018), p. 63.

aims is highly questionable.[122] For Kostick, the primary issue is one of leadership, with Irish Labour figures like William O'Brien and Tom Johnson thwarting the revolutionary energy of a dynamic working class by allowing it to dissipate or channelling this dynamism into Sinn Féin.[123] But even if the leading figures of Irish Labour constituted a Leninist vanguard Party, they would have found that the political dynamics of popular revolt in Ireland, particularly surrounding the pivotal question of land, were drastically divergent from what the Bolsheviks encountered in the Russian Empire. McGarry notes that the British programme of land redistribution in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries fostered 'an independent, conservative-minded, landowning population'.[124] Beatty notes similarly that there is 'scant evidence' of Bolshevik-style sympathies within the labour movement of the revolutionary period, while there is good reason to suggest conservative notions of private property dominated rural Ireland throughout this era.[125]

The agrarian and labour agitation that took place in this period became funnelled into nationalist rather than socialist causes. This was not primarily due to a dearth of Bolshevism, but because the conditions that would make this ideology resonate were absent. Sami Soudenjoki notes that the preconditions for mass support of socialism were weakened in Ireland by the structural frailty of urban labour and relations within farming communities, where local communalism hindered landless labourers from organising effectively and the familial intimacy of agricultural work may have blurred sentiments of class affiliation.[126] Soudenjoki notes that the incorporation of agrarian radicalism into Irish

[122] Conor Kostick, *Revolution in Ireland: Popular Militancy, 1917-1923* (Cork, 1996).
[123] Kostick, *Revolution in Ireland*, p. 221.
[124] McGarry, 'Radical Politics in Interwar Ireland', p. 208.
[125] Beatty, 'Irish Revolution Without a Revolution', p. 65.
[126] Sami Soudenjoki, 'Mobilising for Land, Nation and Class Interests: Agrarian Agitation in Finland and Ireland, 1879-1918', *Irish Historical Studies* 41:160 (2017), p. 218.

nationalist politics effectively prevented agrarian radicals from moving leftwards.[127] Effective government diffusion of the land question and nationalist co-option of agrarian agitation, in tandem with lasting Church hostility to socialism and the lack of a large industrial working-class base, ensured that any Irish Bolsheviks, no matter how impressive their command of the Marxist dialectic, faced an insurmountable struggle in directing class war across the island. This situation remained much the same for the remainder of the century, which is crucial for understanding the political fortunes of the subjects of this thesis. However, the above provisos should not dissuade us from considering the sweeping sense of political potential that the Russian Revolution fostered within a section of Irish radical society.

On the eve of International Women's Day in 1917, thousands of workers were locked out of the Putilov metalworks factory in the Russian capital of Petrograd, unleashing a revolutionary fervour that would find advocates in Dublin, East London and across Europe. On 2nd June 1917, a group of British left-wing notables gathered at a conference centre in Leeds to welcome the Russian Revolution. Among those attending were several women activists whose suffrage politics was infused with revolutionary socialism, notably Pankhurst and Despard. By 1917 in her seventy-third year, Despard was already on the path towards wholehearted support for Irish republicanism. One contemporary remembered how, in the wake of the Easter Rising, she had explained its significance to her workers living in her Battersea stomping ground.[128] She was also an early supporter of the Russian Revolution and wrote a 1917 open letter addressed 'To the

[127] Ibid.
[128] Frank Jackson to Teresa Billington-Greig, Teresa Billington-Greig Papers Women's Library (TBGP), London School of Economics (Hereafter WLLSE), 7/TBG1/71.

liberty loving women of Russia.'[129] Her appearance at the Leeds Conference coincided with her release from a prison stint, which had initially removed her from the unemployed relief initiatives she managed within the 'Little Ireland' of Battersea.[130] Ireland was on the minds of Leeds conference attendees. Following the opening resolution, which affirmed that Britain hailed the Russian Revolution, the 'Irish comrades' present directed the chair to insert 'and Ireland' after 'Great Britain' as having hailed the Russian Revolution.[131] This was agreed and carried unanimously.[132] Pankhurst reported that cries of 'Ireland! Ireland' came from the floor.[133] Later in 1917, Pankhurst welcomed the October Revolution with the same alacrity with which she staked her support for 'Rebel Ireland'. In a lengthy editorial published less than a fortnight after the Bolshevik seizure of power, Pankhurst hailed the 'Lenin Revolution' as that which would ensure workers would 'no longer be disinherited and oppressed.'[134]

On the pages of the *Dreadnought*, the Irish and Russian revolutions were twinned as distinct arms of a common struggle for societal transformation. O'Callaghan reimagined the story of Tir na nÓg to fit this purpose in the Christmas 1917 *Dreadnought* issue. Retrofitting Irish mythology as a vehicle for contemporary political analogy was a well-worn tactic, deployed by Eva Gore Booth in a 1916 text *The Gentler Dream of Maeve*, itself favourably reviewed by O'Callaghan.[135] In O'Callaghan's narrative, a British

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[129] 'To the Liberty Loving Women of Russia', Charlotte Despard, Open Letter, n.d. 1917, British Library Manuscripts Collection (Hereafter BLMC), Samuel Solomonovich Koteliansky Papers, Vol. IX General Correspondence, 57.
[130] Leonard Woolf, *Beginning Again: An Autobiography of the Years 1911-1918* (London, 1964), p. 212; Jill Liddington, *Vanishing for the Vote: Suffrage, Citizenship and the Battle for the Census* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 13-15; Minnie Bowles to Teresa Billington-Grieg, 3 August 1961, WLLSE, TBGP, 7/TBG1/71.
[131] Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Delegates, *What Happened at Leeds* (London, 1917), p. 23.
[132] Ibid.
[133] *WD*, 9 June 1917.
[134] *WD*, 17 November 1917.
[135] Marian Eide, 'Maeve's Legacy: Constance Markievicz, Eva Gore-Booth, and the Eater Rising' *Éire-Ireland,* 51:3&4 (Fall/Winter 2016), pp. 80-103; *WD,* 21 October 1916.

politician enters the eponymous land of eternal youth for a millennium, before remerging on the earthly plane in 3017. There, he addresses the children of the future world about his old one.[136] His world was one wherein women 'had only been discovered' and the meaning of the Bolshevik revolution's challenge to capitalism was yet unknown.[137] The Irish rebels, the protagonist informed his audience, 'who you have celebrated in history and song as heroes and forerunners of the new era', were suppressed by Britain.[138] In this prophecy, the precursors of a harmonious world were conceived of as the Irish rebels, who stood up for small nationalities, and the Bolsheviks, who challenged the system of international capitalism. In hindsight, the outcome of the Irish and Russian causes seem the result of entirely distinct struggles, but observers such as O'Callaghan could perceive them as intertwined processes in the contemporary moment.

When news first broke of the Revolution, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington was in New York on a speaking tour in support of the Irish republican cause. Among those with whom she shared a platform in New York in 1917 were Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, the Russo-American anarchist couple who were deported to Russia in 1919, and John Reed, a radical journalist later famed for his account of the Bolshevik rise to power.[139] In a 1940 obituary of Goldman, Sheehy Skeffington recalled a crowded meeting to welcome the Revolution in Madison Square Gardens. The event reminded her of the words of William Wordsworth written in the wake of the French Revolution: 'Bliss it was in that dawn to be alive, But to be young was very heaven'.[140] The events in Russia also

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[136] *WD*, 15 December 1917.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Emma Goldman, *Living My Life: Part 1* (New York, 1931), http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/emma-goldman-living-my-life.pdf (Accessed 19 August 2019), pp 399-400.
[140] 'Emma Goldman Obituary', *Distributive Worker,* August 1940, in Margaret Ward (ed.), *Hanna Sheehy Skeffington: Suffragette and Sinn Féiner, Her Memoirs and Political Writings* (Dublin, 2017), p. 375.

had an Irish-American connection, when, in April 1917, protestors converged on the US embassy in Petrograd demanding the release of one Tom Mooney.[141] In 1916, Mooney, the Chicago-born son of Irish immigrants, was charged with planting a bomb at a San Francisco parade against a wider backdrop of incipient class warfare within the Irish diaspora.[142] A global campaign for his release would become a rallying cause in international communist and Irish radical circles in the decades to come. In the same month that Russian protestors called for Mooney's release, Sheehy Skeffington was visiting San Francisco, where Mooney was imprisoned. She was approached by Mary Mooney, Tom's Mayo-born mother, who invited the touring Irish feminist to visit her son.[143] Back on the East Coast by February 1918, Sheehy Skeffington informed an East Harlem audience that 'the Russians, the Jews and the Irish' were the 'three great revolutionary forces that would, in truth, make the world safe for democracy'.[144] Consciously upending Wilsonian rhetoric about making the world 'safe for democracy', Sheehy Skeffington foreshadowed her own subsequent engagement with the radical internationalism unleashed by the Bolsheviks against their liberal internationalist opponents.

Against the backdrop of the vying Leninist and Wilsonian battle and the world revolutionary ferment spearheaded by the Easter Rising in 1916, there was no shortage of political paths to national self-determination on offer. The birth of Irish diplomacy amid the 'Wilsonian Moment' has been detailed by Gerard Keown.[145] However, less has been

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[141] David R. Francis, *Russia From the American Embassy* (New York, 1921), p. 101.
[142] Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, 'Political Violence and the Irish Diaspora', in Eugenio F. Biagini and Mary E. Daly (eds.), *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 464-465.
[143] *Dublin Independent,* 12 May 1929, HILA, Alice Park Papers (Hereafter APP), Box 19, Folder 7.
[144] *The New York Call,* 19 February 1918.
[145] Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford, 2007); Gerard Keown, *The First of the Small Nations: The Beginnings of Irish Foreign Policy in the Interwar Years, 1919-1932* (Oxford, 2016).

said about Irish responses to the counter-Wilsonian moment: the Bolshevik revolution and failed or short-lived socialist revolutions beyond Russia that it inspired: chiefly the German Revolution and the Hungarian Soviet. Foster and Keown both detail the Sinn Féin envoy Patrick McCartan's 1921 attempt to negotiate a treaty of mutual recognition between the nascent Irish and Soviet republics.[146] The negotiations collapsed when the Soviets sighted a more lucrative deal on the horizon: a trade agreement with Britain. McCartan, who was not a socialist, entered Soviet territory through the Estonian frontier alongside Robert MacDonald, a travelling companion who noted in his landing card completed upon arrival in Petrograd that he knew 'a little Russian'.[147] While MacDonald had limited linguistic skills, McCartan had an abundance of imagination: he suggested to his Soviet counterparts that the Irish were largely pro-communist.[148] This statement was, in fact, an exaggeration of a reality that certain Dublin radicals had become transfixed by news from Russia.

The response to the October Revolution within Irish socialist circles was predictably ebullient. The first public meeting to express solidarity with Bolshevism took place in February 1918, when socialist republicans such as Constance Markievicz, Maud Gonne, and Kathleen Lynn addressed a meeting in the Mansion House chaired by William O'Brien.[149] The meeting was organised by the 'Russian Revolution and Republic Committee', which had a large weighting of Pankhurst comrades and left-wing members of the IWFL on its committee – including its vice-chair Gonne, joint-secretary Margaret

[146] Foster, *Vivid Faces,* pp. 267-268; Keown, *First of the Small Nations,* pp. 58-63.
[147] *Anketa,* Robert MacDonald, 14 February 1921, RGASPI 495/218/30/1.
[148] Foster, *Vivid Faces,* p. 268.
[149] *Irish Times,* 9 February 1918.

Connery and treasurer Cissie Cahalan.[150] Contributors to the committee fund were directed to send their subscriptions to the IWFL.[151] To Irish sympathisers, the Russian revolution's appeals to the self-determination of peoples was its most potent characteristic. A bilingual pamphlet in English and Irish produced by the Russian Revolution and Republic Committee expressed this idea forcefully. Advertising the first annual commemoration of Lenin's seizure of power, the authors of the pamphlet translated the text 'Russian Revolution' as 'éirígí amach san Ruis,' which can be interpreted as 'Easter Rising in Russia.'[152] Moreover, the bill drew specific attention to a statement by Leon Trotsky on the right to self-determination in the case of Ireland and other colonies, a point the Bolsheviks continually raised on the international political arena as a contrast to Wilson's more limited definition of self-determination.[153] Yet this grand Irish display of support for the Bolsheviks was broadly premised more on the idea that Russia and Ireland were united in a desire to 'go their own way' and shared certain anti-imperialist aims rather than any popularly expressed wish that Ireland should precisely emulate the Bolshevik path.

Yet, as Irish commentary in the *Dreadnought* suggested, the Russian example was important as a means of expanding political horizons. The scent of total social transformation wafting westward from hubs of Russian revolutionary activity opened up new revolutionary opportunities for radicals across the world. In certain radical imaginings, the crescendo towards which Ireland and Russia were building could be perceived as the collapse of imperialism, a theme which O'Callaghan took up in a 1918

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[150] 'Circular Letter Announcing Meeting to be Held in the Mansion House, Dublin, Under the Chairmanship of Wm. O'Brien to Express Sympathy with the Russian Revolution', 4 February 1918, NLI, Thomas Johnson Papers, MS 17,120/2.
[151] Michael Quinn, *Irish-Soviet Diplomatic and Friendship Relations 1917-1991* (Dublin, 2017), p. 184.
[152] 'First Annual Commemoration of the Russian Revolution and the Soviet Republic in the Mansion House', Handbill, November 1918, NLI, Ephemera Collection, LO P 107, Item 23.
[153] Ibid; Manela, *Wilsonian Moment,* p. 38.

report on the Sinn Féin convention for the *Dreadnought*, wherein she noted that the Irish intellectual George Russell had shared with her the prophecy of a 'Great Avalanche' bringing forth the 'dissolution of all Empires.'[154] The rapid development of Irish and Russian political transformation encouraged a belief that a world revolution lay on the horizon. Writing for the *Dreadnought* in 1918, Gonne noted that the 'intense feeling of the people of Dublin', previously evidenced by the 'great meeting… to welcome the Russian Republic', was being channelled into a popular desire for a 'Social and Cooperative Commonwealth'.[155] Nora Connolly echoed Gonne a year later with an article in the *Dreadnought* which suggested that the Irish people had weighed up the various forms of 'Republic' as suggested by America, France and Russia and found the Russian one to be the best of all.[156] Irish solidarity with the Russian Revolution was a varied phenomenon and often such overtures to support for Bolshevik aims revealed little knowledge of Russian revolutionary realities and a distorted or idealistic impression of Irish ones. Yet even factually dubious parallels drawn between the Irish republican and Russian Revolutionary causes reflected how the world revolutionary moment had provided a new vocabulary of insurrection and stimulated attempts to expand anti-imperialist political programmes to include social radicalism.

A frequently cited example of how the world revolutionary moment shaped the Irish radical vocabulary – while losing many key elements of the Russian original in translation - was the 'Limerick Soviet'. This often mythologised incident bore little organisational similarity to the soviet councils that operated in revolutionary Russia in 1905 or 1917. This strike, which was initially supported by both Sinn Féin and the

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[154] *WD*, 6 April 1918.
[155] Ibid.
[156] *WD,* 24 May 1919.

Catholic Church, was more a nationalist dispute than anything predicated on coherent socialist grounds.[157] In Ireland, the labour disputes of the revolutionary period that were labelled 'soviets' were strike committees without the educative role or revolutionary lineage of the soviets organised in revolutionary Russia. The use of the term 'soviet' reflected the desire of Limerick trade unionists and the press covering their strike to adopt the recognisable terminology of an insurrectionary world. As Foster notes, these gestures were rhetorical rather than ideological.[158] Although significant, other moments of labour unrest in Ireland during these years, such as the 1918 general strike against conscription and the Belfast general strike in 1919, showed little sign of contributing to or joining up with the global insurrection that the Bolsheviks sought to direct. Yet, in Dublin at least, direct interest in the models of the world revolution and a desire to understand their complexities could be found within the contained circles of the IWFL.

Interestingly, although Dublin's ethnic makeup lacked the diversity of East London, former subjects of the Russian empire resident in the Irish capital would play a role in shaping the IWFL's response to world revolutionary events. Ahead of her US tour, Sheehy-Skeffington had relinquished editorial control of the paper to Mary Bourke Dowling and Louie Bennett in late 1916 before returning to the role in 1918.[159] In her absence, the paper maintained a keen interest in international events and further developed into an organ under the control of Irish women trade unionists. In June 1917, Sidney Arnold, who described himself as 'a Russian citizen, who is acquainted with the

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[157] Liam Cahill, *Forgotten Revolution: The Limerick Soviet, 1919, a Threat to British Power in Ireland* (Dublin, 1990), pp. 144-145; Diarmaid Ferriter, *A Nation and not a Rabble: The Irish Revolution, 1913-1923* (London, 2015), p. 79.
[158] Foster, *Vivid Faces,* p. 271.
[159] Louise Ryan, *Irish Feminism and the Vote: An Anthology of the Irish Citizen Newspaper, 1912-1920* (Dublin, 1996), p. 19.

tendencies of the Russian idealists' made his first appearance in the *Citizen*.[160] Arnold was a Latvian socialist and a fellow traveller of Irish feminist circles who argued on the pages of the *Citizen* that 'Social progress in modern history' was largely attributable to the feminist movement.[161] In February 1918, the *Citizen* published an effusive account by Arnold on the Russian Revolution's contribution to the 'triumph of humanity' and reported on an IWFL meeting addressed by Konrad Peterson, a Latvian veteran of the 1905 Russian Revolution, who 'aroused such keen interest' that Peterson was immediately invited back.[162] Later that same year, Arnold, who had de-anglicised his name to 'Semyon Aronson' in tribute to the Russian Revolution, edited an 'anniversary bulletin' of the Revolution that was advertised with a contribution from Sheehy Skeffington.[163] Margaret Connery, reviewing the anniversary bulletin, noted that 'New Russia is the hope of renascent democracy throughout the world to-day'.[164] Arnold was also present alongside Sheehy Skeffington at a December 1918 meeting organised by the Socialist Party of Ireland (SPI) that hailed the downfall of 'Prussianism' in Russia and Germany, defined as the combined forces of 'militarism, imperialism and capitalism' and rallied around the call 'All power to the Soviets'.[165]

Both Arnold and Peterson were members of the SPI, described by O'Connor as part of the 'embryo of communism in Ireland', demonstrating the degree of overlap

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[160] *IC,* 2 June 1917.
[161] *IC,* 1 March 1918.
[162] *IC*, February 1918.
[163] Sidney Arnold (Semyon Aronson) (ed.), *New Russia: Anniversary Bulletin of the Bolshevik Revolution, November 1917-1918* (Dublin, 1918); *Voice of Labour,* 30 November 1918; Seán O'Casey, *Mirror in my House: The Autobiographies of Seán O'Casey* (New York, 1956), p. 8. For the advertisement featuring Sheehy Skeffington as a contributor, see: *Irish Opinion,* 23 November 1918. However, Sheehy Skeffington's contribution was not included in the published edition.
[164] *IC,* 3 November 1917.
[165] *Irish Opinion,* 14 December 1918.

between these social-political circles and those of the IWFL.[166] Both the *Citizen* and the *Dreadnought* provided coverage to the James Connolly Labour College, a 1919 initiative to provide working class education from a building on Dublin's North Great George's Street spearheaded by a committee combining prominent SPI members with women trade unionists.[167]

Such interconnections were rooted not only in overlapping committee personnel, contributions to journals and political sympathy, but also in romance. Like Arnold, Peterson played up his national connection to the Russian Revolution, dressing as a 'Bolshevic' for a 1919 IWFL pageant.[168] These pageants where a kind of bourgeoning form of leftist cosmopolitan culture. The means by which Peterson, another former subject of the Russian Empire, came to act as a human metaphor for the Revolution in his ancestral home was vividly demonstrated when he married an Irish suffragist. In May 1920, Gonne spoke at a celebration of Peterson's forthcoming marriage to an IWFL member, Lena Yeates. Gonne discussed 'the pleasure this marriage between a Russian and an Irishwoman' gave to the IWFL, for it was symbolic of the 'closer union in the future between Ireland and Russia', countries with a 'spiritual kinship' and the only two 'which had successfully challenged the power of materialism and militarism during the war and still continued to do so'.[169] This marriage of people and revolutions is an apt metaphor for the process by which the radical elite who orbited the IWFL were gradually becoming enmeshed in the transnational social-political network that ultimately merged into international communism. Peterson and Arnold also remind us that writing a transnational

[166] Emmet O'Connor, '"True Bolsheviks?" The Rise and Fall of the Socialist Party of Ireland, 1917-1921', in D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day (eds.), *Ireland in Transition* (London, 2004), p. 209.
[167] *IC,* 4 October 1919; *WD,* 11 October 1919.
[168] *IC,* 7 June 1919.
[169] *IC,* July-August 1920.

history of Irish radicalism is not simply about tracing the connections of those born in Ireland to a revolutionary world, but can also highlight immigrant contributions to the national political culture.

The *Citizen* continually brought world revolutionary events to its readers' attention throughout the final acts of the war. Many of these reports were based on lectures organised by the IWFL or attended by its reporters which featured speakers who had advocated socialist revolution or witnessed it in process elsewhere. A December 1919 series of lectures by H. N. Brailsford on conditions in Europe was described as 'most hopeful' when it covered 'Communism in Hungary'.[170] According to the review of the event published in the *Citizen,* Dublin attendees were provided by Brailsford with 'a glimpse of a society setting out on a new adventure in pursuit of justice and freedom'.[171] Although the Hungarian Soviet had 'tragically' failed, the author noted that 'we may hope and believe that the world has not heard the last of the great experiment of Károlyi and Béla Kun'.[172] Other lectures in 1919 included an 'inspiring address' on 'Women and Bolshevism' and a visit from Despard to the IWFL, where she praised Ireland for refusing conscription.[173] The faltering German Revolution was also mentioned, with the death of Francis Sheehy Skeffington being linked in the *Citizen* to the murders of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, each being described as examples of militarist murders of pacifists.[174] The *Citizen* also consistently reported on the triumphs of women revolutionaries abroad, celebrating the initial introduction of universal suffrage in Russia, praising the inclusion of a woman in the Soviet delegation negotiating the Brest-Litovsk

[170] *IC,* 6 December 1919.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid.
[173] *IC,* 3 May 1919.
[174] *IC,* 1 February 1919, 3 May 1919.

treaty and describing women's role in the Russian Revolution as 'one of the most energetic and enthusiastic fights which has ever been made by women themselves for their emancipation.'[175] Of course, revolutionary Russia's enactment of universal suffrage contrasted with the partial enfranchisement of British and Irish women granted in February 1918. All of this reportage indicated an interest in global revolutionary developments that captured the circles surrounding Irish feminism.

Out of all the speakers on revolutionary topics that the IWFL reported on and hosted during these years of continental insurrection, the greatest amount of archival detail is available for Pankhurst's visit. Her arrival in Dublin in May 1919 immediately attracted Dublin Castle sleuths.[176] Pankhurst's early and strident support for Bolshevism, in tandem with the traditional suffrage practice of lecture tours, turned her into a roaming advocate for the Soviet cause. Russell, an Irish-American journalist who was also travelling through Ireland at this time, encountered Pankhurst in her quest to convince 'the Irish parliament to become soviet.'[177] Russell witnessed the British agitator clothed in working class garb and speaking to Welsh soldiers on a Dawson street barricade. According to Russell's account, Pankhurst informed the young men that they had been 'armed to kill fellow workers' and implored them to remove their uniforms.[178] The Dublin Castle officers assigned to Pankhurst recorded that she was staying at a residence at St. Stephen's Green owned by Gonne.[179]

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[175] *IC,* April 1917, 1 December 1917, February 1918.
[176] Dublin Metropolitan Police Report, Superintendent Owen Brien, 12 May 1919, TNA, Colonial Office (Hereafter CO), 904/212/16.
[177] Ruth Russell, *What's the Matter with Ireland* (New York, 1920), p. 71.
[178] Ibid, pp. 71-72, 75, quote p. 75
[179] 'Lecture by Miss Sylvia Pankhurst at Irish Women's Franchise League Rooms,' 21 May 1919, TNA, CO 904/212/16.

Pankhurst's first public appearance on her Dublin trip was at a debate on the 'Truth about Russia', where she spoke in opposition to an anti-Bolshevik Russian émigré who was dispatched from an organisation based in London. The debate, chaired by Constance Markievicz, covered topics such as Bolshevik violence and the 'nationalisation of women'.[180] The 'nationalisation of women' canard was a rumour spread by anti-Soviet sources which asserted that Russian women between the ages of seventeen and thirty-two had become a public commodity.[181] Pankhurst denied these allegations and advised those present to strike fast for a Soviet Ireland. [182] The audience was near-unanimous in its support for Pankhurst's position.[183] Such a result speaks more to the temporary vogue in Dublin progressive circles for all things Bolshevik than any theoretically rooted commitment to Soviet ideals. Indeed, Pankhurst's framing of Communism to her Irish audience was notable for the particular veneer she cast over the ideology, euphemising its sacralisation of revolutionary violence and avoiding its weighty theoretical aspects. This public articulation of Pankhurst's politics became particularly apparent when she addressed the IWFL.

Speaking to a Dublin feminist circle, Pankhurst's framing of the Soviet ideal opened with a gendered notion of how communism would transform the concerns of women. Pankhurst raised the issue of the War Pensions and Mothers Pensions inspectors entering women's private homes and contrasted this with how, under a Soviet Government, this would not occur – maternal centres would care for children and an equal wage system would ensure there would be enough for all.[184] But if Pankhurst was in the

[180] Dublin Metropolitan Police Report, Superintendent Owen Brien, 12 May 1919, TNA, CO 904/212/16.
[181] Gregory Carleton, *Sexual Revolution in Bolshevik Russia* (Pittsburgh, 2005), p. 10.
[182] Dublin Metropolitan Police Report, Superintendent Owen Brien, 12 May 1919, TNA, CO 904/212/16.
[183] *The Observer,* 18 May 1919.
[184] Dublin Metropolitan Police Report, Superintendent Owen Brien, 21 May 1919, TNA, CO 904/212/16.

business of prophecy, she did not divine it in her immediate surroundings. She argued, fairly, that 'Socialists are very much in the minority in Ireland' and castigated the audience for not showing greater solidarity with the 'magnificent effort' of the Limerick strike.[185] Contributions from the floor included a question on the necessary extent of revolutionary violence (it would 'depend on the fight the capitalists put up') and a complaint that Irish progressive initiatives were consistently thwarted by British authorities.[186] The meetings suggest Pankhurst's importance in channelling international political currents into the Irish socialist-suffrage nexus.

The accessible Dublin discussions of Soviets described above, one that was sensitive to the feminist interests of Pankhurst's audience, contrasted with the dense theoretical positions broadcast from the pages of the *Dreadnought* from 1918 onwards. The 1920 publication of Alexandra Kollontai's *Communism and the Family,* printed in its first English-language edition by the Pankhurst-owned Agenda Press (which also employed O'Callaghan), was a rare example of Pankhurst combining her feminist interest with her revolutionary theory during the years of her Bolshevik advocacy.[187] Members of her own executive registered discontentment, with Melvina Walker, usually a Pankhurst stalwart, complaining that the *Dreadnought* had become too academic and another committee member stating 'the workers could not understand about Russia'.[188] Within the wider context of the British Left, Pankhurst's decision to adopt a left-communist position that foregrounded local, autonomous 'soviets' as the path to workers' power cast her into obscurity within a movement that was increasingly determined to mobilise through

[185] Ibid.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Alexandra Kollontai, *Communism and the Family* (London, 1920). This pamphlet also contains an advert for a booklet co-authored by O'Callaghan on the back page.
[188] Workers Socialist Federation Minutes, 27 September 1918, ESPP, IISH, Folder 209.

parliamentary routes. She attracted contributions from European communists dissenting from the Bolshevik line and, on one occasion, the writings of a roguish Irish revolutionary. Liam O'Flaherty, after being chastised by the leadership of the Communist Party of Ireland for declaring a council of the unemployed in a Dublin concert hall without seeking Party permission, contributed some of his earliest published work to the *Dreadnought*.[189] Nevertheless, amidst the ongoing War of Independence in Ireland and the growing need for allies abroad, the contacts and venues cultivated by Pankhurst would be placed at the disposal of a wide spectrum of Irish radicals operating in Britain.

This is suggested in the purple prose of a best-selling 1920 pamphlet *The Red Terror and the Green: the Sinn Féin-Bolshevist Conspiracy*, authored by Richard Dawson, the secretary of the Irish Unionist Alliance.[190] Dawson invited readers to peer inside the offices on 400 Old Ford Road, wherein they would find Pankhurst in her 'nest of revolution' leading one of 'the principal societies in London with which Sinn Féin works' and hosting in her lecture halls shadowy figures, hysterical women orators and, at one point, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington speaking 'under the Sinn Féin flag, to an audience largely composed of Russian Jews.'[191] Despite obvious sensationalism, the commentary contained factual elements and appears to have drawn on Special Branch reports. Irish women were recurring figures in the 'Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom' prepared by intelligence officers and presented to the British Cabinet. Sheehy Skeffington, Markievicz and Despard were noted as speakers at London and Glasgow meetings of 'Hands Off Russia', an organisation partly instigated by

[189] 'Report of CPI, Oct 1921-Oct 1922', c. October 1922, RGASPI 495/89/16/53. O'Flaherty published his *Dreadnought* contributions under the pseudonym 'Wobbly', see for example: *WD,* 29 April 1922.
[190] Richard Dawson, *The Red Terror and the Green: The Sinn Féin-Bolshevist Conspiracy* (New York, 1920); Mo Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish in Interwar England* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 266.
[191] Dawson, *Red Terror and the Green,* pp. 249-250.

Pankhurst.[192] Desmond Ryan, an Irish journalist based in London, attended one of these meetings and informed the *Dreadnought* that he recognised the 'same spirit' of the meeting in Ireland, where people now looked to Russia 'with sympathetic understanding and desire to learn.'[193] Furthermore, Sheehy Skeffington was reported as saying she preferred 'a Soviet, but not a capitalist, republic.'[194] While much of this evidence should be treated with caution in light of the anti-Bolshevik hysteria coursing through European governments in the post-war years, these instances of Irish propagandists exploiting a popular platform are hardly unlikely.

Throughout 1919 and 1920, the *Dreadnought* published regular reports of British activities in Ireland while Pankhurst fought intra-left political fires in her editorials – a fight that would eventually spread across the rest of her journal and eclipse its Irish coverage. When not in prison, Pankhurst threw herself into extended theoretical debates. Her anti-parliamentarian viewpoints were the subject of a personal takedown by Lenin himself in a 1920 pamphlet.[195] The debate was conducted against the build-up to the Second Comintern Congress, where the conditions of entry to this transnational organisation initiated by the Bolsheviks in 1919 would be discussed. The Comintern, or Third International, was a bureaucratic behemoth that operated until 1943, formed to direct the Communist Parties of the world. If the idea of a world revolution in which every nationality was to play a role acted as a mobilising vision during the interwar years, then the Comintern was the institutional embodiment of this political horizon. From its

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[192] 'Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom' (Hereafter RROUK), 10 February 1919, TNA, CAB 24/75/16; RROUK, 4 December 1919, TNA, CAB 24/94/57; RROUK, 6 May 1920 TNA, CAB 24/105/39.
[193] *WD,* 25 January 1919.
[194] RROUK, 20 May 1920, TNA, CAB 24/106/29.
[195] Written in April of 1920 and published in May, V. I. Lenin, *'Left Wing' Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, trans. Julius Katzer (Moscow, 1964).

establishment in 1919, the Comintern became the theoretical guide and chief instigator of the radical internationalism charted in this thesis.

Pankhurst's organisation sought to provide more than just rhetorical support to its Irish radical connections. Indeed, as Mike Milotte notes, Pankhurst's group was the only organisation on the British left to engage in anti-militarist activity in support of the Irish struggle.[196] This came to public attention in 1920, when Erki Veltheim, a Finnish communist, was arrested leaving the home of Col. L'Estrange Malone, a communist convert and relative of Constance Markievicz.[197] Veltheim, along with Pankhurst, helped organise the passage of Irish delegates to the Second World Comintern Congress along the network ferrying communists into Russia through Scandinavia known as the 'Northern Underground'.[198] At an open court session, materials seized from Veltheim's arrest were described, including a cypher requesting money from Moscow to help the Federation carry out a task with Irish republicans and a letter from Pankhurst to Lenin.[199] The latter contained Pankhurst's description of the deaths of Irish hunger strikers as evidence that this weapon in her protest arsenal was 'destroyed'.[200]

After release from her subsequent prison stint, Pankhurst provided advice to Art Ó'Briain, leader of the Irish Self-Determination League of Great Britain, by outlining the propaganda methods she deployed in defence of Bolshevik Russia and suggesting that a People's Irish Information Bureau, modelled on her own People's Russian Information Bureau, be established and headed by Despard.[201] Ó'Briain thanked her for the

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[196] Milotte, *Communism in Modern Ireland,* p. 44.
[197] *Manchester Guardian,* 27 October 1920; Malone was the brother of Lady Gore-Booth, mother of Constance and Eva.
[198] Ibid, p. 41; Kevin Morgan and Tauno Saarela, 'Northern Underground Revisited: Finnish Reds and the Origins of British Communism', *European History Quarterly,* 29:2 (April 1999), pp. 179-215.
[199] *Daily Chronicle,* 3 November 1920.
[200] *Daily Telegraph,* 3 November 1920
[201] Sylvia Pankhurst (Hereafter SP) to Art Ó'Briain, c. May 1922, 3 June 1922, NLI, Art Ó'Briain Papers (Hereafter AOBP), MS 8427/28.

suggestions, replying that he had already spoken with members of her Bureau and had adopted some of their tactics through his propaganda work in Britain.[202] Pankhurst's actions as a leading advocate of Bolshevism who also argued for a 'Red Republican Ireland' foreshadowed how international communist networks would provide Irish radicals with a space to triangulate the causes of anti-imperialism, feminism and socialist internationalism. [203]

Against the backdrop of revolutionaries moving through the newly established Comintern network and Pankhurst's defiance of Leninist orthodoxy, members of the suffrage-socialist world who contributed to the *Dreadnought* in previous years steadily disappeared from the by-lines to be replaced by theoreticians of international communism. In 1920, Lynch drew the attention of *Citizen* readers to the factional fighting on the British left, noting:

> Unfortunately, the left wing of the movement is split into tiny groups whose chief occupation is attacking one another and the middle section of the movement. It is a great pity for it is these advanced sections which see clearly the duty of English people towards Ireland and Russia.[204]

Lynch's contributions to the *Dreadnought* ceased after 1916. In 1922, she moved to Ireland with her husband R. M. Fox.[205] In 1923, the *Dreadnought* stated succinctly that 'many who were with us in 1914 no longer share our path'.[206] O'Callaghan and her comrade Nellie Cohen moved from managing the *Dreadnought* office at 400 Old Ford Road to administrating the People's Russian Information Bureau in 1920 from Fleet Street.

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[202] Art Ó'Briain to SP, 31 May 1922, NLI, AOBP, MS 8427/28.
[203] *Éire The Irish Nation,* 10 November 1923.
[204] *IC,* June-July 1920.
[205] Fox, *Smoky Crusade*, pp. 338-339.
[206] *WD*, 17 February 1923.

Here, Cohen and O'Callaghan were supported by Eugenie Bouvier, a Russian-born suffragette who transferred her affiliation from the WSPU to Pankhurst's group before the war and who also ultimately transferred her allegiance to communism.[207] Occupied with propagandising the Soviet state while surviving a bout of the Spanish Flu, O'Callaghan's journalistic output declined.[208] Her final *Dreadnought* contributions were published in the same February 1920 issue. One was a piece covering a lecture from George Bernard Shaw in which he expressed his admiration for Bolshevism.[209] Her other article charged the British Labour Party with carrying on the 'old game of Imperialism' in its failure to forcefully advocate for Irish self-determination.[210]

In an echo of previous form, in 1923 the *Dreadnought* published an interview with Markievicz, presumably conducted by Pankhurst, which registered profound disagreement with Markievicz's measured socialism.[211] Yet even the women's section of the Comintern decided to cancel its subscription to the *Dreadnought* in 1922 after observing that the paper 'extraordinarily seldom' contained detail on the women's movement.[212] By the time circulation of the *Dreadnought* ceased in June 1924, inscrutable leftist theory side-lined the sensitivity to local circumstances that marked earlier *Dreadnought* coverage of Ireland.

Pankhurst retreated temporarily into the political wilderness. However, as we will see in the later chapters of this thesis, she would re-emerge as an important ally for Irish women. Despard, a figure frequently sighted alongside Pankhurst on socialist platforms, would rise from this Dublin-London suffrage-socialist nexus to eclipse her younger

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[207] Biographical Statement of Evgeniia Bouvier, c. December 1921, RGASPI 495/65a/4042/1.
[208] O'Callaghan's work for the PRIB and her bout of Spanish flu is recounted in E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *In the Red Twilight*, draft memoir of the 1918-1924 period, undated c. 1930, ESPP, IISH, Folder 79.
[209] *WD*, 7 February 1920.
[210] Ibid.
[211] *WD,* 10 March 1923.
[212] International Women's Secretariat to Norah Smyth, 18 August 1922, RGASPI 507/3/12/81.

counterpart as the major figure straddling the worlds of Irish and Russian revolutionary fervour. Her decision to travel to Ireland and take up what she viewed as an ancestral call 'came suddenly', as she described it in 1932:

> It was early in 1921; the news was bad. Two leading papers were making protests and publishing letters from Irish men and women about the state of things in their country. I was feeling it all deeply. One Sunday as I was kneeling at Mass in my Club-room at Nine Elms, where mass was said on Sunday mornings, it seemed to me that I hear a voice – 'You must go yourself'. 'Purely emotional', some will say. 'So it may be', I might answer.[213]

It is likely that few other revolutionary careers linked to interwar communism were encouraged by divine intervention. The spiritual circumstances of her arrival in Ireland aside, Despard would emerge as a central figure in both leading Comintern-linked radical internationalist initiatives in Ireland and acting as a representative in Ireland in the publications and at the congresses of the international radical left. Her portrayal of this decision as a sudden realisation should also be contextualised by the fact that, in the years proceeding her vision, she had engaged sporadically with Irish politics, gathering with prominent Irish figures in London and meeting women such as Sheehy Skeffington on trips to visit relatives in Ireland.[214]

In September 1919, the *Citizen* re-published an 'Appeal to the Socialist Women of All Lands' from the *Dreadnought.* The *Citizen* noted that the author of the appeal, Clara Zetkin, was one of the 'most active' women anti-militarists 'among the German socialists'.[215] In her appeal, Zetkin argued for a 'Women's Socialist International' stating that 'the time seems to be near when nothing will further hinder the unhampered meeting of the comrades of the various countries.'[216] The ties of solidarity fostered between Irish

[213] *An Phoblacht,* 2 July 1932.
[214] Mulvihill, *Despard*, p. 132.
[215] *IC,* 6 September 1919.
[216] Ibid.

and British suffragettes turned revolutionary socialists would be further transformed as revolutionaries across the world heeded Zetkin's advice, travelling to take part in the new organisation of which she was a leading member: the Comintern. Although her 1919 appeal was likely printed by the *Citizen* in the spirit of a broad call for socialist women to reenergise their cause, Zetkin's allegiances were firmly tied to international communism. In 1921 she joined the ECCI and became a prominent voice arguing that those who ignored the value of women in the movement were 'conscious saboteurs of the revolution'.[217] The Russian Revolution would mark a historical disjuncture in the history of internationalism, popularising the theory and practice of communism whilst also giving rise to the formidable network of the Comintern. Exploring the coverage of the world revolution in journals like the *Citizen* and the *Dreadnought* and the social-political networks of the women who produced this coverage provides a window into the opening years of this activist transition from the world of suffrage into the networks of radical internationalism. The fact that the *Citizen* reprinted Zetkin's call from *Dreadnought* reflects how this Dublin-East London connection represented one overlooked network which funnelled world revolutionary influences and connections into the world of Irish radicalism.

[217] John Riddell (ed.), *To the Masses: Proceedings of the Third Congress of the Communist International, 1921* (Leiden, 2014), p. 781.

Conclusion

In the summer of 1921, Eugenie Bouvier, formerly a pioneering militant suffragette, returned to her ancestral Russian home to help build a revolutionary society. Bouvier arrived in Petrograd as the city prepared to host the Third Congress of the Comintern. Traversing Nevskii Prospect before her onward train to Moscow, Bouvier spotted two recognisable figures seated at the monument to Catherine the Great. Here, at the crucible of the world revolution, two radicals from Ireland were sharing a copy of the English-language weekly *The Communist*. These two comrades, Bouvier noted, 'turned out to be Comrades Sidney Arnold and an Irish woman (whose name I don't remember), whom I often met in London.'[218] Both were staying in the Hotel International and working for the Comintern.[219] Yellowed pages in the Comintern archives in the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History record that Sidney and his Irish wife Rosa Arnold, about whom little is known, arrived in Russia in February 1921 and by July were certified workers in the Press Bureau of the Third Comintern Congress.[220] Sidney Arnold's trajectory, from Bolshevik-affairs correspondent at the *Citizen* to worker in the headquarters of the world revolution, was a symbolic one: it marked the opening of a new radical world that was navigated by Irish radicals alongside their international counterparts. Bouvier's encounter with the Arnolds had a strong element of chance, but also signified the curiously intertwining historical processes of the Irish and Russian revolutions, symbolised by the ties between the Dublin and East London socialist-feminist networks. This would not be the last time that Bouvier crossed paths with Irish suffrage veterans who had made their

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[218] *WD,* 25 June 1921.
[219] Ibid.
[220] *Anketa*, Sidney Arnold, c. February 1921, RGASPI 495/218/25/2; *Udostovereniye,* 22 July 1921, RGASPI 495/218/25/2; *Anketa*, Rosa Arnold, c. February 1921, RGASPI 495/218/24/1.

way to the Soviet Union. Rosa Arnold would not even be the last Irish woman to work in the Press Bureau of the Comintern. May O'Callaghan became the section's head of translation in the mid-1920s.[221]

Following Irish radical women and their East London counterparts through these years reveals spaces wherein these women could experience socialism and feminism not just as intertwining political theories but as exhilarating oratorical experiences, emotional debates in crowded lecture halls and radical networking opportunities. Evocations of this experience can be found in lively passages preserved in the *Dreadnought* – a critical source whose neglect by historians is discernible in the fact that this is the first study to resurrect biographies of key women associated with its dissemination from the 'nest of revolution' at 400 Old Ford Road. Intimately connected to this world was a circle of Irish socialists and feminists, shaped by the political initiatives fostered by the war and which later flowed into the European revolutionary wave. Many Irish radical women who featured in the *Dreadnought* and the *Citizen* would become prominently involved in international socialist and communist initiatives throughout the interwar period: Charlotte Despard, May O'Callaghan and Hanna Sheehy Skeffington - to name only a selection.

This chapter has introduced many of the global counterparts who would enter alongside Irish women into the networks of the world revolution, such as Alice Park, Sylvia Pankhurst, Nellie Cohen and Emma Goldman – each of whom we will have reason to return to in the chapters that follow. The pages of the *Dreadnought* and the *Citizen,* along with the spaces attached to these journals, provide one useful historical viewpoint from which to trace this network of activist women during its early engagements with the radical internationalist projects of the interwar period.

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[221] See Chapter 3 of this thesis.

By tracing this the London-Dublin feminist network, we can appreciate that the broad women's movement was *transformed* rather than rendered obsolete by the 1918 suffrage act. A multiplicity of political paths opened as conflict in Europe came to a gradual halt and revolutionary transformation appeared imminent. The Russian Revolution did not ultimately precipitate the global collapse of imperialism. But it did signal the rise of an extra-imperial societal model against which international radicals could compare their own projects for the future of humanity. The Comintern, borne out of this Revolution, marked a radical caesura in the trajectory of interwar internationalism. Comintern networks and the cultures of agitation, militancy and travel which they produced fostered initiatives, funding and morale. International communism was one catalyst that determined how veterans of the suffrage movement were shaped by their wartime experience and progressed into the following decades. A commitment to a radical vision of internationalism encouraged these women to sustain their activist careers in the aftermath of enfranchisement and the disappointing conclusions to revolutions in Ireland and elsewhere. The chapters that follow trace how the Irish women shaped by the events described in these opening sections were influenced both directly and indirectly by the initiatives, networks and cultures which coursed outward from this world revolutionary moment.

Chapter 2: 'Too Much Peace and Not Enough Freedom': Radicalising Women's Internationalism in Ireland, 1921-1929

Introduction

In Margaret Barrington's novel *My Cousin Justin,* three characters, Tom, Loulie and Egan, present differing perspectives on the future of the Irish left on the eve of the Irish Civil War. Barrington, a left-wing novelist from Donegal, drew inspiration for this 1939 novel from personal experience. Her place among Ireland's radical intelligentsia, signified by her fraught marriage to Liam O'Flaherty in the mid-1920s, lends her writing credence as a historical account. In Barrington's narrative, Tom represents the advanced nationalist who, although sympathetic to left-wing ideals, ultimately places republicanism before all else, affirming that the 'old hatred of England has eaten into my bones'.[1] Loulie perceives republican objectives to be obstacles to socialist internationalism. For Loulie, a failure to promote international class solidarity will ultimately prevent both sides in Ireland's Civil War from supporting the workers. 'We hoped that out of this struggle the working class would seize power', she laments; 'It was a smoke dream.'[2] Between these positions stands Egan, a fictionalised version of O'Flaherty. We learn through the narration of Loulie that Egan 'takes the long view' and 'may argue that the victory of Republicanism is the death of Imperialism and consequently of Capitalism.'[3] 'But', Loulie continues 'it won't be logical to anyone else.'[4] For those Irish radicals who passed through the Civil War, including many prominent women activists, it was Egan's concept of the Irish republican struggle striking a blow against imperialism and thereby uprooting capitalism that proved the most compelling political

[1] Margaret Barrington, *My Cousin Justin* (London, 1939), p. 175.
[2] Ibid, p. 173.
[3] Ibid, p. 172
[4] Ibid.

vision. To understand how republican objectives could contribute to radical anti-capitalist internationalism, we must situate Irish radical women of the 1920s within a transnational historical context.

In the aftermath of the Great War, European democracy was marked by continual disturbance. In Ireland, a stable system of competing nationalist parties developed in the majority-Catholic south, while a unionist dominated state emerged in the north. For the entirety of the period under consideration in this chapter, the Irish Free State government was led by the victors in the civil war conflict: Cumann na nGaedheal, led by William Cosgrave. The major political event of the post-Civil War 1920s was the emergence of Fianna Fáil, a faction from within the ranks of Sinn Féin led by Eamon de Valera, who dropped the policy of abstention to engage with Free State electoral politics. If we read the history of interwar Irish society backwards through the social conservatism that came to define both states soon after their establishment, we risk homogenising a historical experience that seemed to those who lived through it as though it could unfold in countless directions. What emerges forcefully from the primary sources is a sense of multiple possible futures: the path that Ireland and the world would take was not predetermined. Alternative revolutionary political and cultural currents remained compelling.

This chapter suggests that the Comintern's 'united front' groups played an important role in channelling these revolutionary currents into the circles of Irish radical women. The united front – the collaboration of progressive forces organised to fight a common enemy – entered into the lexicon of Comintern activists in 1922, when it was adopted as policy during the Comintern's Fourth World Congress. Responding to this imperative, the Comintern produced an array of satellite organisations, known as front groups, that sought to rally sympathisers around causes including prisoners' rights, unemployment, hunger relief, strike support and pacifism. Each of these Comintern organisations contributed to what has been

termed a 'politics of labour defence', a radical counterpoint to the consolidatory stabilisation process of 'bourgeois defence'.[5] These organisations continued a process of linking Irish women into the networks of radical internationalism that had already begun during the Great War. This process of radicalisation was shaped by the circumstances of post-revolutionary Ireland, but was not unique to the country. Indeed, as we will see, this passage from liberal into radical internationalism was reflected in the paths taken by certain international counterparts of Irish women.

The literature on Irish women's engagement with liberal internationalism in the post-Civil War period is limited. The two major examples are a chapter by Rosemary Cullen Owens in her 2005 *Social History of Women in Ireland* focusing on the Irishwomen's International League and Ward's comparative examination of Louise Bennett and Sheehy Skeffington.[6] The literature on Irish women's engagement with radical internationalism in the same period is non-existent. This chapter revises the existing account and fills lacunae, while diversifying the historical framing of interwar women's internationalism. This chapter reveals that by the end of the 1920s, women and the spaces they navigated were important in setting the agenda of Irish radicalism. The Irish radical women who developed their internationalist worldviews during and after the suffrage cause, alongside certain international counterparts, gradually drew toward a particular alignment and organisational model during this decade: communist-inspired radical internationalism and the front groups it produced.

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[5] Michael Dennis, 'Women in Defense of Workers: Ella Winter, the Literary Left and Labor Journalism in California, *Women's History Review*, 26:6 (2017), p. 858.

[6] Cullen Owens, *Social History of Women,* pp. 108-154; Ward, 'Nationalism, Pacifism, Internationalism', pp. 60-84. For a detailed account of British women's liberal internationalism, with some details on Ireland that draws from Cullen Owens' account, see: Sarah Hellawell, *Feminism, Pacifism and Internationalism: The Women's International League, 1915-1935* (PhD Thesis, University of Northumbria, 2017).

The Irishwomen's International League, the Workers' International Relief and the Communist Transnational, 1921-1925

In May 1925, the *Sunday Worker*, the weekly organ of the CPGB, published an interview with Charlotte Despard. Referring to her alternately as 'Mrs Despard' and 'Comrade Despard', the article noted that the veteran activist was in London to attend her birthday party.[7] This event hosted annually by the WFL was a decidedly bourgeois affair, with its advertised array of strawberries, cream, flowers and recitations. [8] Despard also took the opportunity while in London to attend the Battersea conference of the Workers' International Relief, a Comintern-backed organisation with a branch in Ireland which had Despard on its executive.[9] The *Sunday Worker* article noted Despard's concern for the status of Irish prisoners and the conditions of the Connaught peasantry, while also demonstrating the ambiguities of women's internationalism as it developed in the aftermath of the Great War. This was a decade which saw some women activists across the world swap the moniker 'Mrs' or 'Miss' for the more revolutionary 'Comrade' – but some, like Despard, did not feel it necessary to sever their relations with 'bourgeois feminism' even as they drew closer to an explicitly communist stance.

Women involved in liberal internationalism often had, as Leila J. Rupp notes, an emotional investment in the 'dogma of difference': the belief that women's innate difference from men rendered them more capable of crafting a better world.[10] This interpretation of a pacifism inextricably tied to femininity was influential among British women internationalists during and after the First World War, such as Helena Swanick, who became

[7] *Sunday Worker,* 24 May 1925.
[8] *The Vote,* 26 June 1925.
[9] *Sunday Worker,* 24 May 1925.
[10] Leila J. Rupp, 'Constructing Internationalism: The Case of Transnational Women's Organizations, 1888-1945', *The American Historical Review*, 99:5 (December 1994), p. 1586.

an important figure in the British section of WILPF after the war.[11] Such a perspective would have been anathema to the head of the Communist Women's International, Clara Zetkin. From the perspective of a 'Bolshevik feminist', asserting innate difference along sex lines created a misleading divide that ignored society's real point of dislocation: class division. Women's liberation in the communist mould required the collapse of separations between the social layers in society. From the perspective of an orthodox communist, such a task was achievable only through revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Yet many women activists found themselves in a space between these poles, varyingly or simultaneously navigating liberal and radical networks and spaces.

1920s Dublin was a city marked by ruins that reflected its recent and turbulent history. Yet the city remained similar to other European capitals – plenty of which were similarly physically and symbolically damaged. Visitors from across the world passed through the city, seizing on renewed opportunities to travel after the armistice was officially declared. R. M. Fox recalled that, although Dublin of the 1920s was a 'heart-breaking' place, it nonetheless 'had the air of a revolutionary city', comparable to Moscow.[12] Like Moscow and other European capitals such as London and Berlin, Dublin became a locus of radical activity, ranging from open-air meetings to small gatherings in homes. A photograph taken from the platform of a Dublin communist meeting in 1925 shows a large crowd of onlookers and police standing in front of a hollowed-out building, listening to an address from Shapurji Saklatvala, the Communist MP.[13] Conforming to a long-standing pattern, radical encounters were often hosted in women's spaces. Fox recalled an evening spent in Delia Larkin's flat on Gardiner Street in the early 1920s, where O'Flaherty, Peadar O'Donnell and Sean O'Casey

[11] Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France During the First World War* (Chapel Hill, 1999), pp. 158-161.
[12] Fox, *Smoky Crusade,* pp. 338, 352.
[13] 'Section of Great Dublin Meeting Addressed by Saklatvala MP and Bob Stewart', 19 April 1925, People's History Museum (Hereafter PHM), Communist Party of Great Britain Archive (Hereafter CPGBA), CP/IND/MURP/02/01.

gathered to discuss the state of the country.[14] Jim Phelan, an ICA veteran, described Langrishe Place, a Labour-movement meeting hall managed by Delia Larkin, as a venue for intellectuals, visiting writers and 'perhaps a few conspirators'.[15] C. S. Andrews recalled in his memoir that a flat on 21 Dawson Street shared by a group of republican women was frequented by a number of IRA men during the mid-1920s, himself included.[16] Among the residents was Daisy McMackin, who would travelled to the USSR as part of a teachers' delegation in 1932 and returned to Moscow in 1936, opening her flat upon her return to communist meetings.[17] But the most important location throughout this period for the purposes of this thesis was Roebuck House – a property with extensive grounds that was occupied by Charlotte Despard and Maud Gonne and located in the peaceful Dublin suburb of Clonskeagh.

Depending on the political tenor of the moment, Roebuck House could function in such roles as exhibition space, fugitive hideout or lodgings for the unemployed. From 1921 until Despard's relocation to Belfast in 1934, Roebuck House would become a byword for radical activity in the city, found in surveillance material, fliers advertising political gatherings and the writings of those who opposed Irish left-wing radicalism. One visitor to the house in the early 1920s, Helen Crawfurd, a long-time comrade of Despard and a leading figure in early British communism, described it as 'a centre where many people destined to play an important part in Irish history were meeting daily'.[18] Police raids were common, invited by the presence of both Gonne and her son Seán MacBride, whose operation of a jam factory in Roebuck House failed to throw Special Branch off the scent of his continued

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[14] Fox, *Smoky Crusade*, p. 332.
[15] Jim Phelan, *The Name's Phelan: The First Part of the Autobiography of Jim Phelan* (London, 1948) p. 247.
[16] C. S. Andrews, *Man of No Property* (Dublin, 2001), p. 28.
[17] Ibid; Interview with Mairead Breslin Kelly (daughter of Daisy McMackin), Personal Interview, 7 January 2017. 'Report on English Workers Delegation', 29 April 1932, *Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoy Federatsii* (State Archive of the Russian Federation, Hereafter GARF) P5451/13a/442/312.
[18] Helen Crawfurd, *The Autobiography of Helen Crawfurd,* c. early 1950s, Marx Memorial Library (Hereafter MML), Helen Crawfurd Papers (Hereafter HCP), p. 122.

association with the IRA.[19] With the meeting halls of the IWFL no longer Dublin's crossing point for radical women networkers, Roebuck House became the Dublin home of the social-political network examined in this thesis.

Marginalised in a state with a contested legitimacy, politically active Irish women could turn to the wider world for comradeship. A particularly important development during the war was the networking of pacifist-feminist women through the International Committee of Women for a Permanent Peace, renamed the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in 1919. The group originated in the 1915 Hague peace conference and established a headquarters in Geneva in 1921. The decision to establish the WILPF headquarters in the same city that hosted the League of Nations reflected the organisation's international alignment. As a body which adopted a non-partisan approach, the WILPF hosted a spectrum of political opinion, including socialist women and women on the left of the international feminist movement. For example, Irish-American labour radical Elizabeth Gurley-Flynn, who would follow a circuitous route into the Communist Party of the USA, was elected to the executive board of the New York branch of WILPF in 1919.[20]

The WILPF was distinct from the two contemporary women's organisations to which it is often compared, the International Alliance of Women and the International Council of Women, in that it expected its branches to follow the policies adopted by its executive.[21] The history of the Irish branch of WILPF, known as the Irishwomen's International League (IIL), demonstrates how this expectation did not always translate into reality. The IIL was established in early 1916 with Louie Bennett, the pacifist, internationalist and Labour activist as its first chair.[22] The timing of the group's foundation was portentous. The Easter Rising

[19] Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, *Seán MacBride: A Republican Life, 1904-1946* (Liverpool, 2011), p. 88.
[20] Jessica W. Hughes to Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, 3 March 1919, Tamiment Library and Archives, Elizabeth Gurley-Flynn Papers, Box 1, Folder 37.
[21] Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History* (Stanford, 2000), p. 347.
[22] *IC,* 1 April 1916.

and the subsequent radicalisation of Irish public opinion accelerated the development of republican and revolutionary ideologies that would shape the IIL's definition of both 'peace' and 'freedom' throughout its existence.

Annual reports printed in the early years of the IIL depict an organisation struggling to define concepts of revolution, violence and pacifism in the midst of armed conflict throughout Ireland. The annual report for 1921, for example, adopted a definition of revolution attributed to Fanny Bixby Spencer, an American Tolstoyan pacifist and socialist. 'Governments as they exist today must be overthrown', the definition noted 'but to rise in armed insurrection can at best bring but transient relief'.[23] Prominent IIL members such as Sheehy Skeffington, Despard and Rosamond Jacob advocated in favour of the republican forces during the War of Independence and the Civil War, implicitly contradicting the stance against 'armed insurrection' that the IIL adopted. It did not take long for republicans to attain the balance of power within the organisation. The report of the IIL for 1923, a year which saw Despard elected as chair of the branch, describes the defeat of a pacifist resolution on revolution proposed by Bennett. In the resolution, Bennett called on membership to be open only to those who advocated methods that did not involve the taking of life 'in resisting tyranny or striving for freedom'.[24] Bennett's resolution was defeated by one vote.[25] Interestingly, the incident echoed a moment at the 1921 WILPF congress in Vienna when a single vote had been the deciding factor in condemning revolutionary violence as a conduit of social change.[26] The validity of absolutist pacifist positions was not a point of contention solely within insurrectionary Ireland.

Indeed, it is often more accurate to attach the adjective 'anti-militarist' to numerous figures of this period who are often simply labelled pacifists. As a qualifier, anti-militarist

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[23] 'Irishwomen's International League Report for 1921', 29 September 1921, NLI, SSP, MS 41,202/2.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Hannam and Hunt, *Socialist Women,* p. 188.

can encapsulate those who opposed 'imperialist war' and arms manufacturing while supporting revolutionary violence ('class war') and the organised self-defence of oppressed nationalities and the working class.[27] The concept of pacifism may suggest an absolute opposition to violence in all forms – something that was a minority position on the international left and a non-existent stance among Irish republicans. This confusion is not helped by the fact that left pacifists of this era occasionally adopted the term pacifist without qualifying their own intended meaning. We can, however, usually intuit the meaning by considering their international alignments. It would have been contradictory for an absolutist pacifist to oppose the continental mobilisation of the Great War but support the anti-Treaty forces in the Irish Civil War. However, an anti-militarist pacifist could adopt such a stance without paradox. An anti-militarist pacifism was of much greater influence on the Irish and international radical left during the interwar period, allowing activists to find no inconsistency in labelling themselves promoters of world peace while supporting armed movements ranging from the ICA to the International Brigades defending the Spanish Republic in the late-1930s.

Importantly, such an interpretation of a path towards a peaceful human future tied to anti-militarism and rooted in class war was promoted at the international level by the world's only socialist state. At the meeting in which Irish women upheld the validity of revolutionary force, Despard called for 'reconstruction in Ireland' in line with the example set by other countries.[28] Although she did not specify which countries, there was one model republic towards which Despard and other members of the IIL would become increasingly drawn: Soviet Russia. Meanwhile, in a neo-classical building on Mokhovaia Street in Moscow,

[27] While this is sometimes defined as 'militant pacifism' the term 'militarist' was an adjective commonly attached by groups such as Irish republicans and communists to the states and empires they opposed. Therefore, the term 'anti-militarist' is used here.
[28] 'Irishwomen's International League Report for 1921', 29 September 1921, NLI, SSP, MS 41,202/2.

revolutionaries working in the Comintern apparatus were crafting an alternative to the liberal women's internationalism represented by WILPF.

International communism would prove an important vehicle for sustaining Irish women's internationalism into the interwar decades and giving it a radical hue. However, the Comintern's early Irish emissaries proved to be poor missionaries for their cause. The tale of the first Communist Party of Ireland (CPI), which was founded in January 1921 and remained in existence for less than two years, is not a glorious one. Formed from a radical wing of the Socialist Party of Ireland, its membership was always miniscule and appears to have been dominated by young veterans of the independence struggle.[29] As David Convery notes, the CPI's opposition to the Anglo-Irish Treaty 'potentially placed them in a good position for gaining influence and membership amongst anti-Treaty republicans.'[30] Attempts were made to present a social programme to members of the IRA and British Communists were dispatched to meet with republican representatives. J. T. Murphy, one of the British delegated Communists, reported that among those receptive to their programme were members of the IRA, the transport workers and the women's movement.[31] Yet the organisation was dogged throughout its existence by tensions surroundings approaches to the national question and the temperament of leading figures, such as Roddy Connolly, seeking to continue the family legacy of his executed father, and O'Flaherty, not-yet a celebrated novelist. Both would depart from positions in the CPI amid accusation and counteraccusation. The return of the Irish worker's titan, Jim Larkin, was hardly helpful in this regard, adding a further ego to a political niche already full of self-regard.

The view from Moscow on communist wrangling in Ireland was hardly rose-tinted. Rose Cohen, formerly of Pankhurst's East London group, wrote to a comrade while attending

[29] O'Connor, *Reds and the Green*, p. 51.
[30] David Convery, '"As Imperialistic as our Masters"? Relations between British and Irish communists, 1920-1941', *Contemporary British History,* 32:4 (2018), pp. 475.
[31] Quoted in Ibid, p. 476.

the First World Conference of the Peasant's International in October 1923 that the organisers were 'particularly anxious to have someone from Ireland… they seem to be a feeble lot out there!'.[32] As the year came to a close, the routing of republican forces in Ireland's ongoing Civil War became inevitable. The same month that Cohen wrote from Moscow, the Comintern ordered the liquidation of the Irish Party, responding to the urgings of Larkin and the clear ineffectuality of its small quarrelsome membership.[33] The mantle of Comintern backing thereafter passed to Larkin and his newly formed Irish Workers League.

The first CPI's lasting influence was its role as an early vector of social radicalism into Irish republican circles. But as an inspiring force for its own brand of internationalism, particularly among Irish radical women, the Party's impact was negligible. Aside from a derisory 1923 report from Scottish Communist Arthur MacManus, describing the Party as being filled with religious 'young boys and girls', there are few other indications that the CPI attracted women members.[34] A.B.F. White, an English school teacher, was elected editor of the Party paper, the *Workers' Republic* once Connolly was not re-elected to the central committee.[35] She was the only woman with a prominent role. Anne Dolan notes that the well-known republican Muriel MacSwiney was involved with the CPI and its successor organisation, Larkin's Irish Worker League.[36] Despite or perhaps because of her fame as Terence MacSwiney's widow, she appears to have played an insignificant role in Irish communism. In 1930 she seems to have joined the Communist Party in Germany, where she

[32] Rose Cohen to Esmonde Higgins, 13 October 1923, Mitchell Library, University of New South Wales (Hereafter ML), Esmonde Higgins Papers (EHP), ML MSS 740, Vol. 11.
[33] O'Connor, *Reds and the Green*, p. 89.
[34] Arthur MacManus, quoted in ibid, p. 89.
[35] Ibid, p. 78; White returned to England in 1925, see: 'Notes on Communism in Saorstát Eireann (Supplement)', c. 1934, NAI JUS 93/4/7.
[36] Anne Dolan, 'MacSwiney, Muriel Frances', James MacGuire, James Quinn (eds.), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2009), http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a5296 (Accessed 2 September 2019).

was resident from 1926-33, and was certainly a lifelong communist.[37] The Comintern's failure to establish a sustainable affiliated Communist Party in Ireland, let alone a women's section within it, did not mean that the influence of international communism would not be felt among radical women in the country. However, influence would be primarily facilitated by pre-existing interpersonal connections rather than institutional networks.

The International Women's Secretariat of the Comintern (IWS) took an initial interest in Irish women. Established in 1920, the IWS was a perpetually frustrated organisation of communist women whose progress was repeatedly impeded by its subordinate status within a movement that militated against the idea of a separate organisation for the articulation of women's issues.[38] Until its dissolution in the early 1930s, the IWS repeatedly came into conflict with the agendas of the early Soviet leaders on women's issues which were, as Anna Krylova demonstrates, extremely inconsistent.[39] Much of this confusion was rooted in the Bolsheviks' hesitant outlook on feminism, an ideology which they feared would promote individualist demands that would fracture universal class solidarity.[40] The IWS' limited engagement with Ireland reflected both the peripheral status of the country and the IWS' own difficulties as an organisation for women subsumed within a movement suspicious of separate organising among women.

In 1922 a network of 'correspondents' was established by the IWS: members of national Parties who would keep the institutional centre informed of work within their

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[37] Angela Clifford 'Introduction', in Muriel MacSwiney, *Letters to Angela Clifford* (Belfast, 1996), p. 39. MacSwiney remained attached to left-wing circles when living in London and Paris in later decades, becoming involved in the Connolly Association, an Irish group tied to the CPGB, after the Second World War.

[38] There are surprisingly few English-language studies of the Communist Women's Movement. For the two major examples, see: Jean-Jacques Marie, 'The Women's Section of the Comintern: From Lenin to Stalin', in Christine Fauré (ed.), *The Political and Historical Encyclopaedia of Women* (London, 2003), pp. 424-441 and Elizabeth Water, 'In the Shadows of the Comintern: The Communist Women's Movement, 1920-1943, in Sonia Kruks, Rayna Rapp and Marilyn B. Young (eds.), *Promissory Notes: Women in the Transition to Socialism* (New York, 1989), pp. 29-56.

[39] Anna Krylova, 'Bolshevik Feminism and Gender Agendas of Communism' in Silvio Pons and Stephen A. Smith (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Communism,* Vol. 1 (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 399-423.

[40] Elizabeth A. Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia* (Bloomington, 1997), p. 30.

section. Little is known about the Irish figure who attended the first Berlin gathering of correspondents in late 1922. The Irish folder in the archives of the Secretariat records this person only as 'Comrade O'Hartis'.[41] The surname is likely a misspelling. Hertha Sturm, the energetic second-in-command to Zetkin, wrote to 'O'Hartis', directing the Irish comrade to send an article on women in the Irish revolutionary struggle.[42] Reflecting Ireland's peripheral status, Sturm noted: 'We think it is our duty to inform the International about a party and a movement so little known as that of Ireland'.[43] Written by Jack Leckie, a Scottish Communist of Irish descent, the article criticised Irish women for a tendency to fall into errors of nationalism.[44] Leckie nonetheless praised Irish women's interest in the affairs of the nation and cited the 'well-known' (*izvestnii*) Cumann na mBan.[45] While Comrade O'Hartis disappeared behind a historical shroud, the intermediary appointed to maintain contact between the Women's Secretariat and the Irish Party would become an increasingly valuable contact for Irish radicals. This woman was yet another activist traversing a path from liberal to radical internationalism: the aforementioned Scottish Communist Helen Crawfurd.

Several months before the IIL came into being in early 1916, the Glasgow branch of the WILPF, known in Britain as the Women's International League, was founded by Crawfurd. Like all of the women at the centre of this thesis, Crawfurd progressed from suffrage, through to the expansion of her organisational opportunities during the war and onto radical internationalism. Crawfurd began her suffrage career as a WSPU member, eventually leaving the organisation in a protest against the organisation's support of the war.[46] The European conflict and her experience of wartime deprivation in Glasgow radicalised her,

[41] Hertha Sturm to 'Comrade O'Hartis', 19 January 1923, RGASPI 507/3/83/1.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] '*Zhenshin Irlandii'*, article translated into Russian, c. February 1923, RGASPI 507/3/83/3-9.
[45] Ibid, RGASPI 507/3/83/4.
[46] Helen Corr, 'Crawfurd, Helen (1877-1954)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Accessed 4 August 2019), https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/40301.

leading her to join the Independent Labour Party in the same year that she left the WSPU.[47] Ireland played a particularly important role in Crawfurd's political trajectory. She noted in her memoir:

> Events in Ireland disillusioned me as to the altruistic idealism of a ruling class which, when the workers had by constitutional means neared their objective, could and did immediately change their weapons of attack. Constitutional procedure in Ireland as in the Suffrage Movement had proved futile and was taken by the enemy as evidence of weakness and incompetence, to be flouted and exploited.[48]

Disavowal of constitutional methods in gaining the vote led her towards militancy in the suffrage movement, while rejection of constitutional methods for attaining any kind of political change, refracted through Ireland, partly led Crawfurd to international communism.

In 1919, Crawfurd was pictured alongside Despard at the Zurich conference of the WILPF.[49] A year later, in September 1920, Crawfurd arrived in Soviet Russia, travelling under the remit of Vice-Chair of the Independent Labour Party's Scottish section.[50] Like Despard, Crawfurd's enthusiasm for revolutionary Russia began as solidarity with the Provisional Government and evolved into support for Bolshevism. The 1920 visit to Russia reflected her deeper involvement in the nascent networks of international communism, culminating in her membership of the CPGB executive upon its foundation in 1921. By 1923, Crawfurd was helping to organise relief for Soviet Russia, developing a committee for communist work among British women and was charged with acting as liaison between Irish comrades and the Comintern's International Women's Secretariat (IWS).[51] She had also

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[47] Ibid.
[48] Crawfurd, *Autobiography,* MML, HCP, p. 123.
[49] 'British delegation at the 2nd International Conference held by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom conference, Zurich, 1919', WLLSE, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Papers, WILPF/22/1, https://www.flickr.com/photos/lselibrary/27484580941/in/photolist-HSHEnc-5ni5zx/ (Accessed 10 April 2019). Louie Bennett represented Ireland at this conference.
[50] *Anketa*, Helen Crawfurd, 30 September 1930, RGASPI, 495/198/904/1.
[51] Hertha Sturm to Helen Crawfurd, 19 January 1923, RGASPI 507/12/98; Hertha Sturm to Helen Crawfurd, 2 May 1923, RGASPI 507/3/12 /106.

become secretary of the Workers' International Relief (WIR) – one of the first united front organisations to establish a presence in Ireland.

The international head of the WIR, Willi Münzenberg, was a dynamic political actor and agenda-setter for the international communist movement and its fellow travellers. Irish radicals were pulled into the orbit of many initiatives first developed by Münzenberg throughout the interwar period, including prisoner defence, anti-war campaigns and anti-colonial initiatives – campaigning causes that could attract activists well-versed in humanitarianism. Münzenberg was, as Frederik Petersson notes, a figure who 'transcended the confines of narrowly communist party politics'. [52] The organisations he initiated proved similarly capable of inviting a diverse array of political perspectives into their fold. In 1921, Münzenberg established WIR in Berlin, responding to Lenin's call for famine relief in Soviet Russia. Patrizia Dogliani notes that the WIR initially mobilised in a way that mirrored the League of Nation's early activities, continuing the wartime tradition of humanitarian aid.[53]

The parallels between the WIR's activities and the operational mode of liberal women's internationalism made it a fitting entry-point to the world of radical internationalism for women with organisational experience rooted in groups like the WILPF. Men led the Party's primary focus of industrial agitation, whereas Crawfurd and other women prominent in early British communism, such as Rose Cohen and Ellen Wilkinson, were positioned in groups on the peripheries of the industrial revolutionary vanguard. The masculine world of the CPGB was hostile to women's separate organising but, to an admittedly minor extent, unwittingly fostered it through its priorities. As early as 1921, Dora Montefiore, an Anglo-Australian former suffragist with historical ties to Ireland dating to the 1913 Dublin lockout, charged the CPGB with having a 'very masculine outlook' and an 'apathy' toward 'propaganda among

[52] Fredrik Petersson, 'Willi Münzenberg: A Propagandist Reaching Beyond the Party and Class', in Ralf Hoffrogge and Norman LaPorte (eds.), *Weimar Communism as Mass Movement* (London, 2017), p. 245.
[53] Patrizia Dogliani, 'The Fate of Socialist Internationalism', in Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin (eds.), *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 56.

women'.[54] An Irish section of the WIR was notionally established in November 1922, but the dissolution of the Irish Party precipitated the dissolution of its front groups.[55] It would take a second attempt, one initiated by the Scottish communist Robert 'Bob' Stewart and largely directed by Crawfurd with support from Despard, Gonne and Sheehy Skeffington, for the WIR to make some headway in Ireland.

In an unpublished autobiography, Crawfurd described the origins of the WIR branch in Ireland as a trip she undertook alongside Bob Stewart to Donegal in late 1924. In a vehicle borrowed from Larkin, Crawfurd and Stewart travelled through Donegal investigating conditions that she described 'worse than we had even anticipated from the reports received'.[56] Travel to the regions afflicted by hunger was about more than fact-finding. Bearing witness to the conditions in person bolstered the legitimacy of later written propaganda – a concept that had underpinned humanitarian travel since the early twentieth century.[57] But this was not mere propaganda: conditions along Ireland's western seaboard in 1925 were drastic. Poverty on the Irish western coast was exacerbated by two particularly wet winters in 1923 and 1924, which undermined harvest and turf yields.[58] Awareness of the situation extended into wider humanitarian civil society. Eglantyne Jebb of the Save the Children Fund travelled to Ireland in January 1925 to investigate reports of distress. She left satisfied with the government support promised to her fund.[59] Yet the government approach relied on casting blame on the citizens themselves or arguing that conditions were inevitable.

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[54] Dora Montefiore to Herta Sturm, 22 December 1921, RGASPI 507/3/11/21.
[55] The title derives from the original Russian *Mezhdunarodnaia Rabochaii Pomoshch'* (Workers International Relief); O'Connor, *Reds and the Green,* p. 58.
[56] Crawfurd, *Autobiography,* MML, HCP, p. 253.
[57] From Victorian-era 'slumming' to its modern equivalent 'voluntourism', the quest to be an eye-witness to miserable conditions allows social-reformers the often-titillating experience of a personal encounter with the recipient of their concerns, see: Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexuality and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton, 2004).
[58] Lindsey Earner-Byrne, *Letters of the Catholic Poor: Poverty in Independent Ireland, 1920-1940* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 24
[59] Eglantyne Jebb to Eglantyne Jebb Senior, 7 February 1925, WLLSE, Eglantyne Jebb Papers, 7EJB/B/01/03/31.

J. A. Burke, the Minister for Local Government, stated in October 1924 that 'people may have to die in this country and may have to die through starvation' further asserting that 'it is no function of government to provide work for anybody'.[60] Government indifference combined with incipient public awareness of dire conditions in Ireland provided Crawfurd and Stewart with the possibility of fertile ground for propaganda work. But they required local supporters.

Although an extreme description of the reality, famine was a useful term for the purposes of propaganda. Naturally, any mention of famine could resonate in Ireland and the diaspora. However, it was more likely that the Executive Committee of WIR, Crawfurd and Stewart had the recent Russian famine in mind when organising the campaign. Within the strategies of the international communist movement, famine-relief had a wider utility as a concept likely to rally women to the cause. This was demonstrated in correspondence between the IWS and Montefiore. Sturm, advising Montefiore on organising women in the CPGB, stated that agitating for Russian famine relief was 'absolutely necessary' as a campaign which would 'be a practical way to get your female members together and make them active for a revolutionary task'.[61] The advice also held true in the Irish case. The Irish WIR Committee was established in early 1925 and headquartered at 47 Parnell Square. Committee members included Despard and Gonne alongside Larkin.[62] Sheehy Skeffington was also sympathetic to the work and showed solidarity with the committee.[63] Retaining her position as secretary of the British WIR, Crawfurd led the initiative.

The Committee proved capable of making their actions known beyond Ireland, particularly through diasporic political networks. A Chicago Committee for the Irish Famine

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[60] Quoted in Anne Dolan 'Politics, Economy and Society in the Irish Free State, 1922-1939' in Thomas Bartlett (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Ireland,* Vol. IV (Cambridge, 2018), p. 324.
[61] Hertha Sturm to Dora Montefiore, 8 January 1922, RGASPI 507/3/12/16-17.
[62] *Workers International Pictorial,* April 1925.
[63] *Sunday Worker,* 2 August 1925.

Relief was formed, headed by Thomas O'Flaherty, an older brother of Liam. A founding member of the Workers Party of the USA, Thomas O'Flaherty sought support from Irish-American figures. A letter requesting support was sent to the prominent Labour movement lawyer Frank P. Walsh, who had assisted Irish republican efforts for recognition of Ireland's independence during the revolutionary period and acted as legal counsel to the American Friends of Soviet Russia.[64] Disrupting a Chicago cinema screening, members of O'Flaherty's Committee unfurled a banner stating 'Irish American Capitalist Politicians Keep Silent While Peasants Starve'.[65] In London's Battersea, an area with a large Irish community, a 'lecture-song-recital' entitled 'Music and the Masses' was held to raise funds.[66] In Australia, a Sydney-based communist weekly published the Irish Committee's appeal for donations.[67] Unsurprisingly, the Soviet press also drew attention to the work of the committee. On 14 April 1925, the front-page of *Pravda* carried a cartoon that contrasted a rotund Catholic priest with a starving Irish peasant family.[68] The Cumann na nGaedheal government and Irish diplomats, understandably concerned with the international reputation of the fledgling state, were made aware of the negative publicity whipped up by the WIR through a memorandum from a British MP, Austen Chamberlain.[69] Tracing the networks through which the famine episode travelled reveals the reach of this initiative spearheaded from a small office on Parnell Square and backed by the formidable Comintern network.

Thomas O'Flaherty noted in his letter to Frank Walsh that 'beyond the alleviation of distress', the appeal for famine relief was about 'strengthening of the bond of solidarity

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[64] Thomas J. O'Flaherty to Frank P. Walsh, 6 March 1925, New York Public Library (Hereafter NYPL), Frank P. Walsh Papers (Hereafter FWP), Box 26, Folder Irish Correspondence 1923-26; Frank P. Walsh to Willie Münzenberg, 10 August 1922, NYPL, FWP, Box 98, Part A, 1922 Correspondence Folder.
[65] *Workers International Pictorial,* May 1925.
[66] *Sunday Worker,* 19 April 1925.
[67] *The Workers' Weekly,* 17 April 1925.
[68] *Pravda,* 14 April 1925.
[69] R. M. Hodgson to Austen Chamberlain MP, 20 April 1925, Queen's University Belfast Special Collections (Hereafter QUB), Brian Goold Verschoyle Papers, Box 5.

between the exploited class on both sides of the ocean'.[70] Was this objective achieved? With a note of disappointment, the WIR bulletin reported that little over one thousand pounds had been raised – half of which was provided by the Russian Red Cross society. [71] In effect, this amounted to a Soviet subsidy for an unsuccessful fundraising effort. The campaign would ultimately be more effective as an exercise in solidarity-building.

Two processions in London were organised tied to the WIR campaign in Ireland. The first was arranged in March 1925 in St. Pancras, led by the Parsi Communist Shapurji Saklatvala, an old comrade of Despard's who had succeeded in winning the Battersea electoral seat that she had unsuccessfully contested in the 1918 general election. Only one third of the local Communist Party turned out for the march, which was viewed by the organising committee as a failure.[72] The second procession was tied to the National Congress of the WIR, which took place in Battersea Town Hall and was chaired by George Lansbury. 'Little Ireland' in Battersea's Nine Elms district was where Despard had focused much of her philanthropic activities prior to her move to Ireland, including running a soup kitchen.[73] One Battersea-born radical, Harry Wicks, recalled Despard travelling through her the area on her way to the WIR congress, waving to cheering crowds as she stood in an open car headed towards the Town Hall.[74] The location was likely chosen because it was the area represented in parliament by Saklatvala, but Despard's connection to Battersea undoubtedly contributed to the festivity of the occasion.

Despard's involvement with the WIR and prominence at its national congress reflected her growing identification with a radical interpretation of internationalism distinct from but

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[70] Thomas O'Flaherty to Frank P. Walsh, 6 March 1925, NYPL, FWP, Box 26 Folder Irish Correspondence 1923-26.
[71] Helen Crawfurd to Delegates of the WIR National Conference, 12 August 1925; WIR National Conference Report, 19 April 1925, Bodleian Libraries (Hereafter BOD), Henry Graham Pollard Papers (Hereafter HGPP), Box 4, CPGB Folder.
[72] 'Report of the Sub-Committee Appointed to Enquire into the WIR Procession', c. March 1925, BOD, HGPP, Box 4, CPGB Folder.
[73] Minnie Bowles to Teresa Billington Grieg, 3 August 1961, WLLSE, TBGP 7/TBG1/71.
[74] Harry Wicks, *Keeping My Head: Memoirs of a British Bolshevik* (London, 1992), p. 6.

connected to the pacifist-feminist tradition from which she emerged. The WIR could be seen as an attempt to upend the 'Lady Bountiful' stereotype of the woman philanthropist assisting the poor to ease her own ascent up the social ladder. This was suggested in Larkin's critique of the organisations which he sent to the Comintern, noting that the WIR 'became a club for persons practicing (sic) charity.'[75] By grounding the practice of humanitarianism in a language of proletarian solidarity, it allowed women like Despard and Crawfurd to transition to a form of activism that appeared distinct from 'bourgeois' feminism while in practice being remarkably similar and even built upon the same social-political networks. Despard noted in an interview following the Battersea Conference: 'The WIR is a foretaste of that beautiful spirit of brotherhood and love which must ultimately come'.[76] The WIR dissolved later in 1925 after Larkin involved the organisation in an internecine Irish trade union dispute, leading to the resignation of Sheehy Skeffington and others.[77] Larkin's combative desire to keep radical initiatives under his control fostered a growing cleavage between him and former allies.

The WIR's failings, such as the poor attendance at its march in St. Pancras and negligible collection of funds, suggests the organisation was disconnected from the social layer it claimed to support. This failure was not entirely rooted in the WIR Committee's inadequacies or domestic trade union's disputes. A hostile atmosphere prevailed in Ireland. The response of Ireland's official Labour movement to the WIR committee was, as Grant notes, 'less than sanguine'.[78] Tom Johnson derided the effort as propagandistic.[79] The criticism was not inaccurate. A network of operatives, ranging from the women meeting at 47 Parnell Square to the offices of the Soviet press, used the distress in the west of Ireland to create propaganda.

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[75] Larkin quoted in O'Connor, *Reds and the Green,* p. 107.
[76] *The Sunday Worker,* 24 May 1925.
[77] O'Connor, *Reds and the Green,* pp. 107-108.
[78] Grant, *Irish Socialist Republicanism,* p. 147.
[79] Ibid.

That much is self-evident. But perhaps what is more interesting is how the practice of creating this propaganda and the networking required to do so could represent the beginning of a pattern: Irish women's involvement with front groups not simply as a propaganda effort but also as part of a sincere desire to connect with a wider radical world.

Resistance also came from both the Catholic Church and the faithful among Irish republican circles. Crawfurd noted that despite members of the WIR committee identifying as 'devout Catholics', the local parishes objected to the food distribution.[80] Echoing the Church's reaction to Montefiore's Children's Exodus, where an offer had been sent by the suffragist to the locked-out workers of 1913 for their children to be temporarily housed in England, the WIR was accused of proselytising the locals.[81] This represented yet another recurring pattern: both official Labour and the Catholic Church would remain persistent antagonists of initiatives connected to the front groups.

Yet religious-inspired resistance and reluctance to become involved with the front groups also came from associates of the Irish radicals involved with the committees. Stewart complained to Comintern overseers that many of the Irish radicals involved with the front groups 'have religious and other weaknesses' and noted it was impossible to find 'many workers in the Free State who are immune from its influence'.[82] Attending a lecture by Sinn Féin's Mary MacSwiney on the subject of 'Democracy', Despard noted that the audience discussed communism as being anti-theist.[83] Committing herself to resolving the dilemma of political belief counterpoised with religious faith, Despard shortly afterward designed a lecture on the subject of 'Communism and Christianity'.[84] A synthesis was evidently possible

[80] Crawfurd, *Autobiography,* MML HCP, p. 254
[81] Ibid.
[82] Robert Stewart to Executive Committee of the International Red Aid (Hereafter EC IRA), 5 October 1925, RGASPI 539/3/639/14; Robert Stewart to EC IRA, 26 April 1925, RGASPI 539/3/639/5.
[83] Charlotte Despard Diary (Hereafter CDD), 9 January 1926, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (Hereafter PRONI), Charlotte Despard Papers (Hereafter CDP) D2479/1/9.
[84] 'Communism and Christianity', flyer, c. February 1926, RGASPI, 539/3/641/77.

for individual radicals, even if, as Stewart's memorandum suggests, such a combination marked political weakness in the view of an orthodox Communist.

An Irish section of the International Red Aid, another Comintern front dedicated to the support of political prisoners and their families was also established in 1925. The acronym IRA already being taken, the group titled itself the Irish Class-War Prisoners Aid (ICWPA). Its committee was similar to the WIR, as it included Larkin, Despard, Gonne, two women trade-unionists named Mary Kennedy and Mrs Farrelly, and a number of members from Larkin's Irish Workers' League.[85] The two organisations also shared an office.[86] By December of 1925 the ICWPA claimed a membership of 1,000, with large sections in Belfast and Dublin and several smaller groups around the country.[87] The Executive Committee in Moscow commended the Irish section for its efforts, noting: 'We are happy to see such a large percentage of women… and so many good revolutionists'.[88] The ICWPA section supplemented the work of Despard and Gonne's Women's Prisoner Defence League (WPDL), a republican organisation founded in 1922 to raise attention to the plight of prisoners and their dependents.

Under the auspices of the ICWPA, several meetings were organised in Dublin throughout 1925-26 that reflected an international orientation of Irish radicals and their own sense of their place within a wider historical trajectory. A protest was organised in September 1925 to call for the release of twelve CPGB members arrested in London.[89] In February 1926, a Lenin Memorial Meeting took place in Dublin, attended by figures such as Despard, Gonne and Peadar O'Donnell and the renegade republican priest Fr. Michael O'Flanagan.[90] A month later, Irish radicals gathered to commemorate the Paris Commune. Describing the event as

[85] Robert Stewart to EC IRA, 16 April 1925, RGASPI 539/3/639/2.
[86] R. Mooney to EC IRA, 31 October 1925, RGASPI 539/3/639/18.
[87] O'Connor, *Reds and the Green,* p. 109.
[88] EC IRA to Robert Stewart, 22 May 1925, RGASPI 539/3/637/9.
[89] 'Meetings Held under ICWPA Auspices', c. 1925, RGASPI 539/3/638/33.
[90] 'ICWPA Report Covering Month of February', February 1926, RGASPI 539/3/641/19.

'intensely interesting' Despard betrayed her own advanced age in her diary by reflecting on the fact that the commemoration had brought back old memories.[91] Small and sparsely attended, events such as these could nonetheless allow Irish radicals to imagine themselves as participants in a transnational revolutionary project. Despard wrote in her diary after attending one of these events that 'Hope is springing up'.[92]

Events like the Lenin memorial meeting, the Battersea conference of the WIR and lectures on Soviet topics reflected the conscious adoption of revolutionary slogans and forms of gathering that marked a certain section of Irish political society as distinct from its counterparts in the country. As Studer has written of international communist rituals that became important during this period: 'emblems such as the raised fist, the slogan, the *Internationale:* all were signs of both distinction and belonging'.[93] Not only were these 'signs of unity and strength', Studer continues 'but also practices creating fusional moments'.[94] A fusion occurred at such events between local issues and an international cause – creating an environment wherein activists that were marginal in their own society could draw succour from the transnational strength of their movement. After attending a talk on Soviet Russia by Fox, Despard wrote in her diary: 'Our cause is *stirring*'.[95]

The WIR was the beginning of Irish women's engagement with the Comintern's front groups, which provided a vehicle for women activists in Ireland, Britain and elsewhere to mark out the initial distance between their own radical, activist-led and Comintern-inspired internationalism and the more gradual and state-sponsored approach represented by WILPF. The personnel of the front groups overlapped, causing the distinction between their activities to blur. These groups did not simply emerge spontaneously from the designs of the

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[91] CDD, 20 March 1926, PRONI CDP D2479/1/9
[92] Ibid.
[93] Brigitte Studer, 'Communism as Existential Choice', Silvio Pons and Stephen A. Smith (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Communism*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 512-513.
[94] Ibid.
[95] CDD, 7 March 1926, PRONI CDP D2479/1/9.

Comintern. In many cases, the front groups simply attached an acronym to a circle of Irish radicals who had long been dedicated to the same causes that Münzenburg's Comintern initiatives now espoused. Although these initiatives presented the age-old Irish leftist tendency for schism and did not enhance Irish radical connections with the workers they sought to liberate in any measurable or sustainable way, they did demonstrate continuing ties between Irish radical women, a small set of counterparts abroad and the world of radical internationalism. Of particular importance was the tie of comradeship and friendship between Despard and Crawfurd. Gradually, a wider number of Irish radical women would find themselves enmeshed in international communist networks through the front groups.

The Radical Club, the Workers Party of Ireland and Cultures of Radicalism, 1925-1926.

In an undated report to the Comintern, likely filed in the late 1920s, Jack Carney, a lieutenant to Jim Larkin, described his frustrations with Olga Kameneva, sister of Leon Trotsky and head of the All-Union Society for Cultural Ties Abroad, known by its Russian acronym VOKS, the Soviet organisation involved in establishing relations with foreign intellectuals.[96] Kameneva, he noted, needed to be convinced that there were some Irish people once removed 'from the amoeba stage of life' and told her of 'writers, painters, doctors, lawyers, professors, men and women, who were intrigued by this new development in Russia'.[97] Carney was seemingly unaware that Kameneva had already corresponded with an Irish intelligentsia circle interested in Soviet Russia: the Radical Club. Although a transient presence on the Dublin social scene, the Radical Club brought together a cross-section of Ireland's artistic and radical bohemia, uniting them in a social space overseen by a former IWFL regular, Madame 'Toto' Bannard Cogley. The prototypical bohemian hubs of the 1920s were Paris and Berlin, but Moscow also played an important role as a trend-setter in avant-garde art and revolutionary culture. The Radical Club was a minor Irish echo of each of these bohemian cultural worlds. Despite its miniscule size and brief existence, the Radical Club is worth examining as a case study which suggests the opportunities open to Irish radical women and their collaborators to find Soviet cultural experimentation resonating in the halls of a Dublin cabaret.

Gavin M. Foster has cogently observed that the Civil War from which Ireland emerged in May 1923 was 'not simply the sentimentally remembered "War of Brothers" fought over lofty political ideals; sometimes it seemed more like a nasty "War of Begrudgers" pitting rival cliques and factions in a zero-sum contest for the spoils of

[96] The acronym is derived from the Russian: *Vsesouiuznoe Obschestvo Kul'turnoi Sviazi s Zagranitsei*.
[97] Report on Soviet Films, Jack Carney, c. 1929, RGASPI/495/89/104/134.

revolution.'[98] If the spoils of revolution were access to state power and a chance to shape the dominant national culture, then the republican loss in the Civil War was also a loss for the socialists and the contained world of the radical intelligentsia in Ireland, which was dominated by anti-Treaty sentiment. A by-product of the radical left's commitment to the republican cause and the divisive nature of the Civil War was the increased proximity between already close social worlds, something which was reflected by those involved with the Radical Club.

Bannard Cogley, whom we encountered in the previous chapter organising IWFL pageants, was at the epicentre of Irish radical social life. Her own socialist and republican credentials were sound. Seán O'Casey's memoirs find her at a War of Independence-era socialist gathering singing *The Marseillaise* before the crowd broke into the *Red Flag*.[99] She spent time in Mountjoy jail for republican activity and later became, according to Elaine Sisson, a communist.[100] In Rosamond Jacob's diary, Bannard Cogley and her family appear as socialites whose private members club on Harcourt street functioned as an intersection of radical networking and discussion. Fred Cogley, Toto's husband, is described in Jacob's diary playing piano at a party, Toto is found at a dance, and Mrs. Bannard, mother of Toto, is described as a pretty woman who talked 'wildly about the meanness & vileness of the Irish since they took the treaty'.[101] Describing a gathering at Cogley's, presumably referencing the cabaret that was located on 41 Harcourt Street, Jacob evoked the ideas regarding Ireland's future that united the attendees, noting that those assembled were 'very keen' on republicans 'coming out definitely for the workers' republic if not for socialism.'[102] One man, she noted,

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[98] Gavin M. Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society: Politics, Class and Conflict* (Basingstoke, 2015), p. 74
[99] O'Casey, *Mirror,* p. 6.
[100] Elaine Sisson, 'Designing Modernism: Harry Kernoff, Russia, and Postindepndence Ireland', Éire-Ireland, 52:3&4 (Fall/Winter 2017), p. 36; Idem, 'Experiment and the Free State: Mrs Cogley's Cabaret and the Founding of the Gate Theatre, 1924-1930', in David Clare, Des Lally and Patrick Lonergan (eds.), *The Gate Theatre, Dublin: Inspiration and Craft* (Oxford, 2018), p. 26.
[101] Rosamond Jacob Diary (Hereafter RJD), 16 May, 17 May, 30 July 1925, NLI, Rosamond Jacob Papers (Hereafter RJP), MS 32,582/48.
[102] RJD, 7 May 1925, NLI, RJP, MS 32,582/48.

'actually condemned the private ownership of means of production, amid applause'.[103] Madame Bannard Cogley's club provided one opening for the development of a Dublin-based counter-culture.

The Radical Club was founded in mid-1925 and functioned as a private members club dedicated to intellectual discourse and artistic expression. Brian Trench describes Liam O'Flaherty as the 'main mover' in setting up the Radical Club.[104] The Jewish Dubliner and artist Harry Kernoff was also involved.[105] Other members included Jacob, Sheehy Skeffington and Geoffrey Coulter, then the editor of the republican paper *An Phoblacht*.[106] The Club's activities included lectures, debates, art exhibitions and social soirees held under Cogley's auspices featuring revues, dancing and 'saxophone music'.[107] Sisson notes that Cogley's cabaret functioned as 'the social wing of the Radical Club.'[108] One of the few remaining copies of the Club's constitution and rules is preserved in the State Archives of the Russian Federation, an indication of the group's international outlook. This document outlined the Radical Club's objects as follows:

1. To provide a centre of intercourse for Irish intellectual workers.
2. To encourage all forms of progressive cultural activity in Ireland.
3. To fight for the freedom of cultural expression in Ireland
4. To promote solidarity among artists, writers, scientists, and all people engaged in intellectual pursuits in Ireland.[109]

[103] Ibid.
[104] Brian Trench, 'The Radical Club: A 1920s Forum for "Progressive Cultural Activity", *History Ireland* (September/October 2019), p. 44.
[105] Ibid, p. 47.
[106] 'Application for Membership of the Radical Club', c. 1925, NLI, SSP, MS 41.205/2; Sisson, 'Experiment', p. 19.
[107] Trench, 'Radical Club', p. 45. Trench notes that the social activities were later run independently of the Radical Club.
[108] Sisson, 'Experiment', p. 19.
[109] Constitution of the Radical Club of Ireland, c. November 1925, GARF 5283/3/11/67

In the absence of any explicit statement on cultural expression made by Irish radical political groups throughout this era, these objectives provide an insight into Irish radical priorities for cultural engagement.

The Radical Club did not introduce a new form of political salon culture to Dublin in 1925. Rather, this Club stood in a long stream of political ferment in the Irish capital that combined radical stances, modernist art and experimental theatre. A year before its establishment, the short-lived Irish modernist journal *The Klaxon* foreshadowed the Club's creation in appealing for 'a whiff of Dadaist Europe to kick Ireland into artistic wakefulness'.[110] In ethos, aesthetics and even attendees, the Radical Club echoed IWFL soirees. The most important recurring figure within the Radical Club-IWFL matrix was, naturally, the Club's impresario Cogley, who had honed her design and hospitality skills at IWFL socials. IWFL pageants had sought to capture the political zeitgeist, for example, featuring the Latvian émigré Konrad Peterson in 'Bolshevic' dress.[111] Likewise, the Radical Club would have its own interests in Soviet events, reflecting the artistic world's increasing interest in leftist politics and, specifically, cultural experimentation in the New Russia.

In September 1925, D. W. Pilger, a medical doctor and member of the Radical Club's executive committee, wrote to Kameneva and the Moscow-based VOKS using the club's headed notepaper. 'Dear Madam', he began:

> The above club has recently been founded in Dublin with the object of providing a centre for free cultural expression in Ireland. At the last general meeting I suggested to come into touch with your society and I was asked to take the matter up. Herr Erich Baron, Secretary of the *Gesellschafts der Freunde des Neuen Rusland in Deutschland*, of which I am a member, gave me your address when I was in Berlin two months ago. I would be very much obliged to you if you could make arrangements for us to get some literature, pictures, posters and the like concerning the cultural activities in the new Russia.[112]

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[110] *The Klaxon*, Winter 1923/1924.
[111] *IC,* 7 June 1919.
[112] D. W. Pilger to Olga Kameneva, 14 September 1925, GARF P5283/3/11/62.

Interestingly, the society Pilger referenced by its German name was the Society of Friends of the New Russia, the prototype for the Soviet cultural friendship societies that would soon emerge in countries across Europe, including in Ireland in 1930.[113] The Radical Club constitution was forwarded to Kameneva by the poet F. R. Higgins and in return VOKS dispatched a supply of its own publications, which, it was noted, caused a great deal of interest in Dublin.[114] In order to liaise more directly with the Dublin-based Club, Kameneva assigned V. N. Polovtseva, a Russian woman based in London who had attended the 1925 Battersea conference of the WIR alongside Despard, as a contact for the group.[115] A channel of mutual contacts had opened between Dublin, London and Moscow.

The Radical Club's international outlook was shaped by the mobility of those who attended. D. W. Pilger's citation of his membership of the German-Soviet friendship society in his letter to Kameneva is instructive here, hinting at his own familiarity not only with German cultural circles, but also progressive and even radical sections of this milieu. A note in Jacob's diary, describing Pilger as having played piano 'deliriously' at a gathering of the IIL, suggests the intersections between these Irish organisations with a transnational outlook.[116] Liam O'Flaherty invites us to think of further cosmopolitan and leftist strands that flowed through it. O'Flaherty spent his time between Dublin and London during these years building a sizeable literary reputation and a certain degree of notoriety. In London, he was a regular at Progressive Books, the store of the anarchist bookseller Charles Lahr and his wife Ester Archer, once a popular speaker for Pankhurst's Workers Socialist Federation.[117]

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[113] Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921-1941* (Oxford, 2012), p. 62.
[114] F. R. Higgins to Olga Kameneva, 7 January 1926 GARF, P5283/3/11/65.
[115] V. Polovtseva to Olga Kameneva, 27 February 1926, GARF P5283/3/11/72. Polovtseva was photographed alongside Despard attending the April 1925 WIR conference, see: *Workers' International Pictorial,* May 1925.
[116] RJD, 9 December 1925, NLI, RJP, MS 32,582/50.
[117] Huw Osborne, 'Counter-Space in Charles Lahr's Progressive Bookshop', in Osborn (ed.), *The Rise of the Modernist Bookshop: Books and the Commerce of Culture in the twentieth Century* (Surrey, 2015), p. 133.

Reminiscences of O'Flaherty and the bohemian social world of the Club can be found in a 1985 *Irish Times* article by Hilda von Stockum, a Dutch artist resident in Dublin during the 1920s who joined the Club.[118] At a cabaret event presided over by Cogley at the gallery of Daniel Egan, wherein patrons could gain discounted entry if they provided decorations, von Stockum presented an illustration of O'Flaherty dressed in a sailor suit and carrying buckets filled with young women.[119] 'He wasn't too pleased with it', she recalled.[120] These examples suggest the Radical Club's potential for channelling radical politics and culture from around Europe into Dublin.

Through these links, the Radical Club continued a process that would be repeated by Irish radicals throughout the interwar period: deploying interpersonal ties to subvert state censorship or the censorial effect of social taboos. In December 1925, a conservative acquaintance of Jacob attempted to warn her against associating with the Radical Club, informing her that it 'aimed at providing pictures & books of a sort not usually attainable, & plays not usually seen.'[121] This was precisely what made the Club compelling, it seemed. 'How little he knows me!' Jacob wryly noted of her interlocutor.[122]

The Radical Club ceased operating in early 1926. Polovtseva wrote to Kameneva with her appraisal of the situation, noting that there was a split in the group and it was not yet known which faction would emerge victorious.[123] Ironically, the dividing line of the Radical Club appears to have been between a moderate and a radical faction.[124] The disarray appears to have ended the Radical Club's existence. But the end of the Radical Club would not be an impediment to the interest in revolutionary cultural currents that the group reflected. Jacob

[118] *Irish Times,* 16 March, 23 March 1985.
[119] *Irish Times,* 23 March 1985.
[120] Ibid.
[121] RJD, 8 December 1925, NLI, RJP, MS 32,582/50.
[122] Ibid.
[123] V. N. Polovtseva to Olga Kameneva, 28 March 1926, GARF P5283/3/11/73
[124] Ibid.

and Sheehy Skeffington, along with their fellow travellers, simply channelled their interests into other organisations. The Radical Club functioned as one group that echoed the IWFL's cultural programming and international outlook alongside channelling currents of cultural modernism. It reminds us to pay attention to the cultural initiatives that so often complemented the political projects of the Irish left. The pageantry of the IWFL that Cogley oversaw and the cultural ethos of the Club should also be considered as part of a broader Irish tradition of radical theatre, in which women had always played an important role.[125]

Part of the Irish radical interest in the alternative political and cultural models from the revolutionary world arose from the necessity of adopting a political programme beyond narrow nationalism to challenge the government. Revolutionary anti-capitalism was one such potential path towards a viable political agenda for republicanism that became increasingly important in the late-1920s. Jacob described an April 1925 meeting at Roebuck House in her diary, where a lecture on the Fenian John Mitchel by the republican author Dorothy Macardle was side-tracked into a discussion about the future of republicanism. The audience of Despard, Sheehy Skeffington, Jacob and Gonne argued that 'the Republican movement [should] come out squarely as Labour – anti the capitalist economic system, if it's to do any good really, all of us against Dorothy [Macardle]'.[126] Despard, perhaps influenced by her experience of the front groups during 1925, was more specific in the philosophy she espoused when writing in her diary a year later. Despard, who noted she was studying the *'*ABC of Communism'*,* likely a reference to the book of the same name written by the Bolsheviks Nikolai Bukharin and Evgenii Preobrazhenskii, wrote that communism was her 'only hope for society'.[127]

[125] Foster, *Vivid Faces,* esp. pp. 81-93; Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist Women,* esp. pp. 51-62.
[126] RJD, 26 April 1925, NLI, RJP, MS 32,582/48.
[127] CDD, 16 June 1926, PRONI, CDP, D2749/1/9.

Small and short-lived, the Radical Club is nonetheless a pointer to how Dublin-based radicals and intellectuals continually sought spaces for progressive artistic and social endeavours into the 1920s. The Club's brief correspondence with Kameneva in Moscow was also a symptom of a developing Soviet campaign to portray the USSR as an experimental and culturally dynamic society to the European and American intelligentsia. The next chapter explores an Irish woman, May O'Callaghan, intimately involved in this web of Soviet cultural diplomacy. Moreover, in the fourth chapter of this thesis, which partly explores a kind of Radical Club successor organisation - the Irish Friends of Soviet Russia – we will have cause to revisit the location of Cogley's cabaret at 41 Harcourt Street.

The Club's dissolution occurred at a moment when the increasingly intemperate stance taken by Larkin against collaborating with anyone beyond his own confidantes opened up a space on the Irish left for another radical initiative. The push for Irish famine relief was no longer a fixture in the Anglophone organs of the Comintern, which were now dominated by the demand to release twelve arrested members of the CPGB. Despard followed the trial closely. The CPGB general secretary Harry Pollitt was a personal friend of Despard, whom he described as 'one of the greatest women who ever lived'.[128] Having read his 'convincing' speech from the dock Despard wrote in her diary for January of the need to start a communist group in Ireland.[129] 'There is no [other] country where it is so much needed', she noted.[130] At the same moment the Radical Club collapsed, a new organisation emerged in Dublin with overlapping personnel and interests, combining the political organising of the front groups and echoing elements of the social and artistic aspects of the Radical Club.

Despard's wish for a communist group in Ireland, one distinct from Larkin's listless Irish Workers' League, was granted in March 1926 with the formation of the Workers Party

[128] Harry Pollitt, *Serving My Time: An Apprenticeship to Politics* (London, 1940), p. 275.
[129] CDD, 6 January 1926, PRONI, CDP, D2479/1/9.
[130] CDD, 17 January 1926, PRONI, CDP, D2479/1/9.

of Ireland (WPI). Her diary for 1926 makes reference to a 'Connolly Club' gathering in March, where Sheehy Skeffington delivered a lecture on Education in Russia, a topic that the organs of Soviet cultural diplomacy foregrounded in their propaganda, while figures such as R. M. Fox with past experience of travel in the USSR reflected on their journeys to the Soviet land.[131] This circle was the James Connolly Workers' Education Club, a group that formed the nucleus of the WPI. Along with committed socialist republicans such as Nora and Roddy Connolly, the group also attracted an intellectual and feminist element, with Despard, the journalist Fox, the mystically-inclined communist Capt. Jack White, Padraic Breslin, a young communist with a talent for languages and Mick Jenkins, a teenage member who moved from membership of the Manchester Young Communist League to the WPI, all forming its initial membership.[132] By the end of 1926, the WPI would claim 200 members, 130 of whom were based in its Dublin branches.[133] Larkin, who desired control over all Comintern-backed initiatives in Ireland, was not involved and would come to oppose the organisation. The WPI was arguably designed to be a means of subverting his near-exclusive access to Comintern channels of funding and declarations of revolutionary legitimacy. The initial headquarters of the group was 44 Parnell Street, later moving to 47 Parnell Square, previously the office of the WIR and later the office of Despard and Gonne's WPDL.[134]

Beyond histories of socialist republicanism, the WPI has received little attention.[135] This is understandable. The Party was miniscule, lasted little more than a year and had the misfortune of being founded in the same month that Eamon de Valera led the split in Sinn Féin that resulted in a viable political alternative in the Irish Free State: Fianna Fáil. Yet

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[131] CDD, 28 March 1926, PRONI, CDP, D2479/1/9.
[132] Mick Jenkins, *Prelude to Better Days,* Unpublished Autobiography, p. 49, PHM, CPGBA, CP/IND/MISC/1/1.
[133] O'Connor, *Reds and the Green*, p. 121.
[134] *Hammer & Plough,* 22 May 1926, 11 June 1927; Irish Political Prisoners', leaflet, c. July 1926, HILA, APP, Box 23 Folder 8.
[135] For further overviews, see: Grant, *Irish Socialist Republicanism*, pp. 147-150 and O'Connor, *Reds and the Green,* pp. 117-25.

articles in the Party press, particularly those written by Despard, reveal the international zeitgeist within Irish radical circles, allowing us to trace the underpinnings of an evolving conceptualisation of internationalism.

Notably, the WPI was the first organisation in the history of the Irish left to have a dedicated women's organizer, a role occupied by Despard. A women's section of the organisation, again the first of its kind within an Irish left-wing party, met weekly.[136] Eschewing narrowly workerist visions of how a communist political party should operate, the WPI even advertised regular choir practice and a women's quartet was founded to perform at party-organised events.[137] Yet the structures of the organisation also continued the equivocations regarding a woman's place within a radical movement which had characterised the experience of socialist women since the mid-nineteenth century. The fact that the meeting of the WPI 'industrial section' was scheduled to clash with meetings of the women's section hints at an organisational understanding of manual labour as being beyond women's concerns.[138] The WPI journal, initially titled *The Hammer & Plough* and in March 1927 retitled *The Workers' Republic*, carried regular reports on industrial disputes, unemployment conditions in the Irish Free State and Dublin meetings. Frequent reports on the Soviet Union in the journal normally took the form of despatches from the Comintern Press Department reprinted from *Inprecorr,* an English-language Comintern publication.

In October 1926, Despard purchased a printing press that allowed the journal to appear in a more professional form[139] This purchase was indicative of her importance as a financial supporter of Irish radical initiatives.[140] While Despard's ability to financially support Irish

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[136] Arguably, the Irish Citizen Army was the first socialist organisation in Ireland to have a women's section, but it was not a party in the same sense as the WPI.
[137] *Hammer & Plough,* 22 May 1926; 'Warning! A Grand Open-Air Entertainment', WPI flyer, c. July 1926, HILA, APP, Box 23, Folder 8.
[138] *Hammer & Plough,* 22 May 1926.
[139] O'Connor, *Reds and the Green,* p. 120.
[140] The image of Despard as central radical funder should not be over-exaggerated, however. Her most recent biographer notes that she never 'had the means to subsidize a whole movement', see: Mulvihill, *Despard*, p. 161.

revolutionary projects was unusual, the unemployment and poverty that socialism sought to abolish were distant worries for many women engaged in internationalist activity during this era. Ultimately, the WPI had more continuities with other Irish leftist initiatives than it had departures from established Irish political traditions, but its innovations, such as a coherent effort to recruit women and a lively, attractive journal are worth noting.

Larkin regarded the WPI as an eyesore and informed the Comintern that its members were interested only in Moscow gold.[141] This brief critique contains elements worth exploring. In his criticism of the group's outward appearance, we find a hint of Larkin's later denunciation of the organisation as bourgeois and middle-class. The reference to Moscow gold, meanwhile, provides a criticism worth unpacking. The Comintern did not place concerns like hunger relief and prisoner defence on the agendas of Irish radical women; these had been mobilising issues since the years of war and revolution. The networks of international communism did, however, provide organisational structures that linked these local concerns to a globe-spanning cause grounded in the language of proletarian solidarity. Was the WPI an attempt by Irish radicals to continue funnelling these resources into new initiatives or a sincere desire on the part of those involved to create a revolutionary party? Most likely, it was a mixture of both.

Ultimately, Larkin's critique, like the existing literature, occludes more than it reveals. In particular, the agency of Irish women in operating and navigating these groups has been largely ignored. By 1926, spaces like Cogley's Cabaret and Roebuck House fostered interest in revolutionary politics and culture, representing a more radical interpretation of internationalism that was drawing Irish women and their counterparts closer into its orbit. The greatest demonstration of liberal internationalism witnessed in Ireland throughout this period, the fifth congress of the WILPF, took place in Dublin in July 1926. In large part

[141] Grant, *Irish Socialist Republicanism*, p. 148.

because of the growing interest in revolutionary politics and culture represented by the Radical Club and the WPI, this congress would prove to be the swansong of Irish women's liberal internationalism.

The Fifth WILPF Congress and the Fracturing of Irish Women's Internationalism, 1926-1929

In Dublin on 11 July 1926, communists sat in the open air having their palms read, while prominent feminists talked prison reform and imperialism in a university hall. In a flier advertising a socialist gathering, the WPI promised a spectacular event. In the spacious Clonskeagh grounds of Roebuck House, guests would experience singing, ballroom dancing and recitations, accompanied by a women's quartet and a workers' choir. Entertainment hired for the day included 'Mrs. Sheridan's jazzmine band' and 'Madame Marossa', a well-known clairvoyant.[142] The venue was made available by the Party women's officer, Despard, but the gracious host was unable to attend the event. A short tram ride away from the radical gathering in her garden, Despard was chairing a session of the Fifth Congress of the WILPF. In rooms belonging to the National University, feminists from around the world discussed the prison systems of decaying empires, referencing Gandhi in India, the Bastille in France, and Holloway, the English women's prison that had once hosted the session's chair.[143] The choice to take the tram south of the city, or remain in the centre to observe the international delegates was itself a choice between immersing oneself in 'bourgeois' or 'proletarian' politics. Yet the proximity between these two events – one, a revolutionary party in both senses, the other a testament to the emergence of interwar liberal internationalism – also reflected the porous borders between two ideologies normally considered not merely distinct but opposed. While women's internationalism fractured during this period, the barriers between a liberal and radical internationalism were never completely impermeable.

The Fifth congress of the WILPF took place in Dublin from 9-15th of July 1926. Alice Park, a California suffragist, kept a detailed diary of the event. Setting sail to her ultimate

[142] 'Warning! A Grand Open-Air Entertainment', Workers Party of Ireland (Workers & Working-Farmers' Party) flyer, c. July 1926, HILA, APP, Box 23, Folder 8.
[143] Alice Park Diary (Hereafter APD), 11 July 1926, HILA, APP, Box 26, 1926 Diary.

destination of Dublin across the pacific, Park travelled through India, North Africa and continental Europe. In May, she met with Sheehy Skeffington and Seán McBride in Paris.[144] Attending the tenth congress of the *Alliance Internationale Pour les Suffrage des Femmes*, Park noted in her diary that Sheehy Skeffington mounted an 'effective' protest against a Northern Irish woman, presumably a unionist, who delivered a 'political speech'.[145] Among the experiences described in Park's diary were meetings with other feminists in a private apartment to discuss birth control, attending a reception for Egyptian nationalists, watching a movie with Sheehy Skeffington in a Paris cinema and spotting a poster advocating protest against the execution of the Italian anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti.[146] This protest was organised by International Red Aid, a Comintern-backed group whose Irish branch we encountered in the previous section being praised for its proportion of women. Not yet arrived in Dublin, Park had already met Irish comrades and experienced a shared world of internationalism.

Continuing towards Dublin, Park arrived in London, where she once more took part in both official and social activities with suffrage veterans. She attended Despard's birthday party in Caxton hall, visited art galleries with the Anglo-Irish suffragette Katherine Gillett Gatty and attended a London production of O'Casey's *Plough and the Stars* before finally taking the boat across the Irish sea.[147] On the 6th of July, Park arrived in Dublin, where she stayed in the Sheehy Skeffington home on Belgrave Road. She immediately submerged herself in feminist, republican and socialist circles in the city. On her second day in Dublin, Park spoke before a meeting organised by the Irish Women Workers Union, alongside women from Germany, Belgium and Czechoslovakia and Irish women such as the former

[144] APD 29 May 1926, HILA, APP, Box 26 1926 Diary.
[145] See APD entries for 4 June, 7 June, 8 June 1926, HILA, APP, Box 26 1926, Diary.
[146] APD, 12 June 1926, HILA, APP, Box 26, 1926 Diary.
[147] APD, 29 June 1926, 30 June 1926, 2 July 1926, HILA, APP, Box 26, 1926 Diary.

IWFL-stalwart Margaret Connery and the trade unionist Louie Bennett.[148] As a socialist and supporter of the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World, Park focused on the importance of collective organising in her speech before a crowd which, she later recalled, 'was packed solid as far as the voice could reach – a contrast with street meetings in [the] United States which are generally open and scattered.'[149] Before official events had opened, Irish women were already availing of the conference prelude to win their international guests over to their view of national events.

The conference aimed for an international scope, though centred on Europe and the United States. A 'Who's Who' of the Dublin congress has survived in Park's archive, providing a useful insight into the political texture and geographic scope of the delegates.[150] Disrupting some of the Euro-American dominance that beguiled women's internationalism for much of the 20th century, the Congress included a delegation of four Japanese women.[151] Socialist and communist women were in a minority, but it is worth highlighting a few of the more radical attendees as an indication of the Dublin congress being a cross-roads for women on a similar political trajectory to Irish radical women. The French delegation, for example, included Gabrielle Duchêne, vice-president of the WILPF and later a prominent fellow traveller of the French Communist Party.[152] Among the British delegates was 'Red Ellen' Wilkinson, a founding CPGB member.[153] Interestingly, Sheehy Skeffington was the only woman in the 'Who's Who' that specifically listed support for 'revolutionary causes' in her

[148] APD, 7 July 1926, HILA, APP, Box 26, 1926 Diary.
[149] Alice Park, *The Autobiography of Alice Park*, unpublished typescript autobiography, c. 1947, HILA, APP, Box 30, Folder 2, p. 137.
[150] 'Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Who's Who – Dublin Congress', c. July 1926, HILA, APP, Box 24, Folder 2.
[151] Ibid. For an account of an interwar conference of women internationalists shaped by settler colonialism, see: Fiona Paisley, 'Performing "Interracial Harmony": Settler Colonialism at the 1934 Pan-Pacific Women's Conference in Hawai'i', in Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton (eds.), *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire* (Urbana and Chicago, 2009), pp. 127-146.
[152] Emmanuelle Carle, 'Women, Anti-Fascism and Peace in Interwar France: Gabrielle Duchêne's Itinerary', *French History,* 18:3 (2004), pp. 291-314.
[153] Wilkinson had, by 1926, resigned formal membership of the Party, but remained a fellow traveller into the 1930s, see: Matt Perry, *'Red Ellen' Wilkinson: Her Ideas, Movements and World* (Manchester, 2015).

biographical statement.[154] The Irish had the largest contingent, with twenty-three women delegates, including several tied to the labour and national movements, such as Bennett, Jacob and Kathleen Lynn. Despard, it should be noted, was not part of the official Irish delegation despite being present as a chair for at least one of the sessions.

The congress focused on the question of paths towards peace, with each country delivering its own report on this theme. The Irish delegates report, 'Three Next Steps Towards Peace in Ireland', was notably moderate and decidedly in line with the legislative tenor of WILPF demands.[155] It called for improved education at primary level alongside improved educational resources for adults, the expansion of agricultural co-operatives, the appointment of a commission to investigate the position of minorities in Ireland and the complete disarmament of all armed forces in Ireland: the Free State Army, the British forces in Northern Ireland and the IRA.[156] The only notes that could be construed as having come from republican delegates such as Sheehy Skeffington or Lynn were references to the 'continued imprisonment' of republicans and Britain's continued influence in Ireland.[157] Both points were simply stated facts rather than calls for action. The official reports of the Congress read like a largely uncontroversial restating of Irish and international pacifist demands. However, to find evidence of more contentious politics, we must look beyond the official reports.

As the congress made its way through previously determined resolutions in the National University rooms, the Irish Free State government and its radical opponents battled for the hearts and minds of the conference delegates. Shaping the perception of Irish politics held by internationally prominent women was a considerable reward for their efforts. Seeking

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[154] 'Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Who's Who – Dublin Congress', c. July 1926, HILA, APP, Box 24, Folder 2.
[155] 'Women's International League for Peace and Freedom: Three Next Steps Towards Peace in Ireland', Press Release, c. July 1926, HILA, APP, Box 23, Folder 8.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.

to influence the proceedings from the outset, Cumann na nGaedheal members addressed the conference on the first evening. Demonstrating the groundwork of shaping perceptions that the Irish republicans had already put in before the congress got underway, Park's sole diary line on the government address stated that Richard Mulcahy 'who signed 77 death warrants' was present.[158] The event was bookended by tributes to murdered Irish socialist and pacifist Francis Sheehy Skeffington from the American suffragist Jane Addams, while issues tackled in meetings chaired by Despard ranged from racial hatred and equality for all, to prisons around the world and communism.[159] With the congress in flow, topics of discussion reflected the WILPF's own respectable image, while occasionally gesturing towards some of the more radical concerns important to Irish delegates such as Despard and Sheehy Skeffington.

Tourist sites and political pageantry provided delegates with insights into Ireland's political factions. On the second day of the congress, Larkin marched into the hall to the sound of applause, followed by a 'deputation of the Dublin unemployed' carrying banners in French, German and English.[160] He used an allotted ten-minute speaking slot to request that attendees visit the slums of Dublin. The following day all delegates were invited to the Vice-Regal Lodge in Phoenix Park for a reception where the city's elite gathered wearing silk hats.[161] The WPI organ, the *Hammer & Plough,* claimed that delegates who 'denounced capitalist Imperialism' were refused invitations and reported on a parade of the Dublin unemployed who marched outside the lodge.[162] Two days later, a select number of delegates, presumably those deemed sympathetic to the left, were brought to a meeting of trade unionists and presented with copies of Connolly's *Labour in Irish History*.[163] Constance

[158] APD, 9 July 1926, HILA, APP, Box 26, 1926 Diary
[159] APD, 11 July 1926 HILA, APP, Box 26, 1926 Diary
[160] *The Northern Whig,* 13 July 1926.
[161] APD, 13 July 1926 HILA, APP, Box 26, 1926 Diary.
[162] *Hammer & Plough,* 24 July 1926.
[163] APD, 15 July 1926 HILA, APP, Box 26, 1926 Diary.

Markievicz, otherwise absent from conference proceedings, drove the delegates back to Dublin from the union meeting. A tour billed as an event organised by the republican women of Ireland visited ancient sites such as Newgrange.[164] Among the hosting party were Sheehy Skeffington, Lynn, ffrench-Mullen, Gonne and Markievicz.[165] On the side-lines of the conference, a leaflet headlined 'Irish Political Prisoners', signed by Despard and Gonne, was distributed to delegates. The leaflet noted the 28 Irish prisoners in English and Irish jails who were 'certainly war victims who did not get fair or impartial trial', drawing special attention to women prisoners and conditions within the prison system.[166] Each faction was evidently keen to impress, using the spatial surroundings of Dublin to reinforce positive impressions or to draw visitors' attention to unpleasant aspects of Irish society.

But who were the victors in this attempt at persuasion? Some indication can be found in reports from the floor of the conference itself. The *Belfast News-Letter,* a unionist publication decidedly hostile to the congress, described 'prolonged applause' greeting an 'anti-British outburst' on the opening day.[167] Writing to Rosika Schwimmer, a Hungarian pacifist who played a founding role in WILPF, Alice Park noted that the republicans 'did all they could in proper ways to remind the [convention] that the Irish [republicans] are numerous' and that their 'hospitality was wonderful.'[168] In contrast, she wrote of government figures, whom she tellingly referred to as 'Free Staters', whose attempts to 'counteract the impression already registered' had been delayed.[169] Although delegates may have returned home with a skewed interpretation of where the balance of power in Ireland really lay, they were nonetheless accurately appraised of the prevailing republican ideals held by the most

[164] *The Vote,* 9 July 1926.
[165] *Irish Independent,* 16 July 1926.
[166] 'Irish Political Prisoners', leaflet, c. July 1926, HILA, APP, Box 23, Folder 8.
[167] *Belfast News-Letter,* 10 July 1926.
[168] Alice Park to Rosika Schwimmer, 28 August 1926, HILA, APP, Box 1, Folder 34.
[169] Ibid.

prominent leftist Irish women based in Dublin. A combination of effective hospitality and an implicit antipathy towards imperialism tipped the balance in favour of the republicans.

Jacob's diary entries on these July days provide useful insights into moments from the congress unlikely to be recorded in official proceedings. Describing sessions of the IIL held to discuss the ongoing conference, Jacob portrayed many of the Irish committee as timid in contrast to the resolutely anti-imperialist figure of Sheehy Skeffington. They were 'a woeful lot' she noted, who were 'getting worse & worse'.[170] This was not only a tension experienced by the Irish committee but appeared to be a faultline stemming throughout the wider WILPF organisation. Marcelle Capy, a French feminist and militant pacifist whom Jacob described as 'very much a revolutionary', provided Jacob and Sheehy Skeffington with intelligence on the radical mettle of their counterparts in the movement.[171] In Despard's car, which was transporting the delegates from their trip to the Boyne valley, Sheehy Skeffington grilled Capy on which feminists in attendance were 'avancée' and which were 'reactionaire'.[172] Alice Park, Gertrude Baer, Gabrielle Duchêne, Vilma Glucklick, Lola Maverick Lloyd, Yella Hertzka and Luci Dejardin were deemed advanced, whereas Ramonndt Herschmann, certain Americans and most of the Scandinavians were among those assumed to be reactionary, according to Capy.[173] Despard further noted meeting with an American named Miss Pollitz during the Congress who was 'desperately keen about a revolution, demanding absolute sex equality.'[174] Within the congress itself, Jacob believed that among the Irish it was only the republicans who voted for anything advanced.[175] Although Jacob did not define precisely what she meant by 'advanced' beyond suggesting these women were more revolutionary in

[170] RJD, 10 July, 13 July 1926 NLI, RJP, MS 32,582/53.
[171] RJD, 12 July 1926, NLI, RJP, MS 32,582/53.
[172] RJD, 14 July 1926, NLI, RJP, MS 32,582/53.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Quoted in Mulvihill, *Despard*, p. 152.
[175] RJD, 15 July 1926, NLI, RJP, MS 32,582/53.

their outlook, turning to the only left Irish journal with a tie to a prominent conference attendee clarifies the distinction.

The incipient communist left in the form of the WPI identified similar distinctions between advanced and reactionary tendencies at the conference. The *Hammer & Plough* diverged from its usual reporting on Soviet conditions and Irish unemployment figures to devote sizeable print space to a leftist critique of the WILPF congress. The columns were printed under the pseudonym 'M. R.', but the text reveals some telling details: the writer was clearly an attendee, a French speaker and a devotee of Francis Sheehy Skeffington. The WPI Women's officer Despard, an attendee with French competencies, is an unlikely candidate given that her writing style was much more prosaic. Sheehy Skeffington is a possible author. Although there is no evidence to indicate he was a French speaker, R. M. Fox, an observer at the conference, can also not be ruled out. In the first article, 'Peace and Freedom', the author separated the conference into two tendencies: 'honest and direct' and 'hypocritical and reactionary'.[176] The bulk of the criticism was levelled at the English delegates, particularly Helena Swanick, who was accused of 'middle class sophistry' for mounting a defence of Empire and stating that pacifists, imperialists and financiers shared certain personal defects in common.[177] Reflecting the tension within the IIL regarding the legitimacy of violence in the service of national and social revolution, the article concluded with sympathetic reference to a delegate's description of Macedonians 'forced to take up arms in self-defence… a pitiful appeal direct from suffering people'.[178] The article demonstrated an interpretation of pacifism that was common to many of the subjects of this thesis, including Despard and Sheehy Skeffington: pacifism as an anti-militarist and non-absolutist ideal that did not apply in cases

[176] *Hammer & Plough*, 17 July 1926.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.

of self-defence. Force was permitted in struggles for emancipation and liberation from an oppressive system, foe or Empire.

A particularly pointed angle of attack in the WPI articles was directed at attendees' patterns of behaviour. The majority of the delegates, it was noted, were 'the smug respectable, bourgeois-minded type that finds a certain amount of pleasurable notoriety in taking part in public functions of this kind'.[179] The 'English ladies' were advised in the future to 'have their garden parties and junketing and remain silent', for their proposed solutions to Ireland's problems could only be effective if 'the world were one big tea party'.[180] Attention was drawn to the existing conditions in the city, noting that 'with a few laudable exceptions' delegates 'have refused to see for themselves the terrible conditions under which the workers of Dublin are living.'[181] Meaningful peace, the author concluded, could only be achieved through economic justice – a line that would be echoed by Despard and Sheehy Skeffington in years to come.[182] The invective of the *Hammer & Plough* articles can be summarised in a pithy critique attributed to Despard: in her view, the WILPF was interested in 'too much peace and not enough freedom'.[183]

Yet the WPI's opponents on the Larkin-aligned Left confronted the Party with identical charges of being 'bourgeois'. For example, Despard and Gonne were singled out as 'margarine communists' amounting to a 'petit-bourgeois element' in the leadership of the WPI.[184] Responding to these charges, an article titled 'Our "Bourgeois Members"' countered that prominent Russian revolutionaries had aristocratic lineage and that the CPGB had members of the 'Bourgeois class' like Saklatvala.[185] The issue was not one's class of origin,

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[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Ibid.
[182] *Hammer & Plough*, 31 July 1926.
[183] Interview with Máire Comerford, conducted by Brian Harrison, 12 June 1977, WLLSE, Brian Harrison Oral History Collection, 8SUF/B/164.
[184] *Communist International,* 1 February 1928.
[185] *Hammer & Plough,* 7 August 1926.

but the class to which solidarity was directed. Organisations like the WIR, which were open to women from a pacifist-feminist tradition but framed their actions in a revolutionary language of proletarian solidarity, could prove an attractive alternative to the WILPF for women with anxieties about their class origin.

The WILPF Congress in Dublin speciously represented the growth of an Irish absolutist pacifist-feminist movement, but, in reality, it signified the beginning of its demise. Although nominally a WILPF-affiliated branch, the issues that electrified radical internationalism began to fundamentally shape the activities of the IIL itself. The drama of the Chinese revolutionary movement of 1927 was a moment of fundamental importance to the international communist movement. The nationalist forces of the Kuomintang led by Chang Kai-Shek united with the Chinese Communist Party in an alliance that the Kuomintang would violently betray in April 1927. Briefly, however, China offered a practical model of how a nationalist force could combine with an internationalist group, in this case a Communist Party, to bring about revolution. In March 1927, the IIL invited a Chinese student, Tan Sin-Wan, to address the Mansion House on the 'Nationalist and Economic movement in China'.[186] He later addressed the Women's' Prisoner Defence League alongside Sheehy Skeffington.[187] Despard, evidently interested in China alongside her comrades, contributed an article to the retitled WPI journal on the role of women in the nationalist and Communist forces in China.[188] Two months later, Despard contributed an article on the model of the Chinese revolution entitled 'An Example to be Followed', which suggested a radicalised understanding of pacifism refracted through events in China. 'When a people is confronted with a powerful foreign foe', Despard wrote bluntly 'the rules of war do not count.'[189]

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[186] *Workers' Republic,* 26 March 1927.
[187] Ibid.
[188] *Workers' Republic,* 28 May 1927.
[189] Ibid.

Towards the end of 1927, the WPI was starting to unravel. Already in December 1926, Despard had confided in her diary that none of her comrades seemed 'big enough' for the revolutionary tasks that the organisation had set itself.[190] She found them disconnected from 'the people' and without any 'real following.'[191] In April 1927, the ECCI ordered the WPI to dissolve, deferring to Larkin's demand that his moribund Irish Workers League be the sole representative of Ireland's radical left. Although the ECCI was growing increasingly impatient with Larkin, it acceded to his request. Important figures in the Party, such as Nora and Roddy Connolly, resigned in deference to communist discipline, leaving just a shell of the organisation to continue.[192] Despard continued to write for the Party journal, contributing articles on topics such as communist commitment. One of her articles focusing on Easter Rising commemorations was accompanied by an image asking: 'RUSSIA – 1917, IRELAND - ?'.[193] In one of the final issues, an article titled 'A Lead for Irish Women' reported on Soviet women's increased prominence in public life and industry.[194] That same month, a letter from an Irish woman arrived at the Comintern headquarters on Moscow's Mokhovaia Street.

In October 1927, a letter on the headed notepaper of the Irish Co-Operative Women's Guild was sent to the IWS from Margaret McCoubrey, of 37 Candahar Street, Belfast. McCoubrey had once directed the Ulster activities of the wartime IWFL from this same address.[195] McCoubrey addressed Hertha Sturm, whom we last encountered seeking an article on Irish women from the CPI in 1923, as 'Dear comrade', noting that many of her fellow Irish women 'know only what they read in the Capitalist press' and opposed 'what has been

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[190] CDD, 10 December 1926, PRONI CDP D2479/1/9.
[191] Ibid.
[192] *Workers Republic,* 2 April 1927.
[193] *Workers Republic*, 30 April 1927; 21 May 1927.
[194] *Workers Republic*, October 1927. Only one issue was printed in October. The final issue was the November edition.
[195] See the Irish suffrage directory printed in *IC*, 18 December 1915.

held up as a bogey – Bolshevism!'[196] McCoubrey met Sturm while attending a 1927 conference in Stockholm of the Women's Co-Operative Guilds. As an organisation, the International Co-Operative Women's Guild was sympathetic to Soviet efforts.[197] For example, Honora Enfield of the English Guild joined Despard and Crawfurd at the WIR Conference in Battersea.[198] Moreover, the leading figure of the English Cooperative Guild, Margaret Llewelyn Davies, a suffrage activist, socialist and feminist, was chair of the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR, which would ultimately evolve into the British section of the Friends of Soviet Russia led by Crawfurd.[199]

In Northern Ireland, however, McCoubrey found herself at odds with her fellow Guild members. Writing to Sturm, she described herself isolated as an 'out and out socialist' but treasured the memory of meeting Sturm at the conference in Stockholm.[200] She concluded her letter with a plea for connection:

> I do hope you will write to me again. In this old world of ours at the present time, with chaos and disorder and misery around us, and many disappointments in our own working class organisations, comradeship is a very precious thing.[201]

McCoubrey was one of the most articulate and active feminists in Northern Ireland during the Great War.[202].This letter, one of the few Irish documents maintained among the files of the IWS, provides a tantalising glimpse into McCoubrey's understanding of internationalism and the position of a suffrage veteran sympathetic to Soviet-style socialism within broader Ulster labour circles. That McCoubrey met Sturm at an international congress further points to the primacy of international networking in creating these connections.

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[196] Mary J. McCoubrey to Hertha Sturm, 26 October 1927, RGASPI, 507/3/84/1-2.
[197] Offen, *European Feminisms,* p. 345.
[198] *Workers' International Pictorial,* May 1925
[199] David-Fox, *Showcasing*, pp. 82-83.
[200] Mary J. McCoubrey to Hertha Sturm, 26 October 1927, RGASPI, 507/3/84/1-2.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Diane Urquhart, '"An Articulate and Definite Cry for Political Freedom": The Ulster Suffrage Movement', *Women's History Review,* 11:2 (2002), pp. 273-292.

Sturm, like other Comintern functionaries, took a keen interest in the activities of the foreign women who came into her orbit, asking McCoubrey to forward examples of Irish political literature.[203] Rather than being discouraged by McCoubrey's statement that many Irish women opposed Soviet Russia based on negative press reporting, Sturm saw this as even more reason to bring such women on delegations, for 'Soviet Russia wants especially to win over those who are misinformed' and all those who '*want* to know the truth ought to be interested to see with their own eyes'.[204] Sturm concluded her letter with her hope that there would be an opportunity for Irish women to visit the Soviet Union and that 'perhaps we may meet again'.[205] Sturm's wish that Irish women would have the chance to learn the 'truth' by seeing the Soviet experiment with their 'own eyes' would be granted. However, it was neither hostile nor indifferent women, but rather Irish women embedded in a social-political network already invested in the success of the Soviet project that would head eastwards – women such as Despard and Sheehy Skeffington.

Several months later after McCoubrey's correspondence, the vote was finally extended for British and Northern Irish women beyond the limited enfranchisement granted in 1918. In July 1928, universal suffrage was introduced in Britain and Northern Ireland. The fact that the vote had already been partially granted in Britain and Ireland in 1918, then extended to all in the Irish Free State from 1923 and in Britain from 1928, was useful for Despard and other Comintern-aligned suffrage veterans whose radicalisation largely occurred after the war. Operating in this context, a political actor such as Despard found no difficulty in combining revolutionary communist and supposedly 'bourgeois' feminist commitment. Despard noted her delight that the 'young women' of Great Britain would now enjoy the same right which had been available to Irish women for several years and commented: 'I

[203] Hertha Sturm to Mary J. McCoubrey, 4 December 1927, RGASPI, 507/3/84/6-7.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid.

have always believed in men and women standing shoulder to shoulder.'[206] For Despard, equal citizenship provided the best vehicle for women to harness their potential. Although commitment to equal citizenship in law was not mutually exclusive with support for revolutionary politics, the vocabulary used was hardly a call for workers' insurrection. Yet in the same report, Despard replied for comment on the Conservative Home Secretary who helped pass the bill by offering a blunt concluding statement to reporters: 'I'm a Communist, you know'.[207]

How did Despard relate her communist commitment to her continued identification with the legacies of the suffrage movement? An article published in the *Working Woman,* a CPGB-aligned paper, provides an answer. In an article framed as Despard's call to the 'new women voters' in the 1928 British general election, Despard framed socialist activism by women as an advancement of the achievements of the women's movement. Outlining her stance on pacifism and demonstrating its anti-militarist rather than absolutist orientation, the article's introduction, written by Crawfurd, noted that Despard was not 'anti-class war'.[208] Interestingly, in her appeal, Despard distinguished between the victories of her own political generation and a younger one: 'Our was the triumph of womanhood in politics,' she wrote, 'and yours will be the far nobler triumph of working womanhood in the vast fields of human labour.'[209] For Despard, her generation's political task had been narrower in its ambition than the younger generation, with whom her solidarity was now shared. She was not alone among the women of her political background in rejecting an absolutist pacifist disavowal of class war and aligning her hopes with a transnational revolutionary movement.

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[206] See for example: *Nottingham Evening Post,* 13 March 1928; *Derby Daily Telegraph,* 13 March 1928; *The Scotsman,* 14 March 1928.
[207] Ibid.
[208] *The Working Woman,* October 1928.
[209] Ibid.

While many radicals in Europe found new avenues for activism through the front groups, liberal internationalist bodies looked to the Comintern's '"disciplined" internationalism' with alarm.[210] In a report to the 1929 WILPF conference, Louie Bennett gave an anxious account of the political zeitgeist in Irish radical circles, noting: 'In Ireland, as elsewhere, the Communist is endeavouring to exploit nationalism (in its Republican cloak) for his own economic ends' and that there was a 'political minority which refuses constitutional representation and looks to revolution as the means of emancipation.'[211] She noted in a follow-up report that Sheehy Skeffington was enraged by this suggestion and that within the IIL there had been 'considerable dissatisfaction amongst the really pacifist group, owing to the presence on the Committee of people who openly state that they consider the use of force essential to achieve a social revolution, or to achieve national freedom'.[212] Tellingly, she added 'They lay emphasis on the [WILPF] object of *freedom* rather than peace.'[213] Bennett's reference to a 'really pacifist' group suggests a non-pacifist group existed within the IIL, but this is a simplification of the reality. When considered in light of the evidence present above, Bennett's comments more accurately reflect the divide between an absolutist pacifism with an integral commitment to non-violence and an anti-militarist pacifism that sanctioned violence as a means to the end of socialism and national liberation.

Placing the Irish women who maintained a commitment to revolutionary violence against a transnational backdrop reveals that this rift between supposed 'reactionary' and 'advanced' pacifist positions was not confined to Ireland or countries with national self-determination movements. Even a non-revolutionary like Alice Park could articulate frustrations with the WILPF for its perceived timidity. In a 1929 letter to Sheehy Skeffington she bemoaned the organisation's 'growing respectability' and 'lack of vigour', noting that her

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[210] Hannam and Hunt, *Socialist Women,* p. 195.
[211] Quoted in Cullen Owens, *Social History of Women,* p. 151.
[212] Ibid, p. 152.
[213] Ibid.

enthusiasm lay 'with left wing and "suffragettes"'. [214] Among British socialist women, conflict also arose between absolute pacifists and those who perceived force as justifiable when it came to class struggle.[215] Ex-suffragettes, as Hunt and Hannam have observed, 'were much less likely to be absolute pacifists.'[216] The militancy of the suffragettes compared to the constitutional politics of their suffragist counterparts appears to have echoed in the tensions within women's internationalism.

Sarah Hellawell, writing of the obstacles WILPF would face in maintaining a transnational network, notes that 'a strong sense of a shared identity' was of utmost importance in transcending national difference.[217] Herein lies one of the critical reasons why a communist-inspired interpretation of internationalism proved magnetic to Irish radical women whose political background lay at the cross-section of suffrage and support for the Irish and Russian revolutions. It was ultimately easier for those with republican sympathies to build a shared identity through an internationalism explicitly grounded in a forceful articulation of anti-imperialism. The communist sanctioning of force when used against an oppressive system also corresponded with both republican and suffragette understandings of militancy. Moreover, while the history of the Irish republican turn towards the left has traditionally been narrated through the lives of men like George Gilmore and Peadar O'Donnell, or as a history of Comintern machinations, charting this turn through the perspectives of women activists opens up our ability to trace this process of radicalisation as a component of a transnational political trajectory. Ultimately, the meeting halls of Dublin would, from the 1920s, host the national revolutionaries of the world – from locations such as India and China – with greater frequency than feminists from a former colonial power. By

[214] Alice Park to HSS, 31 October 1929, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/41.
[215] Hannam and Hunt, *Socialist Women*, pp. 180-181.
[216] Ibid, p. 184.
[217] Sarah Hellawell, 'Antimilitarism, Citizenship and Motherhood: The Formation and Early Years of the Women's International League (WIL), 1915-1919', *Women's History Review,* 27:4 (2018), p. 557.

1928, the circle of Irish radical women who held their meetings in Parnell Street, gathered at Roebuck House and who were entertained in Madame Cogley's Cabaret had become further enmeshed into the networks of international communism.

Conclusion

Liberal and radical internationalist organisations allowed Irish radical women to sustain and develop transnational careers and networks during the 1920s. Yet the radical Comintern campaigns, focused on issues such as forceful opposition to imperialism, relief to starving peasants in Ireland and the immediate release of political prisoners, offered a political combination that the agenda and actions of the WILPF-style internationalism did not. In particular, radical internationalism offered a theorised vision of emancipation and an anti-war stance that justified force in order to achieve peace. But the Comintern was not simply an organisational monolith directing its pawns from afar. Radical networks were populated by activists with shared histories of struggle, signified in this chapter by the tie between Crawfurd and Despard. Such comradeships, as McCoubrey affirmed in her letter to Sturm, were a very precious thing.

Cullen Owens' account of Irish women's internationalism during this period, defined primarily through Bennett and the absolutist pacifist principles of the WILPF, gives the impression that organised Irish women's internationalism succumbed to its ideological dividing lines and fell into abeyance.[218] The disappearance of this tendency, she argues, was predicated on the ascendance of nationalists, women such as Sheehy Skeffington and Despard, who deferred to a republican agenda over an international one.[219] She concludes that developments in Ireland reflected Richard Evans' thesis that the appeal of feminist pacifism was limited because 'historical links between nationalism and feminism were still strong in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries'.[220] However, an internationalist agenda was not sacrificed for the pursuit of nationalist objectives. Instead, the Comintern's

[218] Cullen Owens, *Social History of Women,* esp. 152-154.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid, p. 154; *cf.* Richard Evans, *Comrades and Sisters: Feminism, Socialism, and Pacifism in Europe, 1870-1945* (Brighton, 1987), pp. 150-151.

front groups provided a further means of channelling Irish women's internationalism into new initiatives often premised on old formats. These groups were both more open to women than male-dominated parties or paramilitary groups like the IRA and untroubled by the debates between the absolutist and anti-militarist approaches to pacifism which coursed through the WILPF.

The current literature on the Irish women's movement lacks a transnational perspective necessary to outline the social-political network at the heart of this thesis. Margaret Ward, writing of the 1926 WILPF Congress in Dublin, notes that minds were dominated more by 'an anxiety to achieve freedom' rather than peace.[221] This is not incorrect, but it echoes the same failing that frustrated socialist and communist women in their relations with WILPF: an articulation of freedom that was not specifically defined. By the summer of 1926 during which the Dublin Congress took place, 'freedom' had an explicit definition for many women involved with WILPF – such freedom could not be achieved, it seemed, through an absolutist pacifism but one that at the very least countenanced class war.

This definition of freedom was being studied in editions of the *ABC of Communism* or in the revolutionary periodical press, spoken from Dublin platforms by visiting radicals and encountered at meetings with travelling revolutionaries at international congresses. Freedom meant social revolution, the transformation of everyday social existence alongside a political transition of power. Groups that reflected this interest in social radicalism, such as the united front organisations, radical cultural initiatives and miniscule political parties were often fringe and faltering organisations. Yet they provided a pre-existing social-political network of Irish radical women and their counterparts with reasons to congregate, network and expand their political horizons, thereby sustaining women's radicalism in an era that is at risk of being stereotyped as a period where women's activism was in the doldrums.

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[221] Ward, 'Nationalism, Pacifism, Internationalism', p. 79.

It was clear by the end of the decade that Geneva, where Irish Free State diplomats and politicians went to announce their presence on the world stage and where the WILPF was headquartered, offered little potential as a locus of activity for Ireland's radical women. Moscow, the epicentre of a dense network of organisations dedicated to causes that electrified Irish radicals, became the dominant model for the development of a new society. Remarkably – and, for our purposes, usefully – an Irish woman, May O'Callaghan, found herself in the crucible of the world revolution throughout this period. The current chapter has partly explored the impact of international communism on the fringes of the Comintern's network. In the next chapter, we will consider the centre of this network.

Chapter 3: 'These Russian Boys Think Being Irish So Wonderful': May O'Callaghan and the Intimate Politics of International Communism, 1924-1929.

Introduction

In November 1927, the celebrated American novelist Theodore Dreiser was approached by a Soviet representative in New York as he prepared for a trip to witness the Soviet experiment in action. The Soviet official, charged with smoothing Dreiser's entry into the Russian cultural set, provided a list of introductions to valuable 'Moscow personages'.[1] The list included names such as Sergei Eisenstein, the director of *Battleship Potemkin*, Constantin Stanislavsky, the head of the Moscow Art Theatre and, also, May O'Callaghan, a forty-six year old Irish woman whom the Soviet official described to Dreiser as 'a cultural relations expert'.[2] O'Callaghan, whom we last encountered as the sub-editor of Sylvia Pankhurst's *Workers' Dreadnought,* emigrated to the Soviet Union in 1924, remaining in Moscow until 1928. This chapter traces O'Callaghan's involvement in the institutions of international communism, from her arrival in Moscow to her dramatic departure as the result of an Irish literary celebrity's indiscretions.

Borrowing a phrase from Ruth Barraclough, Heather Bowen-Struyk and Paula Rabinowitz, O'Callaghan's life in Moscow provides an insight into the 'intimate politics of international solidarity.'[3] Writing about interwar anticolonial relationships, Michael Goebel has referred to a 'social history of intimacy' that examines the 'politics of affection, desire,

[1] Thomas P. Riggio, James L. W. West III (eds.), Theodore Dreiser, *Dreiser's Russian Diary* (Philadelphia, 1996), p. 35.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ruth Barraclough, Heather Bowen-Struyk and Paula Rabinowitz, 'Introduction', in Barraclough, Bowen-Struyk and Rabinowitz (eds.), *Red Love Across the Pacific: Political and Sexual Revolutions of the Twentieth Century* (New York, 2015), p. i.

and power' at work within interpersonal relationships grounded in a political milieu.[4] Taking this historicised concept of intimacy as a useful category of analysis, this chapter suggests a framework for understanding the intimate politics of international communism.[5] I also deploy intimacy as a spatial category suggesting that the world of émigré communists in Moscow was a confined one. O'Callaghan allows us to understand how the transnational organisational behemoth of the Comintern, which influenced the lives and trajectories of radical women across the world during this period, was also a physical workplace managed to a hitherto underappreciated extent by multilingual, border-hopping women.

As an Irish radical woman of the early 20th century who did not subscribe to socialist republicanism and a member of the under-researched *tekhnicheskii rabotniki*, the technical workers of the Comintern who performed the administrative tasks of the world revolution, O'Callaghan represents several historiographical gaps. Gleb J. Albert has recently observed that historians know 'only very little' about the lives of such rank and file Comintern workers.[6] As an Irish radical who perceived herself to be living through, and helping to enact, an authentic transformation of social relations in a society she viewed as the future made present, she also provides a useful contrast with her counterparts in Ireland and their stunted attempts to instigate revolutionary change at home. Moreover, O'Callaghan's Soviet sojourn and her involvement in organisations aimed at propagating an idealised vision of Soviet life provide a narrative thread linking the preceding and following chapters which consider transnational currents flowing through Dublin.

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[4] Michael Goebel, 'Spokesmen, Spies and Spouses: Anticolonialism, Surveillance, and Intimacy in Interwar France', *Journal of Modern History* (June 2019), p. 384.

[5] Histories of intimacy are increasingly popular among imperial historians, see: Will Jackson, 'The Private Lives of Empire: Emotion, Intimacy, and Colonial Rule', *Itinerario,* 42:1 (2018), pp. 1-15 and Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, 'The Politics of Intimacy in an Age of Empire', in Ballantyne and Burton (eds.), *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire* (Urbana and Chicago, 2009), pp. 1-28.

[6] Gleb J. Albert, 'Review: Rebellin in München, Moskau und Berlin. Autobiographisches Fragment 1900-1924', *Revolutionary Russia,* 28:1 (2015), p. 71.

A close reading of O'Callaghan's career in Moscow demonstrates the insights we can gain by expanding our definitions of the personnel, roles and revolutionary acts we explore in writing the history of radical internationalism. In this chapter, the primary radical act analysed is not a clandestine case of organising but O'Callaghan's decision to help raise a child that was not her own – the daughter of the Irish novelist Liam O'Flaherty – and how she relied on the networks of radical internationalism to achieve this. O'Callaghan's trajectory from a childhood on the Irish coast to translating speeches at the Kremlin Palace was extraordinary, but she was not unique in traversing this political path from suffrage through to radical internationalism. Moreover, O'Callaghan, a periphery figure who may have been forgotten by the Irish radical women with whom she crossed paths during her years with Pankhurst, nevertheless was involved in producing publications and propaganda that would influence their shared network. A detailed study of O'Callaghan's radical internationalist career provides insights into under-researched quotidian experiences within the headquarters of the vast Comintern machine and the complex ways in which such experiences could sustain, redirect and even demobilise activist careers.

The Intimate Politics of an Irish Woman's Life in Soviet Moscow, 1924-1928.

During the period of May O'Callaghan's residency from 1924-8, Moscow was a city in transition. The German philosopher Walter Benjamin, who visited for several months, described Moscow in 1927 as an urban schematic of the future, representing a range of possibilities, 'above all, the possibility that the Revolution might fail or succeed.'[7] In contrast to those who migrated to the USSR in search of work during the first Five Year Plan in the 1930s or who arrived in antifascist refugee waves from 1933, Moscow of the 1920s – a city like Dublin in that it was marked by the scars of revolution and Civil War – was attractive chiefly to those who could imaginatively transpose the society of tomorrow onto its impoverished cityscape. Soviet subjectivities, a distinct historiographical field which seeks to understand how Soviet citizens imagined themselves as part of the revolution, has made its mark on Russian historiography.[8] Elements of this approach, in particular its micro-historical focus on subjectivity within a political history context, can also be transplanted onto Irish subjects. Kirschenbaum applies this field's approach to émigré communists who lived in the Soviet Union, observing that they learned to overcome uncomfortable observations, such as ongoing prostitution or the acute crisis of homeless children, by perceiving the world through a belief in the 'revolutionary truth' that communism would inevitably resolve society's problems.[9] This section outlines the development of O'Callaghan's 'revolutionary truth.' First, placing O'Callaghan within the broader context of feminist migration to the USSR can resolve the enigma of how a woman from Wexford found herself in Soviet Moscow. Second, focusing on O'Callaghan's everyday life in the Soviet capital – her work routine, private discussions with friends and cultural consumption – allows us to understand how the spatial

[7] Walter Benjamin, 'Moscow Diary,' *October,* 32 (Winter, 1985), p. 132.
[8] See for example: Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton, 2005); Igal Halfin, *Intimate Enemies: Demonizing the Bolshevik Opposition, 1918-1928* (Pittsburgh, 2007); Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge, Mass., 2006).
[9] Kirschenbaum, *International Communism,* p. 53.

and affective experiences of Moscow transformed her understanding of her role within the wider revolution.

During the 1920s, a small number of women active in communist circles beyond Russia emigrated to Moscow. Although the major waves of emigration to the Soviet Union were linked to national crises (Germans arrived in 1933, Austrians in 1934, and Spaniards in 1938/39), we can also define a minor wave of women's emigration predicated on disenchantment with opportunities for women's activism in post-Great War Europe.[10] In the case of American women, Julia L. Mickenberg states that what drew them to the Soviet Union was its embodied promise of 'the good life' and its inclusion of women's emancipation in that promise.[11] Motivations were as much about the implicit promise of Soviet society as the lack of opportunity in the home community. Kevin Morgan and Gidon Cohen have suggested that a number of talented, well-educated women from the male-dominated CPGB viewed the new institutions of international communism in Moscow as a less-restrictive world where they could carry out work for the cause.[12] Beyond its Holy-Site-like status as a crucible of the revolution, Moscow hosted an array of internationalist organisations that required linguistically skilled and secretarially trained employees. Educated women proved a natural fit for these roles.

The precise motivation for May O'Callaghan's relocation to Moscow is unclear. Political enthusiasm for the Soviet project undoubtedly played an important role, but we can also trace a trend among her comrades. She was not a Party member, although she assisted the Labour Research Department (LRD), a group that became a satellite organisation of the

[10] Brigitte Studer and Berthold Unfried, 'Private Matters Become Public: Western European Communist Exiles and Emigrants in Stalinist Russia in the 1930s', *International Review of Social History,* 58 (2003), p. 207.
[11] Mickenberg, *American Girls in Red Russia*, p. 31.
[12] Kevin Morgan and Gidon Cohen, 'Rose Cohen', Keith Gildard, David Howell, Neville Kirk (eds.), *Dictionary of Labour Biography,* Vol. XI (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 34.

Party in the early 1920s, and was active in London's communist social circles.[13] Not all communist sympathisers were willing to maintain the Party membership payments or demands of iron revolutionary discipline, which meant a significant drain on time through regular attendance at meetings and assistance with electioneering. The masculine world of early British communism, as Hunt and Worley demonstrate, had a problematic relationship with women members influenced by the ambiguity and ambivalence regarding the position of the 'women question' within a class-based politics.[14] As a linguistically skilled suffrage veteran, with a background in journalism and research, O'Callaghan fitted neatly into a gendered Comintern-worker type and followed a trend set by her comrades. As discussed in the first chapter, Eugenie Bouvier, a former member of the ELFS, and Rosa Arnold, the Irish wife of the Latvian *Irish Citizen* contributor Sidney Arnold, were both employed in the Comintern Press Department in 1921.[15] Cedar Paul, also formerly of Pankhurst's group, worked as a translator at the Fourth Comintern Congress in 1922.[16] Violet Lansbury, yet another former East London suffragette, and Rose Cohen, a close friend of O'Callaghan's from the East London suffrage days with much the same skillset as O'Callaghan, moved to Moscow in 1923 and were both employed in translation and stenography work for the Comintern.[17]

One year later in July 1924, O'Callaghan moved to Moscow and began working for the Comintern in the same capacity as former ELFS comrades such as Cohen and Bouvier.[18] Cohen left her role the same week O'Callaghan arrived at the Comintern and it is possible

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[13] O'Callaghan is thanked for her research work in the acknowledgements section of Labour Research Department, *The Labour International Year Book* (London: Labour Publishing Company, 1923), p. 4; John McIlroy, 'The Establishment of Intellectual Orthodoxy and the Stalinization of British Communism 1928-1933', *Past & Present,* 192 (August 2006), p. 194.
[14] Karen Hunt and Matthew Worley, 'Rethinking British Communist Party Women in the 1920s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 14:1 (February 2004), pp. 1-27.
[15] *Anketa*, Evgeniia Bouvier, 11 December 1921, RGASPI 495/65a/4042/3-4; *Anketa*, Rosa Arnold, c. February 1921, RGASPI 495/218/24/1.
[16] Bruley, *Leninism*, p. 73.
[17] Morgan and Cohen, 'Rose Cohen', p. 34.
[18] *Anketa,* May O'Callaghan, 9 July 1924, RGASPI 495/218/31/2.

that O'Callaghan simply filled this vacancy.[19] In a questionnaire completed by O'Callaghan upon arrival in Moscow she noted her abilities in French, German and Russian and listed doctrinaire British Communist and LRD member R. P. Dutt as her referee.[20] O'Callaghan's Moscow work, which consisted of managing and editing large volumes of writing, was not unlike the tasks she had carried out as sub-editor of Pankhurst's journal or manager of the People's Russian Information Bureau. In the first chapter, I examined how Pankhurst acted as an intermediary between Irish radical women and initiatives of radical internationalism. In no other case was Pankhurst's influence more direct than in O'Callaghan's substitution of an East London office for a Moscow one. This minor trend of migration suggests the Comintern Headquarters provided a rare opening for radical women's employment that was both exciting and politically relevant. Emigration was hardly atypical for an Irish woman, but Moscow was a decidedly unusual destination. This choice of location was undoubtedly shaped by the radical social-political world in which O'Callaghan was enmeshed.

For those who emigrated, what did Soviet communism offer to women activists? Once in power, the Bolsheviks, particularly under the guidance of Alexandra Kollontai, introduced reforms that received approval from women activists abroad. Reforms introduced by Kollontai's Commissariat for Social Welfare such as legal abortion care, the removal of child illegitimacy as a legal concept, easier access to divorce and the provision of maternity facilities were well received by certain Western progressives. Unlike many Russian women, especially peasants, who resisted Bolshevik attempts to erode familiar family structures in favour of an emancipatory programme, communist women migrants, largely educated and independent-minded, were in an ideal position to lionise and utilise these reforms. The true value of the Bolshevik feminist agenda for émigré communists was its ability to combine

[19] Rose Cohen to Esmonde Higgins, 5 August 1924, EHP, ML, MSS 740, Vol. 11.
[20] Ibid.

genuinely radical policy with a limited realisation of these revolutionary aims. There was a reality of limited advances to experience and a future of total emancipation to anticipate.

By hosting all communists visiting Moscow in one building, Soviet authorities ensured both ease of surveillance and a unique opportunity for revolutionary networking. The Hotel Lux, located on Moscow's long central Tverskaia Street, was a pre-revolutionary institution converted into a home for foreign workers at the Comintern. In the memoir literature of interwar Communism, the Lux is a recurring motif used to symbolise the internationalism of the movement and the obdurate bureaucracy that characterised everyday life in the Soviet capital. J. T. Murphy, a British Comintern representative who had liaised with republicans during the Irish Civil War, surmised many impressions of the Lux when he described it as 'a babel of languages' with a stream of constant visitors 'all vital, alive, intelligent, battling with ideas.'[21] Comrades of O'Callaghan remembered her room on the fifth floor of the Lux as a space where Anglophone Comintern employees met for breakfast before work and as an evening-time gathering point for literati.[22] The Lux ensured that the world of communist émigrés remained distinct from the 'bourgeois' world of resident diplomats, housed in the nearby Hotel Metropole opposite the Bolshoi Theatre.[23] The communists who arrived in the second half of the 1920s were also largely distinct, politically and socially, from an earlier wave of emigrants who had arrived with Quaker relief missions during the Russian famine of 1920-21. The Hotel Lux fostered transnational radical friendships by placing the foreign acolytes of Bolshevism together in one peculiar space that was itself a result of the shortage in housing provision in the post-revolutionary society and the Soviet state's desire to keep a watchful eye on its foreign guests.

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[21] J. T. Murphy, *New Horizons* (London, 1941), p. 242.
[22] Joseph Freeman, *An American Testament: A Narrative of Rebels and Romantics* (New York, 1936), p. 510; Ruth Kennell to Nellie Rathbone, 25 May 1973, University of Oregon Special Collections (Hereafter UOSC), Ruth Epperson Kennell Papers (Hereafter REKP), Box 7, Folder 6; Alida de Jager to Nellie Rathbone, c. May 1973, Rathbone Papers (Hereafter RP), held in private possession.
[23] Eugene Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia* (London, 1938), p. 69.

The conscious gathering-together of revolutionaries from across the world in a single multi-storey building ensured both political diversity and disagreement. Molly Murphy, a former WSPU member, described late night parties at the Lux and political discussions which brought together foreign and Russian communists in open debate.[24] One resident of the Lux close to O'Callaghan recounted an incident when a male American communist invaded a women's shower room. This lead to a heated debate in the hotel featuring the accused's wife interjecting with a call for the collective ownership of individual bodies.[25] This argument was roundly denounced by the majority of Lux residents present at the tribunal as 'un-Marxian' and reeking of 'Greenwich-village dilettantism.'[26] In the hallways of the Lux, residents encountered international comrades and the politics of everyday existence that communism sought to refashion.

Describing O'Callaghan's commute towards her workplace through contemporary accounts underlines how the revolutionary character of the city itself shaped personal perceptions. The Hotel Lux was located at the top of Moscow's long Tverskaia Boulevard. Daily, Lux residents undertook a short walk from where the bottom of Tverskaia intersected with Mokhovaia Street to enter the Comintern headquarters. The distance was easily collapsed by foot or tram. To speak of émigré communists living within the interwar Soviet Union, often, is actually to describe émigré communists living and working between their residence and workplace located on these intersecting streets.

Architecturally, the city centre was a mixture of low built aristocratic houses, gold church steeples and newly constructed monuments. As the first ever English-language guide book about the USSR put it in 1925: 'The combining of Russian spirit and that of the Orient, with socialist international traits, give to the city an inimitable individuality.'[27] As they

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[24] Molly Murphy, *Molly Murphy: Suffragette and Socialist* (Salford, 1998), pp. 103-104.
[25] Ruth Kennell, 'The New Innocents Abroad', *American Mercury* (May 1929), p. 17.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, *Guide to the Soviet Union* (Moscow, 1925), p. 6.

travelled down Tverskaia, Comintern workers passed monuments to Soviet power and internationalism, including a façade of executed German revolutionary Rosa Luxembourg emblazoned with the phrase 'The Revolution is a storm which blows away anything that stands in its way' and an obelisk engraved with the Soviet constitution, placed on a site previously occupied by a Tsarist equestrian statue.[28] One American communist remembering her first visit to the capital city of world socialism described how the glittering domes of Moscow made it 'hard to believe it was not a dream.'[29] The ethereality of the city experience was echoed by O'Callaghan who would regularly sign off letters from Moscow with the phrase 'love from "beyond"'.[30] The contained nature of this physical world, and the saturation of Soviet symbol and thought, ensured that everyday reminders of the revolution's transformative power were inculcated into the daily routine of visiting communists.

After breakfast with fellow revolutionaries and a brief commute through the changing urban landscape of Moscow's centre, Comintern workers entered the organisation's imposing neoclassical headquarters. In August 1924, the Comintern issued O'Callaghan with an identification certificate for entrance into the building as a translator working in the Press Department.[31] One of the first bureaus formed following the founding Comintern Congress, the Press Department was established in May 1919 and tasked with organising propaganda and publishing documents relating to the Comintern and the Soviet Communist Party in different languages.[32] By the time O'Callaghan arrived in Moscow, the department was divided into four language sections: Russian, German, English and French.[33] O'Callaghan's employment and rise within the department was surely assisted by her knowledge of all four

[28] Ibid, p. 72.
[29] Ella Reeve Bloor, *We Are Many* (London, 1940), p. 173.
[30] See for example: May O'Callaghan (Hereafter MO'C) to Joseph Freeman (Hereafter JF), 23 April 1927, 20 August 1927, 26 June 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9.
[31] '*Udostoverenie May O'Callaghana',* 10 August 1924, RGASPI 495/218/31.
[32] G. M. Adibekov, E. N. Shakhnazarova and K. P. Shirinya, *Organizatsionnaia Struktura Kominterna, 1919-194*3 (Moscow, 1997), pp. 9-10.
[33] Ibid, p. 45.

of these languages. By 1927 she had, in her own words, 'a certain standing'.[34] Counter-intuitively, it was O'Callaghan's lack of an official affiliation to a national Communist Party that partly permitted this rise. The extended length of her stay allowed her to continually seek promotion, unlike, for example, British Party members who worked in similar capacities to O'Callaghan but were expected to return home with the political education they received in Moscow.[35]

The precise role of O'Callaghan's office, the English section of the Press Department, was to translate into English appeals, documents, speeches and articles originally written by Comintern members in Russian, French and German.[36] This included documents submitted to O'Callaghan's department in manuscript form but also the simultaneous translation of speeches during Central Committee and Comintern gatherings in the Kremlin Palace. Ruth Kennell, an American woman who became O'Callaghan's closest friend in Moscow after being hired by her to work in the English section, described this intense but exciting work in a letter sent to her family in Oklahoma:

> My work is interesting because most of the material I type is on interesting subjects - I type from dictation generally, and I like that better than copy work. These are the final drafts of bulletins and pamphlets for printing, and is strenuous work as it is sometimes necessary to type as fast as the compiler speaks, there is also much dictation from translators who translate the material from Russian or German to English just as it is being typed. A good translator also translates almost as fast as he would carry on a conversation, and almost six hours at a stretch of this intense concentration is very tiring on me… During rushes, the Press Bureau is a madhouse of clicking typewriters and hurrying footsteps… I have been inside [the Kremlin] twice but have not yet seen the old palace where Ivan the Terrible lived... To the extreme left [of the Kremlin] is the palace, inside whose gold and marble halls I attended a session of the Central Committee. On the walls of the corridors are sketches of many notable people connected with the Communist International and the

[34] MO'C to JF, 24 December 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9
[35] Barry McLoughlin, 'Visitors and Victims: British Communists in Russia Between the Wars' in John McIlroy, Kevin Morgan and Alan Campbell (eds.), *Party People, Communist Lives: Explorations in Biography* (London, 2001), p. 214.
[36] Freeman, *Testament,* p. 506.

> Revolution, and in the ballroom where royalty gathered in the Czarist days, I was somewhat amused by a big display of radical literature on sale.[37]

The Indian revolutionary M. N. Roy noted in his memoirs that the choice to hold the Comintern Congress within the former surroundings of Tsarist power was a 'demonstration of the fact that the working class had replaced the old rulers'.[38] Finding the portraits of the titled aristocracy replaced with the images of the worker revolutionaries was surely a novel experience for Comintern employees and delegates. Work in translation placed O'Callaghan and her co-workers at an international intersection of communist politics, one that was embodied as much in the documents which passed across their desks as in the co-workers they laboured alongside and the grand rooms where speeches were translated.

Notwithstanding the weighty theoretical documentation with which O'Callaghan worked, both memoir and correspondence sources suggest it was the lived experience of life in and around the Comintern headquarters which primarily contributed to her political development. In general, communist men tended to emphasise theory and experience of direct action as a source of radicalisation in their self-narratives. Women were more likely to be represented, and represent themselves, as radicals on account of personal experiences and important friendships.[39] This quality can be found in the gendered pen-portraits in the book *An American Testament: A Novel of Rebels and Romantics*, written by one of O'Callaghan's employees in the Comintern: Joseph Freeman. His description of O'Callaghan and Kennell is a case in point: 'both women' he noted 'vacillated between romantic adoration and bitter despair over the Soviet system':

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[37] Ruth Epperson Kennell (Hereafter REK) to Ella Epperson Tosh, 31 October 1924, UOSC, REKP, Box 9, Folder 8.
[38] M. N. Roy, *M. N. Roy's Memoirs* (Bombay, 1964) p. 372.
[39] For discussion of the gendered nature of left-wing subjectivities see James R. Barrett, 'Was the Personal Political? Reading the Autobiography of American Communism', *IRSH,* 53 (2008), pp. 395-423; Brown and Faue, 'Social Bonds, Sexual Politics'.

> If the water stopped running in their rooms, or they couldn't get a bath for a week, or they found gravel in a sandwich, they would bitterly attack bolshevism (sic)… if they saw a stirring parade in Red Square, or a play in the trade-union theatre, or a new Soviet film, or a demonstration of Pioneers, they would bubble over with joy and praise.[40]

This description of minor everyday experiences as catalysts for adoration of the Soviet regime was reflected in O'Callaghan's correspondence, particularly in a letter to Freeman describing the protest against the British police raids on the Soviet trade delegation in London that O'Callaghan witnessed through her Moscow office window:

> Our building was literally besieged with demonstrations from about one [o'clock] and this was kept up till late night… the crowds were quite as big as May-Day. I never noticed such well-dressed crowds at a [demonstration]. And all seemed to want to show that they were for the Soviet [government] and nothing else - I cannot explain, but you know my gift of sizing up things and for the first time I felt that all fear of [counter-revolution] was baseless - there would be no support here - *all* have learned to value what they gained by 1917.[41]

In this description, O'Callaghan reflected on the appearance of the protestors as a sign of Soviet progress, while the persistence and volume of their protests revealed a popular bulwark against a return to a pre-revolutionary system.

The political hue of O'Callaghan's intimate social network influenced how the personalities within it interacted. Within the contained social-political world of communism, with its defined enemies and allies, friendship circles were always important. But such friendships were rendered distinct by the political character of the network they existed within. Raphael Samuel, a former CPGB member who characterised communism as a 'complete social identity', notes communist comradeship 'was neither exactly personal nor entirely political, but a nexus of the two,' involving kin groups, friendship circles,

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[40] Freeman, *Testament*, p. 509.
[41] MO'C to JF, 16 May 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9. Emphasis in original

neighbourhood networks and even literary coteries.[42] What distinguished it from ordinary friendship, Samuel states, was the political bonds which tied it together as a 'community of purpose.'[43] For émigré communists who were separated from family, and who were often required to hide their activities from blood relations, intimate ties to comrades provided networks of fictive families. It is notable in this respect that O'Callaghan referred to her friendship group as 'the family'.[44] In his work on the history of friendship, Mark Peel notes how the friendship networks of unmarried migrants in the early twentieth century allowed them to seek 'refuge from tradition-bound families, helping men and women to develop more autonomous lives.'[45] In the Soviet context, where the very concept of 'family' was being refashioned, O'Callaghan's use of the term to refer to a group of American, Russian and German communists had added political connotations. Her Moscow 'family' was defined by its sexual and political ties and divergences. To understand how this intimate social circle influenced O'Callaghan's own subjective understanding of her role within the wider revolutionary network, we must delve briefly into their individual biographical contexts.

The O'Callaghan 'family' was unusual in its linguistic diversity and the cultural prominence of individuals. Studer has referred to the Hotel Lux as a decidedly insular world due to the security apparatus that sought to both monitor and protect its inhabitants and the residents' inability to speak their host's language.[46] Linguistic competence was not an obstacle for O'Callaghan, who spoke Russian and German. The cultural prominence of 'family' members drew on this ability. American, British and German members of the 'family' included Freeman, Kennell, Jessica Smith, an American famine relief worker turned

[42] Raphael Samuel, 'The Lost World of British Communism', *New Left Review*, 154 (1985), p. 11; Samuel, 'Staying Power: The Lost World of British Communism', *New Left Review,* 155 (1986), p. 69.
[43] Samuel, 'Staying Power', p. 69.
[44] See for example: MO'C to JF, 20 March 1927, 31 March 1927, 16 July 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9.
[45] Mark Peel, 'New Worlds of Friendship: The Early Twentieth Century', in Barbara Caine (ed.), *Friendship: A History* (London, 2009), p. 294.
[46] Studer, *Transnational World,* p. 71.

committed Bolshevik, Alida de Jager, a communist from a middle-class German-Jewish family and Rose Cohen, O'Callaghan's former flatmate from their East London suffrage days.[47] Cohen's sister Nellie also visited Moscow while O'Callaghan was resident.[48] O'Callaghan was acquainted with Soviet cultural figures such as the film director Sergei Eisenstein and the poets Sergei Tret'iakov and Vladimir Mayakovsky.[49] Russian comrades included the literary critics Sergei Dinamov and Osip Beskin, both employees of the Moscow State Publishing House *Gosizdat* and veterans of the Civil War, and Olga Minskaia, one of the highest ranking women in the Red Army.[50] O'Callaghan's matriarchal position as the eldest amongst her friends is also of note. This status imbued O'Callaghan's surviving letters to 'family' members Kennell and Freeman with a tone of protectiveness and mentorship.

The sights of Moscow that would quickly become routinised facets of Soviet life, such as grand Bolshevik funerals, large military parades and frequent theatre visits, were all eagerly witnessed by O'Callaghan and her circle of friends. A lengthy description of the seventh October Revolution anniversary celebrations in 1924, contained in a letter that Ruth Kennell sent to her mother, provides a vivid insight into the dramatic alterity of Soviet society from the capitalist world beyond. It is worth quoting in detail as an example of the vivid experiences open to O'Callaghan and other émigré communists resident in Moscow during this period:

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[47] For more on Kennell and Smith, see: Mickenberg, *American Girls in Red Russia*, *passim.* On Rose Cohen see Francis Beckett, *Stalin's British Victims* (London, 2004), *passim*. On Alida de Jager see: Fabio Zucca, *International Relations of Local authorities: From Institutional Twinning to the Committee of the Regions: Fifty Years of European Integration History* (Brussels, 2012), pp. 77-78.

[48] Hugo Rathbone to Rose Cohen, 25 August 1926, TNA, KV2/1395. Also evidenced by the stamps on her passport: Nellie Cohen Passport, 1920-29, RP.

[49] For O'Callaghan's friendship with Tret'iakov and Eisenstein see: MO'C to JF, 15 July 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9. For O'Callaghan's connection to Mayakovsky see: May O'Callaghan to Vladimir Mayakovsky, 18 August 1927, *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva* (Russian State Archive for Literature and Art, Hereafter RGALI), *Pisma V. V. Maiakovskomy,* 336/5/111/1. In this letter, O'Callaghan discusses the translation of Mayakovsky's poem 'Horosho' into English, which she was carrying out alongside Freeman.

[50] For O'Callaghan's friendship with Minskaia see Alida de Jager to Nellie Cohen, 21 May 1973, RP, and Freeman, *Testament,* p. 563. O'Callaghan's friendships with Dinamov and Beskin are noted in Freeman, *Testament,* p. 510.

> The parade of the Immigrant Club extended for about two blocks, each nationality forming a section with banners. Our Club had also a big cartoon which said "Forged Letters Won't Save Capitalism" and showed the capitalist escaping from a noose by swimming into the sea and trying to save himself from drowning by seizing a life belt labelled "Zinoviev Letter". We finally started and marching around by the boulevard joined the main parade at Tverskaya. On the way we passed the German Embassy in the windows of which stood some of the officials. The German section stopped and hissed and jeered - they were the largest foreign group in the parade. When we at last became a part of the main procession, we marched without interruption down Tverskaya to the Red Square. It is said that 500,000 people marched in the procession which from ten in the morning until four in the afternoon moved along the streets, and broke ranks after circling the Red Square… At the evening I went with Miss O'C[allaghan] to an entertainment in the Red Club, a new workers' club which has been opened in the "Gym" department store building, which you remember faces the Lenin Mausoleum and the Kremlin wall… At this particular performance a white curtain was let down at intervals which was painted in black letters to look like a newspaper, the heading being "Living Newspaper of the Red Club"… There were numerous slits in the curtain and through these the actors would thrust their heads and give the latest news of the world… As we came out of the building at 11 o'clock and stood on the balcony, we looked out through the stone archway as though a frame at an astonishingly lovely picture: while we were inside the snow had been falling and all the Square had turned white. The cobblestones were covered over with the new snow, it touched the mausoleum of Lenin where lights glowed softly, and the red banner fluttered like flames through the thick snowflakes.[51]

With vast state-organised street festivals where the issues of international socialism were placed on banners, democratised access to theatres, the Red Flag fluttering above the former centre of Tsarist power, it is not difficult to understand how the Soviet declaration that the workers had taken control was believed whole-heartedly by those émigré communists resident in the post-revolutionary capital.

Friendships allowed émigré communists in Moscow to escape the confines of the two streets they shuttled between each working day – even if only in their imaginations. Kennell, who spent months assisting in the construction of an industrial colony in the Soviet far-east, wrote an evocative 1924 letter to O'Callaghan describing the 'journey across the thousands of

[51] REK to Ella Epperson Tosh, 7 November 1924, UOSC, REKP, Box 9, Folder 8.

miles of snow' and the 'humble, primitive people in their dirty shubas.'[52] What makes O'Callaghan's 'family' unusual in the émigré world was its inclusion of Russian communists, which set it apart from the circles the ex-communist Freda Utley denounced for living 'within their own closed-off world' and knowing nothing of Russian life.[53] Soviet friends active during the turbulent era of the revolution provided vicarious entry into the debates of these times. O'Callaghan recounted to Freeman a discussion with her friend Osip Beskin, a literary critic and Russian Civil War veteran, who remembered the factor of sexual desire fading under the extreme conditions of war communism.[54] Freeman wrote in his memoir that it was through his friendship with O'Callaghan and others in Moscow that he came to realise an 'obvious fact' of the communist movement that attitudes 'are influenced not only by theses and slogans, policies and reports, but also by warm human relationships.'[55] For O'Callaghan, 'warm human relationships' with itinerant friends and Soviet agenda-setters connected her to otherwise inaccessible socio-cultural, political and temporal spaces.

In 1927, O'Callaghan began to discuss gender politics in detail amongst her friends. This year saw the 'family' gripped by the question of sexuality under socialism. Early Bolshevik ideology never provided specific delineations for sexual conduct. The question of whether a communist 'moral point of view' existed was itself up for debate, while the ambiguous view of the leading expert on Party ethics Aron Stol'ts was that the 'foundation of our ethics are the requirement of our goal.'[56] In other words, the goal of building communism structured all moral questions, whether these questions revolved around topics such as violence, family or sexuality. State actions provided few signs of a guiding line on sexual politics. Policy enactments such as the 1922 decriminalisation of homosexuality were

[52] REK to MO'C, 20 December 1924. UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 4
[53] Freda Utley, *Lost Illusion* (London, 1949), p. 48.
[54] MO'C to JF, 25 March 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9.
[55] Freeman, *Testament,* p. 510.
[56] Yuri Slezkine, *The House of Government: A Saga of the Russian Revolution* (Princeton, 2017), pp. 297-298.

predicated more on a Bolshevik desire to desacralize their Russian Orthodox opponents than a modern sensibility of sexual liberation.[57] Good communists were expected to abstain from sexual activity if these acts had the potential to get in the way of revolutionary work. As the 'family' member Dinamov wrote to Freeman 'The life of the communist is not only [a] private life but it is [a] social one.'[58] Good communists understood that their own private lives were also a matter of concern for the revolution.

A communist's sexual life was therefore open to scrutiny. Several members of O'Callaghan's 'family' viewed the USSR as a site of sexual liberation. Freeman's reputation as a womaniser was legendary within left-wing literary circles and he was, in O'Callaghan's words, one of several 'highly sexed men' in her life.[59] Kennell, meanwhile, saw life in Soviet Russia as a means of overcoming the boredom of her faltering marriage.[60] O'Callaghan, for her part, was labelled 'celibate' by Freeman in his memoir, and her references to her own sexuality seem to confirm her abstinence from sexual activity.[61] She dismissed American communist suitors by describing their amorous advances as products of 'the usual love the Americans have for antiques.'[62] Less flippantly, O'Callaghan hinted at lesbian desire in a stream of consciousness piece titled 'Thoughts_Mind Flashes (with apologies to J[ames] .J[oyce])', which she wrote after reading Joyce's *Ulysses.* She suggested successive failures to act upon her impulses and rooted her reluctance in a repressed Irish upbringing:

> The world is mad and people and feelings why can't I be natural, this absurd shyness where I love. Also an inheritance. My mother never showed her feelings to us kids. All these damned complexes are Irish of our type these Russian boys think being Irish so wonderful and the pain of longing and regret we all have – rot… That Sunday

[57] Dan Healey, *Homophobia in Russia: From Sochi to Stalin* (London, 2017), p. xiii.
[58] Joseph Freeman, 'Letters from Sergei Dinamov', *Survey: A Journal of Soviet and East European Studies,* No. 55 (April 1965), p. 97.
[59] MO'C to REK, 7 September 1928, UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 4; Alan Wald, *Exiles from a Future Time: The Forging of the Mid-Twentieth-Century Literary Left* (Chapel Hill, 2002), pp. 182-183.
[60] Mickenberg, *American Girls in Red Russia*, pp. 11-12.
[61] Freeman, *Testament*, p. 520.
[62] MO'C to REK, 7 August 1928, UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 4.

> business it was that Sen--- woman of course it might have been the French, but what matter – I wish I'd asked was she willing.[63]

In a lightly fictionalised portrait of Kennell published in 1930, Theodore Dreiser described O'Callaghan as having 'shared everything' with Kennell: 'room, bed, past, and present troubles'.[64] Decades later, Kennell slipped a handwritten note between pages of a typescript memoir she was compiling, in which she mused on the peculiar intensity of her friendship with O'Callaghan and the rumours that were spread about the two women being in a sexual relationship.[65] The most judicious statement we can make about O'Callaghan's relationship with her own sexuality was that it was complex.

This did not infer however, that O'Callaghan was uninterested in developing coherent ideas on the sexual side of the Bolshevik revolution. The immediate task of creating a communist society in a post-Civil War society, as Sheila Rowbotham notes, required effort and self-discipline.[66] But émigré communists who swapped their Greenwich village free-love circles for shared Hotel Lux apartments struggled to adjust to a world where three showers were shared between 315 Hotel Lux residents and food rationing was in place. In such an atmosphere, O'Callaghan could not avoid engaging with the question of how private conduct reflected public commitment to a revolutionary ethos.

The debate regarding sexuality was embedded in the private lives of O'Callaghan's friendship network, but it could also be explored through the literature which passed through her social circle. In 1926, a Soviet publishing sensation caused O'Callaghan to link her own concerns about her friends' sexual conduct with the future of sexual emancipation in Soviet

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[63] 'Thoughts – Mind Flashes (With Apologies to J.J.)', May O'Callaghan, 12 March 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9.
[64] Theodore Dreiser, *A Gallery of Women* (London, 1930), p. 237.
[65] 'Insert about friendship with Pat', undated, UOSC, REKP, Box 2, Folder 14. 'Patricia O'Neal' and 'Pat' were Kennell's pseudonyms for O'Callaghan in her unpublished memoir.
[66] Sheila Rowbotham, *Women, Resistance and Revolution: A History of Women and Revolution in the Modern World* (New York, 1972), p. 153.

society. For O'Callaghan, the most contentious of these works was Sergei Malashkin's *Moon with the Right Side* (*Luna s Pravoi Storonoi)*, which focuses on the life of Tanya, a student from the countryside and the daughter of a wealthy peasant, who moves to a city only to become involved in sensationally-described orgies of young communists. O'Callaghan dismissed the work as 'poor pornography & even poorer reality', but her recounting of the novel's description to Freeman evidenced her own interest in the contemporary literary discussions of sexual revolution.[67] Malashkin's novel was one of three books published between 1926 and 1927 that, according to Gregory Carleton, transformed the debate amongst Soviet citizens regarding sexuality in the new socialist society 'from a primarily theoretical ground to one closer to young people's own lives.'[68] Accordingly, O'Callaghan's letter containing her precis of Malashkin's work was followed by a letter to Freeman detailing her personal vision of sexuality under socialism.

O'Callaghan's contact with the literary embodiment of the Soviet sexual revolution influenced her own understandings of sexual subjectivities. This is revealed in a letter that tellingly opened with O'Callaghan reprimanding Freeman for sexual promiscuity and continued with a brief thesis outlining her vision of sexual desire and the family:

> The fundamental error is the *terminology* – [Bourgeois] & Proletarian - why not natural & unnatural - do we want to set up an interregnum in such matters or do we want to put the whole business on a sane permanent basis? We have convinced ourselves that Revolutions are made in order through the Dictatorship of the Proletariat to attain a *classless society* - in industry we actually know the methods that are likely to be permanent: machines, electricity - everything that will make for the lightening of toil and the ennobling of man - in art and literature s*ome* of us know that the term 'proletarian' is illogical (I will spare you infantile details)! But in sex and the family, we are forced to be shackled with a 'proletarian' brand! They don't even talk of sex under socialism!... what we are seeking is a restoration of a healthy relationship where there will be no question of gain, where we stand to live or die sexually on our natural qualities, where the present-day-much-denounced idea of affection will dominate - where it will be decisive factors & no tinkering as to whether this is

[67] MO'C to JF, 20 March 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9.
[68] Carleton, *Sexual Revolution,* pp. 113-138, quote on p. 118.

> bourgeois or proletariat. Birds in their natural state may contribute something: they mate and are faithful till the family is *feathered* and ready to fly - such constance [sic] may not be necessary for mere humans *when* there is a state to act as nest and nursery… now a family is unavoidable in this stage of transition.[69]

O'Callaghan's description makes clear that her interpretation of sexuality under socialism was aligned with the more prudent of Marxist analysts. The period of transition from socialism to communism had not yet eradicated the need for biological parents to raise their children and therefore, in O'Callaghan's estimation, some degree of fidelity in relationships was desirable. Rejecting the polarities of 'bourgeois' and 'proletarian', O'Callaghan was seeking a politics that included the personal. With her references to a transitional period and the eventuality of a parental state, O'Callaghan's position also echoed the writings of Kollontai, who had herself drawn on Marx and Engels writings in *The Origin of the Family* to suggest that affection would develop rather than disappear under communism.[70] Literary depiction, indiscrete friends and private dilemmas, all against the backdrop of a revolutionary society moving toward a harmonious future, compelled O'Callaghan to articulate a personal vision of sexuality which was, at the same time, deeply political.

In Freeman's memoir – itself a kind of communist *bildungsroman* depicting a path towards Communist conversion – O'Callaghan acts as the catalyst for his epiphany regarding Soviet women's emancipation. She achieves this by introducing Freeman to her friend Olga Minskaia, a veteran of the Civil War and one of few female generals in the Red Army.[71] Writing after O'Callaghan's death in 1973, a German comrade recalled how soldiers would bring O'Callaghan and other Lux women to a barracks outside Moscow.[72] It was here that O'Callaghan likely started her friendship with Minskaia.[73] In presenting Minskaia before

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[69] MO'C to JF, 25 March 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9.
[70] Rowbotham, *Women*, pp. 153-154.
[71] Freeman, *Testament*, pp. 563-568.
[72] Alida de Jager to Nellie Rathbone, 21 May 1973, RP.
[73] Ibid.

Freeman to help him overcome his infatuation with a German communist, O'Callaghan described her as a prototype of the New Soviet Woman. Both Freeman and Kennell, introduced to Minskaia through O'Callaghan, would publish profiles of this woman general.[74] In Freeman's account, he notes that Minskaia's first child was born to a man with whom she had no romantic attachment, but she decided that, given the conditions then prevailing in the Soviet Union, her second child would require a loving father. Minskaia's argument for the necessity of parents rather than communal child-rearing was summed up in the phrase 'We are building the future, but we cannot live in it'.[75] The aspects of Minskaia's biography which Freeman highlighted in his memoir echoed O'Callaghan's thesis on sexuality and the family described above.[76] Soviet communism provided a schematic for a world in which the duties of motherhood were enacted through the state, but the development of Soviet society had not yet reached the point where such communal child-raising was possible.

Minskaia signified the fact that, for certain émigré communist women, Soviet women's emancipation was not simply a theoretical pronouncement but also embodied by figures within their friendship circle. Minskaia's declaration that Soviet life was a life lived in anticipation also speaks to the curious emotional community in which O'Callaghan embedded herself. In her Comintern workplace, revolutionaries worked towards an anticipated future. Hope was not merely a side-effect of the ideology but a presumed part of the practice. 'A Communist who cannot dream' wrote Anatoli Lunacharskii 'is a bad Communist.'[77] In private discussions on the New Woman and the New Man, O'Callaghan's 'family' spoke in the subjunctive mood, debating the correct time when one could begin to live in the future, rather than just assist in its construction.

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[74] Freeman, *Testament,* p. 567; 'The Woman General in Russia's Red Army', Ruth Kennell, 1 December 1927, UOSC, REKP, Box 6, Folder 23.
[75] Freeman, *Testament*, p. 567.
[76] See pp. 161-162 of this thesis.
[77] Quoted in Nick Baron, 'New Spatial Histories of 20th Century Russia and the Soviet Union: Exploring the Terrain', *Kritika* (Spring, 2008), p. 441.

The lived experience of revolution, from commute to communal living and everything in between, coloured O'Callaghan's everyday existence. It shaped her friendship network, influenced how she maintained these intimate bonds and transformed the very manner in which she perceived the world. In March 1927, almost three years after O'Callaghan arrived in Moscow, she stated 'I cannot see myself as a western anymore.'[78] For adventurous and politically committed women on the international left, life in Moscow promised not only employment opportunities but a chance to refashion the very basis of one's identity. Life in Moscow connected the humdrum realities of secretarial employment to a revolutionary temporality. But how could O'Callaghan and her comrades translate this experience of their world for a newly interested western audience with devotees emerging across Europe and America? This question was to be answered by the work of Soviet and émigré communists employed in the organs of Soviet cultural diplomacy. The following section traces O'Callaghan's movement through the Soviet cultural world and her own contribution to propagating an idealised vision of Soviet society.

[78] MO'C to JF, 25 March 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9.

May O'Callaghan and Soviet Cultural Diplomacy, 1927-1928.

During her final months in Moscow, O'Callaghan became acquainted with artists involved in the avant-garde cultural set of Moscow. Her work for the organs of Soviet cultural diplomacy and state publishing houses adds an interesting addendum to the everyday politics of her life in the USSR and her work for the Comintern. Writing on Russian history, Karl Schlögel notes that one future direction for the historiography might be to trace how 'close personal relationships, intimate networks, friendships, love, and the private circulation of ideas sometimes have much greater impact on cultural developments than institutions and formally organised contact do.'[79] Viewing O'Callaghan's engagement with cultural diplomacy, one that was both formal and informal, we can once more perceive the complex movement of interpersonal cogs in shaping political mobilisation and cultural developments.

The years 1927-28 in the USSR witnessed an explosion of artistic debate. A new generation of artists challenged their predecessors as the cultural world stood on the threshold between artistic freedom and state control. On the one hand, the supporters of 'proletarian literature' argued for an explicitly socialist stance in all artwork, while others argued literary forms could be distinct from class conflict. In letters to Freeman, O'Callaghan wrote of the intense atmosphere as her literary contacts facilitated encounters with the most celebrated figures of Soviet culture. In June 1927, the eminent Soviet poet Vladimir Mayakovsky unveiled his work celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution to a select group of the Moscow cultural elite. O'Callaghan, the only foreign attendee, described to Freeman how all those assembled experienced the 'greatest orators' imaginable, as Mayakovsky and his collaborators moved deftly from prose and poetry to arias and song.[80] The visit to Mayakovsky's dacha was facilitated by her friendship with Olga Tret'iakova, the

[79] Karl Schlögel, 'Crossing Intellectual Borders', *Kritika,* 17: 4 (Fall 2016), p. 928.
[80] MO'C to JF, 26 June 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9.

wife of the constructivist poet and Mayakovsky disciple Sergei Tret'iakov.[81] This friendship also brought her into contact with photographer duo Alexander Rodchenko and Vera Stepanova and the avant-garde film-maker Sergei Eisenstein, in whose flat the Tret'iakovs lived temporarily.[82] O'Callaghan boasted of such contacts, describing Tret'iakov, for example, as a 'brilliant man of my acquaintance'.[83] These connections also provided her with commissions, and she was asked to collaborate with Freeman on translations of Tret'iakov's play *Roar China!* and Mayakovsky's anniversary poem.[84] But even more important than employment or her own credibility as an expert in all things Soviet, these contacts provided her with an entry into a vibrant cultural world that was inaccessible to most émigrés, and certainly most Russians.

The revolutionary art produced by the Soviet intelligentsia was recognised by the new regime as a selling point for communist ideology. Organs of cultural diplomacy headquartered in Moscow actively cultivated Western artistic and progressive interest in the Soviet experiment – for example, liaising with the Dublin Radical Club. The historical vision of naïve fellow travellers whose disaffection with their own societies was manipulated by cynical Soviets eager to serve their own propaganda objectives was initially advanced by scholars such as Sylvia Margulies, David Caute and Paul Hollander.[85] In the decades since these early interventions, a more nuanced understanding of the reasons that disaffected

[81] Ibid.
[82] MO'C to JF, 26 June 1927, 15 July, 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9.
[83] MO'C to Liam O'Flaherty, 2 April 1928, RP.
[84] MO'C to JF, 15 July, 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9. O'Callaghan's translation of the poem and the original can be found in HILA JFP Box 57 Folder 11.
[85] See for example: Sylvia Margulies, *The Pilgrimage to Russia: The Soviet Union and the Treatment of Foreigners, 1924-1937* (Madison, 1968); David Caute, *The Fellow-Travellers: A Postscript to the Enlightenment* (London, 1973); Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba, 1928-1978* (Oxford, 1981).

progressives found meaning in the Soviet project and a related analysis of the domestic impact of these foreign visitors for the Soviet citizens themselves has emerged.[86]

Techniques of garnering support amongst the western intelligentsia were first formulated by Soviet officials during 1923-26, years which saw the establishment and expansion of cultural relations with foreign countries under the guidance of VOKS.[87] This department relied on collaboration with other institutions of international communism based in Moscow. For example, the Comintern processed international visiting delegations of Soviet 'Friendship Societies' alongside VOKS while the State Publishing House (*Gosizdat*) established literary magazines aimed at both domestic and international audiences that published the writing of contemporary Western authors alongside their Soviet counterparts. These publications were then distributed through the Friendship Societies and the bookstores of Comintern-member Parties. Journals such as *Vestnik Inostrannoi Literatury* (Bulletin of Foreign Literature) and *Internatsional'naia Literatura* (International Literature), which included translations of authors such as Joseph Freeman, Theodore Dreiser and Seán O'Casey, were printed simultaneously in several languages.[88] O'Callaghan was involved in this world through her personal contacts and in a variety of roles: contributing to literary magazines, acting as a guide for visiting luminaries and arranging for the Soviet-language publications of one writer who would have a particularly significant influence on her career.

The late-1920s saw the Irish writer Liam O'Flaherty at the peak of his fame. His 1924 work *The Informer*, the first fictionalised account of underground life in the Irish Communist Party was a best-seller, while his 1926 *Mr. Gilhooley*, a psychological thriller in which the title-character murders his lover Nelly, received the opprobrium of conservative opinion in

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[86] See for example: David-Fox, *Showcasing*; David C. Engerman, *Modernisation From the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development* (Cambridge, Mass., 2003); Ludmilla Stern, *Western Intellectuals and the Soviet Union*, *1920-1940* (Oxford, 2007).
[87] Stern, *Western Intellectuals,* pp. 4-5.
[88] Samantha Sherry, *Censorship in Translation in the Soviet Union in the Stalin and Khruschev Eras* (PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2012), p. 289.

the Irish Free State for its frank depictions of sex and violence. Although a founding member of the first CPI, O'Flaherty's radicalism was always much more the exception than the rule. His literary career, which began in 1923 with the publication of his first book, eclipsed and substituted his engagement with revolutionary politics. His work is defined by a focus on the natural world and individualism, while his memoirs characterise human nature in sardonic terms. He was therefore not a likely fit for a Soviet audience. Yet the author's connection to the Soviet publishing world ran deeper than previous scholars have revealed. O'Callaghan lies at the heart of this.

Soviet interest in O'Flaherty was disproportionate compared to his more ideologically amenable counterparts. The Irish socialist republican novelist Peadar O'Donnell was never published in Russian. Meanwhile, Seán O'Casey, a card-carrying member of the CPGB who wrote enthusiastic letters to Soviet cultural officials and publicly defended the Moscow Trials in 1938, was not repaid for his efforts with a dedicated Russian language book until after the Second World War.[89] James Joyce, unrivalled in terms of fame amongst Irish novelists of the interwar period, was published only in a serialised format in Russian during the early 1930s and was soon removed from consideration due to the ideological incompatibility of the author's 'formalist' tendencies.[90] It is worth noting that the Joycean scholar Neil Cornwell identified 'Eugene Fogarty', an obscure figure resident in Moscow who corresponded with Joyce, as the first individual to write a serious article on the Irish novelist for a Russian

[89] Episodes from his memoirs were published in 1946: Sean O'Casey, *Imyshemy Dastia* (Moscow, 1946). His work was also published in the journal *Internatsional'naia Literatura,* see: Sherry, *Censorship in Translation,* p. 289; For O'Casey's 1938 defence of the Moscow trials, see: *Daily Worker,* 25 March 1938. RGALI contains several letters from O'Casey to Soviet literary apparatchiks, see for example: Seán O'Casey to Mikhail Apeltin, 10 February 1950, RGALI 330/14/41/1-4 and Sean O'Casey to T. Rokotov and Boris Suchkov, 30 September 1942, RGALI 641/14/206/1-2.

[90] Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1921-1942* (Cambridge, Mass., 2011), p. 161.

audience.[91] In fact, Eugene Fogarty was O'Callaghan's pseudonym.[92] Foster notes how several disenchanted members of the Irish revolutionary generation were passionate admires of Joyce's masterpiece *Ulysses*.[93] The text had a similar cachet among O'Callaghan's cosmopolitan world of 'lost generation' communist émigrés. Freeman's archive contains a moving account of a night in Moscow in 1927 when he bonded over a copy of *Ulysses* with Ivy Litvinov, the English wife of the Soviet foreign minister, and Elise Ewert, a German-Polish revolutionary.[94] Nevertheless, O'Callaghan's personal connection to O'Flaherty had more lasting influence than her limited engagement with James Joyce.

Indeed, removing O'Callaghan from the equation significantly undermines the possibility that Soviet audiences would have discovered O'Flaherty's writing independent of her involvement. Dinamov and Beskin, two attendees at literary gatherings arranged in O'Callaghan's spacious Lux balcony flat, were prominent in the foreign language department of the Moscow State Publishing House (*Gosizdat*), and proved important in translating O'Callaghan's enthusiasm for O'Flaherty into thousands of Russian-language editions of his work. Her connection to these Soviet publishers was both personal and professional. In 1927, O'Callaghan, Kennell, Anisimov and Dinamov were appointed to the Commission for the Study of Proletarian and Revolutionary Literature of the West based at the Communist

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[91] Neil Cornwell, *Joyce and the Russians* (Basingstoke, 1992), p. 89. For the Russian-language essay, see: Eugene Fogarty, 'James Joyce', *Vestnik Inostrannoi Literatury*, 10 (October 1928), pp. 119-128.
[92] The evidence for this is as follows: In August 1928, O'Callaghan noted to Kennell that she had interviewed Seán O'Casey in London, see: MO'C to REK, 7 August 1928, UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 4. A profile of O'Casey appeared shortly thereafter in a Soviet journal, sent from London, under the name Eugene Fogarty, see '*"Serebrianaia Kubok" Shona O'Casey'*, *Vestnik Inostrannoi Literatury,* 12 (December 1928), pp. 122-124. During O'Callaghan's stay in London, other articles under the name 'Eugene Fogarty' and described as letters from London appeared in the same journal, see for example: 'Zametki ob Angliiskom Teatre', *Vestnik Inostrannoi Literatury*, 5 (May 1928), pp. 157-160 and ''Bernard Shaw o Sotsializm', *Vestnik Inostrannoi Literatury,* 8 (September 1928), pp. 125-129. O'Callaghan's friends Sergei Dinamov, Ivan Anisimov and Joseph Freeman were on the editorial board of this journal. The preface to the 1929 translation of O'Flaherty's, *Thy Neighbour's Wife* was also provided by 'Eugene Fogarty', see O'Flaherty, *Zhena Soseda*, pp. 1-11.
[93] Foster, *Vivid Faces,* p. 301.
[94] 'Ivy', Autobiographical Writing, c. 1934, HILA, JFP, Box 78, Folder 3.

Academy and assigned a role in selecting suitable works for publication in the USSR.[95] O'Flaherty was well served by having O'Callaghan on this panel.

O'Callaghan and O'Flaherty possibly had their first encounter in the early 1920s when both belonged to the same London radical circle centred around Sylvia Pankhurst.[96] Freeman recalled that by the time he met O'Callaghan in Moscow, she was describing O'Flaherty as a close friend and her 'favourite genius'.[97] Over a short period from 1927 to 1931, O'Flaherty received a number of Russian publications that would never be surpassed by another Irish novelist until after the Soviet collapse, including editions of his books *The Informer, Spring Sowing, Mr. Gilhooley, The Neighbour's Wife* and *Tales of Inverara*.[98] O'Flaherty registered his complaints with the tardiness of royalty payments in letters to O'Callaghan, while O'Callaghan wrote to Dinamov, requesting that the money be sent via her old comrade from the East London suffrage days Nellie Cohen.[99] The case of O'Callaghan and O'Flaherty demonstrates the personal plane on which transnational publishing could operate beyond institutional relationships.

Reading O'Flaherty was a means of vicariously connecting with Irish roots, while meeting O'Flaherty was an occasion for O'Callaghan to revisit the country itself and analyse the political course it had undertaken in her absence. In August 1927, O'Callaghan departed from Moscow and travelled to Dublin where she visited O'Flaherty. Her visit coincided with the 1927 general election and the fallout from the assassination of Minister for Justice Kevin

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[95] Olga Yurievna Panova and Sergei Igorivich Panov, 'Posleslovie k Predisloviy: Materiali k Istorii (Ne)Isdania T. Dreisera v SSSR'*, Novie Rossiiskie Gymanitarniye Issledovania*: http://www.nrgumis.ru/articles/1957/?print=Y. (Accessed 20 February 2018).
[96] For O'Flaherty's peripatetic commitment to communism, see: Liam O'Flaherty, *Two Years* (London, 1930), pp. 31, 71-72, and Idem, *Shame the Devil* (London, 1934), pp. 28, 174-175.
[97] Freeman, *Testament*, p. 508.
[98] See for example: Liam O'Flaherty, *Osvedomitel'* (Moscow, 1927), *Brodiaga* (Moscow, 1927), *Mister Gilhyli* (Moscow, 1927), *Palatka* (Moscow, 1928), *Assasin* (1928), *Zhena Soseda* (Moscow, 1929), *Iverarskii Rasskazi* (Moscow, 1931)
[99] Liam O'Flaherty to MO'C, 8 November 1927, 11 November 1927, in A. A. Kelly (ed.), *The Letters of Liam O'Flaherty* (Dublin, 1996), pp. 200-201; MO'C to Sergei Dinamov, 24 October 1927, UOSC, REKP, Box 7 Folder 4.

O'Higgins. The election also saw the first and only occurrence in Irish history of a politician, Jim Larkin, being elected to the Dáil as a self-described communist – although he was unable to take up his seat.[100] O'Callaghan was aware of the fortuitous timing, and told Freeman that Konstantin Umanskii, a Russian journalist and later a leading diplomat, had informed her that Ireland was 'politically the most interesting spot at the moment.'[101] O'Callaghan reflected on post-independent Irish society through the lens of post-revolutionary Russia, stating that there was 'much more freedom' in modern Ireland than she remembered and declaring that she had even been able to smoke openly and attended an election meeting addressed by Larkin.[102]

But the Dublin political scene was not defined by the emancipatory vision she found in Moscow. She observed a 'terrible amount of religion', commenting that local radicals 'get it all mixed up and never seem to see the great incongruity of it all.'[103] In a period where Irish socialist republicans attempted syntheses of Christianity and radical politics with varying degrees of failure, O'Callaghan's observation was accurate.[104] O'Callaghan wrote to Freeman on the day of the election, noting that Irish politics was entirely corrupt, 'anti-English sentiment' was the only unifying point and that 'the materialist conception of history is as much in place as to tell the Laplanders how invigorating back salts are.'[105] She also declared her dissatisfaction with the Comintern's handling of Larkin, in particular the sending over of British communists to speak for him at election meetings.[106] This was indeed a tactical misstep in the Anglophobic atmosphere of Irish radicalism and republicanism. O'Callaghan's political diagnoses of Irish revolutionary missteps were unusually perceptive for someone disconnected from the Irish political scene since independence.

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[100] William O'Brien won a libel case against Larkin, leading to Larkin being declared an undischarged bankrupt and preventing him from taking up his seat, see: Donal Nevin, *James Larkin: Lion of the Fold* (Dublin, 1998), p. 81.
[101] MO'C to JF, 18 August 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9.
[102] MO'C, to JF, 5 September 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9.
[103] Ibid.
[104] English, *Radicals and the Republic,* esp. pp. 210-215.
[105] MO'C, to JF, 5 September 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9
[106] Ibid.

Reconnections with past acquaintances and feelings of commonality between post-revolutionary Ireland and Russia caused her to reflect on certain parallels between the two seemingly divergent nations. O'Flaherty acted as her guide through Dublin, introducing her to local and visiting literati and radicals. Ireland, in her estimation, had the same 'largeness of soul' and 'wonderful fellowship amongst the artist crowd and the national revolutionaries.'[107] She visited George Russell, a past acquaintance, and they joked about the impossibility of ever developing a clear understanding of the Russian and Irish psyches.[108] 'I find here more similarity with R[ussia]', she informed Freeman, 'incongruous as that may sound.'[109] The vertiginous effect of finding so much commonality sent her into 'a muddle' about her future direction as she considered remaining in Ireland.[110] Ultimately, however, she affirmed her decision to return to Moscow to find her place 'in the scheme of things in the world.'[111]

In fact, O'Callaghan was already indirectly 'in the scheme of things' as regards the world of Irish radicals to which she was a temporary visitor. If she had engaged with the radical press while in Ireland, she would have found translated documents that had originated in the Comintern Press Department. For example, a speech by Zinoviev and a statement from the Comintern calling for support for the Chinese revolution could be found in Irish radical journals, such as the WPI's *Hammer & Plough*.[112] This reminds us that engagement with radical internationalism was not only about the romantic role of the revolutionary, but also the mundane tasks of translating, typesetting and printing the texts that underpinned radical ideas.

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[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid.
[110] MO'C to JF, 15 September 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9.
[111] Ibid.
[112] *Hammer & Plough,* 26 June 1926, 9 October 1926.

Upon returning to Moscow after this visit, O'Callaghan would become further enmeshed in the Soviet cultural world. As the tactics of Soviet cultural diplomacy were refined in the late 1920s, O'Callaghan, an educated émigré with a proficiency in Russian and a plethora of cultured friends, was an obvious choice to become a guide and translator for visiting Westerners. Notably, when Theodore Dreiser visited the Soviet Union to conduct research for the book which became the bestselling *Dreiser Looks at Russia,* the author needed no introduction to O'Callaghan, who had already written to him in a personal capacity. Noting that Freeman had informed her of Dreiser's impending arrival, she forwarded the address of the playwright Sergei Tret'iakov who would introduce Dreiser to 'all the most interesting people.'[113] 'Your introduction to me will be an introduction to them', she noted.[114] Dreiser was intimately involved with a member of O'Callaghan's 'family'. In Russia, Kennell was both his guide and lover.[115] O'Callaghan herself, whose 'highly intellectualized' personality Dreiser found abrasive, proved less a staple of his tour than her friend did.[116] Freeman also ensured that O'Callaghan assisted the educationalist John Dewey and the American Civil Liberties Union founder Roger N. Baldwin when they arrived in Moscow.[117] O'Callaghan had evidently attained some stature as an intermediary acting on behalf of Soviet interests. Nevertheless, given the informal nature of O'Callaghan's introductions to Dreiser, Dewey and Baldwin, her guiding facilities were seemingly offered more as personal favours and a desire to support the Soviet political project than on the orders of an institution like VOKS.

While O'Callaghan's impression on Dreiser was fleeting and few documents chart her influence on figures such as Dewey or Baldwin, she had a profound effect on the Soviet

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[113] MO'C to Theodore Dreiser, 7 November 1927, University of Pennsylvania Special Collections (Hereafter UPSC), Theodore Dreiser Papers (Hereafter TDP), Box 85, Folder 4612.
[114] Ibid.
[115] David-Fox, *Showcasing*, p. 131.
[116] Dreiser, *Diary*, p. 183.
[117] MO'C to JF, 16 July 1927, 24 December 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9.

itineraries of two young art historians, Jere Abbott and Alfred H. Barr, later the founders of the New York Museum of Modern Art. Both kept detailed diaries of their Moscow experiences. Passing through London, they met the Welsh artist Nina Hamnett who recommended they contact her friend O'Callaghan upon arrival in the USSR.[118] The introduction proved pivotal to their Soviet experience. In their diaries, Barr and Abbott wrote of O'Callaghan effusively. Barr noted her ostentatious frankness and Abbott described her as 'one of the most competent and entertaining people I have ever met.'[119] She played the role of interpreter and host while introducing the artists to her array of contacts. She provided them with backstage access to Vsevolod Meyerhold's theatre through her personal acquaintance with the famed director, allowing them to see the mechanical staging devices.[120] Additionally, the trio visited the gallery of the celebrated Soviet designer couple Alexander Rodchenko and Vera Stepanova.[121] Later, she brought Abbott to Eisenstein's private residence, where they watched his film *October*.[122] O'Callaghan acted as translator in most of these meetings, evidencing her utility as a skilled linguist. Barr confided in his diary the impossibility of describing 'the feeling of exhilaration' during his Russian experience, a sentiment O'Callaghan's ability to connect him to Soviet cultural elites doubtlessly encouraged.[123] The whistle-stop tour recounted in Abbott and Barr's diaries was unlikely to represent O'Callaghan's regular routine of cultural consumption, but it is interesting in what it shows of O'Callaghan knowledge of the cultural world and her contacts within it.

The diaries of Abbott and Barr also provide an insight into the exalted position O'Callaghan had now achieved amongst émigré communists, having moved on from the

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[118] Margaret Scolari Barr and Jere Abbott, 'Foreword', *October*, 7 (Winter 1978), p. 8.
[119] Alfred H. Barr, 'Russian Diary, 1927-28', *October,* 7 (Winter 1978), p. 12**;** Jere Abbott 'Russian Diary, 1927-1928', *October*, 145 (Summer, 2013), p. 176.
[120] Barr, 'Diary', p. 18.
[121] Ibid, p. 21.
[122] Abbott, 'Diary', p. 128.
[123] Barr, 'Diary, p. 12.

austere surroundings of the Hotel Lux. The final months of her time in the capital were spent in the Hotel Bristol, normally reserved for visiting dignitaries. Abbott described a meal in O'Callaghan's residence, prepared by her private Russian cook and served with three kinds of wine and coffee to finish.[124] At an earlier point, O'Callaghan had even flirted with the idea of residing in Eisenstein's flat.[125] Though this living arrangement never materialised, the prospect itself is revealing. O'Callaghan evidently benefitted from Moscow's status within the socialist distribution system. The city, as the designated centre of culture, provided privileged conditions for resident intellectuals.[126] These factors place O'Callaghan within the patronage system identified by David-Fox between the Party and the intelligentsia – who received privileges for assistance in evangelising Soviet socialism.[127] O'Callaghan did not get to enjoy these perks for long, however. She was once more on the move in March 1928 and would never return to Moscow due to a desire to help her friend Nellie Cohen manage a personal crisis and allegations of Trotskyist sympathy directed against her, factors which will be detailed in the final section of this chapter.

Through her experiences of the Soviet cultural scene, O'Callaghan became, in short, a propagandist. Yet this term's charged connotations obscure a more nuanced reality. Discussing how propaganda convinced people is valuable, but discussing why people desired convincing in the first place is crucial. The importance of propaganda on a personal level, Julia Mickenberg reminds us, is that it 'sets up expectations and norms of belief and behaviour to which individuals can conform, not just because they are supposed to but because they *want* to, because it makes them feel part of a larger whole.'[128] Similarly,

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[124] Abbott, 'Diary', p. 176.
[125] MO'C to JF, 15 July, 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9.
[126] Clark, *Fourth Rome,* p. 15.
[127] Michael David-Fox, 'From Illusory "Society" to Intellectual "Public": VOKS, International Travel and Party-Intelligentsia Relations in the Interwar Period', *Contemporary European History*, 11:1 (February 2002), pp. 7-31.
[128] Mickenberg, *American Girls in Red Russia*, p. 164.

Katerina Clark defines Eisenstein, Tret'iakov and other figures connected to O'Callaghan's Moscow cultural set as 'cultural patriots' – individuals who sought to convert their Western counterparts to a vision of Moscow as a cultural crucible of world salvation. [129] Clark's work explores the extent to which their enthusiasm for evangelising the Soviet cultural project was genuinely felt rather than proposing a simple argument of manipulation. Likewise, we can understand O'Callaghan's desire to introduce foreigners to the revolutionary character of Soviet culture as a project borne out of sincere belief in the righteousness of the cause, a sentiment doubtlessly influenced by her intimate acquaintance with Moscow's intelligentsia and the exciting world of the Soviet avant-garde.

Like the stage contraptions she viewed with Abbott and Barr at the Meyerhold Theatre, O'Callaghan was a minor player working behind the scenes of a grander performance. This dramatic event, the interwar cultural pilgrimage to the Soviet Union was, in David-Fox's words, 'one of the most consequential encounters of the twentieth century.'[130] For bit-players in this encounter, such as O'Callaghan, pronouncements of support for Soviet socialism and a desire to spread this impression to visiting interlocutors were genuinely felt, grounded in the excitement of avant-garde Soviet politics and culture. The Soviet social experimentation presented to foreign visitors by organisations like VOKS soon became a fixation of western admirers of the Soviet system, including, as we will see in the next chapter, Dublin-based radicals. For all the excitement wrought by her engagement in the Soviet cultural sphere, as her fourth year in the Soviet Union began, O'Callaghan desired new horizons. In March 1927, she was contemplating spending time in the United States, describing to Freeman how she may 'want a family over there on the lines of here.'[131] Her desire for a family in America would be fulfilled in a more immediate and literal manner than

[129] Clark, *Fourth Rome,* p. 32.
[130] Michael David-Fox, 'The Fellow Travellers Revisited: the "Cultured West" through Soviet Eyes', *Journal of Modern History,* 75:2 (June 2003), p. 300.
[131] MO'C to JF, 31 March 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9.

she could have possibly foreseen. O'Callaghan never returned to Moscow after her departure in March 1928, travelling instead to New York in August of that year. The following section will explore the reason for her inability to return – a reason in part predicated on something her 'charming' but 'hopelessly irresponsible' friend Liam O'Flaherty produced.[132]

[132] MO'C to JF, 5 September 1927, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9.

Motherhood, Morale and the End of May O'Callaghan's Comintern Career, 1928-1929.

In September 1928, O'Callaghan and Nellie Cohen arrived in New York city on board the SS Berengaria. As they stepped into the customs hall, O'Callaghan was allegedly smuggling Trotskyist funds and Cohen, in the fourth month of an unplanned pregnancy, was carrying the child of Liam O'Flaherty. Cohen had met the Irish novelist through O'Callaghan, eventually joining him for a night in a London hotel room in 1928 – the result of which was her only daughter.[133] Cohen's situation, and O'Callaghan's resolve to see her through it, were both products of O'Callaghan's experiences in Soviet Moscow. This section examines the plight of O'Callaghan and Cohen as they attempted to raise this daughter within New York's communist circles. This period in O'Callaghan's life can be retold largely through correspondence with Kennell. As Liam O'Flaherty remains a figure of major significance in twentieth century Irish literary history, it is worth recounting this aspect of his life absented from the memoir of his activities during this period and missing from surveys of the author's life and work. More importantly for our purposes, the birth of Joyce Isabelle O'Flaherty-Cohen in a New York hospital in February 1929 is a moment which crystallises one insight provided by the framework of this thesis: that many women activists transitioned into the radical political worlds of the interwar years alongside their counterparts from the suffrage struggle. A darker context explains O'Callaghan's decision to bring her friend to New York rather than Moscow – a context linked as much to O'Callaghan's quotidian problems as to the titanic debate taking place within the Soviet Union. O'Callaghan's interpretation of this

[133] Nellie Cohen's Russian family, the Petrovskys, prepared a hand-written Russian-language document compiling their reminiscences of Joyce which was sent to me via email on 9 June 2017: 'Istoriia Nashi Otnoshenii s Joyce Rathbone', c. June 2017, Petrovsky Papers.

backdrop can be explored to understand how individual communists sifted the changing political sands as avant-garde Moscow gave way to the Stalinist 'revolution from above'.

In August 1928, O'Callaghan wrote to Kennell with the revelation that her negotiation of O'Flaherty's Russian translations had resulted in Cohen's pregnancy. The letter is revealing twice-over. First, it reveals the circumstance surrounding the birth of the forgotten second child of a celebrated Irish novelist. Second, O'Callaghan encoded her gossip with support for communist gender politics. Cohen, she wrote 'has slipped' and the result is that she wants 'to go to Russia where children are not considered illegitimate… She had already talked of getting away from this country for a year or so, but *now she must*'.[134] O'Callaghan hinted that the initial plan was to bring Cohen to Russia to access abortion facilities in the only state where the clinical practice was legal, further noting 'this is not [Moscow] and everything in the medical line costs a lot.'[135] In the same letter, O'Callaghan described a visit to the British seaside: 'the stuffiness of these seaside places… you cannot sun yourself and be a human being… Oh, for [Russia] and human liberty!'[136] In a following letter, O'Callaghan once more raised the spectre of retrograde Western social mores when discussing the medical examination they would be subjected to when travelling by sea and the anxiety that a doctor would uncover Cohen's status as an '"immoral woman"'.[137] Cohen's pregnancy was an ideal situation through which the relative degrees of Western and Soviet maternal care and women's bodily autonomy could be compared. Meanwhile, O'Callaghan's nostalgia for the 'human liberty' of Russian nude sunbathing habits underlines that the attractions of Soviet society for independent-minded women on the radical left could be found in unusual places.

O'Callaghan's inability to return to Moscow with Cohen in August 1928 as a result of visa troubles came as a surprise. It forced both women to rely on the wider communist

[134] MO'C to REK, 7 August 1928, UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 4
[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid.
[137] MO'C to REK, 30 August 1928, UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 4

network and caused O'Callaghan a great deal of confusion regarding the reasons for her exclusion from Russia. Logistically and emotionally both Cohen and O'Callaghan relied on family networks to ameliorate their difficulties. Before embarking on the SS Berengaria, O'Callaghan and Cohen stayed with O'Callaghan's sister Brigid O'Callaghan.[138] Nellie Cohen's politically sympathetic employer provided both her and O'Callaghan references stating (untruthfully) that they had both worked under him for several years, thereby providing an alibi for O'Callaghan's revolutionary curriculum vitae.[139] Upon arrival in New York, O'Callaghan and Cohen were first hosted by Kennell's mother before moving into an apartment adjacent to O'Callaghan's friend Jessica Smith, a communist veteran of the American suffrage movement and the author of *Woman in Soviet Russia*.[140] In Moscow, the 'family' had existed for O'Callaghan as a term describing a motley-crew combining Soviet intellectuals with Western bohemians. In New York, family took on more literal overtones. O'Callaghan's role in introducing Cohen to the father of her child and her subsequent choice to raise this child made her, in her own words, 'an expectant mother by proxy'.[141] After the birth of Cohen's daughter Joyce on 19 February 1929, an opportunity arose to enact the socialist concepts of parenting discussed at literary gatherings in the Hotel Lux.

Illegitimacy ensured certain difficulties, but an illegitimate child of an author famous in the Anglophone sphere being raised by two unrelated women could have posed difficulties of a different order. However, Cohen and O'Callaghan had numerous precedents to draw

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[138] O'Callaghan listed her sister Brigid O'Callaghan as her nearest relative in 'country whence alien came' in her October 1928 Ellis Island immigration record, see: O'Callaghan, May, Frame 208, Line Number 13, SS Berengaria Ship Manifest, 5 October 1928, Liberty Ellis Foundation, https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org/passenger-details/czoxMjoiOTAxNzU5MzI5NDYzIjs=/czo4OiJtYW5pZmVzdCI7 (Accessed 21 August 2019); O'Callaghan wrote to Kennell from this address, see: MO'C to REK, 30 August 1928, UOSC, REKP, Box 7 Folder 4.

[139] Malcolm Sparks to Nellie Cohen, 21 September 1928; Malcolm Sparks to May O'Callaghan, 5 August 1928, RP.

[140] MO'C to REK, 18 August 1929, 29 October 1928, UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 4; Jessica Smith, *Woman in Soviet Russia* (New York, 1928).

[141] MO'C to REK, 7 August 1928, UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 4

upon for examples of socialist women raising children outside of marriage or in a two-woman pairing based on comradeship rather than romance. Clara Zetkin, the German leader of the IWS, never formally married the father of her two children. Kollontai, meanwhile, raised her son Misha alongside her friend and comrade Zoia with minimal intervention from the father.[142] This arrangement of child-rearing women in a comradely bond was also a motif in Kollontai's literary writings. In her 1923 book *Red Love*, the protagonist Vasilisa welcomes the new freedoms of the Soviet state, leaves the father of her child without informing him of her pregnancy and decides to raise her child with the help of a collective of women she is helping to construct.[143] A more direct and well-known model of an unmarried mother raising her child without care for social stigma was O'Callaghan and Cohen's former employer Sylvia Pankhurst, who gave birth to her son Richard in 1927. In April of the next year, Pankhurst, who began to define her politics as communist 'but not of the Communist Party', made this news public in the British tabloid press.[144] Cohen was clearly aware of Pankhurst's situation as she visited her during her pregnancy.[145]

There is also evidence to suggest there were specific conventions of socialist mothering current within O'Callaghan and Cohen's circle. O'Callaghan recalled an incident when an American communist woman upbraided Cohen for desiring 'a garden or a porch for Joyce.'[146] These reinterpretations of the parenting dynamic reflected the Soviet quest for a parenting model free of bourgeois and patriarchal gender relations.[147] Yet, however

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[142] Lauren Kaminsky, '"No Rituals and Formalities!" Free Love, Unregistered Marriage and Alimony in Early Soviet Law and Family Life,' *Gender & History* (November 2017), p. 717.
[143] Maria Zavialova, 'Red Venus: Alexandra Kollontai's *Red Love* and Women in Soviet art', in Ruth Barraclough, Heather Bowen-Struyk and Paula Rabinowitz (eds.), *Red Love Across the Pacific: Political and Sexual Revolutions of the Twentieth Century* (New York, 2015), p. 229.
[144] Sylvia Pankhurst to Mrs Walsh, c. 1930, Autograph Letter Collection, WLLSE, 9/20/047; June Purvis, 'Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928), Suffragette Leader and Single Parent in Edwardian Britain', *Women's History Review*, 20:1 (February 2011), p. 89.
[145] Interview with Nellie Rathbone (née Cohen), conducted by Lucia Jones, 27 June 1972, Appendix A, Jones, *'Red Twilight'*.
[146] MO'C to REK, 11 November 1929, UOSC, Box 7, Folder 4.
[147] Hannah Proctor, 'Women on the Edge of Time: Representations of Revolutionary Motherhood in the NEP-era Soviet Union', *Studies in the Maternal*, 7:1 (2015), pp. 1-20.

emancipated Pankhurst, Zetkin and O'Callaghan may have been, maternity and maternal instincts, as Elizabeth Wood notes, 'continued to be viewed as the province and spiritual predestination of women alone.'[148] This was the case both in Soviet society and among its international adherents. Nevertheless, the wider context of socialist motherhood in the 1920s provided validation for O'Callaghan and Cohen's unconventional parenting arrangement.

Although Cohen's child was not raised in the Soviet state, the transnational friendship network of international communism ensured that the benefits of growing up in the USSR were transplanted to New York. Familiar faces from Moscow provided a social set that allowed the Cohen-O'Callaghan family to continue their unusual arrangement without disapproving comments. Within weeks of arriving, O'Callaghan reconnected with figures she had previously guided through Moscow, such as John Dewey and Helen and Calita Wilson, a cohabiting lesbian couple.[149] At events such as a play about the Sacco and Vanzetti case, a meeting hosted by Roger Baldwin for those 'who have been in Russia' and a similarly themed dinner at Jessica Smith's house, O'Callaghan and Cohen met literary figures and Party activists.[150] All of these encounters contributed to a sentiment expressed through the letters that life in New York, at least on a social level, was near identical to Moscow – with much of the same people to socialise with and even the same topics enacted in the plays O'Callaghan continued to regularly attend. It is unsurprising that anxieties regarding the stigma of illegitimacy evaporated from O'Callaghan's letters once she embedded herself among her comrades.

Financial woes were alleviated by political comrades, with money even travelling across the Atlantic dispatched by the wealthy British communist Eva Reckitt to assist with Cohen and O'Callaghan's rent.[151] Contacts from the Communist Party of the USA also

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[148] Wood, *Baba and the Comrade,* p. 207.
[149] MO'C to REK, 29 October 1928, UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 4.
[150] MO'C to REK, 9 November 1928, UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 4.
[151] Nellie Cohen to Eva Reckitt, 6 November 1929, TNA, KV 2/1396.

helped rescue Cohen and O'Callaghan from financial uncertainty. Theodore Dreiser met with O'Callaghan to supply her with introductions to editors that would help facilitate her journalism.[152] Cohen was paid to act as nursemaid to the grandchildren of Ella Reeve 'Mother' Bloor, an elderly Despard-like figure known as the 'first-lady' of American communism.[153] While it remained difficult to find a spot for nude-sunbathing so far west of Moscow, the internationalism of the communist network ensured the social mores regarding unconventional parenting and a system of mutual support were integrated into the worldwide revolutionary project. It is notable that this financial support for the child was seemingly arranged by a network of women. This gendered form of support was a further example of how, while international communism was theoretically committed to effacing difference in the roles played by men and women, such distinctions reasserted themselves in the lived practice of communist lifestyles.

For O'Callaghan, the lines of continuity stemming from Moscow were personal and professional. She continued to work for Soviet cultural organisations in New York. Initially O'Callaghan provided *pro bono* work for the American Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR, an American branch of the global network of Soviet friendship societies. Her activities with the Society included liaising with Dreiser to secure his presence at a Society soirée.[154] Later she secured paid employment with the Soviet trade delegation in America, specifically its film division AMKINO, promoting scientific features to schools and laboratories.[155] Drawing on prior contacts allowed her to continue some of the work she had undertaken in Moscow. Despite these jobs, O'Callaghan consistently fell short of her professional aspirations. Her final attempt at a career in America, a country she termed a

[152] MO'C to REK, 29 October 1928, UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 4
[153] Ibid; Bloor, *We are Many*, p. 12.
[154] MO'C to Theodore Dreiser, 1 November 1928, UPSC, TDP, Box 85, Folder 4612.
[155] MO'C to REK, 3 August 1929, UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 4; 'Educational Films from the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics', *Educational Screen*, 9:6 (June 1930), p. 180; 'Russian Biological Film Exhibited to Scientists', *Collecting Net*, 6 July 1929, p. 14.

'land of sorrows', was a failed attempt to join the 1933 delegation negotiating formal US diplomatic recognition of the USSR.[156] In fact, there was a significant factor which compelled her failure to launch her career and also contributed to both her departure from Moscow and her inability to return – O'Callaghan had become a *persona non grata* in American and British Party circles. To understand how this happened, we must first consider the seismic political changes that first rocked Soviet society as she was preparing to depart Moscow.

In January 1928, Leon Trotsky, Stalin's political nemesis in the Soviet Communist Party, was exiled to Alma-Ata before final expulsion from the Soviet territory. Several months later, the Soviet Ministry for Foreign Affairs refused O'Callaghan re-entry to the USSR. The second event was curiously linked to the first. 'Can you keep a secret?' O'Callaghan wrote to Kennell in April 1929 'I have been REFUSED a visa to [Russia] and that was the reason I came over here… I may be denounced as a Trotskyist as I heard someone in the Party here circulated the rumour that I had brought the funds to start the Trotsky paper here!'[157] It was important to O'Callaghan that this allegation be kept secret. She noted 'if it gets around then one is branded.'[158] But the rumour did spread. O'Callaghan noted that when attending an exhibition of Soviet art both British and American Party members purposefully avoided her.[159] Remarkably for someone who was being personally affected by such rumours, O'Callaghan wilfully engaged with them. She noted of the split in the US Communist Party that one of the leading lights of the anti-Stalinist faction was 'suspected of being a spy by his former adorers' and approved of the demotion of Olga Kameneva, Trotsky's sister-in-law, from her role in Soviet cultural diplomacy, stating 'it was

[156] MO'C to JF, 28 October 1933, HILA, JFP, Box 32, Folder 9.
[157] MO'C to REK, 5 April 1929, UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 4.
[158] Ibid.
[159] MO'C to REK, 10 February 1929, UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 4.

about time'.[160] It is hardly unique to communism for a political identity (real or perceived) to shape an individual's interpersonal relations, but the nature of political identity attained an exceptional intensity during the Trotskyist-Stalinist battle over the future of the Revolution.

But was O'Callaghan a Trotskyist? In doctrinal terms, O'Callaghan's archival trail offers little in terms of political theorising. She did, however, have personal links to Trotskyism. Her lifelong friend Alida de Jager was involved in Trotskyist circles operating in Germany prior to Hitler's rise to power and corresponded with Trotsky from 1930-1 using her revolutionary pseudonym Alida Leonhard.[161] After the publication of Freeman's memoir in which O'Callaghan features prominently as 'O. B.', a closed meeting of Comintern's disciplinary body, the International Control Commission, deemed the book 'full of vile counter-revolutionary Trotskyite slander'.[162] But here O'Callaghan's connections with Trotskyism end. Her correspondence is notable for the near-total absence of discussions of Soviet high politics, which is not surprising for someone who did not take up Party membership. Questioning the accuracy of the allegations may risk missing the point. The allegation possibly had little to do with O'Callaghan's politics and everything to do with the prestigious role she had carved out in the Comintern. O'Callaghan articulated this suspicion in the first month of her arrival in New York, noting to Kennell: 'You know I think this getting me over here etc. was all a plot!... I wonder would Mary R. and her Hungarian friends have had anything to do with it? You know she stepped into my shoes?'[163] O'Callaghan speculated that a vacancy had appeared for one of her rivals to fill after she was labelled a Trotskyist. Considering the atmosphere of accusation and counter-accusation, one that was

[160] MO'C to REK, 3 August 1929, UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 4.
[161] Alida Leonhard to Leon Trotsky, 12 September 1930, 3 March 1931, 23 April 1931, 31 July 1931, Houghton Library, Leon Trotsky Exile Papers, MS Russ 13.1, 2727-2730.
[162] 'Excerpts from Minutes of the Meeting of the ICC', 23 August 1938, RGASPI 495/261/2295/52.
[163] MO'C to REK, 7 September 1928, UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 4.

incipient in 1928 but which would transform into the terror of the late 1930s, O'Callaghan's theory seems plausible.

It was not only the allegation of Trotskyism put a halt to O'Callaghan's career. Another hindrance on O'Callaghan globe hopping radical lifestyle was childcare. Writing to Kennell, O'Callaghan complained that the experience of child rearing was such a drain on time that it had begun to blunt her political acuity, noting 'I got so mixed with this small family that I fear I shall soon cease to be classed amongst the intellectual.'[164] O'Callaghan, in becoming responsible for a child late in the chronology of this project, is unusual when compared with many other Irish radical women central to this thesis, such as Despard and Sheehy-Skeffington – each of whom were largely free of maternal responsibilities for most of this period. One need only compare the careers of O'Callaghan and Cohen to the absent father of Joyce, Liam O'Flaherty, to see the manner in which the assumption that motherhood was to be handled by the women within the revolutionary network blocked opportunities for these women to continue to pursue their activism. O'Flaherty continued his vagabonding lifestyle and finally undertook his long-planned visit to the USSR in 1930. The resulting travelogue, *I Went to Russia*, was a whimsically-framed critique of Soviet society.[165] As O'Flaherty toured the world, Cohen returned first to Britain in 1931, later taking up a role in the Soviet embassy.[166] O'Callaghan followed in 1933 and worked in a left-wing bookstore before retiring.[167] O'Callaghan's active engagement with international communism was ostensibly terminated by allegations of political impropriety and the everyday practicalities of motherhood.

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[164] For complaints regarding finance see: MO'C to REK, 9 November 1928, UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 4. For quote see: MO'C to REK, 11 November 1929, UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 4.
[165] Liam O'Flaherty, *I Went to Russia* (London, 1931).
[166] Interview with Nellie Rathbone (née Cohen), conducted by Lucia Jones, 27 June 1972, Appendix A, Jones, *Red Twilight*.
[167] J.T. Murphy to JF, 12 January 1939, HILA, JFP, Box 31, Folder 1.

O'Callaghan's life in New York was in many ways a continuation of her Moscow existence. She drew on friendships originally created in Moscow and used this relocated personal network to inhabit the social mores she had become accustomed to in the USSR. O'Callaghan and Cohen moved across borders carrying secrets, advancing from safe-house to safe-house, seeking financial assistance from comrades, all the while tailed by police surveillance. Their rebellious work, however, was not assassination or the smuggling of seditious documents, but the raising of a child. Junius Wood, a journalist friend of Kennell, noted that the parenting arrangement had 'the making of a Hollywood thriller'. [168] He further described O'Callaghan claiming that Joyce required an 'international support' network.[169] Ultimately, the example of O'Callaghan, Cohen and baby Joyce makes a case for broadening our concept of what acts, roles and forms of activism we can study to gain insights into international communist networks during this period. The more humdrum components of radical lives, from secretarial work to child-rearing, may not initially seem as glamorous as raising a red flag above a seized building or smuggling state secrets, but studying quotidian radical experiences can provide insights into the intimate politics of international communism.

Amidst the reversal of progressive sexual politics witnessed in the interwar West, O'Callaghan and Cohen's determination to raise a child outside marriage as a partnership of two women and to avoid the associated stigma by delving into a communist network was genuinely radical. But this act drew O'Callaghan away from Moscow at a time when her superiors were apparently growing suspicious of her activities. As she approached two decades of a radical life enacted across three continents and encompassing the suffrage

[168] Junius B. Wood to REK, 3 August 1930, UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 36.
[169] Ibid.

movement, the Irish revolution and international communism, her close involvement in the most important institution within the broader network of radical internationalism ceased.

Conclusion

In 1954, an elderly O'Callaghan wrote a Christmas card to Kennell asking her old friend's opinions on such 'diseases as McCarthyism and Communism' and inviting her to remember those distant years in the late 1920s, 'when we were care-free and silly in Moscow'.[170] O'Callaghan was being facetious – the 1920s were a time of deep intensity for her and her comrades. The excitement and intrigue of these years remained with her until her death at the age of ninety-two in 1973. Remarkably, in the available correspondence produced in her post-Moscow years, O'Callaghan never reflected upon nor referenced her life in the suffrage struggle when she worked under Sylvia Pankhurst. It seems that nothing compared to the excitement of O'Callaghan's Soviet existence. Yet her blacklisting in international communist circles and the birth of her friend's daughter caused her to extricate herself from intensive radical activity for the remainder of her life.

After O'Callaghan's departure in 1928, the avant-garde artists and bohemian revolutionaries of Moscow were gradually effaced by Stalinism. In 1929, Clara Zetkin had confided to a comrade that the Comintern had become a 'dead mechanism' capable only of swallowing Russian orders and 'regurgitating them in different languages.'[171] O'Callaghan's quasi-forced departure from Moscow in 1928 was an act of fortune that allowed her to preserve an idealised vision of Soviet society's potential. While this project reveals the ways in which radical internationalism sustained the post-suffrage careers of many activist women, O'Callaghan also provides an insight into how shifts in Communist policy and unexpected lifestyle changes could demobilise a radical career.

This chapter has explored the hitherto under-researched milieu of Comintern *workers,* as opposed to the revolutionary agents and sympathisers of this formidable radical

[170] MO'C to REK, c. December 1954, UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 4.
[171] Quoted in Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin: Waiting for Hitler, 1928-1941* (London, 2017), p. 20.

internationalist organisation. O'Callaghan's absence in the historiography reveals how our concepts and methodologies can create blind spots that obscure fascinating case studies. First, the traditional focus of Irish labour history accounts of the Irish left on institutional actors operating within a nation-state cannot accommodate a border-hopping figure like O'Callaghan. Her identity as a communist woman who rarely engaged with nationalism makes her ill-suited to the static label 'Irish socialist republican' under which interwar Irish radicals are usually considered. Nor is she a typical interwar communist. There is none of the 'iron discipline' of ideological severity in her ironic letters.

A biographical reading of activist lives lends a personal dimension to the phenomenon of radicalism that a straightforwardly political reading of left-wing parties may overlook.[172] Using biographical case studies to tear apart the acronyms – CPI, CPGB, CPSU, ECCI, etc. – uncovers the historical lived experiences within. O'Callaghan's activist life demonstrates that political engagement is never just about developing and assisting in strategic manoeuvres directed towards the success of a cause – it is an end in itself, with a multitude of benefits exchanged for the commitment of the participants. 'Self-sacrifice for a cause can give coherence to an identity by aligning political belief and action', writes Studer 'giving meaning to a life that otherwise might seem bleak and insignificant.'[173]

Even as a member of the ELFS, O'Callaghan did not operate in any of the roles that traditionally attract scholarly attention. She took part in no militancy, spent no time in prison and there is little evidence remaining of her own analysis of the suffrage cause. She was a radical, but not necessarily a militant. Yet, the suffrage movement, as Susan Pedersen notes, 'needed the fanatics, but it needed editors and accountants and printers and public speakers as well'.[174] O'Callaghan performed many administrative roles in the ELFS, acting as office

[172] James R. Barrett, '*Was* the Personal Political?', p. 297.
[173] Studer, 'Communism as Existential Choice', p. 511.
[174] Susan Pedersen, 'A Knife to the Heart', *London Review of Books,* 40:16 (August 2018), p. 10.

manager, sub-editor, translator and occasional public speaker. These precise technical skills made her a promising recruit for the Comintern. Similarly, the practical work that underpinned the functioning of the Comintern's Moscow headquarters, such as the translation of bulletins that were then distributed to the national Parties, much of which was carried out by women, has received little historical attention. Her unusually rich archival footprint is a testament to her contribution to these causes. For example, Muriel MacSwiney, an Irish figure who is much better known to historians and who also contributed to communist politics in emigration, has left no discernible trace in the exhaustive Comintern archives.[175]

O'Callaghan existed in a temporal space which contrasts with that of her counterparts in Ireland. Unlike figures such as Despard and Sheehy-Skeffington who saw their revolution as halted and in need of re-energising, O'Callaghan's revolution was in motion and the transition towards its end goal already underway. O'Callaghan was situated within a wider network of cultural figures who propagandised a vision of Soviet society when interest in this experiment among western intelligentsia circles was at its peak and when, as O'Callaghan demonstrates, Soviet-style socialism enthused radicals into feeling that they could contribute to the material transformation of the world. We will see in the next chapter that Irish radicals who later travelled to the Soviet Union visited a state in the grip of Stalin's 'revolution from above', but through literature and propaganda had developed a fascination with O'Callaghan's Soviet world of the late 1920s and the societal experiments it produced.

[175] As mentioned in the second chapter, MacSwiney was involved in the first Communist Party of Ireland and its successor, Larkin's Irish Workers League. She was also later involved in Communist politics in Paris and London. However, various Cyrillic permutations of her name return no results in the database of Comintern personnel files.

Chapter 4: 'The Land of the Rising Sun': Irish Radical Women, Political Tourism in the USSR and the Comintern's Third Period, 1929-1932

In the summer of 1929, Denis Johnston, an emerging talent among Dublin playwrights, had a political awakening after finishing Theodore Dreiser's travelogue of Soviet society – a book edited by Dreiser's secretary Ruth Kennell and based on a trip partly organised by May O'Callaghan. Reading *Dreiser Looks at Russia* convinced Johnston that 'it is in the hands of the toiling masses… that I feel the revolution when it comes must take shape.'[1] Several months later, in April 1930, Johnston attended the inaugural meeting of an organisation that would channel his newfound political enthusiasms: the Irish Friends of Soviet Russia (FOSR). Writing in his diary after the meeting, Johnston outlined his reasons for attending; first, because he was personally interested in Russia, second, he believed that a 'movement of this sort' was the only one that could challenge the 'chauvinism of the IRA'; and finally because 'the forces of social revolution are the only ones that can effectively undermine & blow up the thing I hate the most of all – the power of the Church.'[2] It amused him to hear what the 'curious and interesting people' who gathered at this Dublin meeting had to say, though he found their socialism 'a pretty pale pink' with the 'green still more evident'.[3] Those in attendance who would later become prominent in the FOSR included Despard, Sheehy Skeffington, Gonne, Jacob and Helena Molony. He had not yet found the toiling masses, but it was a start.

[1] Denis Johnston Diary (Hereafter DJD), c. June-August 1929, Trinity College Dublin Archives (Hereafter TCDA), Denis Johnston Papers (Hereafter DJP), 10066/165/112. Dreiser's book was also reviewed in *An Phoblacht,* 4 January 1930.
[2] DJD, 4 April 1930, TCDA, DJP, 10066/165/124.
[3] Ibid.

The Comintern's prevailing directive to its adherents from 1928 until 1935 was known as the 'Class Against Class' political line. The world revolution had entered a 'Third Period', according to the Comintern's theorists, in which capitalism's inevitable collapse was on the horizon once more. In this fevered revolutionary atmosphere, the international communist movement viewed any collaboration with those to the right of their movement, such as social democrats, as a tactical misstep. The political sectarianism of the Third Period doubtlessly damaged international Communist Parties. Take, for example, the British Party, itself still struggling to recover from the demoralising outcome of the 1926 General Strike. Adopting a 1929 general election manifesto that labelled Labour candidates 'social fascists' and class traitors, the Comintern-mandated messaging fell with a thud. Membership dropped sharply, from a post-General Strike high of 10,000 to fewer than 3,000.[4] . This position created a firm divide between communists and other political groupings – at least in theory. Ireland presents a more complex picture: many Communist and communist-sympathetic Irish radicals felt no obligation to shun their comrades who were not in complete ideological alignment.

The Third Period was, counter-intuitively, a period of growth and experimentation for Irish radicalism. Republicans and communists drew closer together. New front groups emerged and brought into their fold not only lifelong activists but also – to a degree hitherto unappreciated in the historiography of the Irish radical left – literary-types and intellectuals. The current reading of Irish radicalism and international communism in this period argues that, in the late 1920s, the Comintern 'turned to the IRA to provide information about the Irish situation and potentially to spearhead the movement'.[5] Republicans were responsive to communist overtures because contemporary republicanism required a guiding line on social

[4] Sue Bruley, 'Gender, Class and Party: The Communist Party and the Crisis in the Cotton Industry in England between the Two World Wars', *Women's History Review*, 2:1 (March 1993), p. 83.
[5] Oleksa Drachewych, 'Settler Colonialism and the Communist International', in I. Ness and Z. Cope (eds.), *The Palgrave Encyclopaedia of Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism* (Cham, 2019), p. 8.

politics alongside practical concerns such as access to arms and funds.[6] The years 1929-1932 witnessed the golden era of the communist-republican nexus in Ireland. The latter half of 1932 in particular has been described as the 'high tide' of Irish communism in the Comintern-era. [7] As O'Connor notes, even at the height of Third Period dogmatism Irish Communists had some room for manoeuvre on doctrinal specifics.[8] Yet historians of the Irish radical left have rarely explored in detail the Comintern-backed organisations that had the most room for manoeuvre in this period: the front groups.

Tracing how Irish radical women continued their engagement with front groups during this period, this chapter restores further agency to Irish radicals while tracing the State and Church forces that would ultimately and decisively hinder their activism. This chapter develops upon earlier historiography through demonstrating why Irish women, who were excluded from the IRA, continued their involved in Comintern-aligned groups during this period. Irish women continued to support communist-inspired internationalism through a complex interchange of political patronage, personal activist histories and mobility – particularly through delegations to the USSR. This engagement with radical internationalism was often shaped by their support for Irish republicanism *alongside* longstanding involvement in transnational radical culture and their connections to a wider world of women's internationalism. While this chapter continues to trace the web of interconnections which framed how Irish women navigated radical internationalist networks, it also provides new perspectives on relations between British and Irish communists and explores Irish forms of the 'reactionary internationalism' that arose in response to renewed radical initiatives in the wake of the worldwide economic downturn.

[6] O'Connor, 'Red Republic', p. 79.
[7] O'Connor, *Reds and the Green,* p. 179.
[8] Ibid, p. 238.

Irish Radical Women, British and Irish Communist Relations and 'Third Period' Doctrine in Ireland, 1929-1930

In 1930, Herbert Ward, the English heir to a taxidermy fortune, a fluent Russian-speaker and an enthusiastic convert to communism, appeared in the sight lines of British and Irish police intelligence.[9] A year previously, Ward had organised and seemingly funded a delegation of Irish trade unionists to the Soviet Union. Garda intelligence was disparaging of Ward's actions, stating that he was 'a proper subject for a mental home' and joking that the only certain outcome of Ward's lending of money to Irish communists was that 'he will never get it back.'[10] A few months later, a report arrived on the desk of Irish Minister for Defence Desmond FitzGerald, which noted that Ward had hired a cinema in central Dublin, and was now turning a profit showing a series of Soviet films.[11] This time there were no jokes. The report concluded with a cautionary tone, noting that Ward would be encouraged by his success to import further Soviet films in an effort to 'popularise Communist ideas in the Free State.'[12] Evidently, Soviet culture had a Dublin audience.

Although always unequal, the relationship between the Comintern and its satellite organisations was often mutually beneficial. International communism received propagandists, while a radical intelligentsia could imagine themselves as part of the transnational euphoria for Soviet culture and the model socialist state. Ward was one of several British Communists sent to Ireland throughout this period, assigned by the Comintern to build the revolutionary movement there through the establishment of front groups and a preparatory committee for a re-launched all-island Communist Party. Since 1921, with the

[9] 'Re: Herbert Stanford Ward', H.F.B., 2 June 1930, TNA KV 2/1578.
[10] 'Memorandum on Herbert Ward', Det. O'Friel, 15 May 1930, NAI TAOIS S5074AB.
[11] 'Report on Russian Films', Department of the President report sent to the Minister for Defence, 12 August 1930, University College Dublin Archives (Hereafter UCDA), Desmond and Mabel FitzGerald Papers, P80/913.
[12] Ibid.

foundation of the first CPI, the Comintern charged the CPGB with assisting Irish comrades in building their movement and following the correct political line.[13] Already in 1926 Larkin had derided this dynamic as 'imperialist'. [14] Unsurprisingly, the sectarianism of the Comintern's third period did not make Irish-British communist relations any more productive or amiable. Yet the initiatives that these delegated British Communists launched were occasionally captured by Irish radicals themselves, with women playing an important role in setting at least one of these organisations, the FOSR, on a course different to the path toward 'Third Period' orthodoxy plotted for front groups by their Comintern parent bodies.

While the liaisons between British Communists and Irish militants have been traced by O'Connor and David Convery, little attention has been paid to the interactions between Irish radical women and British Communist women.[15] This interchange reflected Irish radical women's growing interest in Soviet overtures to gender equality and the lasting feminist interest in anti-war platforms. In its warnings of an impending war against the Soviet Union in which Britain was cast as the likely aggressor, the Comintern attracted certain elements of pacifist opinion from the 1920s into the Popular Front period of the late 1930s. In June 1929, Despard was approached about attending a Trafalgar Square anti-war demonstration, organised by the CPGB's women's section.[16] She accepted and brought another Dublin delegate, 'John Brennan', to the rally.[17] 'John Brennan' was the pseudonym of Sidney Gifford Czira, crafted by her to convey the persona of a respectable Wexford farmer.[18] One of the well-known republican Gifford sisters, her memoirs entirely efface the commitment to various communist initiatives she made during these years.[19] Shortly after the visit of the

[13] Convery, 'As Imperialistic as our Masters?', p.471,
[14] Larkin quoted in ibid, p. 473.
[15] O'Connor, *Reds and the Green*; Convery, 'As Imperialistic as our Masters?'.
[16] 'Minutes of Women's Department' 3 June 1929, RGASPI 507/3/20/1.
[17] *Sunday Worker,* 4 August 1929.
[18] Karen Steele, *Women, Press, and Politics During the Irish Revival* (Syracuse, 2007), p. 110.
[19] Alan Hayes (ed.), *The Years Flew By: The Recollections of Madame Sidney Gifford Czira* (Dublin, 2006).

Irish women, Kath Duncan, a CPGB member and secretary of the London United Front Committee, completed the return leg of the exchange, attending a Dublin anti-war meeting organised by the WPDL. Writing about the contacts she made in Dublin, Duncan wrote exuberantly 'I imagine that a complete history of the members of this League would provide tales of heroism and endurance unsurpassed in the annals of any nation'.[20] This was a radical version of the standard form of feminist networking between Ireland and Britain that would have been familiar to those with a background in the suffrage movement.

As ever, this interest of Irish radical women in communism was particularly encouraged and spearheaded by Despard. In August 1929, Despard published an open letter in the CPGB's weekly, signed from Roebuck House and addressed to her 'women-comrades' in the Soviet Union:

> Women-comrades, who have won a position such as is held by the women of no other nation in the world – as an old warrior in the holiest of all causes, I am sending you a message of sympathy, love, and admiration, to which I am sure thousands of women in Great Britain and Ireland will gladly respond. We know how the war lords, imperialists, and greedy financiers that see their prey escaping, are hemming you round… To all the oppressed workers of the new world you have brought a new hope and a regenerating courage. All of you - the Red Army - the girls who sang the "International" in your streets on the day of the demonstration against Chinese aggression and British refusal to resume relations unconditionally - the mothers, many of whom know what living under imperial rule meant - all will rise to defend their lately-won liberty. Meanwhile, in Great Britain and Ireland, and in many other countries the groups of men and women who are proud to call themselves the "Friends of Soviet Russia," are by every possible means striving to educate public opinion, and to expose the malignant slanders of those who are seeking your destruction. In my early womanhood I was deeply moved by what I read and heard of the Revolutionary Movement in Russia… I am an old woman; but I have still some energy left, and if, in any way, I can help you, the pleasure and privilege will be mine.[21]

[20] *Sunday Worker,* 11 August 1929.
[21] *Sunday Worker,* 25 August 1929.

The letter reflected Despard's conviction that women's equality in the Soviet Union had been achieved and her place within a wider radical world. The referenced protest against British refusal to resume diplomatic engagement was a component of the demonstrations that we found May O'Callaghan watching from the window of her Comintern department in the previous chapter. More significantly, Despard's use of the term 'Friends of Soviet Russia' indicated her awareness of the developing network of Soviet friendship societies. The letter's path to publication, from a desk at Roebuck House into the editorial hands of Helen Crawfurd, also demonstrated how the links between Dublin and London's radical women in these years often relied on the presence of Despard in Ireland.

However, the amiable ties between British Communist women and Irish women sympathetic to communism would not be replicated in the connections between the leading (and entirely male) CPGB cadre delegated to oversee Irish revolutionary activities and local radicals during the Third Period. Any historical account that relies heavily on Comintern memorandums, surveillance reports and journals may ignore a factor of crucial importance to the British-Irish radical dynamic: personality clashes. CPGB delegates sent to Ireland were disliked by their Irish interlocutors. Writing to Denis Johnston in 1929, Jack White, the ICA founding member who had previously belonged to the Workers Party of Ireland, noted his desire for the 'emergence of a working class intelligentsia… with some sympathetic vision and some outlet for it other than perpetual verbal diarrhoea.' [22] White's pungent reference likely reflected the heightened use of Bolshevik jargon characteristic of Third Period communists, with terms such as 'social fascism' playing a pivotal role in isolating previously sympathetic socialists. Irish communist circles, White continued, were overseen by 'a lot of

[22] J. B. White to Denis Johnston, c. 1929, TCDA, DJP, 10066/187/23159. The letter's date is suggested by a lengthy analysis of Johnston's play "The Old Lady Says No!", first performed at the Gate theatre in the summer of 1929, that White included in the letter.

swollen-headed lackeys' of the CPGB.[23] Writing to Solomon Lozovskii, a Bolshevik trade-union leader, Helena Molony struck a similar though more pressing note:

> Another obstacle to progress [in Ireland] is the personnel of the Party. A group of unknown Englishmen with no visible means of livelihood, talking loudly of Revolution and offering to lead the Irish masses, are naturally looked upon with a mixture of amusement and contempt, and naturally the Irish working class stands aloof.[24]

Molony also indicated a suspicion that the CPGB delegates were engaged in surveillance on behalf of special branch.[25]

Was this simply a persistent political culture of Anglophobia obstructing what could otherwise be a productive relationship? A contrast with Sylvia Pankhurst, arguably the British feminist with the best ability to build connections with the Irish left, is instructive. Throughout her engagement with Irish revolutionary issues, Pankhurst never arrived in Dublin with a pre-existing programme that she demanded Irish radicals adopt. Her model of solidarity was grounded in amplifying the voices of Irish activists themselves, reflected in her hiring of journalists such as O'Callaghan and Lynch, along with her frequent commissioning of articles from Irish socialists and feminists. In the early 1930s, Pankhurst published an account of the war years, in which O'Callaghan and the Cohen sisters featured, followed shortly thereafter by a history of the suffrage movement that included pen-portraits of Despard and Sheehy Skeffington.[26] In 1931, while Irish radicals were in the throes of tensions with British communists, Sheehy Skeffington wrote to Pankhurst and asserted that she knew 'no English rebel who understands the Irish situation and the international so

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[23] Ibid.
[24] Helena Molony to Solomon Lozovskii, RGASPI 534/7/286/98.
[25] Ibid.
[26] For O'Callaghan and the Cohens, see: Pankhurst, *Home Front*, pp. 235, 274. For Sheehy Skeffington and Despard, see: Pankhurst, *Suffragette Movement,* pp. 381, 457.

well.'[27] This contrasted greatly with the CPGB members, perceived as plodding, dogmatic and out-of-touch with Irish realities. As a result, the CPGB representatives proved just as likely to be ignored as to have their marching orders heeded.

The feeling, it seems, was mutual. In 1929, Ward, the aforementioned Communist taxidermist heir, organised an Irish delegation to the Soviet Union. The delegation included Ward himself, trade unionists, a member of Ireland's Revolutionary Workers' Groups (RWG) and two women; Helena Molony and Kathleen Price, a former secretary of the Irish Nurse's Union.[28] A memorandum characterising all of the delegates was delivered to the Profintern, the Comintern's trade-union adjunct. Ward was almost certainly the author of the document, which took particular aim at Molony and levelled reserved criticism at Price:

> Helena Maloney (sic): Romantic, committee-minded, more than slightly inclined to make mischief over trifles. 75% Catholic. Kathleen Price: Not serious[ly] a revolutionary at present, but might be useful in administrative work. Sincere as far as she goes… the lot of them might easily come to represent the most difficult element which the CPI would have to face: i.e. narrow Nationalism with tremendous capacity for sabotage.[29]

The memorandum suggests that the delegation was partly an attempt to judge those who might form the core cadre of an incipient CPI. In this test, the delegates must have fared poorly.

The Irish delegates at Moscow's International Lenin School, who had arrived from 1928, would ultimately make for more theoretically sound and trustworthy cadre to lead the third attempt at forming a CPI.[30] But by the time this Party was founded in 1933, the Comintern would already be on the path towards jettisoning Third Period sectarianism in

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[27] HSS to SP, 3 August 1931, ESPP IISH, Folder 244.
[28] List of Members of the Irish Delegation, c. November 1929, RGASPI, 534/3/431/77
[29] Notes on Delegates, c. November 1929, RGASPI 534/3/431/84.
[30] Barry McLoughlin, 'Proletarian Academics or Party Functionaries? Irish Communists at the International Lenin School, Moscow, 1927-1937', *Saothar*, 22 (1997), pp. 63-79.

favour of Popular Front unity. With the leading cadre of Irish communism such as Seán Murray and Jim Larkin Jnr. spending part of this period being educated in Moscow, and ongoing Irish antipathy toward delegated British communists, Third Period doctrine had few convincing advocates in Ireland. The absence of a formalised Communist Party beyond the preparatory RWG also hindered Comintern orthodoxy from fostering sharp rifts between liberal, reformist and revolutionary tendencies in Irish radical circles. Irish radicals continued operating in broad front groups. Upon their return from the USSR, Molony and Price formed the nucleus of an organisation that would, in spite rather than because of British Communist and Comintern direction, become one of the most successful front groups to emerge in Ireland: the Friends of Soviet Russia.

With the establishment of the Irish section of the FOSR in April 1930, Irish radicals established a means of direct engagement with Soviet-style socialism that allowed them to sidestep their CPGB interlocutors. From the outset, the FOSR executive was dominated by women. Executive members included Sheehy Skeffington, Despard, Molony, Price and Gifford Czira.[31] This inclusion of seasoned women campaigners was reflected in other Friendship societies and front groups. In Britain, for example, the national Friendship society was headed by Despard's old comrade Helen Crawfurd.[32] Gabrielle Duchêne, a leading French feminist who had attended the 1926 WILPF Congress in Dublin, became a well-known fellow traveller of Soviet communism after returning from a trip to the Soviet Union and joined the French Friendship society.[33] Another French WILPF member, Léo Wanner, presided over the French branch of the Comintern- backed League Against Imperialism

[31] 'Friends of Soviet Russia Constitution', 21 February 1930, NAI, Department of an Taoiseach (Hereafter TAOIS), S5074AB; Ward, *Sheehy Skeffington*, p. 293; Circular Letter to FOSR Members, Charlotte Despard, 4 April 1931, NLI, SSP, MS 41,178/91; Circular Letter to FOSR Members, 'John Brennan', c. August 1930, PRONI, Irish Unionist Alliance Papers, D989/D/51B.
[32] David-Fox, *Showcasing*, p. 83.
[33] Mercedes Yusta, 'The Strained Courtship Between Antifascism and Feminism: From the Women's World Committee (1934) to the Women's International Democratic Federation (1945)', in Hugo García, Yusta, Xavier Tabet and Cristina Clímaco (eds.), *Rethinking Antifascism: History, Memory and Politics, 1922 to the Present* (Oxford, 2016), p. 169; Carle, 'Women, Anti-Fascism and Peace', p. 301.

(LAI).[34] In Germany, where the LAI was headquartered, the pacifist and birth-control advocate Helene Stocker played an important role in its early years.[35]

Why did this pattern replicate? One reason is the gendered division of activist roles. Women were often placed into roles in the front groups as a result of the distinctly masculine culture of militancy within communism. Perhaps more importantly for women's interest in the USSR, Soviet social and cultural experimentation – partially through the initiatives of figures engaged in cultural diplomacy such as O'Callaghan and through interpersonal networks – gained a growing profile in transnational radical and literati circles during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Writing to Sheehy Skeffington from California in 1930, Alice Park noted her interest in Russia and hoped that her Irish friend would produce the 'feminist kind [of information] that needs to be scattered.'[36] Park noted that two of her local friends had become communists.[37] One of these was almost certainly O'Callaghan's comrade Kennell, who, like Park, resided in Palo Alto and appeared several times in Park's diaries, discussing Soviet topics with Park.[38] Writing to Sheehy Skeffington from India in 1931, Margaret Cousins was 'glad' to hear that Sheehy Skeffington approved of the USSR.[39] 'I believe immediately in [the Soviet Union]' Cousins affirmed.[40] A year previously, Cousins had corresponded with VOKS, sending information on the All-Asian Women's Conference and requesting delegates from the Soviet far east.[41] Considering this broader picture of feminist curiosity about the USSR suggests that interest in the Soviet project coursed through women's networks. Despite the Comintern's own attempts to undermine and combat what it

[34] Michael Goebel, 'Spokesmen, Spies and Spouses', p. 397.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Alice Park to HSS, 3 November 1930, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/41.
[37] Ibid.
[38] See for example; APD, 15 August 1928, HILA, APP, Box 33, 1928 Diary; APD, 5 May 1929, HILA, APP, Box 33, 1929 Diary; APD, 15 October 1935, HILA, APP, Box 27, 1925 Diary. Park also preserved some of Kennell's writings in her personal archive, see: HILA, APP, Box 7, Folder 8.
[39] Margaret Cousins to HSS, 3 March 1931, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/2.
[40] Ibid.
[41] D. Novomirskii to Margaret Cousins, 14 July 1930, GARF P5283/3/105/41.

saw as the needlessly divisive politics of feminism, the outline of an informal network of veteran feminists interested in the Soviet experiment came into view by 1930.

The FOSR also emerged against the backdrop of a resurgence in Irish anti-imperialist activity, influenced by the establishment of an Irish branch of the LAI. Prominent republicans and leftists such as Peadar O'Donnell, Sheehy Skeffington, Michael Price, Molony and Gonne were involved with the Irish section of the LAI, which frequently drew particular attention to the parallels between Irish and Indian anti-imperialism.[42] Each of these organisations was a radical adjunct of a broader vogue for international organisations during these years as observed by Michele Louro, predicated on a belief that such groups could be used to resolve transnational issues and prevent war.[43] The RWG also functioned as a preparatory committees for an eventual resurrection of the CPI during these years. Amid this plethora of organisations and initiatives, friendship with Soviet Russia, variously defined, would capture a great deal of Irish radical attention.

Indeed, no other initiative of the radical left during this period until the founding of the Republican Congress in 1935 attracted such a diverse spread of members as the FOSR – including elements from what one might deem 'respectable' Irish society. Prominent republicans and radicals were involved with the group, including Gonne, Dorothy Macardle, Jack White, George Gilmore, David Fitzgerald, Kathleen Lynn, Madeleine ffrench-Mullen and Peadar O'Donnell.[44] Of course, these were the usual suspects: the figures who could

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[42] For a discussion of the LAI and Irish-Indo radical connections, see: O'Malley, *Ireland, India and Empire,* esp. pp. 32-41.

[43] Michele L. Louro, '"Where National Revolutionary Ends and Communist Begins" The League Against Imperialism and the Meerut Conspiracy Case', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East,* 33:3 (2013), pp. 310-315.

[44] For Gonne see: Maud Gonne to Rosamond Jacob, 8 July 1931, NLI, RJP, MS 33,129. For Macardle see: DRJ, 9 August 1931, NLI, RJP, MS 32,582/67; For White, see: RJD 10 April 1931 NLI, RJP, MS 32,582/66; For Gilmore and Fitzgerald, see: MS Annotation on 'Report of Irish Labour Delegation to the USSR', c. 1930, NLI, SSP, 41,205/2; For Lynn and ffrench-Mullen see: Kathleen Lynn Diary (Hereafter KLD), 4 April 1930, Royal College of Physicians in Ireland Heritage Centre (Hereafter RCPIHC) Kathleen Lynn Papers (Hereafter KLP) KL/3/2; For O'Donnell, see 'Friends of the Soviet Union', Memorandum, 7 June 1930, NAI TAOIS S5074AB; O'Connor, *Reds and the Green,* p. 170.

always be relied upon to take out membership in other Comintern-backed organisations such as the LAI and RWG. Yet the membership of the FOSR radiated outward from the nexus of radical women who frequented Roebuck House, encompassing figures from Irish cultural circles. The aforementioned playwright Johnston, his wife the Abbey actress Shelagh Richards and the painters Seán Keating and Harry Kernoff joined the organisation.[45] The Irish FOSR reported a total of 300 members in May 1931, likely the peak of its membership.[46] A 1930 FOSR raffle draw gives some evidence of the geographical scope of the organisation, with three winners listed as residents of England and one from Achill island off Ireland's west coast.[47] Although hardly a large membership relative to other political organisations in Ireland, it was sizeable for a front group.

The FOSR was the Irish expression of a transnational cultural moment: the interwar 'pilgrimage' to the Soviet Union. Of the front groups which operated in Ireland during the interwar period, the FOSR best demonstrated Irish radical capacities to subvert and repurpose the intentions of the Comintern and its British delegates. Mandated by the Comintern to be a working-class organisation which promoted class war and labelled enemies as social fascists, the FOSR largely conducted exhibitions, garden parties and organised junkets to the USSR for intellectuals and elite radicals. This reflects the inability of the Comintern to apply Third Period doctrine to Irish radical circles with precision, whilst also recovering a degree of agency and independence of Irish radicals from Comintern machinations, particularly women, hitherto neglected by the historiography.

While the FOSR dedicated itself partly to organising cultural events promoting Soviet society and letter-writing campaigns to the press, the society's ultimate *raison d'etre* was the arrangement of delegations to the Soviet Union. The society thus functioned as a

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[45] Denis Johnston to Shelah Richards, 23 September 1931, TCDA, DJP, 10066/288/378; HSS to Owen Sheehy Skeffington (Hereafter OSS), 24 July 1930, NLI, SSP, MS 40,484/5; Sisson 'Harry Kernoff'.
[46] 'Berichte Ueber Die "Freunde der Sowjetunion"', 19 May 1931, RGASPI 495/99/33/1-2.
[47] *An Phoblacht,* 4 October 1930.

disembarkation point from which Irish radicals could set out on this interwar rite of passage. Women's involvement in Soviet Friendship societies and other front groups in Ireland and elsewhere was the product of a gradually developing fascination with Soviet-style communism among radical women – a fascination which, as we learned in the last chapter, an Irish woman played a small role in developing. Mickenberg, following Kate Baldwin's analysis of the USSR and black internationalism, has observed that the Soviet Union helped create a 'narrative of possibility' for the non-Soviet other, allowing them space to reformulate social and cultural issues at home.[48] While Soviet travelogues, avant-garde films and reading circles proved convincing, the breadth of this narrative of possibility was not fully discernible at a distance.

[48] Julia L. Mickenberg, 'Suffragettes and Soviets: American Feminists and the Spectre of Revolutionary Russia', *Journal of American History,* 100:4 (March 2014), p. 1050, *cf.* Kate A. Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters between Black and Red, 1922-1963* (Durham, N. C., 2002), pp. 8, 21.

An Irish Suffrage Veteran Encounters the New Russia: Charlotte Despard in the USSR, 1930

Fittingly, a meeting to plan the first FOSR first trip to Soviet Russia took place in Madame Cogley's Cabaret – once the meeting space of the Radical Club.[49] Indeed, Madame Cogley represented an individual line of continuity from the cultural programming of the IWFL, through to the cultural politics of interwar Irish radicalism. The Irish FOSR sent two delegations to the Soviet Union, one in 1930 and the other in 1931. The first delegation consisted of Despard, Sheehy Skeffington, Sheila Dowling (née Bowen), Jack O'Neill, Seán Dowling, Harry Kernoff, David Fitzgerald and George Gilmore.[50] The second consisted solely of Jacob and Margaret Connery, due to passport issues experienced by other delegates.[51] This chapter focuses on the first delegation and, in particular, on one delegate: Despard. Focusing on one delegate alone allows us to explore in detail how political travel could be a transformative and exciting experience that marked another step in the political trajectory from suffrage through to radical internationalism. Moreover, following our research subjects on their travels allows us to understand how mobility could fill a well of energy for political mobilisation, one that would be drawn from in the challenging months and years to come as revolutionary possibilities in the Irish Free State and the wider world faltered.

Analyses of Irish radicals and intellectuals who travelled to the Soviet Union have rarely extended beyond remarks about the travellers being hoodwinked by Soviet handlers. My own MPhil thesis considered a broad selection of Irish political tourists in the USSR comparatively, arguing that their experiences were similar to those of political tourists from

[49] Sisson, 'Harry Kernoff', p. 34.
[50] O'Connor, *Reds and the Green,* p. 150; 'Report on Friends of Soviet Russia', Department of Justice, 7 November 1930, NAI, TAOIS, S5074AB.
[51] O'Connor, *Reds and the Green*, p. 150.

other national contexts and contesting the idea that a paradigm of duped fellow-travellers remains useful in understanding the significance of their tours.[52] Developing upon my earlier work whilst integrating new sources and insights from recent secondary literature, this section offers the first close-reading of Despard's Soviet diary, placing it within the context of her suffrage past and the broader history of interwar women's radical internationalism. This section does not simply suggest comparative similarity, but continues a history of interconnection between Irish women and their international counterparts charted throughout this thesis.

Detailing Despard's Soviet journey, which was similar to those undertaken by radical travellers throughout this period by design, illuminates how the trip to the USSR – a living, breathing encounter with a revolutionary society – convinced radicals of the imminence and necessity of systemic transformation. Tracing the intricacies of this trip, one undertaken in some form by every woman central to this project, is essential to understanding how radical internationalist women understood Soviet society. It also points to the unprecedented spatial feature of the post-1917 era: the ability of international socialists to readily move between spaces they perceived as being shaped by capitalism and imperialism to the spaces they believed were shaped by anti-imperialism and socialism. Despard's detailed diary of her trip provides a vivid example of a travel experience that was familiar for interwar radicals and influenced their belief in the necessity of revolution.

Three detailed diaries by Irish FOSR women delegates exist, two written by Jacob and one by Despard. Sheehy Skeffington's notes are disjointed and offer little analytical value, given that they fail to distinguish between what might have been her own thoughts about the visit from the recorded quotations of others. Lines in her notes such as 'Lesbian

[52] Maurice J. Casey, *Irish Sympathisers with the Soviet Union's 'Great Experiment', 1917-1938* (MPhil Thesis, Cambridge University, 2016).

love in Berlin' and 'Communist ideal ascetic and rigid' are tantalising pointers for delegate's experiences, but too fragmentary to fruitfully explore.[53] A journal covering Margaret Connery's 1931 visit to the USSR existed briefly, but was left behind on a Leningrad tram in the last week of her visit.[54] For the purposes of this thesis, Despard's Soviet journal gives the most valuable insight into the experiences of an Irish delegate by indexing how a suffrage veteran encountered Soviet society. Jacob's diaries are also detailed and useful, though it is important to note that Jacob was ultimately unenthusiastic about the experience and about communism more broadly, believing the reports of Soviet gender equality to be exaggerated.[55] Although Garda intelligence believed Jacob to have been a Communist Party member from 1933 onwards, the political sentiments expressed in her diaries depict a fragile sympathy with Soviet ideals and only a wandering interest in Communist ideology.[56] By contrast, Despard's account is the detailed testament of someone with a lasting engagement with radical internationalism and a long past in feminist and socialist movements.

Despard's regularly kept diaries were logged in small pocket-size journals. These small day-to-day accounts resemble personal aide-memoires rather than detailed accounts of her life and ideals. Often, they are concise and difficult to read. The account of her Soviet trip, in contrast, was written into a large diary. Although a shaking hand is evident in the handwriting, perhaps reflecting Despard's advanced age of eighty-six years, the entries are clearly legible. All of this effort raises the question: what did she intend to do with the diary? No source suggests that publication of the diary was attempted, thereby suggesting that Despard was not interested in literary fame and fortune. It is more likely that Despard hoped to use the document as a basis for future lectures and perhaps as a permanent record of an

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[53] 'Notes on Russia', HSS, c. August 1930, NLI, SSP, MS 24,163 (i).
[54] RJD, 21 May 1931, NLI, RJP, MS 32,582/66.
[55] Rosamond Jacob to HSS, 27 May 1931, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/27.
[56] 'Questionnaire: Rosamond Jacob', c. October 1935, NAI, JUS, 2008/117/726. See, for example, Jacob's 1934 account of asking a Trotskyist doctor to outline the differences between Stalin and Trotsky: RJD, 26 December 1934, NLI, RJP, MS 32,582/76.

experience that marked the pinnacle of a lifetime of struggle: the recognition that her political ideals had become the basis of a state. Furthermore, political travel writing, as an extension of a literary, journalistic or activist career, could be a means of distinguishing oneself from the common tourist.[57] The very act of penning a detailed account added gravitas. More than a document of delusion, Despard's diary provides a rare insight into an Irish radical woman's self-construction of her political identity at a moment where ideal and reality appeared to converge.

Despard's journey through the USSR began with a lengthy wait at Leningrad customs, followed by visits to: a home for old Bolsheviks, a maternal care facility, an academy for new Party members, an evening at the ongoing Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) Fifth Congress, a textile factory and its creche, an open-air school, a department store, the RILU Congress once again, the Park of Culture, a reformatory institute for prostitutes, another factory creche, a women's prison, an open-air meeting of the RILU Congress, a court of law, an Orthodox church, a communal housing complex, the Bolshevo Commune for juvenile offenders, a mass-demonstration of the young communist Pioneers, a men's prison, a family law court, a reception of Pioneers, the Lenin Home of Rest, a Catholic church, a final return to the RILU Congress, a closed meeting to discuss the revolutionary situation in Ireland, and finally the Kremlin, before returning to Leningrad to begin the trip back to London. The other Irish delegates followed a different route, travelling from Leningrad to Moscow, Rostov on Don, Baku, Tbilisi and Vladikavkaz before returning to Moscow and finally departing from Leningrad. Although the 86-year-old Despard was given a lighter itinerary than her fellow delegates, this still amounted to a hectic tour. In the evenings of this tightly organised visit, Despard managed to commit more than 6,500 words

[57] Martyn Cornick, Martin Hurcombe and Angela Kershaw, 'Radical Departures and the Politics of Inter-war Travel Writing, in Cornick, Hurcombe, Kershaw (eds.), *French Political Travel Writing in the Inter-war Years: Radical Departures* (New York, 2017), p. 6.

to her diary. All of this activity left little time for the encounters with Soviet citizens or the long-term perspectives on the development of this rapidly changing society that was afforded to political émigrés like O'Callaghan.

The first page of Despard's journal finds her on a boat headed towards a state managed along socialist principles. Suffrage friends, likely habitués of the WFL's Minerva Club where both Despard and Sheehy Skeffington stayed whenever visiting London, waved farewell from the dock.[58] A journalist present as the boat departed described the passengers and crew joining the well-wishers assembled on the bank in singing the Internationale.[59] Besides the familiar company of the Irish delegates, Despard was also joined on board the SS *Kooperatsia* by British comrades, including her long-time collaborator Crawfurd and young comrades such as Wal Hannington, a Welsh communist who spent the voyage exchanging opinions with Despard.[60] As the boat set out, *Pravda* published an article announcing that 'Comrade' Despard, an 'elderly woman member of the Irish revolutionary movement', was among the workers' delegates making their way to the USSR.[61] Despard noted in her diary that she had 'travelled most by sea and have never experienced anything like this – no class, no separation of interests – no superiorities – I had come at last into a true democracy.'[62] Despard adopted various mantles throughout her tour: Irish revolutionary, veteran British socialist, world-renowned feminist. But the most consistent role depicted in the diary is that of traveller from the capitalist present to the socialist future.

As a form of cultural diplomacy, the Soviet tour was an assiduously formalised affair. Travel narratives thus corresponded to certain patterns. Describing these tropes, Angela Kershaw lists: 'visits to model institutions, descriptions of the Russian people, interviews

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[58] Crawfurd, *Autobiography,* MML, HCP, p. 324.
[59] *Todmorden Advertiser and Hebden Bridge Newsletter,* 26 September 1930.
[60] Wal Hannington to Theresa Billington-Grieg, 12 August 1961, WLLSE, TBGP, 7/TBG1/71.
[61] *Pravda,* 8 August 1930.
[62] CDD, 8 August 1930, WLLSE, CDP, HCA/CHE/2/1/7CFD/C, Box FL558.

with leaders and functionaries, reflection on whether what the traveller has experienced is or is not the truth, evaluation of the regime.'[63] Women's accounts also reveal gendered commonalities, tied to the norms of interwar travel writing and the structure of the Soviet tour itself. Sheehy Skeffington noted in a review published not long after her tour that books of travel by women 'tell of the intimate, personal things, dealing with human beings and with life'.[64] Kershaw notes that the Soviet authorities actively fostered a situation whereby women's encounters in the Soviet Union were tied to perceived feminine concerns.[65] In the first week of the 1930 Irish FOSR tour, for example, men were taken to a mine while the women were taken to a textile factory. There is no evidence to suggest they objected to this obvious segregation on the tour. While there was some scope to request visits to particular sites, the itineraries were chiefly set in advance. The travel accounts of Despard and the other delegates reflected all the key tropes of the gendered Soviet 'travelogue' genre.

The position of women in public administration was the most visible sign of a Soviet commitment to women's equality. This was a result of the position of equality granted to women in Soviet law, which both reflected a reality in certain cases and in others functioned purely as aspiration (or propaganda, depending on one's degree of cynicism). Despard had ample opportunity to experience both women's real positions in Soviet society and their place in law, occasionally at the same time, such as during her visit to a family law court in Moscow. Despard noted that she had wanted 'particularly to know about marriage and divorce'.[66] She was taken to a large bright room with a picture of a baby on the wall, presided

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[63] Angela Kershaw, 'The New Soviet Woman and the French Debate on Gender in the 1920s', in Martyn Cornick, Martin Hurcome and Kershaw (eds.), *French political Travel Writing in the Inter-war Years: Radical Departures* (New York, 2017), p. 99.
[64] *The Vote,* 17 April 1931.
[65] Angela Kershaw, 'French and British Female Intellectuals and the Soviet Union: The Journey to the USSR, 1929-1942', *Reveu Electronique d'Etudes Sur le Monde Anglophone,* Vol. 4, No. 2 (October, 2006), p. 64. For an account of American travellers, see: Choi Chatterjee, '"Odds and Ends of the Russian Revolution," 1917-1920: Gender and American Travel Narratives', *Journal of Women's History,* 20:3 (2008), pp. 10-33.
[66] CDD, 28 August 1930, WLLSE, CDP, HCA/CHE/2/1/7CFD/C, Box FL558.

over by a young woman registrar. Couples entered and proceeded through marriage and divorce with ease:

> The first had been divorced at the woman's demand and five weeks before. They want to be remarried. They were [Trade Union members]. They had to show their identification card, sign a statement read out to them and pay 2 kopeks. They went away looking quite contented. The next – a China man and a young Russian woman. They wanted to be married. These were in private employment and had to pay 20 roubles. Next a handsome young woman and a hard-working peasant-faced man. They wanted re-marriage after divorce. So it followed, case after case – the registrar showing a great patience. In cases where the man had a child or children he was bound by law to give the woman alimony for the children. Who, we find are the first concern of the law in Russia. No difference between children born in or out of wedlock.[67]

This was not a dramatization arranged for Despard's viewing pleasure, but reflected the family code drafted by Kollontai in 1918. It was precisely these same legal arrangements, particularly parity of rights for children born in and outside marriage, which O'Callaghan had sought for baby Joyce Cohen-O'Flaherty in attempting to bring her mother to Moscow. Yet legal equality did not always correspond with equality in practice.

Another Soviet institution of particular interest to international feminists was the Profilaktoria: a reform institution for prostitutes. Despard heard 'much that was interesting to me' during her visit to one such institute in Moscow.[68] She observed that 'in a few years prostitution will pass away altogether'.[69] It did not. As an approach to the 'prostitution question', a lasting issue of concern for social reformers, Soviet Profilaktorias differed little in theory and practice from the similarly carceral Magdalene Laundries that existed in Ireland. The ideal was reform through the application of a trade and education in social values. The reality was incarceration. This was explicitly the case by the mid-1930s, when guards were posted at Profilaktoria doors.[70] Although gender equality in Soviet society was a

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[67] Ibid.
[68] CDD, 19 August 1930, WLLSE, CDP, HCA/CHE/2/1/7CFD/C, Box FL558.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Marcelline J. Hutton, *Russian and West European Women: Dreams, Struggles and Nightmares* (Oxford, 2001), p. 293, fn. 2.

mixture of reality and mirage, it largely proved a positive contrast for Irish feminists when compared to Ireland. In the USSR, conventional approaches to women's issues were combined with authentically cutting-edge models of sexual emancipation.

Besides Crawfurd, a recurring companion for Irish women navigating the world of communism, Despard encountered other old comrades from the struggle who were either visiting or resident in the USSR. Patrick Breslin, an Irish communist working on the *Moscow Daily News* who had emigrated in 1928 to attend a course at the International Lenin School, met with Despard and the Irish delegation.[71] Attending an evening session of the Trade Union congress, Despard met Tom Mann, the celebrated English trade-unionist who had been active in the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) alongside Despard, 'and other old friends'.[72] Another former SDF stalwart she encountered was Theodore Rothstein, formerly Lenin's representative in London and a funding source for Pankhurst's People's Russian Information Bureau.[73] On the same evening that Despard was reunited with Rothstein, she met another person with a political background in the People's Russian Information Bureau: 'Mrs. Bouvier', whom Despard described as 'an old friend of the suffrage time'.[74]

We previously encountered Eugenie Bouvier in the first chapter talking with Irish communists at the base of a Petrograd monument to Catherine the Great.[75] Formerly attached to Pankhurst's East London Federation of Suffragettes, Bouvier had resided in Moscow since 1921, where she had initially worked in the Comintern Press Department – also the place of employment of her fellow ELFS veteran O'Callaghan.[76]. Each of Despard's encounters, particularly her reunion with Bouvier, speaks to a shared political path through these decades.

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[71] Interrogation Protocol of P. Breslin, 31st January 1941, Breslin-Kelly Papers (Hereafter BKP), p. 109. For a biography of Breslin, see: Barry McLoughlin, *Left to the Wolves: Irish Victims of Stalinist Terror* (Dublin, 2007), pp. 11-104.
[72] CDD, 20 August 1930, WLLSE, CDP, HCA/CHE/2/1/7CFD/C, Box FL558.
[73] CDD, 18 August 1930, WLLSE, CDP, HCA/CHE/2/1/7CFD/C, Box FL558; Davis, *Sylvia Pankhurst*, p. 72.
[74] Ibid.
[75] See p. 83 of this thesis.
[76] *Anketa*, Evgeniia Bouvier, 11 December 1921, RGASPI 495/65a/4042/3-4.

It was not mere chance that Despard and Bouvier met in Soviet Moscow. Rather, it was a meeting contingent on both Despard and Bouvier moving from suffrage, through socialism to international communist solidarity. The world revolution became a profoundly intimate affair in the capital of international communism.

Importantly, Despard was not only politicised in a world where the dark contrast of Russian Imperialism was ubiquitous, she was a participant in the construction of this idea. For example, in 1909, when Nicholas II visited Britain, Despard recited to a Finsbury park crowd an account of 'cruel treatment' meted out to Russian comrades fighting Tsarist tyranny.[77] One 1908 issue of Tom Mann's journal, *The Socialist*, contained a description of Despard and her Women's Freedom League marching beneath a banner that declared 'Stone walls do not a prison make!'[78] Little over two decades later, Despard found herself in the Soviet Union, meeting with old comrades such as Mann and Bouvier, in a country seeking to enact liberation within and beyond the prison walls.

Sites of incarceration were, naturally, locations of central interest for veterans of the suffrage struggle on tour. As Crawfurd noted of her sightseeing with Despard: 'We visited many prisons and as both of us had sampled British prisons, we were able to make comparisons.'[79] As suffrage veterans who had politicised their past imprisonments, Despard and Crawfurd represented a movement which, along with Irish nationalists and Russian revolutionaries, had created the modern idea of the political prisoner.[80] Max Hodgson also notes the widespread fascination with Soviet penal institutions as a model for a social democratic future within British Labour circles.[81] It is unsurprising, therefore, that the comparisons Despard made were distinctly favourable. Despard noticed the preponderance of

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[77] *Justice,* 24 July 1909.
[78] *The Socialist* (Melbourne), 31 July 1908.
[79] Crawfurd, *Autobiography*, MML, HCP, p. 333.
[80] Padraic Kenney, *Dances in Chains: Imprisonment in the Modern World* (Oxford, 2018).
[81] Max Hodgson, 'If I Ever Have to go to Prison, I Hope it's a Russian Prison': British Labour, Social Democracy and Soviet Communism, 1919-25', *Twentieth Century British History,* 28:3 (2017), pp. 344-366.

women administrators once more as she visited bright, airy prisons where the convicts were allowed privileges such as visits, film screenings and lectures.[82] Despard was informed that the prisoners were given political education and literacy skills.[83] In a men's prison she encountered three political prisoners. Confronted with precisely the same category of prisoner she sought to liberate in her domestic political context, she proved capable of justifying their incarceration in a revolutionary state.[84] Their crime, she noted, was 'treachery to the Revolution' and one of the criminals had given himself up 'tired, we may hope, of the risky game'.[85] Although these model prisons were hardly indicative of the Soviet incarceration system as a whole, Despard's experience within them underpinned how an activist whose career was shaped by the very concept of political imprisonment and who had been subject to incarceration herself could continue to defend political imprisonment and coercive government in the Soviet state.

The imprisonment of political prisoners, prospectors, bankers and even petty criminals was, in Despard's worldview, a task of clearing up 'residual' elements in the progress towards a socialist future.[86] But the issue of shaping the first generation of the revolution's children was perhaps a more important task. A particularly important site for shaping visitors' impressions of the new Soviet life was the Bolshevo Commune, a penal reform institute located outside Moscow. Avant-garde in its philosophy and architecture, Bolshevo was one of the most-popular sites for Moscow visitors of the 1930s and was seen as a 'prime experimental site for the "remaking of man"'.[87] With the Soviet secret police overseeing its management, it also became a vehicle for euphemising the reputation of a

[82] CDD, 21 August 1930, WLLSE, CDP, HCA/CHE/2/1/7CFD/C, Box FL558.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Casey, *Irish Sympathisers,* pp. 35-36.
[85] CDD, 26 August 1930, WLLSE, CDP, HCA/CHE/2/1/7CFD/C, Box FL558.
[86] CDD, 16 August 1930, WLLSE, CDP, HCA/CHE/2/1/7CFD/C, Box FL558.
[87] Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Foreigners Observed: Moscow Visitors in the 1930s under the Gaze of their Soviet Guides', in *Russian History/Histoire Russe,* 35, Nos. 1-2 (Spring-Summer, 2008), p. 224.

repressive arm of the state.[88] Despard visited the site, finding a society self-governed by those who would in 'other countries' be 'waifs and strays, casually employed or not employed at all'.[89] After her visit to the Commune, she was taken to a parade ground of the Pioneers, the Soviet young communist organisation, where she watched from a large platform as thousands of children marched before her, singing the Internationale and Russian revolutionary songs.[90] Here, she also talked with 'young and some old Russian comrades' who were 'full of joy, good will and enthusiasm'.[91] Many, she noted, 'were anxious to hear about Ireland'.[92] The children of the Revolution, even those who had initially strayed from the socialist path toward criminality, appeared to Despard to be marching forward, literally and figuratively.

The side-lines of these grand ceremonies also provided opportunities for Despard and the Irish delegates to carry out revolutionary networking with international delegates. These encounters could underline how others had benefitted from living an internationalist life, such as when one English woman delegate told Despard how the Communist movement had 'given her hope and fully kept in life'.[93] Other more clandestine encounters were also possible. Although Despard spoke alongside the leading Bolshevik and widow of Lenin Nadezhda Krupskaia at a gathering at the International Lenin School, the Irish delegates were seemingly not considered important enough to be feted by many other prominent Bolsheviks.[94] Writing to Solomon Lozovskii ahead of the 1930 delegation's arrival, Molony noted that he should discuss the development of a CPI with 'Comrades Sheila Dowling and Sheehy Skeffington, particularly with Comrade Dowling regarding Trade-Union activity' noting that the 'work is very difficult and complex here, surrounded as we are by

[88] David-Fox, *Showcasing,* pp. 159-165.
[89] CDD, 24 August 1930, WLLSE, CDP, HCA/CHE/2/1/7CFD/C, Box FL558.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] CDD, 3 September 1930, WLLSE, CDP, HCA/CHE/2/1/7CFD/C, Box FL558.
[94] CDD, 1 September 1930, WLLSE, CDP, HCA/CHE/2/1/7CFD/C, Box FL558.

reactionaries of all kinds'.[95] It is interesting that Molony recommended that Lozovskii liaise with two women from a delegation that included influential Republicans, including Gilmore and Fitzgerald, both among the political leaders of the IRA's left wing. It suggests Molony's confidence in their abilities, which would have been grounded in her long association with both women.

A meeting similar to that suggested by Molony did take place towards the end of the FOSR delegation's visit. Despard was also present. She recorded in her diary:

> I went with my Irish comrades to a special meeting in an office room here to discuss the Irish situation. I think the speaker was American. He gave an admirable sketch of the October Revolution. Laying great emphasis on the fact that strong and disciplined Communist Party was necessary to lead an effective Revolution. When it came to the Irish situation, there was some difference of opinion. We made it clear that mistakes had been made by the comrades who came over to help us. All personalities were assessed. I think the discussion was helpful, and hope it will clear the way.[96]

The discussion evidently explored the disagreements between the delegated British Communists and the Irish radicals – an argument that, as we will see, would resurface once more in response to the FOSR's activities. The revolutionary character of the discussion underlines the distinction between a delegated visit to the USSR and a standard tourist itinerary. This was also a Bolshevik take on a common experience for seasoned political tourists like Despard and Sheehy Skeffington: discussions on the side-lines of international conferences, normally conducted away from the official plenums and sessions.

Even when Despard was not being guided through a penal institution, speaking before thousands, or discussing Ireland's future revolutionary path, the simple ambience of Soviet life appeared to prove the validity of her cause. It is a mark of the intensity of the experience that even rest and relaxation caused Despard to reflect on the merits of Soviet style-socialism.

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[95] Helena Molony to Solomon Lozovskii, 15 August 1930, RGASPI 534/7/286/99.
[96] CDD, 3 September 1930, WLLSE, CDP, HCA/CHE/2/1/7CFD/C, Box FL558.

In a rest home outside Moscow, Despard and Crawfurd reclined as other elderly women discussed their lives. 'One old woman literally wept as she looked at me and thought of my having come all this great distance at 86 years of age to see them and to hear about the Revolution' she noted.[97] Importantly, some of Despard's interactions with elderly Russian revolutionaries did not require an interpreter. French, the language of the Russian aristocracy, provided a common tongue. This reflected the class origins of much of the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia whose elite upbringings would have been familiar to many of their western counterparts. Despard, perhaps used to such linguistic convenience through her suffrage work, did not remark upon this – but it was a revealing insight into the retention of class dynamics within revolutionary movements, particularly when contrasted with the Soviet citizens for whom she required an interpreter, namely workers such as those she encountered on the boats ferrying her to and from the USSR.

Toward the end of her Soviet excursion, Despard attended a meeting of young communists that had an almost dreamlike quality. Brought to a Moscow chocolate factory, Despard was guest of honour as fifty children between the ages of 11 and 16 joined her in a banquet of tea and cakes:

> They welcomed me as coming from their brothers and sisters in Ireland. They wanted to hear of them. They wished that I could have brought another Irish child with me. I answered – telling them of the situation in Ireland and thanking them for their welcome. Might they ask questions: certainly. Had they pioneers in Ireland. I told them of the Fianna. They asked me if I would take back a letter from them to the Irish Fianna and if it would be answered. I assured them that I would take their letter gladly – said I looked upon the Russian Revolution as the beginning of a better world and a higher civilization. If ever able to visit them again. I would bring some Irish pioneers with me. With shouts and acclamation, singing of patriotic Revolutionary Songs and waving of hands, this interesting evening ended.[98]

[97] CDD, 30 August 1930, WLLSE, CDP, HCA/CHE/2/1/7CFD/C, Box FL558.
[98] CDD, 29 August 1930, WLLSE, CDP, HCA/CHE/2/1/7CFD/C, Box FL558.

Treated as a three-dimensional experience, one that inspired authentic emotions of solidarity and revolutionary morale, it becomes obvious why these visits proved so essential to convincing revolutionaries, particularly those coming from as hostile an environment as Ireland, why radical change was both possible and necessary.

Here in the USSR could be found the abstraction of socialist theory turned into a concrete reality – or so it seemed. Shortly after her boat from Leningrad docked in London, Despard was interviewed by a reporter from the CPGB's *Daily Worker*. Her enthusiasm for the Soviet Union was unbounded. She noted she had the 'most wonderful time of her life' in the country – which she would later term in an elegiac poem 'the land of the rising sun'.[99] Reflecting once more her tendency to permit herself more revolutionary language in the Communist press than in the feminist press, Despard declared: 'The Russian workers owe all to the Revolution and for the Revolution they will shed every last drop of blood.'[100] The Soviet tour, a rite of passage for radicals of every red hue in the interwar world, was important precisely because it presented an idealised vision of the future. This experience influenced a belief in the possibility, and even inevitability, of the socialist transformation of the world. Such a belief was important in maintaining revolutionary morale in the capitalist world beyond the Soviet frontier – particularly as Ireland entered a period of intense repression of radical groups. Exploring how socialism was no longer merely an abstract idea in the interwar period, but a reality apparently made manifest in a country that one could visit with relative ease, helps to explain the faith certain Irish radicals held in the inevitable emergence of a new society, even in the most inhospitable environments.

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[99] *Daily Worker,* 18 September 1930; Linklater, *Despard,* p. 238.
[100] Ibid.

Irish Radical Women and Reactionary Internationalism, 1930-1932

On 17 October 1932, a letter was dispatched from San Quentin prison, addressed to 'Dear Comrade Stalin'.[101] Tom Mooney, the letter's incarcerated author, wrote: 'I hope that my revolutionary greetings were given to you and to all of the workers of the Soviet Union by my dear 84 year-old mother'.[102] Two weeks earlier, Mary Mooney, too infirm to speak before a microphone, had an address read on her behalf as she attended a Moscow conference of the International Red Aid, the Comintern organisation concerned with agitation on behalf of political prisoners. 'I have come many thousands of miles to join the workers and peasants of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics in celebrating the 15th anniversary of their revolution' she noted in her address, 'and to thank them for their help to workers in all countries who have been sent to jail because they fought for the working-class.'[103] Mary Mooney's life had taken her far from the rural Mayo childhood where she had been raised a native Irish speaker. Her emigration to the United States was the beginning of a new life shaped by her miner husband's early death as a result of tuberculosis and the imprisonment of her son on charges later overruled. The Comintern-backed European tour of 'Mother Mooney' coincided with the tour of Ada Wright, mother of a black American teenager on trial in the infamous Scottsboro Boys case, which was also supported by the Comintern. This remarkable scenario tells us something of the opportunities radical internationalism afforded. Yet the fact that neither Mooney nor Wright visited Ireland, although both were scheduled to do so during their tours, points to how such opportunities were increasingly restricted by European governments animated by fears of communist conspiracies in the wake of the 1929 economic

[101] *Pravda*, 23 October 1932.
[102] Ibid.
[103] 'To the Workers and Peasants of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics', c. October 1932, Typescript Address, Bancroft Library, University of Berkeley (Hereafter BAN), Thomas J. Mooney Papers (Hereafter TJMP), Carton 24, Folder 88.

crash. Like Mooney and Wright, the returned Irish FOSR delegates and the front groups could be seen as contaminated in the eyes of the authorities by their direct contact with a Bolshevik contagion.

Initially, it seemed that the returned FOSR delegates were having some success in spreading their Bolshevik passions to diverse corners of Dublin society. A glossy pamphlet titled *The USSR Through Irish Eyes* that recounted the 1930 delegates' experiences was produced.[104] The public FOSR meetings ritually included delegates recounting their experiences and occasionally featured exhibitions and dances. Jacob noted at one meeting the 'rapt attention' of the audience as 'general communist stuff' along with 'people's lives and flats and work and prices in Russia' were discussed.[105] In September, the *Irish Press* reported on a FOSR garden party and dance held in Roebuck House where 'pictures and charts' were displayed depicting Russian life.[106] In March 1931, the Irish Labour Party journal *The Watchword* advertised an upcoming FOSR play in Cogley's cabaret modelled on the experimental drama of Soviet directors such as Meyerhold and starring Deirdre MacDonagh, Kathleen Price, Gifford Czira and Capt. Jack White.[107] The FOSR was thus the latest in a long line of organisations managed to a large extent by a single social-political network of Irish women that combined radical politics with respectable socialising. Following the decline of groups such as the Radical Club and IIL, the Comintern's front groups became another vehicle for these gatherings fusing radical leftist politics with culture.

In the spring of 1931, the moribund IIL, which we last encountered as a fractured and fraying organisation at the close of the second chapter, finally fell victim to the competing forces within this small organisation of Irish women. The fatal rift occurred as a result of an

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[104] Friends of Soviet Russia, *The USSR Through Irish Eyes* (Dublin, 1930).
[105] RJD, 19 August 1931, NLI, RJP, MS 43,582 (67).
[106] *Irish Press,* 15 September 1931.
[107] *The Watchword,* 21 March 1931. Denis Johnston directed the play and wrote a farcical account of it in his diary, see: DJD, 27 March 1931, TCDA, DJP, 10066/165/132.

event organised by the Irish branch in association with the League of Nations Society and set to be addressed by Patrick McGilligan – a Free State minister whose inclusion was vociferously opposed by members with republican ties.[108] In a letter to WILPF headquarters, Jacob, the chair of the IIL, suggested the organisation's conflict was deeply-rooted and not isolated to this event alone. 'I think the clearest way to describe the cleavage is to say that some of us would put peace before freedom, and others would put freedom before peace', she noted.[109] Freedom was not defined specifically and was likely interpreted as national freedom, economic freedom or a mixture of both. Division had also emerged within the IWWU in response to the FOSR. In May 1930, shortly after a resolution to bulk-buy delegation reports was defeated within the union, Louie Bennett, a leading union official with a longstanding suspicion towards communist-linked internationalism, proposed a resolution condemning Soviet infringements on religious liberty.[110]

As the tension between radical and liberal Irish women's internationalism reasserted itself once more, tensions arose between the Irish branch of the FOSR and its international parent organisation over the efficacy of revolutionary or supposedly-bourgeois modes of action. Albert Inkpin, the British Communist who headed the International Friends of the Soviet Union, wanted local branches to ensure a fixed percentage of workers on their delegations.[111] The radical elite and intellectuals sent as part of the Irish delegations were far from the proletarian workers that Inkpin desired.[112] In her diary, Jacob described how Inkpin argued that the Irish section was working 'in an out of date way, not organising the class-war properly'.[113] He 'criticised [the FOSR] very hostilely', she noted, 'and gave the impression of

[108] Cullen Owens, *Social History of Women*, p. 153.
[109] Jacob quoted in ibid.
[110] Irish Women Workers Union Minute Book, 1 May 1930, Irish Labour History Society Archives, Irish Women Worker's Union Papers; *The Irishman,* 10 May 1930; Casey, *Irish Sympathisers,* p. 56.
[111] David-Fox, *Showcasing,* p. 104.
[112] Casey, *Irish Sympathisers,* pp. 54-55.
[113] RJD, 5 May 1931, NLI, RJP, MS 33,129/1.

thoroughly despising it and us'.[114] Reflecting a pattern of mutually-reciprocated Irish distaste for the British Communists who nominally oversaw their efforts, Gifford Czira, who acted as FOSR secretary, found Inkpin to be a 'slimy individual' and an obstacle to their organisation.[115] The FOSR's appeal to the bourgeois social-political networks of Dublin was precisely what led to the Friends' limited successes. A push toward a more revolutionary language in line with the Third Period doctrine was given lip-service by the women who dominated the FOSR executive, such as when Gifford Czira denounced 'the agents of capitalism and imperialism' in a letter promoting raffle tickets.[116] Nonetheless, the FOSR's standard mode of action remained hosting raffles, garden parties and exhibitions. This decidedly non-revolutionary approach would not save them, however.

The domestic context was not ripe for the kind of revolutionary rhetoric that Inkpin demanded – or, indeed, the FOSR's more guarded mode of operation. In September 1931, for example, the *Nenagh Guardian* reported that the FOSR had to abandon plans for a meeting in Kilrush, Co. Clare, when local Labour leaders took exception to the use of their town hall.[117] The incident in Clare was ultimately a premonition of the turbulence that lay ahead. A month later, Cumann na nGaedheal decided to outlaw all Irish organisations deemed 'communistic' through the introduction of a constitutional amendment: Constitution (Amendment No. 17 Public Safety) Bill. Jason Knirck rightly describes the bill as the 'most draconian' of all the Public Safety Bills introduced by Cumann na nGaedheal.[118] The measure was chiefly directed against Saor Éire, the radical left republican group whose leading theorist, David Fitzgerald, had accompanied Despard and Sheehy Skeffington to the USSR. The FOSR and other unite front groups also fell afoul of this law. By proxy, the mobilisation of radical women in

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[114] Ibid.
[115] 'John Brennan' to HSS, 10 May 1931, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/4
[116] Circular Letter, 'John Brennan', c. August 1930, PRONI, Irish Unionist Alliance Papers, D989/D/51B.
[117] *Nenagh Guardian*, 22 August 1931.
[118] Jason Knirck, *Afterimage of the Revolution: Cumann na nGaedheal and Irish Politics*, *1922-1932* (Madison, 2014), p. 234.

Ireland, which had occurred largely through these front groups, became another casualty. It is worth focusing on the bill, because in its genesis can be traced one strand of the transnational political atmosphere that would demobilise the front groups and put a halt to radical women's activism in Ireland by the end of the decade. This thesis is grounded in a study of radical internationalism – but we must also consider its counterpoint: reactionary internationalism.

The Dáil debate which preceded the passage of the amendment revealed Cumann na nGaedheal's fevered reading of the world situation and the intelligence produced by Garda sources. By 1930, as Knirck notes, 'ministers were being deluged with memoranda from the Ministry of Justice on the communist and labour movements'.[119] Cosgrave argued for the necessity of the bill by depicting a multi-fanged conspiracy pitched to absorb the state, consisting of the IRA, Cumann na mBan and linked 'Communistic groups', specifically pointing to the 'The Irish Friends of Soviet Russia, the Irish Communist Party, the Irish Working Farmers' Committee, the Workers Revolutionary Party in Ireland, the Irish National Unemployed Movement, the Workers Defence Corps and the Irish Labour Defence League.[120] The omission of the LAI is notable, particularly when we consider that four of the listed organisations did not actually exist. The Department of Justice's intelligence-gathering work was evidently shoddy.

In detailing the bill, Cosgrave framed communism as the ultimate evil facing the state. Republican violence, combined with 'new teaching of communism', would risk 'the permanent perversion of the youth of the country', he suggested.[121] To allow communism to be openly advocated would, he argued, be comparable to having people at street corners preaching 'sexual immorality'.[122] Communism was envisioned as an existential threat which

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[119] Knirck, *Afterimage of the Revolution*, p. 240.
[120] Constitution (Amendment No. 17) Bill, 1931, Allocation of Time Motion, 14 October 1931, Dáil Éireann Debates, Vol 40, No. 1, https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1931-10-14/33/ (Accessed 23 May 2019).
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.

struck at the stability not only of the political regime but also the social ties that bound Irish people. The movements singled out for proscription were, in the view of the government, intent on destroying the Church and the State, 'the only bulwarks against Chaos'.[123] Cosgrave's framing was perhaps as imaginative as his list of radical groups in the country, extrapolating from the paranoid vision of police surveillance to describe a conspiracy that was total in its destructive intent.

Although framed by the social theology of Catholicism and building on Irish government fears of republican subversion, the conspiracy outlined by Cosgrave was not a uniquely Irish invention. Knirck, the most recent historian to examine this amendment, has noted it as interesting that Cumann na nGaedheal assumed the communist element in the republican programme to be an external creation rather than a component of an Irish socialist tradition.[124] It was also unsurprising. Bolshevik anti-religious policy seemed to confirm Catholic fears of socialism as a radical secularising force. Todd Weir notes that Catholic leaders interpreted 'radical secularism' through the lens of the Russian Revolution and its anti-religious campaigns.[125] Moreover, the majority Catholic countries such as Mexico and Spain witnessed anti-clerical violence during this period, often provoked by agrarian conflict. Within Cumann na nGaedheal circles and the Ministry of Justice, republican flirtation with communism thus raised the spectre of this anti-clerical violence witnessed in contemporary Spain, Mexico and Russia spreading to devout Ireland.

Following the breakdown in Vatican-USSR negotiations and the newfound prominence of Communist Parties in the aftermath of the Great Depression, the Vatican hastened the construction of the intellectual and theological scaffolding that would support its

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[123] Ibid.
[124] Knirck, *Afterimage of the Revolution*, pp. 243-244.
[125] Todd H. Weir, 'A European Culture War in the Twentieth Century? Anti-Catholicism and Anti-Bolshevism between Moscow, Berlin, and the Vatican, 1922 to 1933', *Journal of Religious History,* 39:2 (June 2015), p. 283.

anti-communism for decades to come.[126] In May 1931, Pope Pius XI released the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. As Marc Mulholland notes, the encyclical 'reconfigured the Church's toleration of "Catholic socialism" in favour of virulently anti-socialist corporatism', thereby ensuring that Irish Labour in the South was 'ideologically hemmed in'.[127] The Irish radical left (and, indeed, all other Irish leftist tendencies) had to overcome the obstacle of demonstrating that socialism posed no threat to the practice of religious faith. They were not helped in this task by the consistency with which the Irish press pointed to the anti-clerical conduct of socialist movements from Mexico to Moscow.

The framing of communism as a foreign threat to social order extended beyond senior figures within continental Catholicism, becoming an increasingly popular theory held by politicians in western Europe. John Regan has noted the influence upon leading Cumann na nGaedheal figures, especially the virulently anti-communist Desmond FitzGerald, of neo-Thomist philosophy: a theological standpoint with a political project that lay between liberal individualism and socialist collectivism, developed by the French Catholic Jacques Maritain.[128] Yet, not every Catholic anti-communist in Ireland was a neo-Thomist. The belief in a Judeo-Masonic-Bolshevik conspiracy was never endorsed by the Holy See, but fear of this alignment of forces was familiar to many among the faithful.[129] Seán William Gannon's forthcoming essay on Irish adaptations of the myth reveals how influential this mode of thought was becoming in the upper echelons of Irish Catholicism during the thirties.[130] The Judeo-Bolshevik mythology, although always more popular with Irish priests than politicians,

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[126] James Chappel, *Catholic Modern: The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church* (Cambridge, Mass.: 2018) p. 63.
[127] Marc Mulholland, 'Irish Labour and the "Co-operative Commonwealth" in the Era of the First World War', in Lucy Bland and Richard Carr (eds.), *Labour, British Radicalism and the First World War* (Manchester, 2018), p. 197.
[128] John M. Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution, 1921-1936* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 280-284.
[129] Paul Hanebrink, *A Spectre Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge, Mass., 2018), esp. pp. 98-100.
[130] Seán William Gannon, '"The Old Sinister Enemies Have Found a New Ally": The Judaeo-Bolshevik Myth in Mid-Twentieth-Century Irish Catholic Culture', in Zuleika Rodgers and Natalie Wynn (eds.), *Reimagining the Jews of Ireland: Historiography, Identity and Representation* (Bern, Forthcoming 2021).

constituted a lasting part of the transnational anti-communist imaginary. In these Dáil debates about the communist conspiracy allegedly pitched to absorb the state, we find the opening of a political space on the Irish right that allowed this myth space to develop and transform, particularly in the references to the 'foreignness' of communist ideology and the focus on its perversion of a national social order perceived in terms of national faith and moral values.

Throughout the five stages of the bill's passage through the Dáil, deputies revisited animosities from the era of the civil war and denounced republican violence or delivered tempered apologias for republican intransigence. The crux of the debate, however, centred on the concept of foreign influence upon Ireland's extra-parliamentary radicals. What kind of contact with the Soviets merited an organisation being labelled 'Bolshevik' or 'Communist'? Cumann na nGaedheal deputies were reminded by the opposition that they had once been involved in a Sinn Féin executive that had cited the Russian example in its electioneering literature in 1918 and sent a delegation to Soviet Russia in 1921.[131] Fianna Fáil's Gerald Boland was questioned about his more recent participation in a 1925 IRA delegation to Moscow. He stated that he was proud to have continued the tradition of Hugh O'Donnell and Roger Casement, in travelling to another country 'in the vain hope that we would get the Russian people to weaken the power of our enemies'.[132] Perhaps the most remarkable and revealing interjection in the debate came from Thomas Mullins, a Fianna Fáil TD for Cork West who heavily hinted at his own membership of the FOSR and implicated other deputies as having Soviet sympathies. After noting that he was a member of four of the organisations set to be proscribed and stating that the FOSR had corresponded with the Dáil, Mullins argued that if 'being friendly with the Soviet Union' was a conspiracy 'then I believe that

[131] Constitution (Amendment No. 17) Bill, 1931, 15 October 1931, Second Stage, https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1931-10-15/6/ (Accessed 23 May 2019).
[132] Ibid.

there are many in this House besides myself who are guilty of conspiracy'.[133] The interrogation of political pasts had reflected the common revolutionary origins of both sides of the House, while Mullins' comments hinted at the interlocking circles of Ireland's extra-parliamentary radicals and certain members of the political establishment.

In this sense, we can re-assess Regan's emphasis on Cumann na nGaedheal anti-communism as being a response to a largely imagined threat.[134] Much of this conspiracy was fantastical, but it is important to outline the realities that shaped political fantasies. Despard and other leading FOSR members were well-known to deputies in the Dáil, either through their reading of surveillance material or personal encounters during the revolutionary period. Dublin was always a small city where the politics of the country was focused into a select set of locations; cafés, homes and clubs. Although the revolutionary politics pursued by Despard, Sheehy Skeffington and their circle differed from the policies of Fianna Fáil, their political world was too small to avoid overlap. In 1928, for example, Seán MacEntee had raised the issue of a police officer visit to Roebuck House at a time when Despard was being removed in an ambulance. The Minister for Justice responded that Roebuck House is 'a spacious building consisting of over twenty rooms and occupied by a considerable number of people', suggesting the watchful eye on the house maintained by the government.[135] When Cosgrave sought to illuminate this shadowy world by shining a light on the links between his political opposition, Irish republicans, radical women and Moscow, he presented a grossly distorted image – but a distorted image of something which did exist in some form.

The bill passed and was put into effect immediately – censoring the publications of the Irish radical left and rendering most of their organisations illegal. Word of the

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[133] Constitution (Amendment No. 17) Bill, 1931, Allocation of Time Motion, 14 October 1931, Dáil Éireann Debates, Vol 40, No. 1, https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1931-10-14/33/ (Accessed 23 May 2019).
[134] Regan, *Irish Counter-Revolution*, esp. pp. 282-283.
[135] Questions. Oral Answers. CID Visit to Roebuck House, 31 October 1928, https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1928-10-31/11/ (Accessed 23 May 2019).

suppression of revolutionary forces in the country soon spread beyond Ireland. *Pravda* issued a headline for 20 October 1931 describing a 'Siege situation in Ireland.'[136] While the Public Safety Bill was the result of a potent domestic political cocktail, it was also a response to a wider resurgence of leftist activity in the wake of the 1929 world economic crisis. It was therefore not surprising that the Irish Free State was not alone at the end of 1931 in taking tough action against front groups. The state's actions were echoed by the Weimar government, for example, which in December 1931 raided the offices of the League Against Imperialism headquarters on the pretence that the organisation sought to subvert the state.[137] However, the difference in the Irish case was the primacy of an anti-communist atmosphere shaped by Catholicism, which would have repercussions for the mobilisation of Irish activist women for years, and even decades, to come.

It was precisely because international communism had such an impact on certain activist women operating in Ireland that the rise in anti-communism would play a role in demobilising women's activism. In the immediate aftermath of the legislation, Sheehy Skeffington, Despard and Kathleen Price used the pages of Larkin's *Irish Worker*, a journal which had escaped suppression, to dispel notions that the FOSR was an organisation intent on overthrowing the state. The statement asked for the organisation not to be misrepresented and noted that their public lectures, letters to the press, public meetings and organised delegations were not secretive methods.[138] Speaking for the IIL, Jacob protested against the Act for placing 'women and girls' in 'moral danger' by subjecting them to search, interrogation and detention by 'any man in the police force.'[139] Private appraisals of the situation appear to have been less measured. Describing a post-Public Safety Bill meeting of the FOSR in his

[136] *Pravda,* 20 October 1931.
[137] Daniel Brückenhaus, *Policing Transnational Protest: Liberal Imperialism and the Surveillance of Anticolonialists in Europe, 1905-1945* (Oxford, 2017), p. 165.
[138] *Irish Worker,* 7 November 1931.
[139] *Republican File,* 5 December 1931.

diary, Denis Johnston noted that Gonne was 'hysterical' and attempts were being made to destroy the 'very fine collection of Russian posters' which Kernoff had brought back from the USSR.[140] In December, Despard wrote to an English friend describing the raids and arrests taking place: 'Much anxiety and much work falls upon us the women' she noted; 'We have to stir up the people, so as to get this government out of power.'[141] Cumann na nGaedheal, as it transpired, were in the last months of their tenure. However, the change of government would not bring the evolution in society that Despard and her comrades desired.

With the Public Safety Bill suppressing the organs and organisations of the Irish radical left, *Republican File,* a creatively constructed journal edited by Frank Ryan and Sheehy Skeffington, was put into production. The title suggested both a newspaper file and the file used by prisoners to break out of a cell.[142] Adopting the wartime strategy of 'Scissors and Paste', the publication was composed of articles from other newspapers that had already passed the censor's gaze.[143] Through clever placement and juxtaposition, these reprinted articles could convey a subversive message. For example, the republication of an article from a British tabloid arguing that 'women are Russia's chief agents and paymasters in Ireland' was likely a tongue-in-cheek signal to sympathetic radicals.[144] *Republican File* indicated the self-awareness of certain Irish radicals of their own place within the Irish political landscape and reflected their own attempts to subvert the narratives of being Soviet dupes which others placed upon them.

Illustration was also deployed in *Republican File* as a propaganda counterpoint. In February 1932, with a general election underway in Ireland, an image of Despard was placed on the front page of *Republican File* above an *Irish Independent* article quoting government

[140] DJD, 20 October 1931; 17 January 1931, TCDA DJP 10066/165/186.
[141] Charlotte Despard to Charles Wilson, 26 December 1931, WLLSE CDP HCA/CHE/2/1/7CFD/A15.
[142] *An Phoblacht,* 22 October 1932.
[143] Ibid.
[144] *Republican File,* 19 December 1931.

minister Desmond Fitzgerald's promise to imprison and 'if necessary' execute people like 'Mrs. Despard, Mrs. McBride and those who were trying to bring in Soviet conditions.'[145] To understand the propaganda value of an image of Despard, we can draw on Beth Slutsky's analysis of the American communist Anita Whitney. The daughter of an eminent California family and a veteran suffrage campaigner, she shared much in common with Despard. She was also known to Sheehy Skeffington.[146] Slutsky notes how Whitney's supporters 'used her gender identity to mollify any deep concerns about liberals supporting revolutionaries.'[147] Moreover, Slutsky argues that 'rigid understandings of gender roles – cast by both radicals and liberals – overtook [Whitney's] self-proclaimed identity as a revolutionary and allowed supporters to rally around a wealthy woman, albeit a Communist'.[148] By placing Despard with her head bowed and wearing her signature black mantilla prominently on its front page, *Republican File* enlisted a visual language of femininity and respectability. The front-page image asked: how could a woman like this threaten the government? In doing so, the publication deployed a conventional understanding of gender and class in an attempt to elicit broad sympathy for a woman who was, in fact, committed to the revolutionary overthrow of the state.

Government actions also provided fuel for similarly framed propaganda in the important constituency of Irish-America. Gonne drew attention from abroad to the plight of Irish republican prisoners by corresponding with Roger Baldwin, secretary of the International Committee for Political Prisoners (ICPP), from 1928.[149] Baldwin had previously travelled to the USSR in a tour organised by O'Callaghan and had another Irish connection

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[145] Ibid, 13 February 1932.
[146] Marie Equi to HSS, 1 September 1938, NLI, SSP, 41,177/16; Alice Park to HSS, 15 July 1930, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/41.
[147] Beth Slutsky, *Gendering Radicalism: Women and Communism in Twentieth-Century California* (Lincoln, 2015), p. 22.
[148] Ibid, p. 24.
[149] Maud Gonne to Secretary of the ICPP, 17 June 1928, NYPL, International Committee for Political Prisoners Records (Hereafter ICPP), Box 4, Folder 7.

through his colleague and former romantic partner the Irish-American radical Elizabeth Gurley Flynn.[150] In July 1931, Gonne sent Baldwin a carbon copy of a letter to a Garda inspector, decrying the raids on Roebuck House, focusing on the invasion of her and Despard's home. Baldwin extended his sympathies and 'sense of indignation to Madame Despard'.[151]

With the introduction of the Public Safety Bill, Baldwin was once more contacted by Gonne and responded with amazement that 'a government with the traditions of the Irish struggle should adapt precisely the same weapons against its opposition as were used by the British.'[152] A New York protest against the Public Safety Bill was organised in January 1932, with the Mecca Temple filled to capacity as speakers including Baldwin, Basant Kolmar Roy, an Indian nationalist and Michael Price, an IRA commandant on tour, denounced the Public Safety Bill.[153] The gendered distinctions in republican organising between a *Women's* Prisoners' Defence League and a male-dominated paramilitary organisation appears to have played a role in retaining the support of Baldwin's organisation. In 1930, for example, the ICPP refused support to the IRA, stating the organisation only supports non-violent political prisoners.[154] Enlisting Baldwin's help through the WPDL, Gonne received support for the exact same category of prisoners.

Continued international pressure would not be required however, as Fianna Fáil's entry into government following the February 1932 election led to the release of republicans imprisoned under the Public Safety Bill. Although temporarily shelved, the act was not repealed. It would, as Nic Dháibhéid notes, later 'form the bedrock of the Fianna Fáil

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[150] Rosalyn Fraad Baxandall, *Words on Fire: The Life and Writing of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn* (New Brunswick, 1987), p. 41.
[151] Baldwin to Gonne, 15 August 1931, NYPL, ICPPP, Box 4, Folder 8.
[152] Baldwin to Gonne, 29 October 1931, NYPL, ICPPP, Box 4, Folder 9.
[153] Gavin Wilk, *Transatlantic Defiance: The Militant Irish Republican Movement in America* (Manchester, 2014), pp. 87-88.
[154] ICPP Secretary to Adjutant General of the IRA, 19 February 1930, NYPL, ICPPP, Box 4, Folder 8.

government's eventual confrontation of the IRA threat'.[155] Briefly, however, Fianna Fáil's rise seemed to offer republicans political breathing space. *Republican File* was decommissioned and *An Phoblacht* resumed publication once more. Reflecting the temporary optimism of the political moment, Patricia Lynch, writing in the resurrected *An Phoblacht*, called for national recognition for Gonne and the WPDL in standing up to coercion.[156] Lynch's husband, R. M. Fox, would also remember the moment as a cause for revolutionary hope – tying the Irish cause to the suffrage and pacifist movements:

> As I stood by the prison railings and watched these men come out, it seemed as if there emerged a ghostly procession of prisoners who through the ages had suffered not for any privileges for themselves but to extend the bounds of freedom for humanity. I thought of the Suffrage prisoners, of the anti-War prisoners, as well as of these prisoners for National freedom.[157]

This description opened a sequence in Fox's 1937 memoir that would conclude with Fox listing the three great struggles witnessed by his generation: the suffrage movement, the Russian Revolution and the Irish nationalist struggle.[158] Fox, as a former fellow traveller of the East London radical network, an early visitor to the Soviet Workers' Republic, the husband of Lynch and a chronicler of the Irish left, was a key witness to the world surveyed in this thesis. It is telling that he placed his own foundational political experiences at the same historical cross-roads explored in this thesis: the intersection between suffrage, the Irish revolution and the Russian revolution.

Fox's romantic memory of greeting the released republican prisoners hints at how some of those within Irish radical circles framed their own struggle within the history of a wider revolutionary world. It is interesting that Fox's account does not explore in detail

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[155] Nic Dháibhéid, *Seán MacBride*, p. 98.
[156] *An Phoblacht,* 19 March 1932.
[157] Fox, *Smoky Crusade,* p. 366.
[158] Ibid, p. 368.

solidarity with the Belfast Outdoor Relief Strike in October 1932, an oft-eulogised moment of non-sectarian working class mobilisation that was partly led by Belfast communists and continues to play a significant role in socialist republican historical memory.[159] Leftists in the Irish Free State expressed active solidarity with the strike at the time. The *Irish Workers' Voice* reported on a mass meeting in College Green where members of the Belfast strike committee spoke alongside Dublin-based radicals such as Despard, Peadar O'Donnell and Seán Murray while *An Phoblacht* carried a front page headline stating 'Orange and Green United in Belfast'.[160] Fox's account of the release of the prisoners also belied the harder reality of continued repression of the left. Although de Valera temporarily took a more conciliatory approach towards militant republicans, Fianna Fáil's stance on communism and the radical left would not differ majorly from that of their predecessors. Eoin O'Duffy remained in his role as police commissioner until his dismissal in February 1933. But more importantly, the rising tide of transnational Catholic anti-communism, buoyed by the power of the Church in the Irish Free State, ensured that Fianna Fáil would develop its predecessor's anti-communist legacy despite its initially more lenient approach.

With Cumann na nGaedheal's scattershot proscription of revolutionary organisations no longer enforced, other less direct methods of supressing radical initiatives could come into play. This was demonstrated within months of Fianna Fáil's election victory when the Scottsboro mother Ada Wright was unable to come to Ireland on a planned speaking engagement. The stage had been set for a pluralistic platform to welcome Ada Wright to Dublin in the summer of 1932. Radical women like Sheehy Skeffington and more moderate counterparts, such as her sister Mary Kettle, planned to join figures such as Peadar O'Donnell and Harry Kernoff in the Mansion House for a protest against a world-famous case of

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[159] For a recent account, see: Seán Mitchell, *Struggle or Starve: Working-Class Unity in Belfast's 1932 Outdoor Relief Riots* (Chicago, 2017). The contextualised oral histories of the event in Ronnie Munch and Bill Rolston, *Belfast in the Thirties: An Oral History* (Belfast, 1987) are also useful.
[160] *Irish Workers' Voice,* 15 October 1932; *An Phoblacht,* 22 October 1932.

injustice.[161] However, the event never took place. Wright's travelling party did not land in Ireland. Writing to the Trinidadian Comintern operative George Padmore, Reginald Bridgeman of the British section of the LAI saw political intent in the incident: '[De] Valera refused to allow Mrs. Wright to visit the Irish Free State in order to win a little credit with the United States Government at the expense of the Negroes'.[162] An unwillingness to upset American officialdom is a plausible explanation for the decision, but the move also reflected a European context of state opposition to radical internationalist campaigns.

In December 1932, Sheehy Skeffington wrote to Tom Mooney in San Quentin with a briefing on the situation in Ireland that sheds further light on the incident. On the case of Ada Wright, Sheehy Skeffington noted that requests for a visa for Wright to land in Ireland were ignored.[163] A September 1932 article in the communist journal *Irish Workers' Voice* reported that Wright and an organiser of her trip had applied to the Free State Minister in Berlin for visas to visit Ireland but were refused.[164] Such tactics in obstructing the movements of Comintern-backed campaigners were not unique. In the years following the economic crash of 1929, British authorities established 'complex manoeuvring' to suppress communist-aligned groups in ways that impeded their supporters from whipping up public sympathy, including through visa refusal.[165] The *Workers Voice* article reported further that Sheehy Skeffington and a 'Mrs. Mary Donnelly' had sent a letter of protest to de Valera that went unacknowledged.[166] Sheehy Skeffington informed Tom Mooney further that she had learned that his mother, whom she had made preparations to host, had failed to arrive in Ireland although she would have been entitled to do so.[167] While the Wright incident suggests an

[161] *Irish Workers' Voice,* 11 June 1932.
[162] Quoted in Susan D. Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain* (Princeton, 2009), pp. 35-36. The letter cited by Pennybacker is held in RGASPI.
[163] HSS to Tom Mooney, 13 December 1932, BAN, TJMP, Carton 58, Folder 38.
[164] *Irish Workers' Voice,* 24 September 1932.
[165] Brückenhaus, *Policing Transnational Protest,* pp. 146-148.
[166] *Irish Workers' Voice,* 24 September 1932.
[167] HSS to Tom Mooney, 13 December 1932, BAN, TJMP, Carton 58, Folder 38.

underlying government aversion to Comintern-aligned initiatives outlasted the coercion period, the rejuvenation of Catholic inspired anti-communism would prove a more lasting impediment to leftist organising in the Irish Free State than legal and bureaucratic obstacles.

Informing Tom Mooney of the status of Irish revolutionary movements, Sheehy Skeffington noted she would avoid certain details in case a 'benevolent gov[ernment] censor' was reading the correspondence.[168] Despite self-censorship, the correspondence provides insights into the status of Ireland's radical left in this twilight between coercion and an uncertain future. Repeating standard criticisms, Sheehy Skeffington deemed Jim Larkin vain, incapable of working with others and 'a spent force'.[169] Meanwhile, his son, Jim Larkin Jnr., whom the Comintern had partly entrusted with directing Irish communist initiatives, apparently lacked the personality of his father.[170] Gonne, suffering from rheumatism, was tired.[171] In contrast, the octogenarian Despard was 'active & revolutionary as ever'.[172] One initiative that Sheehy Skeffington believed had prospects was the 'Workers' College' that had been established that November on an Eccles Street premises owned by Despard.[173] But Sheehy Skeffington described a deluge of anti-communist propaganda that branded any form of socialism as 'anti-Christian', which she traced to a fear among the 'clerics, their allies [and the] capitalists' of Christianity being attacked.[174] 'They fall for it too!' she noted, gesturing towards the perceived gullibility of the Irish public.[175]

The awakening of the Catholic anti-communism in Ireland would have a profound impact – and not only for the conservative-minded faithful. The political atmosphere inaugurated by the Public Safety Bill, particularly the religiosity which acted as its backdrop,

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[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid.

could also encourage self-professed radicals to reconfigure their politics in the face of a Church onslaught against communism. A passage in the prison diary kept by Sighle Humphries, a republican activist who had been arrested under the Public Safety Bill due to her involvement with Saor Éire, is revealing in this respect. Humphries wrote in her diary about her interpretation of communism, which she saw not just as an 'economic theory' but as a 'crusade to establish justice so far as is possible in a natural world.'[176] Curiously, she detached communism from its internationalism, a fundamental precept of the ideology, in an attempt to reconcile her Catholicism with her political commitments. The Pope, she noted, 'had to condemn the types of communism practised in Europe because it unfortunately preaches atheism'.[177] 'But atheism is not a principle of Communism any more than drunkenness is a principle of Irish Catholics' she added.[178]

This attempt to overcome the disjunction between communism and Catholicism was not unique to Humphries. Even the avowedly secular Sheehy Skeffington used the rhetorical fugue of describing Soviet society as Christianity-in-practice when lecturing about her tour of the USSR.[179] The difference, however, was that Sheehy Skeffington's private correspondence reveals that she understood the Church as a barrier to the development of progressive movements in Ireland, whereas Humphries, initially saw the two as reconcilable. However, Humphries appears to have abandoned this position. Shortly after her release, Humphries informed Ernie O'Malley that certain aims of Saor Éire had been 'excised too closely' from a Communist programme.[180] In 1934, Humphries resigned from Republican Congress, a successor organisation to Saor Éire. Her resignation letter suggests that the organisation's

[176] Diary of Sighle Humphries, 30 December 1931, UCDA, Sighle Humphries Papers (Hereafter SHP), P 106/1096.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.
[179] *An Phoblacht*, 4 October 1930.
[180] Sighle Humphries to Ernie O'Malley, 5 April 1932, UCDA, SHP, P106/756 (i).

orientation towards international communism influenced her decision.[181] Humphries' internationalism, if it ever existed, was not integral to her politics. It is also worth noting that her politico-religious dilemma was remarkably uncommon among the other Irish radicals prominent in this thesis, most of whom lived largely secular lives or, in Despard's case, found a lasting means of reconciling their religious beliefs and revolutionary commitments.

What sustained political commitments amid the atmosphere of hostility? Unsurprisingly, it was the women who had emerged from the matrix of transnational feminism charted in this thesis and who had seen Soviet socialism in action who retained interest in Communist-inspired internationalism in spite of the hostile atmosphere. Connections to the causes and comrades beyond Dublin bolstered morale through encounters with the radical world. For example, Despard was attending a world congress of the WIR in Berlin as the Dáil debated the Public Safety Bill. Here, she witnessed an electrifying atmosphere of international solidarity, with youth groups performing songs, plays and revolutionary dance, along with performances by Bertolt Brecht's collaborator Hans Eisler.[182] Despard was impressed by the 'atmosphere of hope'.[183] Once more, the travel opportunities opened by radical internationalism buoyed revolutionary expectations.

Amid coercion, Despard and Gonne's Women Prisoner's Defence League also remained active. In a December 1931 rebuke sent by the Executive Committee of International Red Aid to the Irish section of the International Labour Defence, the executive in Moscow noted:

> [W]e believe that up till now the organisation which in Ireland has taken the lead in support of class war victims and in the action of protest and agitation against bourgeois class justice, prison regime etc. has not been the [Irish Labour Defence League] but the Women Prisoners' Defence League.[184]

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[181] Sighle Humphries to Republican Congress Committee, 18 July 1934, UCDA, SHP, P1906/1490.
[182] Braskén, *International Workers' Relief*, p. 196.
[183] Quoted in ibid.
[184] EC IRA to Irish Labour Defence League, c. December 1931, RGASPI 539/3/645/3.

By mid-1932, the anti-communist atmosphere had not yet reached the point where events in Dublin were disrupted by lay Catholic organisations. In May 1932, D. S. Mirskii, an Anglo-Soviet intellectual, attended a meeting chaired by Sheehy Skeffington wherein he remarked that 'the movement' in Ireland lacked the 'outstandingly' working class character of its Russian counterpart.[185] Although there was a natural wariness to radical initiatives displayed by government authorities – signified by incidents such as Ada Wright's failure to receive a visa for Ireland – by and large, the early months of Fianna Fáil represented a return to normality after a period of coercion. This, as we will see, would change dramatically in 1933, as widespread anti-communism acted as an extra-governmental means of suppressing radical initiatives.

The years between 1929 and 1932 saw the refinement of a Christian anticommunism alongside an escalation in anti-colonial and communist activity in Europe. The Public Safety Bill emerged from a combination of fears for the stability of the state, a desire to cast major political opponents as Bolsheviks and sincerely held anxieties about godless communism. What could be perceived as a bunker-mentality in Irish politics and an attempt to shield the country from global political currents through coercive legislation and the fostering of a 'red-scare', was conversely a potent symbol of Ireland's connection to an international crisis. Appositely, the coercion period should not just be viewed in terms of arrests of activists and the proscription of groups, but in terms of a transnational context of repression of radical initiatives. While the 'Third Period' was the Comintern's response to the economic downturn, reactionary legislation formed a core part of the response of European liberal democracies to this historical moment. The front groups, which had become an important means of mobilisation for Irish radical women, became one victim of this anti-communist atmosphere.

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[185] *Irish Workers' Voice*, 7 May 1932.

Conclusion

In late 1932, Willi Münzenberg, the enterprising German Communist who had developed the WIR and the LAI, initiated his latest globe-spanning mobilising effort: the World Committee Against Imperialist War. At its inaugural congress, held in Amsterdam in August, delegates heard a song written by Despard, who attended as an Irish representative alongside Peadar O'Donnell.[186] The chorus of Despard's song reflected her indefatigable revolutionary commitment and her self-perception as one person standing at the intersection of the political currents of a wider radical world:

> At the heart of the world,
> Our banner is unfurled,
> Bear it on; bear it on, o'er earth and air and sea.[187]

This organisation would ultimately develop into the World Committee Against War and Fascism, attracting beneath its unfurled banner feminists such as Sylvia Pankhurst and Gabrielle Duchêne. With the Nazi rise to power in 1933, the struggle against fascism overtook the opposition to 'imperialist war' that had undergirded so many united front efforts in the previous years. The insurgent fascist menace would become the last political effort that would rally the international left before the onset of the Second World War.

Front groups, particularly the FOSR, brought under their umbrella a cross-section of Dublin's cultural bohemia and progressive political circles. Within these social-political circles the historian will find a series of interpersonal dynamics that shaped how radical politics was conducted and sustained in Ireland throughout the interwar period; such as the clash of personalities between British Communists and Irish radicals and the familiar

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[186] *An Phoblacht,* 17 September 1932; *The Herald* (Melbourne, Australia)*,* 22 July 1933.
[187] Reprinted in Leslie Daiken, *Good-bye Twilight: Songs of the Irish Struggle* (London, 1936), p. 93

commingling of artists and agitators. The prominence of women within such organisations and events is not incidental. Radical women, particularly those with suffrage backgrounds, were practised transnational networkers with the contacts, linguistic abilities and organisational skills to build organisations like the FOSR into relatively successful operations. Yet a red scare emerged that had the effect of demobilising Irish radical women's initiatives. Once the anti-red genie emerged out of the bottle, it proved impossible to make him return.

Irish radical women and their international counterparts progressed through a radical world that was at once expansive in geographical scope and breath of political vision, yet intimate in its overlapping spaces, networks and personal relationships. Departing from Dublin on a several-day voyage to the Soviet Union, Despard nonetheless travelled alongside comrades from past struggles and encountered further old friends upon arrival in Leningrad and Moscow. This was a literal embodiment of a historical phenomenon traced throughout this thesis: the political course taken by radicals like Despard, from suffrage to radical anti-capitalist internationalism, formed a shared political experience pursued by a global, yet interlinked, network of activist women.

In the next chapter we will explore Irish women's engagement with the final battle of anti-capitalist women's internationalism in the interwar period: transnational women's antifascism. This mobilising political sentiment was an as-yet incipient cause among radical women in Ireland in 1932. Yet there was one Irish woman who has hitherto moved through the side-lines of certain sources considered in this thesis, Katherine Gillett Gatty, who was vociferous in her adoption of a transnational antifascist politics. The next chapter will use her movement through antifascist networks as a launching point for an exploration into Irish women's antifascism and the ultimate decline of Irish women's radical internationalism during the era of the Popular Front.

Chapter 5: 'This Rabble Doesn't Deserve to be Saved from Capitalism': Irish Radical Women, Antifascism and the Popular Front 1932-1939

Introduction

In October 1936, Irish police surveillance observed the arrival in Templemore, Co. Tipperary, of Katherine Gillett Gatty – an 'avowed anti-Fascist'.[1] Gillett Gatty, the reporting officer noted, was highly educated and appeared to be of Irish birth.[2] The report described her as interested in 'all movements aiming at the destruction of Fascism' and listed Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and Maud Gonne as her local contacts.[3] Shortly after this report was filed, Gillett Gatty became an important participant in Irish solidarity initiatives with the Republican forces in the Spanish Civil War. Simultaneously the most active Irish woman in interwar women's antifascist networks and one of the least well-known, Gillett Gatty has fallen through the historiographical cracks. As someone from an Anglo-Irish background who spent substantial parts of her youth in Ireland, primarily associating with British feminist circles in the interim, only to once more identify with Irish political causes decades later, she troubles rigid definitions of 'Irishness'. Moreover, her evolving political stances make her a poor candidate for the fixed political label 'Irish socialist republican'. Tracing the path of women such as Gillett Gatty through interwar antifascism further demonstrates how both political and national identities were transformed and set in flux through the lived experience of radical internationalism. This chapter uses Gillett Gatty's induction into antifascist

[1] 'Madame Gillett Gatty, Journalist and Authoress – Communist', P. Colleran, 14 October 1936, NAI, JUS, 2008/117/726.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.

activism as a prelude to understanding Irish radical women's political and cultural responses to the Spanish Civil War and the Popular Front. While I have maintained throughout this thesis that activists always proved capable of crossing the boundaries between liberal and radical internationalism, transnational antifascism and the Popular Front more broadly were premised on an advocacy of such broad progressive unity.

The history of Irish fascism and antifascism is well-traversed territory. Historians have traced the political fortunes of para-fascist and fascist tendencies in Ireland.[4] Irish resistance to fascism, from both the state and fascism's socialist opponents, has also received attention.[5] Related to this, Irish engagement in the Spanish Civil War and the influence of the conflict on domestic politics remains a subject of popular and academic interest.[6] However, historians of Irish antifascism have yet to systematically explore women's roles within this political project. While women remain marginal to the history of the Irish left, the international character of both fascist and antifascist politics has made a transnational lens inevitable in such studies. In his 1999 study of the Spanish Civil War and Irish politics, Fearghal McGarry, for example, argued that 'the tendency to view Irish history as occurring within a vacuum, isolated from European currents, has become increasingly untenable.'[7] A 2018 essay by Anne Dolan surveying politics, economy and society in the interwar Irish Free State continued this argument.[8] Refuting the stereotype of Ireland's supposed parochialism is a continuing task for historians. This chapter contributes to the ongoing project of

[4] See for example: Maurice Manning, *The Blueshirts* (Dublin, 1970); Mike Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* (Dublin, 1997); R. M. Douglas, *Architects of the Resurrection: Ailtirí na hAiséirghe and the Fascist "New Order" in Ireland* (Manchester, 2009) and Fearghal McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy: A Self-Made Hero* (Dublin, 2005).
[5] Mike Cronin, 'The Blueshirts in the Irish Free State, 1932-1935: The Nature of Socialist Republican and Governmental Opposition', in Tim Kirk and Anthony McElligot (eds.), *Opposing Fascism: Community, Authority and Resistance in Europe* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 80-96.
[6] Notable studies include Fearghal McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* (Cork, 1999) and R. A. Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39: Crusades in Conflict* (Manchester, 1999).
[7] McGarry, *Irish Politics*, p. 234.
[8] Anne Dolan, 'Politics, Economy and Society', pp. 323-348.

internationalising Ireland's interwar experience by tracing hitherto unexplored Irish connections to women's antifascist networks.

Writing in the context of Italian antifascism, Isabelle Richet has proposed a critique of the existing literature that echoes my critique of the historiography of the Irish radical left: the study of struggle through organisations and leaderships from which women were systematically excluded has led to a lack of women in the historiography.[9] But beyond a compensatory history, what insights can be gained by integrating women into antifascist history? Writing on British women and antifascism, Julia V. Gottlieb notes that a fundamental question to be asked is 'how righteous indignation can be organised.'[10] Building on Gottlieb's suggestion, women's antifascism can be seen as an ideal plane both to explore how righteous indignation could foster political morale but also how indignation could turn to demoralisation and disillusionment, resulting in a failure to pass the political torch to a younger generation. Antifascism ultimately became the final crusade that united the networks of radical internationalism during the interwar period.

[9] Isabelle Richet, 'Marion Cave Rosselli and the Transnational Women's Antifascist Networks', *Journal of Women's History,* 24:3 (Fall 2012), p. 118.
[10] Julia V. Gottlieb, '"Broken Friendships and Vanished Loyalties": Gender, Collective (In)Security and Anti-Fascism in Britain in the 1930s', *Politics, Religion & Ideology,* 13:2 (June 2012), p. 198. See also: Idem, 'Varieties of Feminist Responses to Fascism in Inter-War Britain', in Nigel Copsey and Andrzej Olechnowicz (eds.), *Varieties of Anti-Fascism: Britain in the Inter-War Period* (New York, 2010), pp. 101-118.

Katherine Gillett Gatty, the International Women's Matteotti Committee and Feminist Antifascism, 1932-1934

In 1933, the secret police of Mussolini's Italian Fascist government opened files on several internationally known feminists, including Charlotte Despard and Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, who were suspected of involvement in a plot to abduct Velia Matteotti, the wife of the murdered Italian socialist Giacomo Matteotti, from a town in the Po Valley. The intelligence work was shoddy. Sheehy Skeffington's name was confused with Despard's, whom intelligence described as 'exalted and unbalanced', and asserted that both were, alongside 'Countess Marchievic (sic), Gohne MacBride (sic) and Mary MacSwiney (sic)' members of Sinn Féin.[11] Of course, by this point, Markievicz was dead several years. The secret police also appear to have failed to highlight easily the most active figure in the network that Mussolini's police intelligence was attempting to map: Gillett Gatty. To understand how Gillett Gatty eventually combined her political and ancestral identities in assisting the Irish solidarity with the Spanish Republic, it is necessary to first examine her entrance into the transnational flow of antifascist politics. This section traces her work as the on-the-ground operative for the Women's International Matteotti Committee (WIMC), an antifascist organisation founded by Sylvia Pankhurst in 1932 and built upon suffrage networks.

Gillett Gatty was born in 1870, in Firozpur, India, to Edward Gatty, a British Army Captain, and Emma Collum, a member of a landed family from the same Fermanagh town, Enniskillen, where her husband's regiment was quartered.[12] The Collums were local power

[11] Alfio Bernabei, 'Hidden History: Sylvia Pankhurst', *Searchlight,* no. 335 (May 2003), p. 24.
[12] 'Fermanagh's Forgotten Suffragette', *Fermanagh Herald,* 8 March 2018, https://fermanaghherald.com/2018/03/fermanaghs-forgotten-suffragette/ (Accessed 5 December 2018); *Enniskillen Chronicle and Erne Packet,* 25 July 1867.

brokers, holding sway through property and prominence in local professions.[13] Gillett Gatty claimed in a 1936 interview that her dedication to 'the cause of democracy' had been stirred by observing the plight of the Irish tenants that surrounded her on the Collum estate during her upbringing.[14] In the same interview she claimed that childhood encounters with Jeremiah Jordan, a local Irish Parliamentary Party figure who opposed the unionist politics of the landed Anglican elite within which Gillett Gatty was raised, influenced her to rebel against her family's unionist politics by supporting Irish Home Rule.[15] She appears to have based herself permanently in London from her late teenage years and later claimed to have participated in labour organising during the 1889 Great Dock Strike.[16] Before adulthood she had rebelled against her elite background and developed what she would describe as her lifelong 'curse of *unorthodoxy with indignation*'.[17]

Gillett Gatty joined the suffrage movement after the suffragettes adopted militancy. In January 1907, she joined the WSPU, then defected to the WFL, before re-joining the WSPU briefly when the WFL appeared to her 'wobbly on militancy'.[18] In 1908, she was a delegate to the International Congress of Women at Amsterdam.[19] During the suffrage campaign, Gillett Gatty was imprisoned nine times, once with the WFL and eight times with the WSPU, including undergoing force-feeding and a prison stint shared with Despard.[20] Gillett Gatty also held the position of secretary of the National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants,

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[13] Patrick Maume, 'Jordan, Jeremiah' *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a9560 (Accessed 28 January 2019).
[14] *Nenagh Guardian,* 23 May 1936.
[15] Ibid.
[16] *Stanford Daily,* 8 February 1938.
[17] KGG to Richard Wright, 13 March 1939, Beinecke Library Yale University (Hereafter BLYL), Richard Wright Papers (RWP), Box 98, Folder 1351. Emphasis in original.
[18] KGG to Sylvia Pankhurst, 10 February 1933, BLMC, Estelle Sylvia Pankhurst Papers (Hereafter ESPP), Ms. 88925/7/3; June Purvis, 'The Prison Experiences of the Suffragettes in Edwardian Britain', *Women's History* Review, 4:1 (March 1993), pp. 109-110.
[19] Crawford, *Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide,* p. 241.
[20] KGG to Sylvia Pankhurst, 10 February 1933, BLMC, ESPP, Ms. 88925/7/3

Warehousemen and Clerks in the years of her suffrage activity.[21] She combined the causes of socialism and suffrage fluidly. Defending herself in court on charges of window smashing in 1911, Gillett Gatty stated that 'if there was a revolution in this country, a much greater amount of damage would be done to private property.'[22] During the Great War, Gillett Gatty did not associate with the pro-war WSPU but appears to have continued to argue for adult suffrage on a trade union platform. In July 1917, the *Dreadnought* reported her as a speaker for the Co-Operative Bakers' Union.[23] Like many other women explored in this thesis, Gillett Gatty's commingling of labour and feminist politics became a mainstay of her career.

Gillett Gatty's ties to Irish feminists dated to the pre-war days of the IWFL.[24] She did not engage with Irish nationalism during the period of the Irish revolution. She did, however, become increasingly interested in international events following the decline in suffrage activism. According to Gillett Gatty, her opposition to fascism developed after a 1924 visit to Italy shortly after the murder of Matteotti.[25] Although she married twice, had a daughter, and retained the surname of her second husband Ernest Gillett, Gillett Gatty's correspondence from 1930 suggests that she lived independent of family ties. Her political commitments, she noted, had 'upset my home'.[26] She spent the early 1930s in Spain, where she lived for a period with Hildegart Rodriguez-Carballeira, a revolutionary child prodigy raised by her mother as a model for the socialist woman of the future.[27] Her mobility was assisted by her command of French, German and Spanish. Gillett Gatty had already amassed decades of

[21] Liz Stanley, 'Romantic Friendship? Some Issues in Researching Lesbian History and Biography', *Women's History Review,* 1:2 (June 1992), p. 213 n. 22.
[22] Quoted in Tara Morton, "'An Arts and Crafts Society, working for the enfranchisement of women': Unpicking the Political Threads of the Suffrage Atelier, 1909-1914', in Miranda Garrett and Zoë Thomas (eds.), *Suffrage and the Arts: Visual Culture, Politics and Enterprise* (London, 2019), p. 71.
[23] *WD,* 28 July 1917.
[24] KGG to HSS, 16 January 1937, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/17.
[25] KGG to SP, 29 January 1933, BLMC, ESPP, Add Ms. 88925/7/3
[26] KGG to SP, 13 April 1933, BLMC, ESPP, Add Ms. 88925/7/3
[27] KGG to Havelock Ellis, 1 July 1933, BLMC, Havelock Ellis Papers (Hereafter HEP), Add MS 70542, ff. 70.

experience and contacts within feminist and radical networks before her antifascist work began with a letter from a former suffrage comrade.

When Gillett Gatty first received an invitation from Pankhurst to collaborate with the WIMC in August 1932, she was living among peasant women in a remote Spanish village.[28] The invitation prompted a year of eventful antifascist activity for Gillett Gatty, including trips to London, Rome and Berlin building the Committee's network. In October 1932, the first issue of the Committee's journal *Humanity* was released, which outlined the rationale for forming the group.[29] The stated aim was to ensure that Velia Matteotti and her children should be free to leave Italy or be free from surveillance if they elected to remain.[30]

Although it may seem peculiar, at least one aspect of the committee's work was designed to be a failure. In a history of the Matteotti case published in *Humanity's* only issue, it was noted that Francesco F. Nitti, son of the former Italian Prime Minister, had been sentenced to five years on a penal island for leaving a wreath on Matteotti's grave.[31] As the Committee expanded under Pankhurst's efforts, the *modus operandi* of the group developed into an attempt to organise a repeat of Nitti's symbolic action. This would consist of an international delegation of former suffragettes and socialist women who would travel to Italy with the intention of generating publicity. These tactics – courting press attention through acts designed to encourage a police response – were comparable to those deployed by Committee members during the suffrage struggle. Gillett Gatty's immediate task was to build the network by establishing a Spanish section of the committee and liaising with Italian antifascist exiles resident in Paris through her connections to French feminists.

Through Pankhurst's correspondence and Gillett Gatty's on-the-ground networking, the Committee expanded. In November 1932, Gillett Gatty left Spain for Paris, which she

[28] KGG to SP, 1 August 1932, BLMC, ESPP, Ms. 88925/7/3.
[29] *Humanity,* October 1932.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.

was visiting en-route to London to attend a lecture organised by the Suffragette Fellowship. In Paris, she met with Carlo Rosselli and Marion Cave-Rosselli, two prominent figures of the antifascist resistance. Carlo escaped from an Italian prison in July 1929. A month later, Marion, his English-born wife, was arrested and accused of planning the breakout. Her release was secured through an international campaign spearheaded by feminists and antifascists.[32] The Rossellis were an important addition to the Committee. In addition to the Rossellis' extensive connections to antifascist exiles, Marion's experience embodied the principle that applying international pressure could have tangible consequences for those persecuted by fascism. Other figures who Gillett Gatty met on Committee business included Angelica Balabanoff, the Russo-Italian revolutionary who had joined the Bolsheviks in 1917 but had, by this time, rejected Soviet-style communism.[33] From London, Pankhurst corresponded with women such as Ethel Mannin, an English leftist novelist with Irish ancestry, Alice Park, the California-based suffragist, and Sheehy Skeffington, who noted in her response 'I will do whatever I can to help your Committee'.[34] The spread of individuals involved in the Committee was a catalogue of the Anglophone feminist left. As was the case with the label 'anti-imperialist', the target of antifascism was suitably broad to unite a large spectrum of progressive political opinion; from religious figures and moderate social democrats to committed communists.

In January 1933, Gillett Gatty travelled to Italy to uncover details about Velia Matteotti's current condition. In Rome, Gillett Gatty ascertained that there was a 'Zone' surrounding the area where Matteotti lived which would prevent the delegation from visiting the widow.[35] She informed Pankhurst that, while in Rome, she was tailed by the police, and had to quickly slip out of the city on an early morning train to Pisa after receiving notice that

[32] Richet, 'Marion Cave Rosselli', p. 118.
[33] KGG to SP, 16 November 1932, BLMC, ESPP, Ms. 88925/7/3.
[34] Extracts from Letters to Sylvia Pankhurst, no date, c. October 1932, IISH, ESPP, Folder 289.
[35] KGG to SP, 10 February 1933, BLMC, ESPP, Ms. 88925/7/3.

the authorities were to visit her.[36] Gillett Gatty's activities in Mussolini's Italy raise a series of questions: on a practical level, how did she fund her activities? What propelled her to risk arrest? And were these actions beneficial to their subject, Velia Matteotti? The first question has a straightforward answer that reveals how solidarity facilitated travel. To finance her travels on Committee work, Gillett Gatty sold a piano to the Workers Travel Association, an organisation which grew out of the British trade union movement and aimed to provide affordable travel. Her correspondence with 'Comrade Mr Tinkler' of the Workers Travel Association, reveal that their connection was not just transactional but also one of political sympathy. In a letter enclosing £5 towards her travel, Gillett Gatty also disclosed details of her trip in Italy, including names of the women she had encountered in Rome and details of Velia Matteotti's condition.[37] Tinkler was evidently aware of the Committee's intrigue. Gillett Gatty possessed the assets necessary to fund her incursions, but the existence of sympathetic agencies for arranging the travel was also beneficial. Even with initiatives such as the Workers Travel Association, international travel remained open only to those who possessed the means.

Importantly, mobile middle-class women were essential to the functioning of committees with pretensions to transnationalism such as WIMC. Writing of the women involved in the earlier Irish nationalist organisation Inghinidhe na hÉireann, Pašeta notes how their activities were supported by wages that allowed them to travel, read, write and dedicate their time to the cause.[38] Much the same can be said of Irish women and their foreign counterparts prominently involved in the internationalist initiatives of the interwar era.

Gillett Gatty's commitment to undertaking expeditions on behalf of the committee remained steadfast, despite suffering from an injury to both of her arms which had occurred

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[36] Ibid.
[37] KGG to Manager of the Workers Travel Association, 30 January 1933, and KGG to Comrade Mr Tinkler, no date, c. January 1933, BLMC, ESPP, Ms. 88925/7/3.
[38] Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist Women,* p. 51.

as a result of a car accident in Spain, and which was exacerbated when she slipped while trying to leave Italian territory in haste.[39] Her first letter to Pankhurst after returning was written by Marion Cave Rosselli, and noted that the sacrifice symbolised by the arm-breakage had convinced a previously on-the-fence Italian antifascist to join the delegation.[40] Financial and physical sacrifice were legitimated by the political objective.

In her letters to Pankhurst, Gillett Gatty rooted her loyalty to the cause in her lived experience of encountering antifascist exiles and her commitment to the suffrage movement. She noted to Pankhurst that she had promised one of the Italian antifascist exiles that 'as soon as the work of the Matteotti committee had ceased… I should feel bound to fight Fascism until I died.'[41] In a letter sent shortly after, she added: 'we who love socialism more than life and we who abhor fascism owe you for your brilliant idea, something of the same kind of inextinguishable loyalty as we owed and gave your great mother for hers and the same gratitude for giving us a chance to make a breech (sic) in the wall.'[42] After returning from Italy following her injury, she noted to Pankhurst: 'Wouldn't your mother have been amused.'[43] Gillett Gatty framed her devotion to antifascism and socialism as a legacy of her loyalty to the suffrage movement, personified in the Pankhurst family whose black-sheep she now worked for.

Building an antifascist movement through the revival of a dormant suffrage network was one means of suffusing past legacies into new initiatives. Framing antifascist actions in relation to suffrage was another. The quotations above represent how Gillett Gatty channelled into her antifascist work what Laura E. Nym Mayhall has defined as the 'Suffragette Spirit': an imaginative construction of self-sacrificing devotion and sisterhood that shaped how

[39] Ernest G. Wise to Havelock Ellis, 23 June 1933, BLMC, HEP, Add MS. 70542 ff. 66.
[40] KGG to SP (in Marion Cave Rosselli's hand), 10 January 1933, BLMC, ESPP, MS 88925/9/1.
[41] KGG to SP, 29 January 1933, BLMC, ESPP, Ms. 88925/7/3.
[42] KGG to SP, 3 February 1933, BLMC, ESPP, Ms. 88925/7/3.
[43] KGG to SP (in Marion Cave Rosselli's hand), 10 January 1933, BLMC, ESPP, MS 88925/9/1.

former suffragettes constructed their political identities.[44] It is not coincidental that, amid her travel for the Committee, Gillett Gatty attended a lecture organised in London by the Suffragette Fellowship and petitioned for women's suffrage in France.[45] All of this activity was part of a dynamic political conviction in which suffrage, socialism and antifascism were melded in a fluid amalgam. Legacies of suffrage were not only important as a means of supplying contacts, but also in terms of creating a political imagination that bolstered morale, allowing Gillett Gatty to frame her antifascist activities as a further rupture in the wall first breached during the fight for the vote.

But the third question of whether these actions benefitted Matteotti's widow is more vexed. The operation was formulated without consulting Velia Matteotti if she wanted to leave Italy or if she considered herself to be persecuted. Information gathered by Gillett Gatty suggested that Matteotti was neither committed to antifascism nor wanted to leave Italy. The Rossellis informed Gillett Gatty that the '*most religious'* Velia Matteotti had seemed 'a strange woman for Matteotti to have married' and that if she desired a passport she could get one.[46] Pankhurst remained expressly opposed to broadening the terms of reference to 'anything but Signora Velia Matteotti and her children' in the face of such information.[47] While this might initially seem curious, the reasons that Velia Matteotti's consent to the plan was not considered pivotal by Pankhurst and her collaborators demonstrates a vision of antifascist solidarity that relied on conventions of the feminine victim of the fascist aggressor. A widowed woman was more emotionally resonant than a depersonalised collective of victims.

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[44] Laura E. Nym Mayhall, 'Creating the "Suffragette Spirit": British Feminism and the Historical Imagination', *Women's History Review,* 4:5 (1995), pp. 319-344.
[45] KGG to SP, 16 November 1932, 13 May 1933, BLMC, ESPP, Ms. 88925/7/3.
[46] KGG to SP, 16 November 1932, BLMC, ESPP, Ms. 88925/7/3.
[47] KGG to Marion Cave Rosselli, 22 March 1933, BLMC, ESPP, Ms. 88925/7/3.

More light can be shed by considering why Gillett Gatty and Pankhurst wanted Sheehy Skeffington in particular to be part of the delegation. 'I greatly desire Mrs. Sheehy Skeffington' Gillett Gatty wrote 'she would be most appropriate as the widow of another politically assassinated political martyr'.[48] Pankhurst suggested the same in more subtle terms in her appeal to Sheehy Skeffington: 'I am sorry that you doubt the possibility of going at Easter to Italy. I strongly urge that you should, as there is no one so fitted as yourself to do this.'[49] The woman as widow, mother and victim of militarism fitted into a broader anti-war paradigm, while being suitably emotional symbolism to generate valuable propaganda. But perhaps more important than simply being a widow was the fact that the husbands of Sheehy Skeffington and Matteotti lost their lives in the service of their principles.

In May 1933, with the plan for a delegation delayed, Gillett Gatty visited Berlin, ostensibly to ascertain the status of women known to Gillett Gatty and Pankhurst following Hitler's ascent. Gillett Gatty's letter to Pankhurst following her visit is worth quoting at length as an insight into the emotional impact of Gillett Gatty's extended exposure to fascism itself. After noting that she had received an address for the anti-Nazi activist Dr Dora Fabian, Gillett Gatty continued:

> I got this address from a brave Communist-woman (whom I had known slightly before) a former socialist whose unfortunate husband was arrested & has been in Spandau… Only the G[erman] Communists are showing the slightest fighting spirit & the socialists, in their own Party Headquarters, were holding meetings daily… I am most frightfully wearied by my incessant laborious days (13) in Germany… But if ever a party took it lying down it is the craven German Socialist Party - they have just gone and re-elected that unspeakable Otto Wels as their party leader. All the German socialists are as anti-Soviet as our wretched George Rex… All the Germans say "What can we do *we aren't armed*?" I offered, laughing, to formulate a plan of passive resistance for to-day & May Day, & told them of how the prince of Wales post war Indian tour was reduced to utter and ludicrous failure by all but the Anglo-Saxon civilians boycotting him in India. All they want is to re-arm Germany and to get back the corridor and their colonies and Alsace-Lorraine and the Saar. To shoot is

[48] KGG to SP, 15 February 1933, BLMC, ESPP, Ms. 88925/7/3.
[49] SP to HSS, 2 March 1933, BLMC, ESPP, Add MS 88925/9/1.

> their favourite verb… I want to leave Paris on or about August 1st, or July 1930, and go through Switzerland, getting there for the 14th when the body was found.[50]

Was Gillett Gatty a reliable witness? References elsewhere in her letter to figures like Hertha Gotthilf, an obscure Jewish-German journalist, and political figures like the Social Democrat Hermann Molkenbuhr and feminist Mina Cauer, suggest considerable knowledge of German socialist networks.[51] While her testimony does not upset any historical paradigms of the German left's response to Nazi repression, the experience is crucial in understanding her own activist trajectory and underlines the importance of mobility in framing an activist's understanding of internationalism As we will see, the experience in Germany would cause Gillett Gatty to momentarily retreat from antifascist activism.

Threaded throughout the above quotation are some of the contradictions implicit in the interwar encounter between antifascism and feminism, particularly in relation to pacifism. Gillett Gatty spoke disparagingly about a German desire for arms, drawing on the example of Indian passive resistance. Simultaneously, however, she held up the German Communist Party as a model, a Party that, prior to its proscription, engaged in violent confrontations with Nazis and the police through its paramilitary wing, the Red Front Fighters League.[52] One way of overcoming this seeming contradiction is to reframe the traditional division in the history of women's antifascism. Instead of a dichotomy between pacifism and violence, the question suggested by Gillett Gatty's case is: could fascism be opposed through a diplomatic approach, or did it require mobilisation from the bottom up? For feminists who relied on the concept of collective security embodied in the League of Nations, diplomatic action was the most valid process. However, for those closer to the position of the Comintern than to the

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[50] KGG to SP, 1 May 1933, BLMC, ESPP, Ms. 88925/7/3. The 'body' referred to is the discovery of Giacomo Matteotti's corpse.
[51] See ibid and KGG to SP, 1 August 1933, BLMC, ESPP, Ms. 88925/7/3.
[52] Eric D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism: From Popular Protests to Socialist State, 1890-1990* (Princeton, 1997), p. 200.

League, women such as Despard, Sheehy Skeffington and Gillett Gatty, the overthrow of capitalism was a necessary pre-requisite to a world without war. A telegram sent by Sheehy Skeffington and addressed to a 1933 conference of American pacifists expressed this worldview concisely:

> GREETINGS AMERICAN PACIFISTS STOP WORLD PEACE ONLY SECURABLE BY SCRAPPING CAPITALISM AND IMPERIALISM AND OUTLAWING ARMAMENT MAKERS STOP REGARD LEAGUE OF NATIONS MERELY AS SHIELD FOR THE VICTORS STOP HENDERSONS SCHEME LIKE KELLOGG PACT ALSO BUT PIOUS GESTURES[53]

In brief: collective security is a talking shop – revolutionary transformation is required.

In the final lines of her letter from Germany, Gillett Gatty referenced the delegation's plans, which had escalated to an explicit desire to be arrested. Romanticising her prospective actions, she noted: 'nothing but dying first will interfere with this plan. But it must be backed by adequate staff work at the general headquarters and prison must be part of the plan'.[54] Ultimately, however, her determination was confounded by exhaustion and personal tragedy. In a letter she started writing in early May 1933, but did not complete until August, Gillett Gatty told Pankhurst 'I am utterly worn out by the incessant enquiries & visits in Berlin & Hamburg, & by the tragic sadness of it all. I who remember the old Germany of pre-war Imperialism & who so rejoiced in the gallant struggles of Liebknecht… & Rosa Luxemburg against such frightful repression'.[55] She noted feeling 'a horrified nauseating shame' in response to her friends' seeming acquiescence to the Nazi takeover.[56] The emotionally-infused lines reflected a personal attachment to the history of the German revolution and the drastic indicator for revolutionary possibilities that Hitler's rise symbolised. Gillett Gatty's

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[53] Telegram, HSS, c. Nov 1933, HILA, APP, Box 24, Folder 2.
[54] Ibid.
[55] KGG to SP, 1 August 1933, BLMC, ESPP, Ms. 88925/7/3.
[56] Ibid.

travel was a profoundly demoralising experience precisely because she could link her engagement with Germany's past to its darker present and what appeared an even more ominous future.

A month after her return from Berlin, a further trauma occurred. On 9 June 1933, the day before the proposed departure deadline of the delegation, Gillett Gatty's friend Hildegart Rodriguez-Caraballeira, the Spanish woman raised as a model revolutionary daughter, was murdered by her mother. Writing to the British sex reformer Henry Havelock-Ellis, who had taken an interest in the work of Rodriguez-Caraballeira, Gillett Gatty noted that she had rushed from Paris to Madrid upon hearing the news.[57] Describing personal loyalty as her impetus, she decided to maintain contact with Aurora, Hildegart's mother, whom she believed insane and incapable of understanding the impact of her 'desperate action'.[58] 'I wrote to her every Saturday,' Gillett Gatty informed Havelock-Ellis, 'with her face & voice absolutely wringing my heart while concentrating on writing to her'.[59] The delegation never took place. A pamphlet released by the Committee in late 1933 titled the organisation as the 'Women's International Matteotti Committee (to combat Fascism and assist its victims)'.[60] The addition in parentheses simultaneously clarified the intent and suggests that the failure of the delegation plan had led the Committee to adopt a more inclusive remit than advocating exclusively for Matteotti's widow. The powerful and unpredictable fact of contingency collapsed the delegation, with Gillett Gatty, the most forceful proponent of the action, left disenchanted and traumatised by events both world historical and personal.

Tracing Gillett Gatty's work for the WIMC demonstrates how her antifascism was not a static identity she adopted fully formed. Travel, for example, played a central role in vindicating her beliefs and legitimating her as a speaker who could pronounce upon them.

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[57] KGG to Havelock Ellis, 21 June 1933, BLMC, HEP, MS 70542, ff. 69.
[58] KGG to Havelock Ellis, 11 August 1933, BLMC, HEP, MS 70542, ff. 75.
[59] Ibid.
[60] WIMC Circular, c. October 1933, BLMC, ESPP, Add MS 88925/9/1.

When responding to a message that Pankhurst was to lecture on the dangers of fascism in Edinburgh, Gillett Gatty emphasised the importance of having witnessed fascism, noting that the audience could not 'visualise Italy as I saw it in Dec. & Jan. The pall of suspicion and terror everywhere and on everyone!'[61] The emphasis on visualisation is important. Gillett Gatty's ability to call on prior and personal experience of the results of fascist rule could buttress her ability as a speaker warning of the dangers of fascism's rise – much as visiting the USSR granted an aura of legitimacy to speakers who advocated or rejected a socialist system.

The WIMC was an antifascist canary in the socialist women's coalmine. The growing perception of fascism as an international threat to women's emancipation was reflected through a transnational feminist response spearheaded by the WIMC. In August 1934, a Comintern-backed initiative, the Women's World Committee Against War and Fascism (WWCAWF) was established at a conference in Paris. Despard was one of the organisation's sponsors and Pankhurst was made treasurer of its British section.[62] Unable to attend the Paris conference, Despard attended a parallel Sheffield gathering organised by the CPGB. She reported on this convention at a 'War against War and Fascism' meeting held in Dublin.[63] WWCAWF reflected the diverse and occasionally conflicting agendas flowing into women's antifascism. The initiative developed under the guidance of Gabrielle Duchêne, the vice-president of the WILPF and a fellow traveller of the Communist Party of France.[64] Duchêne, who was briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, charted a remarkably similar political course to that of certain Irish women and even crossed the paths of these women. She rose to prominence through opposition to the war, eventually becoming a founding member of

[61] KGG to SP, 13 April 1933, BLMC, ESPP, Ms. 88925/7/3.
[62] Jill Liddington, *The Road to Greenham Common: Feminism and Anti-militarism in Britain Since 1820* (New York, 1989), p. 157; Sylvia Pankhurst to the Chairman of the Women's Committee Against War & Fascism, 17 December 1935, BLMC, ESPP, Add MS 88925/9/2.
[63] 'War Against War and Fascism', Report, 17 September 1934, RGASPI 495/89/92/6.
[64] Carle, 'Women, Anti-Fascism and Peace', pp. 291-314.

WILPF. In 1926, she attended the WILPF congress in Dublin, two years before emerging as a vocal supporter of Soviet communism.[65] Cases like that of Duchêne and the WWCAWF suggest that the political itinerary through pacifism, feminism, communism and antifascism reflected a shared political course plotted through the interwar period by numerous women activists.

The period of Gillett Gatty's involvement with the WIMC decidedly influenced her thought and action in relation to antifascism in addition to introducing her to a wider network of activists. It did not, however, lead to Velia Matteotti's departure from Italy. But assessing an organisation only through stated aims occludes how network-building is a long-term process. Activists like Gillett Gatty, Pankhurst and Sheehy Skeffington passed through suffrage and came to radical internationalism and antifascism on a shared political path. Although activists took divergent routes along this path, they consistently linked causes and gathered comrades along the way. Despite being a minor recurring figure in suffrage history, Gillett Gatty has hitherto remained obscure. Mentions of her in the existing literature have ignored both her Irish background and failed to detail her later engagement with antifascism and communism, reflecting the insufficiency of current frameworks in accounting for the particular political trajectory from suffrage to anti-capitalist solidarity charted in this thesis. It is similarly unsurprising that Irish labour history has ignored women like Gillett Gatty. She fits uneasily within a field reliant on a definition of Irish radicals shaped by the gendered assumptions of the field's own research subjects. Detailing Gillett Gatty's career – from youthful Home Ruler to matured antifascist – not only reveals a worldly activist whose life fits uneasily within the conceptual framework of Irish socialist republicanism and draws the trajectory of post-suffrage Irish women's activism deeper into uncharted territory, it also

[65] 'The Dublin Congress – Who's Who', July 1926, HILA, APP, Box 24 Folder 2.

functions as a prelude to the final world event that mobilised the women considered in this thesis: the Spanish Civil War.

Irish Radical Women's Political Responses to the Spanish Civil War, 1934-1939

In 1934, an Irish time traveller told a group of Krakow socialists that Ireland was in a race with Poland for the title of becoming the first peasant republic outside the USSR. He informed his comrades of the 'march of Republican Congress in Ireland towards a Workers' and Small Farmers' Republic'.[66] This fictional scene can be found in the 1935 novel *Traveller in Time,* written by Mairin Mitchell, a London-Irish novelist and a pacifist with anarchist sympathies. The late 1930s saw a transnational revival in revolutionary optimism. Mitchell's hopeful tone in her novel indicates how some of this determination inflected Irish radical networks. Her follow-up book, *Storm Over Spain,* centred on a subject that led the Irish radical left to once more rally to an internationalist cause: the Spanish Civil War.[67] This section focuses on Irish radical women's responses to a conflict that encouraged antifascist activists to convert rhetorical statements into active solidarity.

Before examining Irish responses to the conflict in Spain, the domestic political situation must be contextualised. Fascism never gained significant political momentum in the Irish Free State, although conditions existed which would superficially appear to have made the populace amenable to the mass politics that consumed other new European democracies. Any autocrat-in-waiting would have found encouragement in the high levels of unemployment, poor economic growth and a populace that proved willing to repeatedly pursue 'anti-Red herrings'.[68] Such a political figure would need to look to the Catholic hierarchy for both a structural model and support. The paternalistic vision of modernity pursued by the Irish Catholic Church, a vision grounded in family-centred social doctrine and anti-communist politics, proved itself to be, at the very least, tolerant of strands of continental

[66] Mairin Mitchell, *Traveller in Time* (London, 1935), p. 253.
[67] Mairin Mitchell, *Storm Over Spain* (London, 1937).
[68] Douglas, *Architects of the Resurrection,* p. 30.

fascism as a bulwark against communism.[69] The Francoist forces in the Spanish Civil War received regular encouragement from Irish pulpits. But social safety valves, including the early 20th century process of land reform and the perennial movement of emigrants from Ireland, hindered the growth of the fascist-sympathetic right as a mass political force – much as it frustrated similar growth in the radical left.

Fianna Fáil, which ruled with a majority for most of the decade, clamped down on the growth of the Blueshirts – interwar Ireland's para-fascistic movement – using legislation and coercive policing. This was borne of a commitment to stability and a desire to quench possible resistance to their own agenda rather than an ideologically constructed antifascism.[70] This commitment was easily pursued by a government which had inherited its legislative powers from a predecessor marked by a determination to quench both republican and left-wing radicalism. It was the state response that proved most effective in halting the growth of Irish fascism, rather than the antifascist activities of socialists. This does not mean, however, that the Popular Front — the period of united left opposition to fascism inaugurated in 1935 by the Seventh Comintern Congress — or the cultures of antifascism it fostered were without imitators in Ireland.

The position in which we found the Irish radical left at the conclusion of the previous chapter was not a promising one. Cumann na nGaedheal and the Catholic Church found common ground in promoting anti-communism to a receptive audience, resulting in an ever-present red-scare liable to erupt at a sermon's notice throughout the decade. This atmosphere encouraged radicals to leave Dublin, most notably Despard, the dynamic organiser and funder of numerous radical initiatives, who was based permanently in Belfast from 1934 in response to the hostile atmosphere in the Irish Free State. Over the course of several days in

[69] James Chappel, *Catholic Modern*, *passim*.
[70] Cronin, 'Blueshirts in the Irish Free State', pp. 80-96.

March 1933, mobs inspired by Catholic anti-communism had besieged and attacked the Eccles Street building owned by Despard that housed the Workers' College.[71] By 1936, the constant disruption of leftist gatherings by Catholic lay groups carrying 'bricks, bottles, and the bible' led Owen Sheehy Skeffington to write to his mother in frustration: 'this rabble doesn't deserve to be saved from capitalism'. [72] Nevertheless, Dublin remained the centre of Ireland's cowed but persistent left intelligentsia. In 1935, police intelligence believed that Ireland was home to an estimated three hundred 'social revolutionaries'.[73] A year later, Garda Special Branch attempted a survey of Irish communism and those in its orbit, placing individuals in one of three primary categories: agitators (paid members of the party); gunmen (republicans with communist sympathies); and intellectuals (essentially everyone else, though it was usually the label applied to women).[74] It was a somewhat futile task, given that such categories could not encompass the heterogenous complexion of Irish radicalism.

A political space opened between the doctrinaire CPI, re-established in 1933, and the socially conservative-leaning republicanism embodied by the IRA and Cumann na mBan. Following the development of strong anti-communist sentiment in Ireland, the IRA Army Council rejected social radicalism. Sheehy Skeffington noted in a May 1933 letter that an 'independent Republican Left Wing Group' was being planned, almost certainly referencing what ultimately became the Republican Congress.[75] The Congress was created chiefly through the initiative of left-republican figures such as Peadar O'Donnell and George Gilmore, who had broken with the IRA Army Council following its decision to disengage from leftist politics. The ill omens of the Congress initiative can be augured from its earliest days, when a split occurred at its first annual congress over the question of whether to fight

[71] O'Connor, *Reds and the Green,* p. 186.
[72] OSS to HSS, 12 April 1936, NLI, SSP, MS 40,483/1.
[73] 'Report to the Garda Commissioner', signed S. Roche, 19 September 1935, NAI, JUS/2008/117/726.
[74] 'Personnel of the Communist Party of Ireland', Report, 6 October 1936, Commissioner CS, NAI, JUS/2008/117/726.
[75] HSS to OSS, 17 May 1933, NLI, SSP, MS 40,484/6.

for a 'republic', broadly defined in line with Popular Front values, or a 'workers' republic'. Communist participation, crucial in the ultimate success of the 'republic' motion, repelled god-fearing republicans. Cumann na mBan members Sighle Humphries and Eithne Coyle, resigned from the Congress committee, renouncing the organisation for promoting a 'foreign pagan and materialist philosophy which so many insinuate is the only solution to the capitalist state of society'.[76] Cora Hughes, a young republican, was one of the few women who remained prominently involved in the Congress followings its acrimonious beginnings.[77] The Congress received little public support, even when compared with the relatively weak Irish Labour Party.[78] Despite these setbacks, the Congress nonetheless became an important umbrella organisation under which the Irish radical left and its social circles often gathered from 1934 onwards.

The influence of Irish Communists on radical circles remained important, while being both miniscule in membership and capable of catalysing violent anti-communist responses to their existence. In June 1933, the third attempt to found a CPI was undertaken. Its locus of activity was in Dublin and Belfast. A 1933 report sent to Moscow by the CPI outlined small rural communist cells in Kilkenny, Cork, Longford and Waterford.[79] This same report noted that the active groups in Dublin consisted of 'IRA proletarians': the Cork group, it noted, was made up of ninety per cent IRA members, while two of the three Waterford comrades were also in the IRA.[80] Despite a 1933 IRA army council ruling that barred communists from membership of the organisation and a public condemnation of communism for its 'denial of God', there appears to have remained a continuous overlap between the two.[81] The report's

[76] Sighle Humphries to Republican Congress Committee, 18 July 1934, UCDA, SHP, P1906/1490.
[77] 'Personnel of the Communist Party of Ireland', Report, 6 October 1936, Commissioner CS, NAI, JUS/2008/117/726.
[78] Niamh Purséil, *The Irish Labour Party, 1922-73* (Dublin, 2007), p. 3.
[79] Report of the Communist Party of Ireland, 25 July 1933, RGASPI, 495/89/90/15-16.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Hanley, *The IRA,* p. 179; O'Connor, *Reds and the Green,* p. 192.

suggestion of overlap between the CPI and the IRA, as distinct from Cumann na mBan, suggests that this was an almost uniformly male world.

This was not a peculiarity of the Irish Party, but a broader consequence of an organisational structure and ideology which 'fetishized male productive labour' and 'placed an emphasis on male physicality as the means for social transformation.'[82] The only women recorded in the minutes of the CPI founding congress were Betty Sinclair, an activist from Belfast, and Esther McGregor of North Dublin, a regular contributor to the Party press on women's issues.[83] Despard was also present as an observer, though no contributions by her were recorded in the minutes.[84] In October 1935, when the Party gathered in Dublin to discuss the Comintern's Popular Front theses, general secretary Seán Murray charged the Party with initiating 'work on the question of the youth and women'.[85] To attract women, Murray argued the Party must develop propaganda on high rents and 'everyday problems'.[86] Murray's implication that this was a new political direction reflected the discontinuity in Irish Communist organisations and the failure to maintain women within the various Comintern-backed attempts at forming a Communist Party in Ireland. The Comintern directed Irish communists to initiate work among youth and women along the same lines proposed by Murray as early as 1923.[87] Throughout the Party's voluminous archive, Sinclair, McGregor and a 'Comrade Mrs. Kenny' are the only women documented as having contributed to Party discussions.[88] Several more appear in police surveillance: Nellie Towers, a woman who joined the Party women's section in 1936 while her husband worked in England (but upon his

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[82] Norman LaPorte and Matthew Worley, 'Towards a Comparative History of Communism: The British and German Communist Parties to 1933', *Contemporary British History*, 22:2 (2008), p. 238.
[83] Minutes of CPI Founding Congress, June 1933, RGASPI 495/89/89/23.
[84] Byers, *Seán Murray*, p. 63.
[85] Report of CPI Meeting in Dublin, held at Connolly House, held 5th to the 6th October 1935, RGASP 495/14/337/24.
[86] Ibid.
[87] International Women's Section of the Communist International to Comrade O'Hartis, 19 January 1923, RGASPI, 507/3/83/1.
[88] Report of CPI Meeting in Dublin, held at Connolly House, held 5th to the 6th October 1935, RGASPI 495/14/337/19.

return was forced to leave by her scandalised Fine Gael-supporting spouse), Sonya and Cecilia Goldman, two teenage sisters of Russian parentage, and Wilmot O'Farrell, a former member of the IWWU and the proprietor of the Party's Dublin bookstore.[89] A disaffected wife, two young rebels and a handful of women trade-unionists made for a rather small women's section.

However, the Party had some success in encouraging non-Party women to appear on its platforms. For example, Sheehy Skeffington, speaking at a meeting organised by the Party for International Women's Day in March 1936, discussed the education of women in the USSR and held up Russian women as an example of what women in Ireland could achieve under communism.[90] By 1936, the front groups had lost much of the cultural vibrancy that marked a group such as the FOSR while the Republican Congress and the CPI proved a cold house for women's organising. It would take a new mobilising cause to encourage Irish radical women to summon their energies and funnel them into the antifascist initiatives emanating from Comintern networks.

Several months after Sheehy Skeffington praised the education of women in the USSR at a CPI meeting, a military coup in the Spanish territories of Northern Africa led by General Francisco Franco precipitated a Civil War that rapidly became a global event. The Spanish Civil War would give those already attached to the international communist movement a renewed sense of purpose and provide new reasons for those within the communist orbit to engage with Comintern-inspired initiatives. In terms of the reputation of Soviet-style socialism, the timing was fortuitous: the deepening conflict in Spain drew attention away from the macabre spectacle of the Moscow Trials, which seemed to many to be befuddling at best and a stitch-up at worst. The Spanish Civil War, perceived as a dramatic

[89] 'Personnel of the Communist Party of Ireland', 6 October 1936, Commissioner CS, NAI, JUS/2008/117/726; 'Notes on Communism in Saorstát Eireann', c. 1937, NAI, JUS/93/4/7.
[90] 'Communism', unsigned report, 18 March 1936, NAI, JUS 2008/117/842.

showdown between the forces of democracy and fascism, provided a political morality tale that could be more easily comprehended. The 'moral peril' divide between a right-wing military conspiracy and a democratically-elected socialist government drew foreign combatants into the fray. In September 1936, the Comintern initiated the International Brigades: combat units organised by international Communist Parties to fight in defence of the Spanish Popular Front government. McGarry estimates that around 200 Irish volunteers fought within the companies of the International Brigades from 1936 to 1938.[91]

Where could Irish radicals find information on the conflict that they could trust? Importantly, the near universal press hostility to the Spanish Republican cause in the Irish Free State could not counteract Irish radicals' personal connections to the conflict through the presence of internationally-minded individuals in Dublin. One such individual tuned into transnational antifascist channels was Gillett Gatty. Throughout 1936 and 1937, Gillett Gatty made several visits to Ireland. In the period between her work for the WIMC and arrival in Ireland she protested against Italian intervention in Ethiopia and toured the Soviet Union.[92] In February 1936, she renewed her friendship with Sheehy Skeffington, writing that she was coming to Ireland to 'pay homage to poor old 92 year old Mrs. Despard' and that she had made a promise to a German comrade to get Irish resolutions condemning women's imprisonment in Nazi concentration camps – a promise she fulfilled.[93] In February 1937, she made a report at a Dublin meeting attended by, among others, Sheehy Skeffington and her daughter-in-law Andreé, which passed a resolution calling for the 'immediate release of women hostages imprisoned in Germany'.[94] One of the specific prisoners mentioned in the

[91] McGarry, *Irish Politics*, p. 49.
[92] *Nenagh Guardian,* 23 May 1936; KGG to HSS, 7 November 1936, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/17.
[93] KGG to HSS, c. February 1936, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/17.
[94] *The Worker,* 20 February 1937.

report was Olga Prestes, a participant in a failed revolution organised by the Comintern in Brazil who was at the centre of a well-publicised case of Nazi injustice.[95]

Legacies of Gillett Gatty's suffrage career and WIMC activism seeped into her Irish foray from its outset. Gillett Gatty also noted to Sheehy Skeffington that she felt 'bitterly ashamed I suffered nothing for Ireland, like all of you'.[96] Political struggle and sacrifice for Ireland could thus provide a source of personal fulfilment, compensating for her failure to engage with Irish causes since a youthful engagement with Home Rule. Special Branch observed her arrival in October, reporting that though she 'holds extreme views on International Politics' there was nothing to connect her to any movement in the country.[97] In late 1936, the Irish Friends of the Spanish Republic and the Irish Women's Spanish Aid Committee were founded, providing Gillett Gatty with something to connect her to a movement in the country. The two committees overlapped in aim and personnel and should be considered yet another case of a committee structure being placed upon a single social circle with shared political ideals.

The Dublin-based group was also linked to committees formed in Belfast, New York and London. During her final relocation to Belfast, Despard was involved in the Northern Irish Joint Committee for Spanish Relief from its foundation.[98] Despard continued to be observed by the Royal Ulster Constabulary as a figure on communist platforms in Belfast and Derry. Standing before audiences of the unemployed in Northern Ireland, she exhorted friendship with the Soviet Union and described herself as a 'revolutionist'.[99] In New York, the Irish Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy was founded in January 1937. The

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[95] Ibid.
[96] KGG to HSS, 26 September 1936, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/17.
[97] 'Madame Gillett Gatty, Journalist and Authoress – Communist', P. Colleran, 14 October 1936, NAI JUS 2008/117/726
[98] *Northern Whig,* 2 August 1938.
[99] See for example the surveillance reports: 'Friends of the Soviet Union Meeting at Victoria Square', 5 March 1934; 'Irish Unemployed Workers' Movement – Meeting at Custom House', 27 May 1934; 'Friends of the Soviet Union – Meeting in Belfast', 27 January 1934, PRONI, Home Affairs Office of Northern Ireland Papers, HA 32/1/551.

organisation was connected to a Republican Congress cell in the city and was established in response to Irish-American groups that were forming to support Franco.[100] The chair of the group was Patrick Quinlan, a labour radical who had attended the Second Comintern Congress as an Irish delegate in 1920.[101] The Chicago-born activist Helen Crowe was also involved. During the Irish revolutionary period, Crowe took part in pickets in support of Irish nationalist demands and had ties to Sheehy Skeffington from her early days of advocacy in support of Irish republicans alongside the Irish Progressive League in the US.[102] This New York committee was therefore enmeshed in the broader world of diaspora radicalism. The London branch of the Friends of the Spanish Republic also recruited several members with Irish links. Nora Connolly O'Brien, her brother-in-law Dick Beech and Jack Carney were all listed as members of its national council.[103]

In January 1937, Gillett Gatty travelled to Paris for a conference of the International Committee of Coordination and Information for the Support of Republican Spain, a body to which she sat as the Irish delegate. Gillett Gatty's reports sent to Sheehy Skeffington from the conference demonstrate how certain participants in the antifascist left responded to Irish interventions in Spain. Interestingly, Gillett Gatty described certain attendees whom she met in Paris as the 'International Matteotti Committee', demonstrating the fact that her earlier antifascist network matured alongside her and now joined her in Spanish Republican solidarity efforts.[104] Marion and Carlos Rosselli, both essential to WIMC work, discussed Ireland's response. Marion, 'with tears in her eyes', expressed her thanks for the efforts of the

[100] Minutes of the Irish Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, 6 January 1937; Peadar Nunan to Pat Quinlan, c. January 1937, Columbia University Special Collections (Hereafter CUSC), Spanish Refugee Relief Association Papers (Hereafter SRRAP), Box 15, Irish Committee Folder.
[101] Keown, *First of the Small Nations,* pp. 59-60.
[102] Helen Crowe to Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, 13 February 1938, NLI, SSP, MS 41,178/103. For background on the Irish Progressive League see: Elizabeth McKillen, 'Reverse Currents: Irish Feminist and Nationalist Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and U.S. Anti-Imperialism, 1916-23', *Éire-Ireland*, 53:3-4 (Fall/Winter, 2018), pp. 148-185.
[103] Jack Carney to Desmond Ryan, 19 February 1937, UCDA, Desmond Ryan Papers (Hereafter DRP), LA10/70.
[104] KGG to HSS, 16 January 1937, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/17.

Irish Friends of Republican Spain while Carlos 'begged me to assure you it will be a great, great pleasure to know… that Ireland has some pro-Government sympathisers!'[105] In a letter sent a day later, Gillett Gatty reported that Sofia Blasco, a Spanish author in exile, told her that the Irish committee need not contribute hospitals and ambulances but if they would send volunteers and distribute 'pro-Government propaganda Spain would be deeply touched.'[106] Delegates were also aware of the involvement of the Irish Brigade, Eoin O'Duffy's pro-Franco volunteers. In the same letter, Gillett Gatty noted that everyone was 'shocked & grieved & amazed at Ireland's gesture in sending the Duffy-ites'.[107]

Gillett Gatty's interactions with international radicals demonstrated how some within radical internationalist networks understood Irish identity in relation to transnational radicalism. The nominal parallel between the Irish and Spanish *Republican* cause was not lost on her interlocutors. She noted that 'Spain expects so much sympathy from the *Irish Republic*'.[108] Referring to the connotations that the Irish Republic carried, Gillett Gatty claimed it 'relieved these international admirers of Ireland's passionate idealism & love of freedom to hear that our… society is sponsored by the Sheehy Skeffingtons.'[109] The Sheehy Skeffington name appeared to carry weight in other meetings attended by Gillett Gatty. She noted that Carlo Rosselli knew Sheehy Skeffington's name and 'didn't require me to tell him how you make things succeed and grow.'[110] The sense of Ireland representing idealism and resistance was further evoked by Gillett Gatty when she reported that Romain Rolland, the leading French pacifist and fellow traveller of Soviet Communism, was amazed that a group was sent in support of Franco '*de la part de… l'Irelande!!!*'[111] Evidently, as the interwar

[105] Ibid.
[106] KGG to HSS, 17 January 1937, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/17.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid.
[110] KGG to HSS, 30 September 1937, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/17.
[111] Ibid.

period came to a close, the idea popular in the final years of the Great War of Ireland as a challenger to imperialism resonated, even as the popular support in Ireland for Franco's forces appeared to expose yet another reactionary hangover to the Irish revolution.

The Irish committee was miniscule and found it difficult to organise in a conservative atmosphere. Morale was easier to find when committee work could be framed and enacted as one branch of a transnational effort. Despard, Sheehy Skeffington and Gillett Gatty were also present at an earlier September 1936 World Peace Congress in Brussels, which was attended by the internationally celebrated orator of the Spanish Republican cause and the figurehead of Spanish Communism Dolores Ibárruri.[112] Characterised by encounters with world-renowned figures and practical expressions of transnational solidarity, conference attendance as a form of internationalist networking allowed Irish radical women to receive affirmation for their efforts, providing a source of morale abroad when Ireland itself proved hostile.

With the departure of the first of the Irish International Brigade volunteers, the Dublin group focused on publicity, providing material support to those fighting and raising funds for victims of the conflict. This involved fundraising for basic medical supplies and support for children orphaned or displaced by the war, with Gillett Gatty cashing the funds with the Paris committee.[113] Sheehy Skeffington, along with the London-based Irish labour journalist Desmond Ryan, attempted to gather prominent signatures for an open letter. Clerical pressure militated against any public position in support of the Spanish Government forces. Ryan noted that some believed the open letter 'too Christian', others that it was 'not Catholic enough'.[114] Catholic opposition to the Republican cause promoted an atmosphere that was not conducive to holding regular public meetings.[115] Like other progressive initiatives, the

[112] For HSS attendance, see: RJD, 20 October 1936, NLI, RJP, MS 32,582/80; for KGG attendance, see: KGG to HSS, 22 February 1937, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/17; for Despard attendance, see: *Irish Press,* 11 November 1939.
[113] KGG to HSS, 26 February 1937, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/17.
[114] Desmond Ryan to John Brophy, 24 April 1937, UCDA, DRP, LA10/70.
[115] McGarry, *Irish Politics*, p. 99.

Irish Friends of the Spanish Republic faltered in their publicity efforts when confronted by Catholic resistance to their cause.

Yet the public meetings that took place were important in making the experience of Spanish battlefields ricochet into small Dublin halls. After returning from a trip to Spain in February 1937, Gillett Gatty spoke at a meeting in Parnell Square organised by the Irish Friends of the Spanish Republic and chaired by Sheehy Skeffington.[116] She read from a list of sixteen Irish men killed and wounded in Spain. June Richardson-Lucas, an American member of the League of Nations Association who visited Dublin in December 1937, provides a vivid example of how sound and vision affected the experience of attending these meetings.[117] Richardson-Lucas, who also worked for the Spanish Refugee Relief Association, wrote to a fellow relief worker about another meeting chaired by Sheehy Skeffington and addressed by returned Irish International Brigade volunteers.[118] Richardson-Lucas noted that one speaker was hoarse, having been shot in the neck, while another volunteer recovering from a lung wound appeared on the verge of death. 'I thought I could give it you, a little of it, but I can't. It was too vividly real' she noted in the letter.[119] Theatrical staging and raising the recognisable salute of the International Brigade could also bring meeting attendees into communion with the struggle abroad. In November 1938, the Irish Friends of the Spanish Republic displayed a memorial banner to the Irish volunteers killed in Spain in Dublin's Molesworth Hall. The *Irish Times* reported that returned *brigadistas* 'stood to attention with clenched fist to brow' as the banner, designed by 'two Proletariat artists', was unveiled.[120]

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[116] *Irish Times,* 20 February 1937.
[117] June Richardson Lucas' visit in Ireland lasted several months, see; *Irish Press*, 13 October 1937; *Irish Independent,* 13 December 1937, *Irish Independent,* 4 February 1938.
[118] Ticket for Irish Friends of the Spanish Republic Public Meeting, c. November 1937, NLI, SSP, MS 33, 637 (4).
[119] June Richardson Lucas to Dr Thomas Addis, 1 December 1937, CUSC, SRRAP, Box 15, Irish Committee Folder.
[120] *Irish Times,* 19 November 1938.

Accounts of such gatherings suggest how the sensory experience of international solidarity meetings functioned as localisations of global events.

The emotions and tensions implicit in the hostile atmosphere surrounding organisations supporting Republican Spain were capable of moving from the meeting halls and into the letter box. Two letters received by Sheehy Skeffington in response to her agitation for the Spanish Republic stand out for their acutely gendered vitriol. A letter signed by 'Eireannach' was written in response to Sheehy Skeffington's appeal to assist 'the "Irishmen" who have gone to Spain to assist the murderers of nuns and priests.'[121] Referencing two much-publicised fighting contingents – the Moroccan soldiers fighting alongside the Francoist forces, which evoked racial alterity, and the women *miliciana* who mobilised to defend the Republic, who represented a challenge to traditional femininity – the letter writer noted 'the photographs of the women fighting in the Communist side amply show, it is a case of MOORS versus WHORES.'[122] In the view of 'Eireannach', radical politics was a threat not only to the institution of the Church, but to the gender order itself – just as the suffrage movement had also been perceived in the minds of its reactionary opponents.

This theme was further developed by a subsequent anonymous correspondent. This time, the charge was levelled specifically at leading Irish radical women. Once more responding to an appeal for money made by the committee, the letter writer condemned Sheehy Skeffington's 'brazen effrontery' in supporting the 'Legion of Satan!'[123] This letter depicts a fevered imaginary of the world outlined in this thesis:

> You and [Maud Gonne], and such like shrieking [illegible] who are making a mean livelihood by taking Russian Gold… You and your low comrades, male and female have carried on a campaign of evil in this city for years. You are responsible for hundreds of Irish girls turning to prostitution owing to irreligious teaching… Your

[121] 'Eireannach' to HSS, 3 February 1937, NLI, SSP, MS 41,204/5.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Anonymous to HSS, 18 January 1938, NLI, SSP, MS 41,204/5.

> Roebuck House band are guilty of several dastardly murders; but all this is nothing to the Souls you have destroyed.[124]

The reference to Roebuck House, a recurrent location throughout this thesis as a site of leftist gatherings and the shared home of Despard and Gonne before Despard's relocation to Belfast, is not purely incidental. Neither is the fixation on leftist politics as being destructive to sexual respectability. This sentiment fed into recurrent fears that socialist transformation would destroy religion, the supposed bulwark between women and sexual impropriety. In doing so, socialism would upend the property order that allowed a man to own a home and thus maintain both his family and the sacrosanct divide between the feminine domestic space and the masculine realm of political engagement.[125] Such myths had long been attached to the international left. To see such fears reflected in letters from cranks suggests how the internationalised ideological tensions in Irish politics could percolate into disparate corners of society.

Identifying with a broader international cause allowed radicals to weather reactionary storms by providing encouragement from assistance in a greater cause. However, as it became clear that Franco would emerge victorious in the Spanish conflict, a malaise spread through radical networks. Gillett Gatty wrote to assure Sheehy Skeffington that 'you'll live to see a Left Ireland emerge. Think of the Church in Russia and in Spain and be hopeful…. Then there are (sic) all the Irish outside of Ireland (Still Catholic alas!) who all about are leftists.'[126] The Catholic Church in Ireland did obstruct all things leftist. But the possibility of the Irish Catholic Church being plunged into the same position as Russian Orthodoxy or subject to the anti-Clerical tradition of Spanish agrarian conflict was slim. Gillett Gatty's

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[124] Ibid.
[125] This latter point was utilised by Cumman na nGaedheal to critique the 'Bolshevik' property initiatives of their Fianna Fáil opponents, see: Aidan Beatty, *Masculinity and Power in Irish Nationalism, 1884-1938* (Basingstoke, 2016), pp. 164-165.
[126] KGG to HSS, undated, c. 1938, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/17.

assurances, although based on the accurate perception that many Irish leftists emigrated, were ultimately more cathartic than prophetic.

International travel, as always, provided relief from the febrile atmosphere in Ireland. It is telling that both Sheehy Skeffington and Gillett Gatty travelled to the US and became involved there in Spanish solidarity and antifascist initiatives in late 1937 and 1938. Both were supported and hosted by American comrades while lecturing to sympathetic audiences, free from the threat of an anti-communist mob. Sheehy Skeffington liaised with groups such as the left-wing League of American Writers and the North American Spanish Aid Committee while reconvening with Gillett Gatty in California.[127] On a leaflet advertising a lecture in San Francisco in March 1938, Sheehy Skeffington was billed as a champion of 'Democracy, Peace & Women's Rights' and a chair of the 'Irish Anti-Fascist League'.[128] During the speech, she reportedly denounced 'the swing of De Valera toward conservatism and Fascism.'[129] Alice Park, one of the attendees at the 1926 WILPF Congress in Dublin, a member of the WIMC and a lifelong friend of Sheehy Skeffington, helped lay out the hall before Sheehy Skeffington's San Francisco talk while Gillett Gatty also appears to have provided introductions for Sheehy Skeffington during this tour.[130] As both women travelled, a new cause flared in the far East.

In late 1937, when Gillett Gatty first travelled to California, she spent time living with Park as her host. Meanwhile, a bombardment of Chinese cities by Japan, an ally of Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Italy, was underway. China temporarily became the focus of the transnational antifascist imagination.[131] Gillett Gatty was frustrated by Park, who cared little

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[127] See for example: Bert Leech to HSS, 25 March 1938, Ethel Turner to HSS, 27 March 1938, NLI, SSP, MS 41,178/103.
[128] APD, 1 April 1938, HILA, APP, Box 28, 1938 Diary.
[129] *Palo Alto Times,* 31 March 1938.
[130] APD, 30 March 1938, HILA, APP, Box 28 1938 Diary; Anne Hadden to HSS, 24 March 1938, NLI, SSP, MS 41,178/103.
[131] Tom Buchanan, '"Beyond Cable Street" New Approaches to the Historiography of Antifascism in Britain in the 1930s,' in Hugo García Mercees Yusta, Xavier Tabet and Cristina Clímaco (eds.), *Rethinking Antifascism: History, Memory and Politics, 1922 to the Present* (New York, 2016), p. 67.

about 'the Sino-Japanese life & death struggle'.[132] This was perhaps an unfair assessment of Park, a consistent feminist antifascist who had founded a local branch of the WWCAWF in her Palo Alto home in 1934.[133] While based in California, Gillett Gatty lectured on the dangers of fascism. In an article publicising one of her lectures, she was described as an 'Irishwoman'.[134] In contrast to 1936, when the *Irish Press* defined her as 'half-Irish', Gillett Gatty was here described as more completely Irish.[135] Like Despard before her, her political re-engagement with Ireland could cause a modification in how her nationality was defined. Both Gillett Gatty and her fellow Anglo-Irish activist Despard suggest the malleability of 'Irishness' as an identity during this period.

Similarly, like Despard, Gillett Gatty became more interested in communism as a result of political experiences that included a visit to the Soviet Union. In a 1939 letter to the African-American author and communist Richard Wright, Gillett Gatty declared that only communism, rather than 'mere democracy, mere Socialism' could protect 'my sex and your race'.[136] Experiences throughout the 1930s transformed Gillett Gatty into the characteristic radical-type described on these pages: a globe-trotting Irish woman sympathetic to communism.

The events in China which interested Gillett Gatty were not without resonance in Ireland. In early 1938, Prof. Tao Heng Chih travelled to Ireland to make the case for Irish support of China's anti-Japanese resistance. On one occasion, he attended a lecture given by Sidney Gifford Czira on Irish songs and received applause when he informed the audience that the Irish had taught the Chinese to 'Unite and Resist'.[137] Margaret Connery, a former IWFL stalwart who had travelled to the Soviet Union alongside Jacob as part of the 1931

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[132] KGG to HSS, 19 December 1937, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/17.
[133] APD, 6 January 1934, HILA, APP, Box 27 1934 Diary.
[134] *Stanford Daily,* 9 February 1938.
[135] *Irish Press*, 10 June 1936.
[136] KGG to Richard Wright, 13 March 1939, BLYU, RWP Box 98, Folder 1351.
[137] *Labour News,* 26 February 1938.

Irish FOSR delegation, informed Sheehy Skeffington that a welcoming reception was given to the CPI general secretary Seán Murray as he spoke alongside the professor at a meeting. [138] This, she noted, demonstrated a changed temper, presumably referencing an absence of hostile anti-communism.[139]

In this same letter, Connery moved from discussing China to briefing her long-time political collaborator on the rising generation of Irish feminists. 'I don't find myself terribly at home amongst the new feminists' she noted 'and there is certainly not one Radical amongst them.'[140] In the following section, the failure of Ireland's radical women to directly transfer the political torch to a younger generation of activists will be discussed through the cultural tastes and representations of Irish radical women during a period of renewed left unity overshadowed by the demoralising outcome of the Spanish conflict.

In November 1938, the International Brigades were ordered to return to their countries of origin. Several months later in the French town of Amélie les Bains, Owen Sheehy Skeffington watched Spanish government soldiers arriving. 'The stream of refugees continues' he informed his mother in a letter describing militia men travelling across the border.[141] Interpersonal channels once funnelled hopeful news of the conflict. Now they brought word of the Republican collapse. The Irish Friends of the Spanish Republic would become the nucleus of the committee formed to free Frank Ryan, an Irish republican International Brigade volunteer who was captured by Francoist forces in March 1938. A list of contacts who were considered useful in securing Ryan's release and written by Hanna Sheehy Skeffington can be found in the CPI archive, suggesting that she also assisted the Party in its efforts.[142] Ryan was eventually released into the arms of the Nazi German

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[138] Margaret Connery to HSS, 11 February 1938, NLI, SSP, MS41,177/10.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid.
[141] OSS to HSS, 21 February 1939, NLI, SSP, MS 40,483/4.
[142] List of Contacts, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, c. 1939, Dublin City Library and Archives, Communist Party of Ireland Archives, Box 14, Item 65.

intelligence services and died in Germany in 1944, bequeathing a complex and enigmatic legacy for his admirers on the Irish left.[143]

Although Irish radical women were unable to raise significant protest against global fascism or local pro-Franco sentiment, the value in exploring their contributions remains. Caoilfhionn Ní Bheacháin has argued that the 'vibrant anti-imperialism of republican activists throughout the 1920s and 30s provides examples of alternative solidarities and modes of action', underlining the need for a re-examination of radicalism in the Irish Free State.[144] Yet, as Gillett Gatty reveals, there is value in exploring Irish activists who fit uneasily within the standard framing of socialist republicanism. Ultimately, the Spanish Civil War acted as more than simply a set of distant events for Irish radicals and their counterparts. The Spanish Civil War provided a mobilising sense of purpose, one that continued the process of linking suffrage veterans into the world of radical internationalism through galvanising conferences abroad and gatherings at home. The course of the conflict indexed a trajectory of political emotions, from hopeful defiance to disappointment and despair. This political path is discernible when we reconstruct a shared world of radicalism, one which continually connected women like Gillett Gatty, Sheehy Skeffington and Pankhurst with one another and propelled them into new causes often shaped by old struggles.

[143] Jerome aan de Wiel, 'The Trouble with Frank Ryan: "Corpse Diplomacy" Between East Germany and Ireland, 1966-80', *Irish Studies in International Affairs,* 25 (2014), pp. 203-220.
[144] Caoilfhionn Ní Bheacháin, "We are of Necessity Anti-imperialists", Irish Republicans and Empire, 1922-39', in Eóin Flannery and Angus Mitchel (eds.), *Enemies of Empire: New Perspectives on Imperialism, Literature and Historiography* (Dublin, 2007), p. 71.

Irish Radical Women and the Cultures of the Popular Front, 1936-1939

On 13 December 1938, three notably sun-burned Irish veterans of the International Brigades addressed a crowded and smoky Dublin meeting room after their return from the frontlines.[145] The meeting was held under the auspices of the Dublin branch of the Left Book Club (LBC) – a small leftist reading circle that signified Irish links to the transnational cultural initiatives of the Popular Front era.[146] The period of the Popular Front was accompanied by a blossoming of leftist cultural projects. Memoirs, histories, book clubs and theatre groups emerged to promote the left unity of the period. Perhaps the most important Irish print expression of this wider cultural moment was the *Irish Democrat,* a short-lived journal of the Irish Popular Front. The *Democrat* emerged from the combined efforts of the CPI, the Republican Congress and the Northern Irish Socialist Party and held its Dublin meetings in Jacob's home.[147] It ceased printing after a short run due to lack of funds.[148] Little attention has been paid to the Dublin branch of the LBC, which included members such as Sheehy Skeffington, Connery, Roddy Connolly and R. M. Fox.[149]

Writing of the British Women's Liberation Movement, Lucy Delap has noted how the 'centrality of books and other texts within feminism was shaped by the settings in which books were encountered'.[150] For an earlier generation of activist women, books, the spaces in which they were sold and the contexts in which they were published was no less important. Interestingly, the protagonists of earlier struggles began to write themselves into history as the world lurched toward a cataclysm that would violently refute prospects of a harmonious

[145] RJD, 13 December 1938, NLI, RJP, MS 32,582 (85).
[146] Ibid.
[147] See RJD, 8 March 1937, NLI, RJP, MS 32,582 (81); RJD, 4 August 1937, NLI, RJP, MS 32,582 (82).
[148] McGarry, *Irish Politics,* pp.103-4
[149] O'Connor provides a brief overview of the LBC, see: O'Connor, *Reds and the Green,* p. 216. For membership details, see: 'Communism', P. Carroll, 20 January 1939, NAI JUS 2011/25/431; Margaret Connery to HSS, 16 June 1937, NLI SSP MS 41,177/10.
[150] Lucy Delap, 'Feminist Bookshops, Reading Cultures and the Women's Liberation Movement in Great Britain, c. 1974-2000', *History Workshop Journal*, 81:1 (2016), p. 171.

socialist future. Disillusionment once more emerged as the dominant mode in the European radical left, but reading, re-enacting and debating the continued relevance of the old causes provided psychological fortitude against the seemingly unabating waves of setbacks.

The LBC was founded in March 1936 in London and spearheaded by the communist-sympathetic but non-Party publisher Victor Gollancz, alongside prominent collaborators such as Harold Laski and John Strachey. As an organisation, the LBC's intention was to 'confront the menace of fascism that was growing across Europe'.[151] Its method of confronting fascism was a subscription-based book distribution service, which sent a curated selection of left-wing books to subscribers on a monthly basis. The Dublin branch of the LBC was founded at a late 1936 meeting chaired by Sheehy Skeffington.[152] In April 1937, the *Irish Democrat* also advertised the launch of a Belfast section.[153] Yet another initiative of the fissiparous Irish literary left outlined at various points throughout this project, the Dublin branch once more brought together the usual suspects of this thesis in politico-literary gatherings. No archive exists of the group, but police surveillance, diaries and correspondence allow us to recover evidence of its membership and events. By March 1937, Owen Sheehy Skeffington reported that its Dublin membership numbered eighty-one.[154]

The LBC connected its small Irish readership to a curated selection of British socialist writing shaped by the Popular Front priorities of the Comintern, but it could also connect them to the British left socially. Gillett Gatty, for example, provided Sheehy Skeffington with details of precisely where she sat during London meetings of the Club, suggesting that the details be passed on to Irish members who may be visiting.[155] Her offer indicated how Club

[151] Johnathan Roscoe, 'My Country: Right or Left? How the Left Book Club Lost the Battle, but Won the War', *Logos,* 22:3 (January 2011), p. 62.
[152] 'Report on Communist Activities', 3 November 1936, NAI, JUS 2008/117/842.
[153] *Irish Democrat,* 10 April 1937.
[154] OSS to HSS, 18 March 1937, NLI, SSP, MS 40,483/2.
[155] KGG to HSS, 16 January 1937, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/17.

membership in the small circle of Dublin could link an individual to the wider membership in London.

The LBC's circulation of books exploring the pressing issues and past causes of the international left resulted in curious moments of intertextuality. For example, one of the books that Gollancz distributed through the LBC was Joseph Freeman's *An American Testament: A Narrative of Rebels and Romantics,* which told the story of the author's eventual embrace of communism. Owen Sheehy Skeffington and his wife Andrée found it absorbing. He wrote to his mother encouraging her to get a copy through an LBC member, noting that it 'has a lot about people you know, or knew.'[156] In its final chapters, the book explores the political impact of Freeman's friendships in late 1920s Moscow, including the author's relationship with 'O. B.', his chosen pseudonym for his comrade May O'Callaghan. The book's path to publication by the LBC was not straight-forward. Demonstrating the proximity between the Club and international communism, the leading Bulgarian communist Georgi Dimitrov personally pleaded with Gollancz to halt the book's publication after the Comintern's disciplinary body deemed the work harmful to the movement.[157] Freeman's book was an autobiographical response to world events, designed to lead readers toward sympathy with the author's communism. In this aim, it had some success. It also led to my discovery of a hitherto unknown Irish woman's communism. That the subjects of this thesis found themselves reading a source that proved pivotal in constructing a chapter is a succinct reflection of the interconnectedness of their world and the intertextuality of their cultural tastes.

Despite its miniscule membership, the Dublin LBC, like so many other fringe radical initiatives, stoked the consistently fevered imagination of the Irish Catholic right. Denis

[156] OSS to HSS, 12 July 1938, NLI, SSP, MS 40,483/3.
[157] 'Notes of a Meeting with Victor Gollancz about the Left Book Club in England', 8 May 1937, RGASPI 495/261/2295/102.

Fahey, an influential Holy Ghost father, argued in his 1938 antisemitic tract *The Rulers of Russia* that a 'New IRA', allied with members of the CPI and the Dublin LBC, proved that the Soviets were preparing a campaign in Ireland 'for the Popular Front and the attack on the Mass'.[158] Seemingly conscious of the sceptical reader, Fahey footnoted this statement with the line: 'the LBC is the creation of the Jew, V. Gollancz'.[159] Although frankly unhinged, Fahey's worldview had currency in Irish and international anti-communist circles. A miniscule radical grouping and a Dublin reading circle posed little threat to the holy sacraments as practised in Ireland. There was no alliance between communists, Jews and freemasons in Ireland – or, indeed, anywhere. But this did not prevent either Church or State surveillance from adopting a paranoid and racist vision of alleged Jewish communist infiltration in Ireland. In a Garda report on a January 1936 leftist meeting, the reporting officer noted that a 'considerable number of Jews attended', while Church surveillance more bluntly stated that the rise of Nazism had led to an influx of Jews in Ireland who were granting communism 'Jewish world-support'.[160] Fahey's views may have occupied a fringe space in Irish society, but the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism appears to have percolated into the corners of Church and State where anti-communist paranoia was most prevalent.

Yet conspiratorial mindedness was never the preserve of the right alone. The Soviet Communist Party eulogised in the lectures, writings and memories of the European left was gripped by a wave of paranoia from 1937 as Stalin's fears of internal subversion precipitated a purge of Soviet society, beginning with the upper echelons of the Soviet Communist Party and eventually radiating outwards to encompass ordinary citizens. Publicly defending the Soviet state while the Bolsheviks began a process of self-destruction was a trying task. Could

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[158] Denis Fahey, *The Rulers of Russia* (Dublin, 1938), p. 56
[159] Ibid.
[160] 'Communism – Year Ending 31st March 1936', c. March 1936, NAI, JUS 2008/117/842; 'Report on Communism in Ireland', February 1937, Dublin Diocesan Archives (Hereafter DDA), Archbishop Byrne Papers (Hereafter ABP), AB7/B/Lay Organisations, Uncatalogued.

the enthusiasm for united progressive solidarity be sustained in the face of the macabre spectacle of the Moscow show trials? These events were observed with unease by certain Irish radical women. In Kathleen Lynn's diary, Agatha Bullitt Grabisch, the Dublin-based cousin of the first US ambassador to the USSR, is found discussing the confessions of the defendants in the 1936 show trial.[161] Although it is clear from the diary entry that Bullitt Grabisch culled her information from the press, her cousin's position surely added a personal dimension to her discussions of the events with other Dublin-based women. Owen Sheehy Skeffington's letters home suggest that his mother was also perturbed by the trials. 'Yes, I don't like the look of the Soviet executions at all' he wrote, noting that a friend had informed him that Trotskyists were indeed dangerous, 'but 16 shootings seems appalling to me.'[162] A 1937 report in the *Sunderland Daily Echo* suggested that Despard was unsettled enough to consider a return visit to the USSR 'because she is a bit puzzled by recent events in Russia'.[163] She died in her Belfast home shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, having never undertaken this return visit. The research for this project unearthed no further evidence to suggest she harboured doubts about the course of Soviet society. Ultimately, there was no Irish version of the public reckoning with a communist 'god that failed' among interwar radicals.

The Stalinist terror was harder to discern at a distance than the public Show Trials. Nonetheless, comrades abroad became aware of mass arrests as their friends, comrades and leaders exiled in Moscow began to disappear.[164] The Terror effectively demobilised and demoralised the Comintern apparatus in Moscow, with émigré communists becoming automatic suspects by nature of their foreign status. In January 1939, Joseph Freeman wrote to J. T. Murphy, once a British communist delegated to Ireland, asking after May

[161] KLD, 24 August 1936, RCPIHC, KL/3/3.
[162] OSS to HSS, 27 August 1936, NLI, SSP, MS 40,483/1.
[163] *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 6 October 1936.
[164] Karl Schlögel, *Moscow, 1937,* trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 389-390.

O'Callaghan, with whom Murphy had recently reconnected in the London bookshop where she worked. Freeman asked Murphy to salute O'Callaghan and remember the Moscow days. 'Those days seem terribly far off, and it is hard to think of them' he noted.[165] Many former comrades in Moscow, including O'Callaghan's close friends Rose Cohen and Sergei Dinamov, were arrested during the terror of the late 1930s. Both Freeman and O'Callaghan were aware of this. In June 1938, O'Callaghan wrote to Dinamov, requesting that he help a friend bring a book to the attention of Soviet audiences.[166] A Soviet editor replied, informing O'Callaghan that Dinamov had not worked at the publication for more than year.[167] He was arrested three months after O'Callaghan wrote to him. Rumours of disappearances and news of arrest did pass through interpersonal communication channels. Decades later, O'Callaghan would remember her reconnections with communists in London with a tragic note. 'You mention Sergei [Dinamov]', O'Callaghan wrote to her lifelong friend Ruth Kennell in 1969, 'I have a recollection that one of the comrades on his return from Moscow did not want to give me any information – a bad sign.'[168] The arrest of Rose Cohen in 1937 received attention in the British press at the time.[169] It is impossible that O'Callaghan and Rose's sister Nellie remained unaware. The lack of any evidence for either Rose's close friend or sister referring to her imprisonment as it unfolded is a dark indicator for the lasting strength of their commitment to the Soviet cause. The Show Trials were, by design, more public than the terror, but this did not prevent knowledge of the wave of arrests from seeping out of the USSR in certain cases.

Before the international left reeled from the news of turns in the Party line and began consuming books distributed through the LBC, women who had been active in suffrage

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[165] JF to J. T. Murphy, 23 January 1939, HILA, JFP, Box 31 Folder 1.
[166] MO'C to Sergei Dinamov, 13 June 1938, RGALI, 1397/1/680/1.
[167] T. Rokotov to MO'C, 31 July 1938, RGALI, 1397/1/680/11.
[168] MO'C to REK, 17 December 1969, UOSC, REKP, Box 7, Folder 14.
[169] John Callaghan and Mark Pythian, 'State Surveillance and Communist Lives: Rose Cohen and the Early British Communist Milieu', *Journal of Intelligence History,* 12:3 (April 2013), esp. pp. 146-148.

militancy began producing their own histories and accounts of their movement. In part, this process was designed to ensure a place in history for the women and their movement, but it was also a form of catharsis in the face of contemporary political setbacks. Hilda Kane noted that in writing these memoirs, the authors found that the 'dreams and myths of the suffrage movement existed in contrast to the hard and difficult present'.[170]

The Irish literary products of the Popular Front era similarly channelled the memory of an old cause in faltering attempts to revitalise the new ones. Irish leftist authors were far less prolific during the last half of the 1930s than their British counterparts, who had the enviable distribution network of the LBC to rely upon for amplification of their message. However, the publishing arm of the CPGB, Lawrence & Wishart, did release two books by Irish authors in 1936: *Easter Week,* a Marxist history of the Easter Rising by Brian O'Neill, and *Good-bye Twilight*, an anthology of Irish 'proletarian' writing edited by the Jewish Dubliner Leslie Daiken and dedicated to then-still-imprisoned Tom Mooney.[171] The same year also saw the release and performance of *Easter, 1916*, a kind-of dramatic accompaniment to O'Neill's book by the English communist writer Montagu Slater, which centred on the figure of James Connolly and was dedicated to Nora Connolly O'Brien.[172] One Irish Jesuit journal reviewed the avowedly-communist play with the wry comment: 'As for a performance in this country, it would be difficult, we imagine, to find a building strong enough to withstand the audience'.[173] The most interesting of these works for our purposes was Daiken's book of poetry which, as Daniel Gomes has noted, indexed the uncertainties and complexities of the Irish left's attempts to link the national to the international against the

[170] Hilda Kean, 'Searching for the Past in Present Defeat: The Construction of Historical and Political Identity in British Feminism in the 1920s and 1930s', *Women's History Review*, 3:1 (1994), p. 67.
[171] Brian O'Neill, *Easter Week* (London, 1936); Daiken (ed.), *Twilight*.
[172] Montagu Slater, *Easter, 1916* (London, 1936).
[173] G.F., 'Review of Montagu Slater, *Easter 1916*', *The Irish Monthly,* 64:756 (June 1936), p. 424.

backdrop of the Spanish Civil War.[174] Taking its cue from Joseph Freeman's theorising of 'proletarian culture', a theory Freeman first developed in Moscow during the 1920s, Daiken's collection brought together working-class writers, communists and well-known rabble-rousers like Despard.[175] As an anthology combining writers of various leftist hues, some of whom wrote in traditional Irish verse forms and others who drew on international inspiration in form and content, the book gestured towards the heterogenous composition of the Irish left itself.

As ever, Irish radical women found avenues for publicity for their own activities in the British radical women's press, particularly the journal of the British section of the WWCWAF, *Woman To-Day*. First published in 1936, *Woman To-Day* was a lively publication that printed a monthly advice column and beauty guide alongside appeals for Spanish Republican support. During its run, the journal featured several examples of Ireland-related coverage. The first issue opened with images of Charlotte Despard illustrating an article on the 1936 World Peace Congress in Brussels.[176] In later issues, the publication printed a historical profile of Constance Markievicz that placed her within a pantheon of socialist feminism and an account of women-led organising on the island of Achill.[177] Interestingly, one young member of the British section of the WWCWAF, who was deemed prominent enough by the CPGB to have an autobiography dispatched to Moscow, was from Ireland: Kathleen Madden. Born in Wicklow, Madden wrote in her Comintern biographical statement that she had 'seriously thought of [joining the] Communist Party because [I] believed Mrs. Despard (for whom [I] had great admiration) to be communist'.[178] The ties

[174] Daniel Gomes, 'Good-Bye, Twilight, Ireland, Spain and the Ballad Resurgence', *Éire-Ireland,* 50:3&4 (Fall/Winter, 2015), pp. 35-58.
[175] Daiken cites Freeman in his introduction, see: Daiken, *Twilight,* p. xviii.
[176] *Woman To-Day,* September 1936.
[177] *Woman To-Day,* September 1937, October 1937.
[178] Biographical Statement, Kathleen May Claire de la Cherlois Madden, 11 July 1936, RGASPI 495/128/424/1-2.

between Irish communist-aligned women and their British counterparts examined earlier in this thesis clearly had lasting resonance. This influence could play out in interesting ways, such as providing copy for a communist women's journal or influencing a young woman from Wicklow to become a committed antifascist.

Two fellow travellers of Irish radical women, both British by birth but who claimed Irish ancestry, R. M. Fox and Ethel Mannin, published books that discussed the contribution of Irish women to progressive movements in 1935 and 1938 respectively. Fox's *Rebel Irishwomen* placed figures such as Charlotte Despard, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and Maud Gonne within a nationalist *and* socialist tradition.[179] Fox has been discussed elsewhere in this thesis and is a regularly cited figure in histories of the Irish left. Mannin's connections to Irish politics are less well-known, though her relationship with W. B. Yeats has been detailed by Foster and Joseph Hassett.[180]

How Mannin came to be connected to the world of this thesis further reveals the dense network of interpersonal connections that undergirds this project. Mannin's Irish radical thread can be picked up by looking at a regular visitor to Dublin during the interwar period: the aforementioned Agatha Bullitt Grabisch, an American journalist married to a German doctor and the cousin of William Christian Bullitt Jnr, the first US Ambassador to the USSR. Bullitt Grabisch became tied to Irish republican circles in Berlin in December 1915, when she met Roger Casement, then in Germany forming a brigade of Irish men from among Prisoners of War.[181] In 1924, her journalistic career in Berlin brought her to an anarchist meeting addressed by revered revolutionary Emma Goldman.[182] Later, in the home

[179] R. M. Fox, *Rebel Irishwomen* (Dublin, 1935).
[180] R. F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats: A Life II: The Arch-Poet* (Oxford, 1997), esp. pp. 511-519; Joseph M. Hassett, *W.B. Yeats and the Muses* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 180-183.
[181] For a reminiscence of Bullitt Grabisch, see Michael J. Lennon, 'Frau Grabisch', *The Capuchin Annual* (Dublin,1955), pp. 175-180.
[182] Agatha Bullitt Grabisch to James B. Bullitt, 28 April 1924, Louis Round Wilson Library Special Collections, Bullitt Family Papers, Series 1, Folder 83C.

of the radical journalist Agnes Smedley, Bullitt Grabisch was introduced to Goldman and her partner Alexander Berkman.[183] In 1926, Bullitt Grabisch was briefly involved in an ultimately unsuccessful initiative to publish Sean O'Casey's work for a Soviet audience.[184] A decade later, after removing herself from Nazi rule by residing in Dublin, Grabisch furnished Sheehy Skeffington with Goldman's address so that Sheehy Skeffington could express her condolences following the suicide of Berkman, whom Sheehy Skeffington had met in January 1917 during her first American lecture tour.[185] Meanwhile, Mannin drew towards anarchism following her disillusionment with Soviet Communism. She became a disciple of Goldman, who was in London agitating for the Spanish anarchists.[186] Mannin was then introduced to Sheehy Skeffington by Goldman.[187] Radicals and their fellow travellers moved through the interwar period with their address books in tow. Informal networks which had been developed through interpersonal links allowed activists to sustain connections to events abroad, facilitating person-to-person information sharing and subverting state attempts to control cross-border flows of information.

In November 1936, Gillett Gatty informed Sheehy Skeffington that she hoped to hear Ethel Mannin speak at the Unitarian Church in Dublin.[188] Mannin's contact with the Irish left would provide material for two books: her 1938 non-fiction work *Women and the Revolution* and the 1945 satire of Irish-British left relations *Comrade O Comrade: Or, Low-Down on the Left*, set during the period of the Popular Front.[189] In the former, Mannin adopted the

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[183] Agatha Bullitt Grabisch to Emma Goldman, 15 September 1936, IISH, Emma Goldman Papers (Hereafter EGP), General Correspondence Box, Folder 61.
[184] Raisa Lomonossava and Agatha M. Bullitt Grabisch to Sean O'Casey, 3 February 1926, NLI, Sean O'Casey Papers, MS 37,975.
[185] Hanna Sheehy Skeffington to Emma Goldman, 27 October 1936, IISH, EGP, General Correspondence Box, Folder 151. *An Phoblacht* carried an interview with Grabisch in 1932, see: *An Phoblacht,* 17 September 1932.
[186] Kathleen Bell, 'Ethel Mannin's Fiction and the Influence of Emma Goldman', in H. Gustav Klaus and Stephen Knight (eds.), '*To Hell with Culture': Anarchism and Twentieth-Century British Literature* (Cardiff, 2005), pp. 82-96.
[187] Ethel Mannin, *Privileged Spectator: A Sequel to Confessions and Impressions* (London, 1939), p. 259.
[188] KGG to HSS, 7 November 1936, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/17.
[189] Ethel Mannin, *Women and the Revolution* (London, 1938); Idem, *Comrade O Comrade: Or, Low-Down on the Left* (London, 1947).

conventional Irish socialist position that the Easter Rising and the War of Independence were 'part of a revolution not yet finished in Ireland'.[190] The section on Irish women, which centred on Markievicz, repeated familiar tropes of innate Irish rebelliousness. 'It is a tradition of the Irish to face danger gaily and die, if need be, with a smile', readers are told.[191] Despite being a work of comic fiction, *Comrade O Comrade* is perhaps the more insightful of Mannin's works relating to Ireland. Mannin's caricatures of peasant-obsessed English leftists who gormlessly grasp towards their own misunderstandings of the Irish question seems close to the reality of the British radicals who were ordered to build Irish communism but succeeded only in constructing animosity between themselves and their Irish counterparts. The book also contains a rare physical description of the Dublin CPI headquarters on Strand Street and its interior, describing it as a small bookstore 'off the quay' with a broken window and a hammer and sickle 'chalked on the boards'.[192]

Beyond the LBC, the CPI headquarters and bookstore appears to have been another reliable place in Dublin to find radical literature. Sphinx Publishing, the Party's publishing wing, was managed by Wilmot O'Farrell, a woman believed by Garda intelligence to have previously been a member of the IWWU, though little else is known about her.[193] According to a 1936 police report, books available in the store included titles such as *Women Under Fascism and Communism, The Moscow Trial was Fair* and issues of the *New Masses* and *International Literature*.[194] Further surveillance conducted by the Archdiocese of Dublin revealed that the shelves of the store were lined with a 'full library' of revolutionary literature along with copies of the *Moscow Daily News,* an English-language journal for émigré communists in Moscow, and the CPGB's *Daily Worker*.[195] Although impossible to

[190] Mannin, *Women*, p. 155.
[191] Ibid, p. 158.
[192] Mannin, *Comrade O Comrade,* p. 30.
[193] 'Notes on Communism in Saorstát Eireann (Supplement)', c. 1937, NAI JUS 93/4/7.
[194] 'Report on Communist Activities', 3 November 1936, NAI JUS 2008/117/842.
[195] 'Report on Communism in Ireland', February 1936, DDA, ABP, AB7/B, Lay Organisations, Uncatalogued.

quantitively measure the impact of the CPI's consistent supply of revolutionary literature to the radicals of Dublin, it surely supplemented the pre-existing LBC as a repository of left-wing thought.

Irish radicals and their literature could also find their way into stores abroad. Suggestive evidence comes from the London-Irish novelist Mairin Mitchell, who noted in a letter to Sheehy Skeffington that she received a copy of *An Phoblacht* from 'Marx House', the CPGB library in London.[196] In her book *Storm Over Spain,* Mitchell also outlined the London geography of Irish radicalism. She wrote of the bookstore owned by the anarchist Charles Lahr on Red Lion Street, which was always 'a meeting place for Irish writers' such as Sheehy Skeffington, Liam O'Flaherty and R. M. Fox.[197] According to Mitchell, the figures who passed through the International Restaurant on Denmark Street included Sheehy Skeffington, Emma Goldman, who had made common cause with Sheehy Skeffington 'in social activities', a 'lady gardener from Terenure' and the socialist journalist Henry Nevinson, to whom Irish guests paid tribute for raising his voice in the cases of Francis Sheehy Skeffington and Roger Casement.[198]

Mitchell's correspondence with Hanna Sheehy Skeffington also indicates the overlapping interpersonal publishing networks stemming between Irish and British radicals. Part of their discussion focused on Mitchell finding a British radical publisher for Sheehy Skeffington's writing. Mitchell recommended Lahr and Hugo Rathbone, who had adopted O'Flaherty's daughter Joyce, born to Nellie Cohen in New York in 1929.[199]

Publishing memoirs of a life on the left held the potential to assist in the generational transfer of political ideals. Sheehy Skeffington was working on an autobiography before her

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[196] Mairin Mitchell to HSS, undated, c. 1936, NLI, SSP, 41,177/32.
[197] Mitchell, *Storm Over Spain,* pp. 129-130.
[198] Ibid, pp. 130-131.
[199] Mairin Mitchell to HSS, 14 March 1936, NLI, SSP, 33,607 (14); Mairin Mitchell to HSS, 14 January 1936, NLI, SSP, 41,177/32.

death, but only a limited number of chapters were drafted.[200] An outline plan gives some suggestion of how she planned to cover the interwar period, including an entire chapter dedicated to her experience in the USSR.[201] In her 1939 memoir, Mannin wrote that Sheehy Skeffington was 'interested in the ideas of those of a younger generation' and cognisant of international issues.[202] Somewhat unfairly, Mannin suggested this was 'rare in the Irish', though she may have had her earlier frustrations in attempting to publicly engage Yeats with European politics in mind.[203] The younger generation appears to have been little interested in the ideas of Sheehy Skeffington and her cohort, however. This was suggested by Connery's above-cited comment that there was 'not one Radical' among the younger Irish feminists. In a 1937 book on women in European politics published by the LBC, the British antifascist writer Hilary Newitt argued that many young women were uninterested in feminist demands because of a more urgent concern that the world could erupt into conflict at any moment.[204] Although this suggests that a younger generation's lack of interest in feminism was a broader phenomenon, the political atmosphere in Ireland and the paucity of published memoirs by Irish socialist women surely contributed to the absence of a direct transfer of radical political ideals from one generation to the next.

The last domestic Irish feminist campaign of the interwar period resulted in a defeat, with 56.5% of the population voting for the adoption of de Valera's 1937 constitution. This result came in spite of feminist campaigns directed against the draft constitution that aimed to protect women's rights as citizens and their right to work.[205] For Sheehy Skeffington, the constitution contained 'fascist proposals' regarding women, resigning them to a purely

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[200] These chapters, in various stages of completion, cover Sheehy Skeffington's life from early childhood to the establishment of the first Dáil. They were recently published in Ward (ed.), *Hanna Sheehy Skeffington,* pp. 2-28.
[201] Notes and Typescripts for an Unpublished Memoir, HSS, c. 1946, NLI, SSP, MS 33,618/5.
[202] Ethel Mannin, *Privileged Spectator,* p. 258.
[203] Ibid; Foster, *Yeats*, Vol. 2, p. 519.
[204] Hilary Newitt, *Women Must Choose* (London, 1937), p. 32.
[205] Maria Luddy, 'A "Sinister and Retrogressive" Proposal: Irish Women's Opposition to the 1937 Draft Constitution', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* Vol. 15 (2005), pp. 175-195.

domestic role.[206] Although groups such as the Women's Social and Progressive League were enlivened by the campaign against the draft constitution, it would be decades before an avowedly anti-capitalist organisation spearheaded by Irish women would emerge once more. As Pašeta notes, the 1937 constitution outlined the ideal female citizen of the Irish Free State, 'a model which reflected both the conservative turn in Irish politics and the increasing marginalization of the Irish women's movement.'[207] At the end of the interwar period, a thread in the line of Irish feminism's continuity was severed, as the red socialist hue that shone with varying levels of intensity in previous years dimmed entirely.

However, some lines of cultural continuity between the Irish radical left of the interwar period and later years was sustained through the emergence of the Dublin-based New Theatre Group (NTG), which was founded in April 1937 as an offshoot from the Dublin LBC.[208] This leftist drama society appears to have been largely composed of a younger generation of leftists, although Roddy Connolly appears in Owen Sheehy Skeffington's correspondence appealing for money for the group in March 1937.[209] Hanna Sheehy Skeffington also delivered a lecture to the group.[210] Early NTG programming reflected the rejuvenated radical interest in China reflected in Connery's letter. In September 1939, the NTG staged Sergei Tret'iakov's *Roar China,* a Soviet play about British Imperial misadventures in China.[211] Tret'iakov had been an acquaintance of O'Callaghan in Moscow and had permitted her and Freeman to work on the English translation of *Roar China*.[212] Two

[206] *Prison Bars,* July 1937, reprinted in Ward (ed.), *Hanna Sheehy Skeffington*, p. 342.
[207] Senia Pašeta, 'Women and Civil Society: Feminist Responses to the Irish Constitution of 1937', in Jose Harris (ed.), *Civil Society in British History: Ideas, Identities, Institutions* (New York, 2005), p. 229.
[208] H. Gustav Klaus, 'Introduction', in Idem (ed.), *Strong Words Brave Deeds: the Poetry, Life and Times of Thomas O'Brien* (Dublin, 1994), p. 28.
[209] OSS to HSS, 18 March 1937, NLI, SSP, MS 40,483/1.
[210] Seán O'hEidirsecoil, 'A Personal Memoir of the Thirties', in H. Gustav Klaus (ed.), *Strong Words Brave Deeds: the Poetry, Life and Times of Thomas O'Brien* (Dublin, 1994), p. 205.
[211] Klaus, 'Introduction', p. 33.
[212] See p. 166 of this thesis.

years before his play was performed on a Dublin stage, Tret'iakov's work was denounced by Soviet authorities and he was executed during the Stalinist terror.

Lines from *Lock-Out,* a play written by NTG member Seán O'hEidirsceoil, referenced the mobilising effect that international events had upon beleaguered Irish radicals in the late 1930s:

> Sometimes we sicken,
> Tired of the struggle without end…
> Then someone dies,
> In China or in Spain,
> Or in a Dublin Street…
> But with determination we resolve,
> That this rich blood poured out so selflessly,
> Shall make a richer world…[213]

Learning the extent of the executions then underway in the USSR would, presumably, have not had the same galvanising impact. The resolve of the NTG group to continue its project of encouraging workers' theatre in Ireland eventually faltered. By 1943, the group had lost its audience and its more talented actors had migrated to established venues which could afford to pay wages and royalties.[214] Thomas O'Brien, founder of the O'Brien Press, was perhaps the best-known figure to emerge from the group.

In a short summary of the year written after Jacob had concluded her diary for 1939, she wrote that the most important international event was Franco's victory, which she deemed the 'most horrible thing that happened in Europe since the last war'.[215] The opening of the European conflict in September had 'darkened all since' as 'evil news' and 'worse apprehensions' filtered into neutral Ireland.[216] 'One can't look ahead without miserable fear

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[213] Seán O'hEidirsceoil, 'Lock-Out', in H. Gustav Klaus (ed.), *Strong Words Brave Deeds: the Poetry, Life and Times of Thomas O'Brien* (Dublin, 1994), p. 135.
[214] Thomas O'Brien 'The New Theatre Group: To Die or Not to Die', in H. Gustav Klaus (ed.), *Strong Words Brave Deeds: the Poetry, Life and Times of Thomas O'Brien* (Dublin, 1994), p. 149.
[215] RJD, 1939 Summary, p. 79, NLI RJD MS 32,582/90.
[216] Ibid.

& has just to try & not think of the future', Jacob observed.[217] For many leftists during this period, such despondency was immediately recognisable. Already in November 1937, Gillett Gatty had described Spain as 'the saddest thing I've ever seen my life'.[218] The ultimate collapse of the Spanish Republic and the invasion of Poland, darkly accented for the international left by the spectacles of the Moscow Trials and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, created a widespread atmosphere of disillusionment. Although the Comintern would not be officially dissolved until 1943, the Stalinist terror ensured that the organisation had, as Schlögel argues, 'been given the *coup de grâce* as early as in 1936-8.'[219] By early 1937, Stalin had convinced himself that the Comintern was a 'hotbed of subversion and anti-Soviet espionage.'[220] In exploring Irish radical women's responses to the cultural products of the Popular Front-era and their place within them, this section has sought to further present the sincere desire of Irish radical women to be part of a wider cause – one that was decisively demobilised and demoralised by the course of world events and the disenchanting *dénouement* of interwar radical internationalism.

[217] Ibid.
[218] KGG to HSS, 11 November 1937, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/17.
[219] Schlögel, *Moscow*, p. 403.
[220] Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, *The Comintern: A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin* (London, 1996), p. 145.

Conclusion

In June 1939, Katherine Gillett Gatty entered a Vancouver post office to gather information on a figure whose name was notorious among British and Irish women with a shared feminist past. After receiving an address, she borrowed a car from locally based antifascist exiles. She drove to a forest outside the city with Anna Askanasy, a Viennese feminist and refugee who had recently fled Nazi Austria. Their car stopped outside two buildings in the woods. As Gillett Gatty approached one of the houses, a tall figure in a shabby khaki uniform emerged from the other. After Gillett Gatty asked him his name, the man confirmed that he was Captain John Bowen Colthurst.

Gillett Gatty described this encounter in a lengthy letter to Sheehy Skeffington, whose husband had been murdered by Bowen Colthurst in Dublin's Portobello barracks twenty-three years before.[221] Gillett Gatty spoke at length with him about fascism '(in which, of course) he believes'.[222] Later, when speaking with other antifascist exiles and members of the Vancouver branch of the LBC, Gillett Gatty related the events in Dublin in Easter 1916 when Francis Sheehy Skeffington was murdered and of the verdict 'Guilty but Insane' delivered in the case of Bowen Colthurst. To ensure she got all of the details correct, she carried a copy of Brian O'Neill's 1936 account *Easter Week*.[223] Gillett Gatty affirmed that the 'whole of the facts are now known to many people'.[224] Describing the rationale for this personal mission to Sheehy Skeffington, Gillett Gatty wrote *'I wanted the story to go around*'.[225]

The symbolic importance of Francis Sheehy Skeffington's murder for the journalistic teams behind the *Irish Citizen* and the *Woman's Dreadnought* was first discussed in the

[221] KGG to HSS, 12 June 1939, NLI, SSP, MS 41,177/17.
[222] Ibid.
[223] Ibid.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Ibid. Emphasis in original.

opening chapter of this this thesis.[226] In the late 1930s, as the networks energised during the final years of the Great War slowed to a halt, there was a return to the murder of Francis Sheehy Skeffington through Gillett Gatty's attempt to ensure that disgrace followed the murderer across the world.

This was not simply a coincidence. Radical internationalism sustained an interlinked network of Irish women activists and their counterparts in the aftermath of the Great War, ensuring that their interwar social-political networks were typified by a constant overlap in people, ideals and destinations. These networks were often built on past legacies. This chapter has sought to demonstrate how engagement with antifascism marked the final evolutionary step of the leftist women's network explored in this thesis. The WIMC introduced women such as Gillett Gatty and Sheehy Skeffington to antifascism, bringing them into these networks through Pankhurst's initiative. Emmanuelle Carle has reflected that even if the protests of women antifascists ultimately failed to sway politicians, the necessity of gendering antifascism remains, for it will 'bring out more strongly the specificities and subtleties of feminist pacifism and, as a result, establish the real value that such voices possessed.'[227] For the purposes of this project, the value of the voices of Irish radical women is that they help us reconstruct a political path pursued by former suffragettes into the interwar period, thereby revealing how a shared world of radical internationalism provided the morale necessary to sustain a transnational activist career. For Irish radical women, interpersonal connections, political developments and morale existed on a nexus that spanned from the local to the global.

[226] See pp. 52-54, 72, of this thesis.
[227] Carle, 'Women, Anti-Fascism and Peace', p. 314.

‘Cemeteries of Dead Hopes’: Conclusion

In a Moscow interrogation room on a night in January 1941, Padraic Breslin, an Irish communist charged with anti-Soviet espionage, found the courage to dispute the translation capabilities of his captors. Breslin, who we first encountered in the second chapter as a young member of the lively Dublin radical group the Workers Party of Ireland, had emigrated to Soviet Russia in 1928.[1] Tasked with proving his involvement in an international anti-Soviet conspiracy, secret police raided his apartment near Moscow’s Central Telegraph Building, seizing correspondence that they would deploy in their accusations against him. Through interrogation, the investigators learned that Breslin had greeted the Irish delegation to Soviet Russia in 1930, receiving a package from his Dublin family through the delegates and meeting his acquaintance Charlotte Despard.[2] The investigating officers were also interested to learn of Breslin’s acquaintance with the writer Liam O’Flaherty and with Rose Cohen, Breslin’s former boss on the *Moscow Daily News* who had been executed outside Moscow in 1937.[3] Prior to his arrest, Breslin had spent much of his time at the home of Edward Soermus, who was once a regular violinist at socials of Sylvia Pankhurst’s East London group before being deported to Russia in 1919.[4] During one particular interrogation session in the basement of the infamous Lubianka building, Breslin’s interrogators focused on a letter sent to Breslin by Harry Kernoff, the watercolour chronicler of Dublin’s artistic and political bohemia. Writing to Breslin, Kernoff had asserted that he and Breslin were working for the same people. The NKVD saw it as evidence of collusion with foreign powers. Breslin,

[1] See p. 118 of this thesis.
[2] Interrogation Protocol of P. Breslin, 31 January 1941, BKP, p. 109; McLoughlin, *Left to the Wolves,* p. 47.
[3] Ibid, p. 165.
[4] Padraic Breslin to Daisy McMackin, 21 January 1940, BKP; *WD,* 8 December 1917, 14 December 1918, 22 February 1919.

however, attempted to convince them of a more holistic definition of the term 'people'. 'What people?' his interrogators asked.[5] Breslin informed the officers in Russian that he and Kernoff were agitating not for a foreign power but 'for all working people'.[6]

The interrogators remained unconvinced. Breslin met his grimly predictable end in a Soviet forced labour camp several months later. In Dublin, he left behind a wife and a young daughter – only one of whom would ever learn the truth about his disappearance. Breslin's wife Daisy, a committed communist, later established the Russian department in Trinity College Dublin and opened her home to meetings of Irish communists. In the first year of my DPhil research, I sat with Daisy and Padraic's daughter, Mairead Breslin Kelly, in her North Dublin home, located a short walk from the Eccles Street building that once housed Despard's Irish Workers College, as I read through her father's interrogation protocols.[7]

Historians are not entirely dissimilar to the secret police. Occasionally our methods, sources and our questions overlap. Unlike the paranoid secret police of the Stalin era, however, we have little reason to be suspicious of Breslin's intentions. An attempt to encounter the internationalism of Irish radical women and their counterparts on their terms has been at the core of this thesis. Their radical vision of internationalism acted as a means of connecting to a broader international cause after their engagement with the suffrage campaign. Delving into the social world of Irish women's radicalism reveals that those within it received their political sustenance from an attachment to the promise of emancipatory possibility inherent within the wider radical world. Although the scene with which I have opened my conclusion takes place in the Lubianka prison, the building where the interwar dream of world revolution went to die in both a literal and metaphorical sense, determinist

[5] Interrogation Protocol of P. Breslin, 31 January 1941, BKP, p. 109.
[6] Ibid, p. 110.
[7] Interview with Mairead Breslin-Kelly, 5 January 2017.

readings of this period which suggest that tragedy was inevitable should be treated with suspicion.

Throughout this thesis I have probed the value of recovering historical possibilities – past futures demobilised and deferred. As Joseph Freeman declared in an essay reflecting on his life in 1920s Moscow written shortly before his death: 'It is only when we encounter this era in its own terms as the living experience of a generation that it regains its meaning.'[8] Speaking a common language of radical internationalism that crossed the world with shared imagery, words and metaphors, transported by itinerant revolutionaries, lecturers, books and films, was an important source of inspiration and kept alive a belief in political possibility in a period that witnessed catastrophic reversals in socialist and feminist fortunes.

[8] Joseph Freeman, 'A Year of Grace', *New Politics* (Winter 1965), p. 119.

Re/Defining Irish Radicalism

In 1977, A. Muriel Pierotti, an early member of the WFL, attempted to convey her personal memories of Charlotte Despard to Andro Linklater, a writer working on a biography of the Anglo-Irish radical. Pierotti discussed her difficulty in narrowing down Despard's many identities, noting 'it sometimes seems that I have evidence of 100 separate women without the clues to join them'.[9] The evidence left behind by individual lives is always fragmentary. By redefining the standard terms by which we approach this history, I have sought a means of not merely 'adding women' to the story but creating a methodology that accurately represents their import on Irish radical initiatives. In doing so, I have expanded the focus of the history of the Irish radical left beyond organisational acronyms and the usual suspects – Jim Larkin, Peadar O'Donnell, et. al – who are repeatedly foregrounded in such accounts. It is hoped that this thesis will assist the scholarly project of creating an integrated history of the Irish revolution and its aftermath, one which recognises the due importance of each section of Irish society – men, women, immigrants and others – in shaping radical history.[10]

General identifying terminology such as 'Irish communist', 'Irish republican', etc, may be useful and necessary categories when we seek to index the broad groups that constitute a political spectrum, but simultaneously reveal their limitations when we explore the more intimate level of interaction within movements. Charlotte Despard, for example, was a communist without being a Party member or accepting all of the ideological orthodoxies, a Catholic whose house was burned to the ground by a mob incited by a Catholic priest and an Irish woman who began to claim her Irish ancestry only later in her long career. By remaining open to multivalent definitions of each of the terms deployed in this thesis,

[9] A. Muriel Pierotti to Andro Linklater, 9 October 1977, WLLSE, A. M. Pierotti Papers, 7AMP/D/1/3.
[10] I am here following Katy Turton's use of the term 'integrated history', see: Katy Turton, 'Men, Women and an Integrated History of the Russian Revolutionary Movement', *History Compass,* 9:2 (2011), pp. 119-133.

communist, pacifist, feminist, internationalist, and so on, we can explore new avenues for research. Terms that defined political and national identity appeared loaded with multiple meanings and subject to ambiguous interpretation by the research subjects themselves. Ultimately, this thesis demonstrates that during the interwar period political labels such as communism, pacifism and internationalism could prove more porous than absolute, often coalescing in the Irish radical imagination to suggest new combinations and improvisations.

Irish radical women, like all political beings in every era, were not reliably consistent in their political stances. Take, for example, Gonne. R. M. Fox, in his hagiographic biographical sketches of Irish women, held Gonne up as one of 'the most representative Irishwomen' and a disciple of James Connolly.[11] Yet Gonne's flirtation with the Irish far-right organisation the Financial Freedom Federation in the late 1930s invites scepticism about the consistency of her convictions. Gonne frequently aired her 'unabashedly anti-Semitic views' from platforms of the Federation, according to R. M. Douglas.[12] For James T. Farrell, an American Trotskyist who travelled to Ireland in 1938, the enigma of Gonne was resolved through arguing that she applied one question to world events: 'Is England for it? Then we're agin' it'.[13] During the Second World War, this reasoning led some Irish republicans with a history of socialist activism to countenance collaboration with Nazi Germany. In 1941, for example, Kathleen Lynn wrote in her diary that Germany had found countries to support their 'anti-Bolshivic (sic) league.'[14] 'Strange we [should] approve' she admitted.[15] In contrast, Ethel Mannin recalled in a 1946 obituary of Hanna Sheehy Skeffington that one of her final discussions with the 'one hundred per cent anti-Fascist' Irish feminist focused on Sheehy Skeffington's impatience with those who 'because they hate the British, were prepared to

[11] Fox, *Rebel Irishwomen*, p. 21.
[12] Douglas, *Architects of the Resurrection*, p. 39.
[13] James T. Farrell to Albert Glotzer, 21 September 1938, HILA, Albert Glotzer Papers, Box 3, Folder 1.
[14] KLD, 26 November 1941, RCPIHC, KLP JL/3/3.
[15] Ibid.

love the Nazis'.[16] Meanwhile, May O'Callaghan, living a sedate life as a communist pensioner in London, followed the Soviet line on the course of the war.[17] In an October 1943 letter, she described her hatred of fascism and declared that there were 'little Hitlers' to be found in all nations and 'the sooner they are exterminated, the better'.[18] A surviving fragment of a letter sent to Gillett Gatty in 1940 from a committee dedicated to solidarity with the Ethiopian people suggests her antifascist commitment remained integral and expansive.[19] Political ideologies such as nationalism, feminism, socialism and communism reveal their capacity for ambiguity, paradox and contingency when placed under a microscope of subjectivity. By using the collective term 'Irish radical women' I have sought a definition that can accommodate this capacity for complexity.

Throughout this thesis I have sought to provide alternative political labels to narrate the history of the Irish radical left beyond socialist republicanism, arguing through figures such as O'Callaghan and Gillett Gatty that the use of this term to encapsulate the interwar experience of Irish radicalism has obscured fascinating and instructive case studies. Even for those whose ideals fit neatly under the rubric 'socialist republicanism', the variance in belief revealed through a biographical approach suggest that there existed numerous Irish *socialist republicanisms* rather than a unitary Irish socialist republicanism. A focus on organisational acronyms will naturally allow groups rather than individuals to dominate the historiography. Historians should remain aware that such a narrative mode often implicitly marginalises the historical contributions of women.

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[16] 'Agin the Government: A Memoir of Hanna Sheehy Skeffington', Ethel Mannin, c. May 1946, HILA, APP, Box 20, Folder 1.
[17] MO'C to REK, c. December 1941 UOSC, REKP, Box 7 Folder 4; MO'C to REK, 3 October 1943, UOSC, REKP, Box 7 Folder 4.
[18] MO'C to REK, 3 October 1943, UOSC, REKP, Box 7 Folder 4.
[19] Maleku E. Bayan to KGG, 1 February 1940, HILA, Maleku E. Bayan Letter Fragment to Mrs. Gillett-Gatty, Folder 1.

To understand how this standard focus has limited the sources available to historians, it is instructive to take the case of a single collection in Queen's University Belfast (QUB): MS 57, the Comintern Papers. From 1993 to 1995, McLoughlin and O'Connor gathered material relating to Ireland from the Comintern archives, held in RGASPI, Moscow. In 2015, the material was made publicly available on microfilm at QUB. This was a valuable and generous contribution, particularly given the linguistic obstacles and visa bureaucracy involved with accessing this material in its original repository. However, researchers should be aware that it is not a complete collection of Soviet-era archival material in RGASPI relating to the interwar Irish left. Folders and documents relating to Ireland contained within the archive of the Comintern's International Women's Secretariat were not included and only seventeen of a total of sixty-nine personnel files relating to Irish communists were microfilmed. The personnel files, rich repositories of working-class biography, have been important in recent Comintern historiography. Of course, curation is not a form of conscious obfuscation. However, the sources chosen reflect the existing literature's focus on organisational actors and the male-dominated world of Irish socialist republicanism. There has also been a recurring issue in works drawing on this collection where sources have been cited based on microfilm reels rather than adhering to correct Russian archival practice, making it difficult to follow through to the source of a footnote. Without understanding how and why the MS 57 Comintern papers are the product of a deliberate form of knowledge creation, future researchers risk unconsciously imbibing the historical priorities of past scholars.

There remains vast scope for future research into histories of interwar Irish radicalism both within and beyond the island of Ireland itself. Irish women's domestic political activism in the post-revolutionary period beyond nationalism and republicanism remains an under-researched topic, while our understanding of how immigrant communities contributed to

radical initiatives in Ireland has also been overlooked. A study of radical internationalism beyond the world of suffrage veterans examined in this thesis may also raise new questions about both the Irish and international left. The material gathered for this project suggests a role played by emigrants from the former Russian Empire and British (particularly Scottish) emigrants in supporting Irish radical initiatives. Left-wing radicalism within the Irish diaspora is another emerging topic.[20] Reading through a small selection of the Comintern's personnel files in Moscow on the side-lines of research for this project, I uncovered several files belonging to Irish radical emigrants, such as Dennis Devers, a Donegal native active in American and British Communism and Kathleen Taylor, a woman born to Irish parents in London and a former member of the Irish Self-Determination League who was married to the editor of a Polish paper in Moscow.[21] A systematic survey of personnel files in traditional sites of Irish diasporic political engagement, such as Australia, Britain and North America, will provide a valuable launching point for a history of how the emigrant Irish became red.

Additionally, the research herein conducted into the Moscow world of May O'Callaghan suggests new research avenues into the transnational world of émigré communist employees in the headquarters of the world revolution. Comintern historiography, which was until recently usually framed through a top-down approach examining a centre-periphery paradigm, has only scratched the surface of this fascinating historical experience and the remarkably rich archival trail left in its wake.

[20] An example of this emerging scholarship is Jimmy Yan's ongoing PhD project at the University of Melbourne exploring the 'Irish Question' within Australian radicalism and its relationship to settler-colonial imaginings of 'self-government'.
[21] *Anketa,* Dennis Devers, 11 July 1936, RGASPI 495/198/421/1; *Anketa,* Kathleen Taylor Rust, 26 August 1935, RGASPI 495/198/885/3-4.

Placing Irish Radical Women in a Radical World

Reflecting a broader tendency in the political history of the Irish left to neglect the importance of space and place, little has been written about the social world of Irish radicalism in the interwar period. This thesis has sought to reconstruct that social world and reveal its importance. In 1926, Soviet intellectuals gathered in O'Callaghan's Moscow flat, learning of the works of Liam O'Flaherty. In 1933, a pious mob besieged the Eccles Street building owned by Despard, which had hosted classes on Marxist theory. In 1937, an American observer watched as people gathered in a Dublin meeting hall to hear a returned Irish fighter from the Spanish front speak hoarsely, his neck wounded by a bullet. Each of these moments, just a few examples of many found throughout this thesis, underline the importance of interpersonal encounters in intimate spaces for the conduct of radical politics. Laura C. Foster rightly underlines that the historical space where radical encounters and discussions took place matter: 'It matters because people respond to their surroundings: they respond to the subtle atmospheres that make a place variously inviting, hostile, affecting, stirring, or fearsome'.[22] Moreover, each space in this thesis is interconnected. They are tied together broadly through their connections to leftist political initiatives, but more specifically through the network of Irish activists who crossed the thresholds of these residences, meeting halls and even prisons, while travelling on their shared journey through the interwar radical world.

What should the careers of the women in this thesis tell us about the radical world of this period? The Irish women explored in this project provide insights not only into their specific and particular lives, but into the lives of their international comrades, many of whom followed a similar path from suffrage through to radical internationalist solidarity. The

[22] Foster, 'Paris Commune in London', p. 6.

frequent recurrence of activist tactics and often remarkable longevity and interconnectivity of transnational comradeships reflects how the wider backdrop of radical internationalism shaped a strand of women's activism throughout the interwar period.[23] Tracing the remarkably international itineraries of the women in this thesis – women such as Despard, O'Callaghan and Gillett Gatty – also reveals that mobility could determine their political trajectories. Travel to socialist congresses and states functioned as a pressure release valve for beleaguered interwar radicals, relieving the tensions of organising in a hostile context.

While the emergence of international communism represented the dawn of a new formalised mode of leftist organising, one that theoretically rejected feminism in favour of a class-based analysis, many women activists engaged with radical internationalism through informal networks while retaining certain continuities with their suffrage past. Rather than focusing primarily on formal networks or crafting ideological comparisons between a sex-focused campaign and class-based politics, these continuities can be fruitfully explored by tracing how women maintained and navigated familiar social-political networks as they progressed from the suffrage campaign through to organisations mobilising for workers' solidarity, world communism and antifascism. Ultimately, the evidence presented in this thesis suggests that the experiences of suffrage veterans who took part in the new causes of interwar radical internationalism were often influenced by the roles they had fulfilled and the comradeships they built within an older shared cause.

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In a tribute to a colleague published in 1941, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington recounted a search through her personal archive for an old *Irish Citizen* newspaper clipping. She asked her readers: 'is there anything sadder than glancing through cemeteries of dead hopes?'[1] This

[23] For a visualisation of this social network interconnectivity, see Appendix A and B.
[1] 'Sarah Harrison', *Irish Press,* 5 August 1941, in Ward (ed.), *Hanna Sheehy Skeffington*, p. 380.

thesis has sought to capture impressions of these 'dead hopes' when they still seemed vital, plausible and necessary. To paraphrase James Barrett, I have pursued the lives of Irish radical women through their world in order to populate the history of the Irish left with flesh-and-blood subjects rather than cardboard characters that fill scenery.[2] To achieve this, it has also been necessary to reconstruct the worlds within which Irish radical women existed.

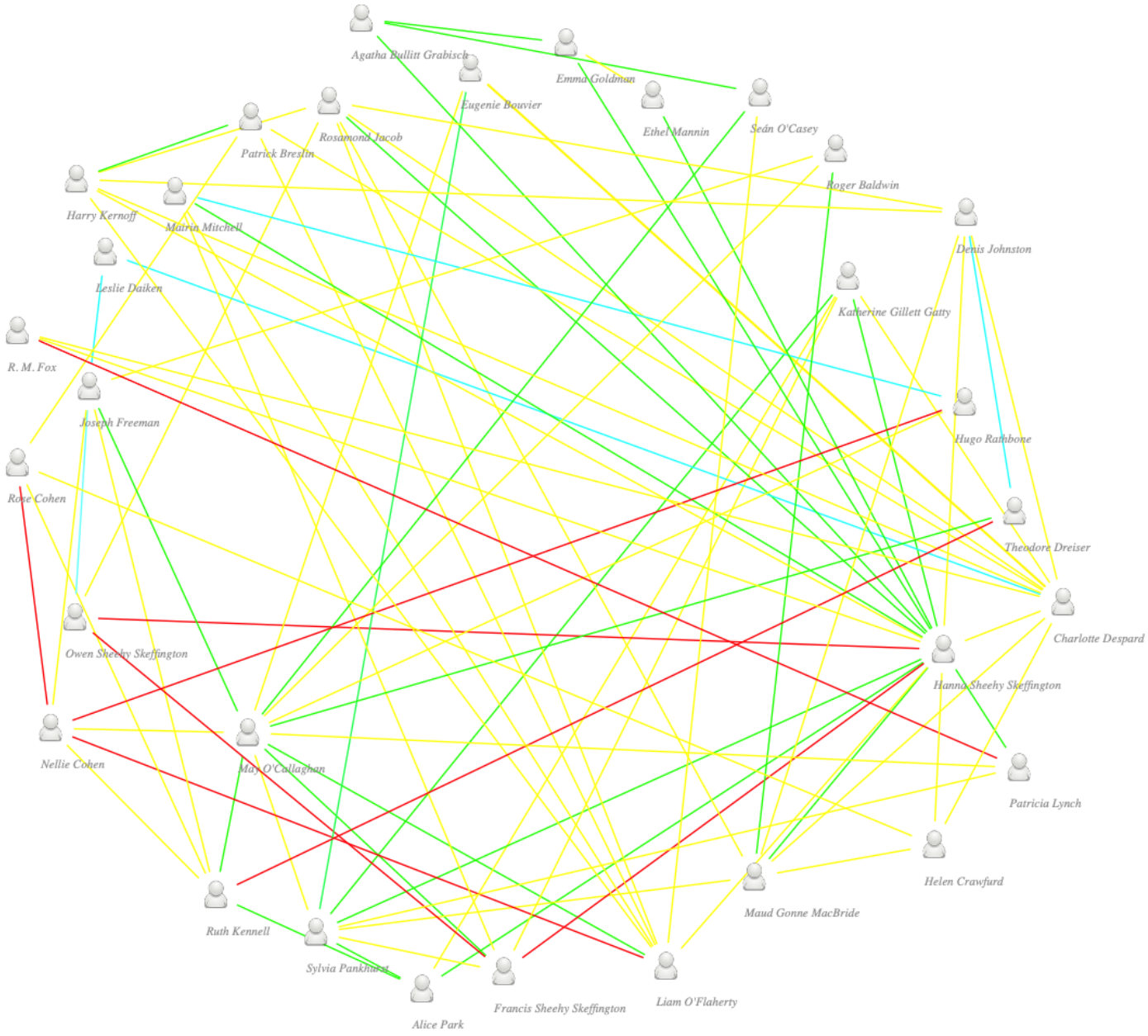
The Irish radical world was populated by the standard trifecta tracked and feared by police intelligence: agitators, gunmen and intellectuals. Yet it was also more heterogenous than its antagonists or historians have hitherto acknowledged, encompassing atheists, Christians, Jews, feminists, immigrants, workers, writers and more besides. Though it was small, mostly based in Dublin, and consistently beleaguered by a fortified opposition, the cultural space of the Irish radical world not only reflected similar radical political cultures of interwar Europe, its shape and existence was defined by its direct connection to these circles. This was a network that was global in expanse but socially contained, oriented to the future but beholden to readings of a radical past that provided an ultimately misguided sense of revolutionary imminence. It was a world of contradictions, where many activists proved capable of holding paradoxical opinions. One central contradiction was the fact that interwar radical internationalist movements, which claimed to offer politics of a fundamentally new type, were often shaped by the old struggles of their veteran members. The central example used in this thesis – those who transitioned from the suffrage movement to radical internationalist solidarity – illuminates the multiplicity of political paths open to women in the aftermath of the First World War and before the onset of its sequel. Ultimately, for the diverse set of Irish women studied in this thesis and many of their comrades, radical internationalism shaped their post-suffrage trajectories and sustained their remarkably transnational activism over the course of the interwar period.

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[2] Barrett, '*Was* the Personal Political?', p. 400.

Appendices

Social Network of Major Research Subjects with Lines Demonstrating Substantive Connections.



Subjects corresponded.

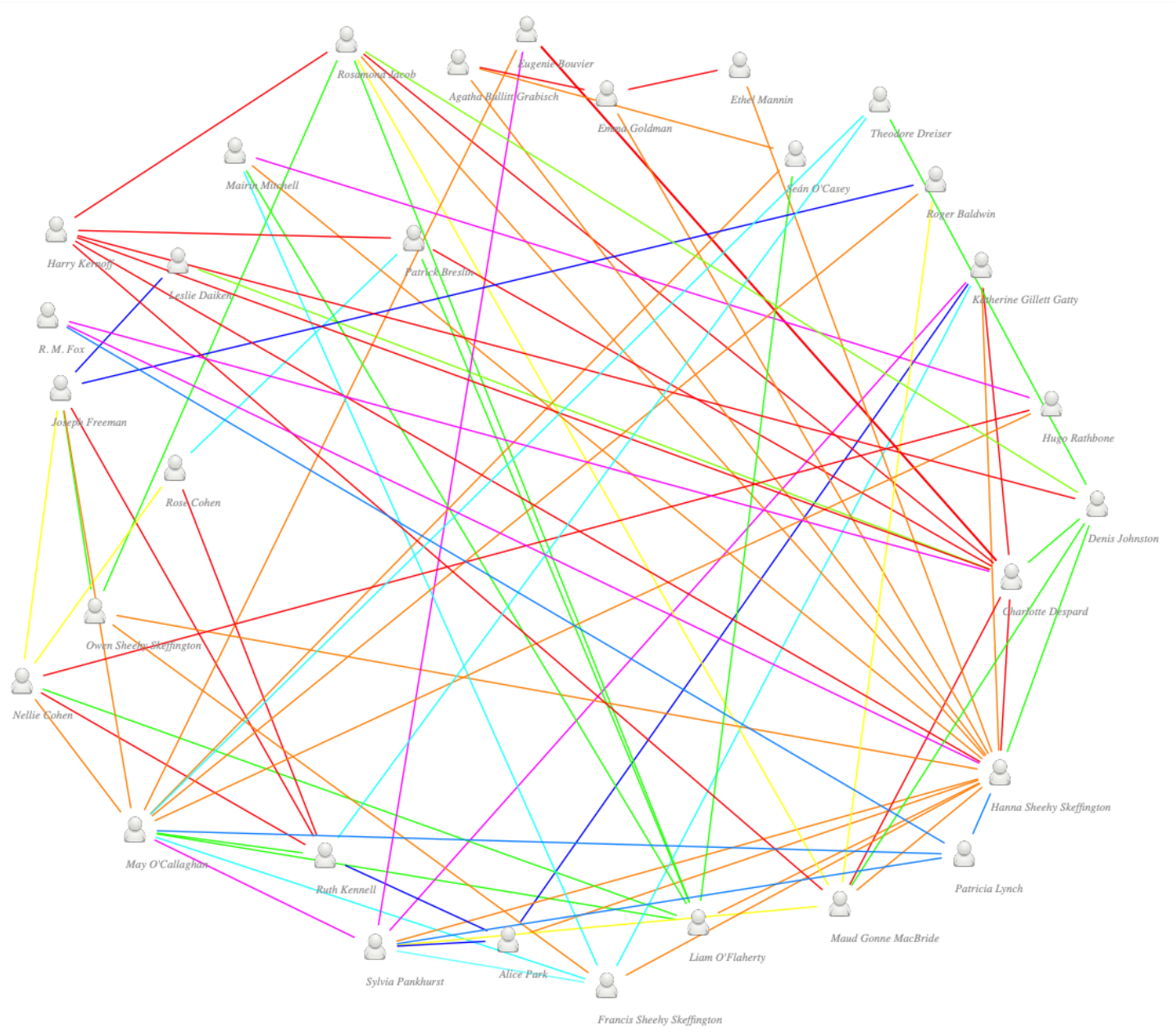
Subjects were members of the same committee, organisation, workplace, etc.

Subjects had a family tie or romantic connection.

Subjects had a literary link through publishing or reading publications

Note: In many cases, subjects simultaneously corresponded, served on committees, had a family link, etc. This graph shows the primary connection between activists described in the text of this thesis alone.

Social Network of Major Research Subjects with Lines Coloured for Ease of Tracing



Bibliography

Archives

Australia

Mitchell Library, University of New South Wales

Esmonde Higgins papers

Netherlands

International Institute of Social History

Emma Goldman Papers

E. Sylvia Pankhurst Papers

Republic of Ireland

Bureau of Military History

Witness Statements

Dublin City Library and Archives

Communist Party of Ireland Papers

Dublin Diocesan Archives

Archbishop Byrne Papers

Irish Labour History Society Archives

Irish Women Workers' Union Papers.

National Archives of Ireland

Department of an Taoiseach

Department of Justice

National Library of Ireland

Ephemera Collection

Rosamond Jacob Japers

Thomas Johnson Papers

Patricia Lynch and R. M. Fox papers

Art Ó'Brian Papers

Seán O'Casey Papers

Sheehy Skeffington Papers

Royal College of Physicians in Ireland, Heritage Centre

Kathleen Lynn Papers

Trinity College Dublin Archives

Denis Johnston Papers

University College Dublin Archives

Desmond and Mabel FitzGerald Papers

Sighle Humphries Papers

Desmond Ryan Papers

Russian Federation

Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI)

f. 336 Personal Fond of V. V. Mayakovsky

f. 1397 Editorial Board of the Journal *International Literature* (*Internatzionalnaia Literatura*)

Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI)

f. 495 Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI)

f. 507 International Women's Secretariat (IWS)

f. 534 Red International of Labour Unions (Profintern)

f. 539 International Red Aid (IRA)

State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF)

f. P5283 All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with the West (VOKS)

f. P5451 All-Union Central Council for Professional Unions (BTsSPS)

United Kingdom

Bodleian Library, Oxford

Pollard Papers

British Library Manuscripts Collection

Havelock Ellis Papers

Samuel Solomonovich Koteliansky Papers

Estelle Sylvia Pankhurst Papers

London School of Economics, Women's Library

Autograph Letter Collection

Theresa Billington Grieg Papers

Charlotte Despard Papers

Brian Harrison Oral History Collection

Eglantyne Jebb Papers

A. M. Pierotti Papers

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Papers

Marx Memorial Library

Helen Crawfurd Papers

Museum of London Archives

David Mitchell Papers

The National Archives

Cabinet Office

Colonial Office

Home Office

KV Personnel Files

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