In Defence of Trotskyism No. 27
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Ireland and Britain in Revolution and Counterrevolution:
The Limerick Soviet, April 1919 and Belfast Confetti, July-September 1920
1. We stand with Karl Marx: ‘The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves. The struggle for the emancipation of the working class means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies but for equal rights and duties and the abolition of all class rule’ (The International Workingmen’s Association 1864, General Rules). The working class ‘cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all other sphere of society and thereby emancipating all other spheres of society’ (Marx, A Contribution to a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, 1843).

9. We are completely opposed to man-made climate change and the degradation of the biosphere which is caused by the anarchy of capitalist production for profits of transnational corporations. Ecological catastrophe is not ‘as crucial as imperialism’ but caused by imperialism so to combat this threat we must redouble our efforts to forward the world revolution.

11. We also support the fight of all other specially oppressed including lesbians and gay men, bisexuals and transgender people and the disabled against discrimination in all its forms and their right to organise separately in that fight in society as a whole. In particular we defend their right to caucus inside trade unions and in working class political parties. While supporting the latter right, we do not always advocate its exercise as in some forms it can reinforce illusions in identity politics and obscure the need for class unity.

13. We fight racism and fascism. We support the right of people to fight back against racist and fascist attacks by any means necessary. Self-defence is no offence. It is a legitimate act of self-defence for the working class to ‘No Platform’ fascists but we never call on the capitalist state to ban fascist marches or parties; these laws would inevitably primarily be used against workers’ organisations, as history has shown.

14. We oppose all immigration controls. International finance capital roams the planet in search of profit and imperialist governments disrupts the lives of workers and cause the collapse of whole nations with their direct intervention in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan and their proxy wars in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, etc. Workers have the right to sell their labour internationally wherever they get the best price.

19. As socialists living in Britain we take our responsibilities to support the struggle against British imperialism’s occupation of the six north-eastern counties of Ireland very seriously. For this reason we have been active in founding the Irish Republican Prisoners Support Group and we will continue to campaign for political status for all Irish prisoners of war and for a 32-county united Socialist Ireland. We reject ‘two nations in Ireland’ theories.

21. We are for the re-creation of a World Party of Socialist Revolution, a revolutionary international, based on the best traditions of the previous revolutionary internationals, critically understood, particularly the early Third and Fourth Internationals, with their determination to combat and overcome both reformism and centristism. It is by orienting to the ranks of workers in struggle, struggles against imperialism, struggles of oppressed minorities against varied all forms of social oppression, as well as political ferment among intellectual layers radicalised through these struggles, that we will lay the basis for regroupments with forces internationally breaking with reformism, centristism and various forms of radical populism/nationalism, and seeking to build a new revolutionary Marxist international party.
We have just celebrated the centenary of the Easter Rising in Dublin and commemorated the executions of the 16 leaders, 14 in Dublin, one in Cork and Rodger Casement in London in August. Amongst the most fought over question amongst Marxists is was James Connolly right to participate in the Rising at the head of the Irish Citizen’s Army? Nationalists seek to portray him merely as an Irish patriot and deny his socialist internationalism. Stalinist seek to paint him as a two-stage revolutionists; he had abandoned the goal of the socialist revolution and now sought only a nationalist victory like they have done since they rejected Leninism in 1924. We will seek to show that neither of these interpretations is correct; Connolly remained true to the cause of international socialism, and, despite the limitations of his understanding of Marxism, he was striving towards an understanding of the essence of Lenin’s April Theses and Trotsky’s Permanent Revolution.

**Was James Connolly an Irishman or a Socialist first?**

This question was posed in *The Irish Opinion—The Irish Labour journal* on 15 December 1917 as a question frequently asked “in country districts”. The journal carried a stout defence of the Bolsheviks on p. 31 and on p. 33 a powerful defence of Connolly. He was, the author D.R says, “the spirit of the revolution incarnate” who proudly proclaimed that “I stand for constitutional agitation in times of peace and for revolution in times of war”.

Connolly’s last words to his daughter Nora before his execution on 12 May 1916 were “The Socialists will never understand why I am here, they all forget I am an Irishman”. Who were those socialists, what they stood for and how they reacted to the 1916 uprising and the subsequent Tan War from January 1919 to December 1921 and the Civil War from February 1922 to May 1923 we might wonder. Geoff
Bell reveals the sorry details in his new book *Hesitant Comrade*, reviewed on p.17.

And although a hundred years of political and theoretical struggle has ensued since then it is certain that his actions are as little understood or supported by most of those claiming the mantle of socialism and Marxism now as they were then. In fact during the great leftist upsurge that swept Ireland and the world from 1916 to 1923 we might argue he was better understood then than he is now. Of course we can expect as little sympathy, understanding or solidarity action now as then from the pro imperialist labour movement reformists, left and right and those leftist pro-imperialist groupings and their political ancestors whom Geoff Bell exposes so well. Trotsky referred to them as “British social-imperialists of the Hyndman type – downright blood-thirsty hooligans” in condemning their attitude to 1916. But there are others who we might expect to do better.

So why did Connolly lay emphasis on his Irishness in that terrible circumstance? Surely a socialist and a revolutionist should have shunned the politics of bourgeois nationalism and concentrated on liberating the working class in Ireland and Britain against the capitalists and not embark on a foolish and unwinnable uprising with the representatives of the Irish class enemy?

He defended his stance in writings and speeches from his return to Ireland in 1910. In the course of these he developed at least in outline the correct theory of Permanent Revolution, that only the working class could lead the national struggle to victory and that it needed to process that struggle through to the Workers Republic for it to survive. It is true that in identifying capitalism as a foreign import into Ireland by Britain, in not seeing the differences between working class and peasants, not seeing the emergence of the working class in Ireland from the late 18th and early 19th centuries as a new and therefore revolutionary class with its own separate interests quotes like “The cause of labour is the cause of Ireland, the cause of Ireland is the cause of labour” allowed much diversity in his interpretations.

But as far back as 1898 he correctly identified the combined tasks of national liberation and socialism in Ireland:

“If you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin...”
Castle, unless you set about the organisation of the socialist Republic your efforts would be in vain. England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole army of commercial and individual institutions she has planted in this country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs. (...) Nationalism without Socialism - without a reorganisation of society on the basis of a broader and more developed form of that common property which underlay the social structure of Ancient Erin - is only national recreancy.” (Connolly, Socialism and Nationalism, p25)

Connolly clearly saw the need for both strike struggles and armed defence of that struggle; he formed the Irish Citizens Army precisely to defend workers on strike against their bosses and the Dublin Metropolitan police during the 1913 Lockout. They were only armed with hurley sticks and other non-lethal weapons then, as was the practice during the Irish theatre of the industrial militancy known as the Great Unrest that swept Britain and Ireland from about 1910 to the outbreak of WWI. Herbert Asquith, the Prime Minister, resorted to the use of the army and navy in Wales, Liverpool and elsewhere during that great outburst of anger by the working class against the capitalism that had brought them to such poverty and humiliation with the collaboration of their own trade union leaders in the period of ‘class peace’ that spanned the end of New Unionism of the 1890s to 1910.

But the ICA armed themselves with rifles thereafter, particularly after the Curragh Mutiny of February 1914 indicated that the British state would always side with treasonous Orangemen and British Army officers against Ireland’s right to self-determination. Whilst the leaders of the treasonous Orangemen and the Curragh Mutineers were rewarded with places in the House of Lords and with promotions Irish nationalists were executed and hanged for their ‘treason’ in 1916.

But Ireland was different despite its greater deprivation or more correctly because of it. Its militancy was certainly as powerful but because of the peculiarities of its historical development its trade unions were saddled with a union bureaucracy in the north that were even more wedded to the defence of Empire than their British counterparts. An aristocracy of labour based on Loyalist Protestant workers in skilled engineering jobs, descendants of planted Scottish and English colonists from the early decades of the 17th century. These remained infected with a supremacist ideology against nationalist Catholic workers and they were the dominant majority of the province of Ulster, which was then the most industrialised part of Ireland.

Following the defeat of Ireland’s bourgeois revolution in 1798 the divide and rule tactics of the Empire encouraged and promoted discrimination against the native Irish peasants in the whole of Ireland at first and then against nationalist/Catholic workers when industrialisation took off in Belfast and other places in the north of Ireland from the middle of the 19th century. Periodic riots to
enforce this and fightback by nationalist against this took place in Belfast and elsewhere. The years 1857, 1864, 1872 and 1886 saw serious riots. I believe my own grandfather, an RIC constable, was sent north from his station in Cork city to quell the latter.

So when Jim Larkin and later James Connolly led Ireland’s Great Unrest they faced different problems. The Larkin-led militancy began earlier, in 1907, and from the beginning they were confronted with a dual aspect problem; the loyalty of Protestant workers to the Empire in defence of their own privileges and the loyalty of the British trade union bureaucracy and their Irish agents to that same Empire as the source of their privileges also. But the latter had a far smaller base of loyal collaborators in Britain itself, the struggle for the New Unionism from about 1888 had shifted class consciousness albeit on a syndicalist basis significantly to the left, but they were enormously strengthened by that base in Ulster. So when Randolph Churchill famously played the Orange Card in 1886 against Gladstone’s Home Ruler Bill he, and later imperialist divide and rule practitioners, found ready allies in the trade union bureaucracy and later in Labour party leaders. The divide and rule tactic was so often the most important tactic for the survival of the Empire back then and it is still internationally at crucial junctures for all imperialism today.

Of course Larkin was apparently spectacularly successful in overcoming the prejudices of Loyalist workers up to the 1913 Dublin Lockout and even in 1919 the legacy of that struggle survived in the great Belfast strike of that year. But the strike itself was not in an all-Ireland context; workers will often fight for sectional privileges whilst absolutely rejecting col-
laborating with their own fellow workers whilst a supremacist, aristocracy of labour mentality is undefeated. And so it transpired in July 1920 with the terrible pogroms against nationalist workers in the shipyards and elsewhere where some 11,000 were driven out of their workplaces by their fellow workers with their murderous metal projectiles called Belfast Confetti, which slaughtered 53 of them. Connolly knew it was coming.

In the newspaper *Forward*, on 2 August 1913 he spelled out why you must fight reaction to the death and not conciliate it and seek to make a deal acceptable to it. There are many today, the Socialist Party and others, who would do well to ponder on his words in his article *North-East Ulster*:

… It also serves to illustrate the wisdom of the Socialist contention that as the working class has no subject class beneath it, therefore, to the working class of necessity belongs the honour of being the class destined to put an end to class rule, since, in emancipating itself, it cannot help emancipating all other classes. … But as no good can come of blaming it, so also no good, but infinite evil, can come of truckling to it. Let the truth be told, however ugly. Here, the Orange working class are slaves in spirit because they have been reared up among a people whose conditions of servitude were more slavish than their own. In Catholic Ireland the working class are rebels in spirit and democratic in feeling because for hundreds of years they have found no class as lowly paid or as hardly treated as themselves. At one time in the industrial world of Great Britain and Ireland the skilled labourer looked down with contempt upon the unskilled and bitterly resented his attempt to get his children taught any of the skilled trades; the feeling of the Orangemen of Ireland towards the Catholics is but a glorified representation on a big stage of the same passions inspired by the same unworthy motives. An atavistic survival of a dark and ignorant past!

In his article *Labour and the Proposed Partition of Ireland*, published in *The Irish Worker* on 14 March 1914 he made the following commentary:

And now that the progress of democracy elsewhere has somewhat muzzled the dogs of aristocratic power, now that in England as well as in Ireland the forces of labour are stirring and making for freedom and light, this same gang of well-fed plunderers of the people, secure in Union held upon their own dupes, seek by threats of force to arrest the march of idea and stifle the light of civilisation and liberty. And, lo and behold, the trusted guardians of the people, the vaunted saviours of the Irish race, agree in front of the enemy and in face of the world to sacrifice to the bigoted enemy the unity of the nation and along with it the lives, liberties and hopes of that portion of the nation which in the midst of the most hostile surroundings have fought to keep the faith in things national and progressive.

Such a scheme as that agreed to by Redmond and Devlin, the betrayal of the national democracy of industrial Ulster would mean a carnival of reaction both North and South, would set back the wheels of progress, would destroy the oncoming unity of the Irish Labour movement and paralyse all advanced movements whilst it endured. To it La-
bour should give the bitterest opposition, against it Labour in Ulster should fight even to the death, if necessary, as our fathers fought before us.

If we take our lead today from Connolly’s correct revolutionary instincts of those years and, whilst not confining ourselves to his limited understanding of Marxism, due in large part to the unavailability of the core works, [3] we will not only support the battles of Republican POWs in Ireland for their democratic and political rights but recognise the ‘carnival of reaction’ that the partition of the Irish nation consolidated and fight for the ending of that too. For a Workers Republic, a united socialist Ireland and an anti-imperialist united front with those who genuinely want to go at least part of way towards that goal.

Just a few weeks before the Uprising Connolly addressed the Irish Citizens Army in language that demonstrated irrefutably that his understanding of the combined tasks was not a ‘two stage’ theory of national liberation now so the workers must wait. No; it was the revolution in permanence/April Theses of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky:

In the event of victory, hold on to your rifles, as those with whom we are fighting may stop before our goal is reached. We are out for economic as well as political liberty.” (Greaves, Life and Time of James Connolly, p. 403)

Notes
[1] Trotsky: On the events in Dublin (this links provides two articles by Trotsky and one by Lenin on 1916).

[2] On February 22, 1886, Conservative Party politician Lord Randolph Churchill, father of Winston Churchill, gave what many consider one of the single most destructive speeches in Irish history, inciting militant loyalists at Ulster Hall in Belfast. “Ulster will fight, and Ulster will be right,” he proclaimed to a crowd before he even arrived at Ulster Hall.

[3] Whilst we may criticise Connolly for his backwardness on the oppression of women and his tendency to conciliate German imperialism what do we make of the following scurrilous attack on him in the journal What Next?, reprinted in Revolutionary History: “Those pacific and internationalist sentiments were interspersed with praise of the German Empire, and racist stereotypes of Russians. An article “Diplomacy”, published in Workers’ Republic on 6 November, praised the “peace loving” German Emperor, who was an innocent victim of Allied conspiracies. Connolly’s evolution resembled Mussolini’s, a member of the pro-war minority in the Italian Socialist Party and a fellow believer in the invigorating qualities of a bloodbath, rather than Liebknecht’s, whose dogmatic Marxism prevented him from playing his part in the war effort.” The author, Brendan Docherty, describes himself as a “lapsed Catholic”. Shocking lies from a lickspittle apologist for British imperialism like the early Labour leaders described by Bell: James Connolly: His Life and Miracles, What Next? No.20 2001 http://www.whatnextjournal.org.uk/Pages/Back/Wnext20/Connolly.html ▲
Geoff Bell has done the whole British Labour and socialist movement and the Irish republican socialist and labour movement a great service by producing this meticulously researched and laboriously compiled work. He examines in great detail the relationship between all sections of the British labour movement and Ireland and also examines the Irish labour movement and its relationship to the anti-imperialist struggle from 1916 to the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 6 December 1921. And it is a sorry tale of gross class treachery to the cause of the British, Irish and International working class in the service of the British Empire with just a few exceptions; Sylvia Pankhurst of Workers’ Dreadnought fame in her communist phase and the young Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) when it responded to the sharp chidings of the Comintern and one leading member, T.A. Jackson, whose book Ireland Her Own is a classic defence of the revolution in Ireland with all the economic and social factors fully understood. Other individuals also deserve praise at least for their humanitarian opposition to Lloyd George’s reign of terror by the Black and Tans from early 1920 to July 1921. Alongside these must be placed vanguard sections of the British working class who demonstrated their potential to lead the whole class on occasions on the Irish question and Irish working class and revolutionary nationalists when a strong anti-imperialist leadership who followed the leadership of James Connolly and the revolutionary Comintern emerged. We will examine Bell’s own political outlook also.

But the majority of the Labour movement bureaucratic leaders, to a greater or lesser degree, defended the interests of the British Empire and its right to exploit Ireland taking into account the constraints placed upon them by their own base of support in the working class and its degree of radicalisation. Bell details how these conditions were modified and reinforced in resolutions and statements of labour movement conferences, congresses and leadership statements as the British working class itself radicalised, particularly in the years 1920-21.

Bell examines the Labour party and its leading influences. The Independent
Labour Party (ILP) leader and first Labour party leader, the pacifist Keir Hardie. He had upset Henderson and Snowden by his unequivocal support for Larkin and the Dublin Lockout (he also lent James Connolly £50 to relaunch the Workers Republic [originally launched by Connolly in 1898] in 1913) but following his death in 1915 subsequent leaders were condemnatory of 1916 and following. The other major influence in Labour was the Fabian Society, Sidney and Beatrix Webb and George Bernard Shaw, himself an Irishman. These were super-patriots of the British Empire and the leading ideological influence, although they lacked the organisational strength of the ILP. Their journal, The New Statesman, founded in 1913, is the best indication of the politics of this group. Bell tells us they referred to the 1916 Uprising as, ‘the miserable and abortive Sinn Féin Rebellion’ displaying their ignorance (Sinn Féin had nothing to do with the Rising, in fact they opposed it) and their chauvinism. They did oppose the execution of Roger Casement and conscription in Ireland but ‘Ireland can have Home Rule if she likes, but Ulster must be excluded’ with a call that such a solution be imposed ‘with or without Irish consent’ (p120).

James Connolly’s closest comrades on the left in Britain was surely the Socialist Labour Party in Scotland and The Socialist, the paper that Connolly himself had founded in 1901 and passed on to George Yates to edit when he departed for America in September 1903. There was no obituary for Connolly on his execution in the paper he himself had founded. For three years it had no coverage of substance on Ireland when that obituary finally appeared. The reason is clear, Bell tells us, ‘taking a stand on the Rising would always have been difficult in Glasgow which had seen much inter-worker religious sectarian strife in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries’. We reject Bell’s excuse, ‘Quite simply, for what it considered socialist reasons, it could not support it or Connolly’s involvement’ … so ‘it preferred to say nothing’. Sheer political cowardice and capitulation to pro-imperialist prejudices (NOT ‘inter-worker religious sectarian strife’ or ‘socialist reasons’) was the explanation (pp. 19-21).

How fared the new CPGB and its immediate predecessor organisations? Following the stern words from Karl Radek at the Second Congress of the Comintern in July 1920 telling them that Ireland and not Russia had to be their priority Bell can quote the brave words by the new CPGB in The Communist of 25 November 1920:

‘A nation is being murdered under our eyes… the National struggle and the class struggle are inseparable from one another … not only the Irish but the working class all over the world is looking to us… if we are found wanting, not all the enunciations of orthodox formulae… will save us from contemptuous dismissal as faithful, although talkative, servants of the British Imperial oligarchy’ (p. 114).

But they did little to escape the ‘contemptuous dismissal’ according to
Bell, citing the lack of the word ‘Ireland’ in the index of James Klugmann’s first volume of the ‘official’ *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain* and the lack of discussion on Ireland in the founding conference of the CPGB on 31 July 1920, which did find time to discuss the massacre of Jewish communists by Poland, Romania and Hungary and the prohibition of alcohol.

**Belfast Confetti**

The starkest example of Labour movement treachery is the events around the terrible pogrom against nationalist workers in Belfast in July 1920. On p. 85 et seq. Using the murderous missiles known as Belfast confetti, metal disks, nuts, bolts, large rivets etc. from the ship-

When the attacks against Catholics known as the Belfast pogrom erupted in July 1920, Tom Glennon was a 20-year old officer in the IRA. The next three years took him from brutal street fighting in Belfast to organising a flying column in the Glens of Antrim, to a daring escape from captivity in the Curragh and then the viciousness of civil war in Donegal. Scarred by his experiences, he sought to create a new life in Australia, only to find further tragedy awaiting him. His silence about his past was so complete that almost eighty years passed before his son learned the truth about his own mother's death. Now, using contemporary documents and the accounts of comrades and enemies, his grandson not only tells the story of Tom Glennon's life, but also re-examines the mythology of the pogrom and questions Michael Collins’ northern policy, asking: were the northern IRA the victims of a monstrous betrayal?
had been given official recognition by the management, in effect. The union responded by calling a strike on 18 September.

Only 600 of the 2,000 union members responded to the strike call; correctly the union promptly expelled the 1,400 scabs. Only 4 branches of the union are recorded as opposing the expulsions. 45 branches passed resolutions of support. The British working class, at least those organised in that union, had not been found wanting in class solidarity with their victimised Belfast comrades, rejecting all ‘loyalty to Empire’ propaganda pleading of the mass media in those revolutionary years. (pp. 88-89).

On 21 September the TUC appointed three union leaders to go to Belfast ‘with plenary powers’. These were J. Hill of the Boilermakers, A.A Purcell of the Furniture Trades and A. Pugh of the Iron and Steel Confederation. They had gone to ensure the reemployment of the expelled workers but ‘we came to the conclusion there was one problem that had to be overcome in view of the general situation’ which was not the reemployment of those forced from their workplace, but ‘the dispute which existed between the executive of the woodworkers (Carpenters Union) and their people in Belfast’ Pugh explained later. These absolute treacherous scoundrels had stabbed the victims in the back and begun championing the cause of their oppressors. The TUC gratefully accepted their report.

A strikes against the Black and Tans took place in January 1921, 400 miners at Giffnock colliery near Glasgow staged a 24-hour strike ‘as a protest against the [British] terrorism in Ireland and to demand the withdrawal of all British forces used against the Irish people’. In April 1920 the Liverpool branch of the Irish Self-determination League (ISDL) organised a very successful unofficial dock strike in their port against the imprisonment of Irish political prisoners in Wormwood Scrubs. But the TUC continued to refuse any support to these unofficial actions. And when official actions were threatened they moved swiftly to isolate and defeat them. Apart from the Belfast dispute there was the threatened strike by the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) over the murder of three train crew, two of whom were its members, by the Black and Tans in Mallow, Co. Cork on 31 January 1921. ASLEF immediately demanded an inquiry and, with obvious serious intent, threatened a national strike if it was not held. At this stage of the struggle direct industrial
action against the British Army was seriously proposed in many unions with widespread support.

The *Daily Herald*, edited by George Lansbury, Bell tells us, hoped it would be the start of more general action: ‘If ASLEF can protect its members by a strike threat, British Labour can save Ireland by the same weapon. Only the threat must not be a bluff. One society has shown the way. It is for Labour as a whole to follow.’ On 17 February G.D.H. Cole, writing in the ILP newspaper *Labour Leader*, correctly blamed the leadership, ‘the apathy of the working class movement is a disgrace’ and hoped that the ASLEF dispute would rectify the situation, ‘the locomotive engineers have shown what they can do’.

NUR leader J. H. Thomas rode to the rescue of the Empire as usual. The NUR, whose members were also attacked in Mallow, passed a motion on 11 February referring the matter to the ‘Parliamentary arena’, i.e. the right wing Labour traitors had the ball in their court, *The Times* reported with relief. So the Executive of the Labour party called for an enquiry on 15 February and so did the Parliamentary Committee of the TUC on the 16th but no mention was made of a strike; both wings of the Labour movement had disowned ASLEF’s strike call. Will Thorn MP (Casement’s hound), James Sexton and J.R Clynes opposed the strike, the latter opining that, ‘bad as the situation is in Ireland, public opinion is not prepared for a settlement of Irish troubles by means of a strike’. He thereby implicitly acknowledged that a settlement by mass strike action was possible and this was a live issue amongst British workers and, because this would be a defeat for the British Empire, he would do everything in his power to prevent it. So the labour movement leaders moved with great speed to isolate ASLEF who were forced to withdraw the strike threat on 17 February.

If the sympathy of the British working class was so strong from mid-1920 to mid-1921 why did it die then? On 15 April 1921 the Empire loyalist Thomas delivered another blow at the British and international working class. The owners of the newly re-privatised mine proposed massive wage cuts and the miners’ executive called for a strike of the Triple Alliance, miners, railway workers and transport workers that had
been in existence since 1915. They called the strike, the government declared a state of emergency and moved troops for confrontation and the leaders of the Triple Alliance called off the strike. That date goes down in history as Black Friday. So it was that Thomas and the right wing Labour traitors now moved on to deal with the next, and perhaps greater problem for the British ruling class, Ireland.

**Special Conferences and Conferences**
The Special Party Congress of the TUC in July 1920 was called to discuss direct action by the trade unions against the British military in Ireland. In May 400 NUR members in Dublin refused to unload what they thought were munitions for the British Army. NUR leader J. H. Thomas was on the ball in defence of the Empire as usual. He instructed his men to return to work in order ‘to give the labour movement the opportunity of acting on their behalf’. Outrageously Bell opines that, ‘Thomas’s return to characteristic caution was understandable’ because ‘the railway workers action did have far reaching implications for the British and Irish trade union movement’.

By the time the Parliamentary Committee met on 16 June NUR members in Dublin had been sacked for ‘blacking’ British munitions. Thomas told the meeting, he was ‘being pressed by other trade unions to assist its Irish members’ (which obviously he was very reluctant to do). The Parliamentary Committee called a Special Congress ‘to discuss the application of direct action to Ireland’. Just one month before Labour Party had passed a motion in favour of unqualified self-determination for Ireland, against the wishes of the leadership. J. H. Thomas, of course, spoken against at the party conference. But now his union, the NUR, moved the major resolution at the TUC’s Special Congress. The TUC leadership panicked because a strong motion from the Miners Union was tabled at the Conference so the TUC leadership elicited what was in effect a wrecking motion from the NUR. Both motions passed but the ambiguity between the two allowed Thomas and his ilk to play on that and pretend that only the NUR motion was important.

Bell concludes that:

Thomas could also be criticised for declining to press the resolution on direct action passed by the Special Congress. However, in this he was not alone. The resolution had called for unions to organise ballots in order to carry out this action. There is no record of any of affiliated unions doing so. This unanimity suggests it would be wrong to see the reason for the unwillingness of the TUC to act on Ireland residing in the figure of J. H. Thomas or the Parliamentary Committee in general.

No, on the contrary it would be absolutely correct ‘to see the reason for the unwillingness of the TUC to act on Ireland residing in the figure of J. H. Thomas or the Parliamentary Committee in general’ because they were the leadership when there was a clear wish for action and, led by Thomas, they sabotaged it. It was a heinous act of class treachery.

Just a month before, in June 1920 the Labour party Conference resolved on ‘British military withdrawal’ from Ireland and ‘absolute and free self-determination’.
The leaders immediately set about subverting and reversing this decision and they succeeded in the Special Conference of December called to discuss unemployment and Ireland, but basically to overturn the June Congress resolution. An Empire loyal resolution was drafted by the NEC, who decided in advance that no amendment to it would be allowed. Labour Leader was subsequently criticise the conference for being an ‘almost entirely a platform affair’, but with no counter position permitted the resolution was overwhelming carried. So confronted with a Congress decision that went against their wishes, they called a special conference with only their motion allowed and all rights of amendment abolished to serve the cause of the Empire. Similarly with the 1921 Conference ten local Labour party motions were ignored and the Special Conference motion was the only one allowed. And we all think Blair was the worst and most undemocratic Labour leader!

Finally how does Bell deals with the question posed in the title of his work, Hesitant Comrades. Who were these hesitant comrades, whom must we essentially blame for the failure to support the struggle in Ireland in her hour of need, the leadership of the British working class or the class itself? As Marxists we will always blame the leadership but Bell reaches the opposite line in his Conclusion. Of course with the Truce in July and the Treaty in December 1921 it was clear that the Sinn Féin leaders themselves were willing to compromise on Britain’s terms. They was no longer an inspiring fight against British imperialism to urge on the British working class to fight themselves against that same enemy. There was no ‘new and more powerful leadership’ for them to rally to; the new CPGB was too small and too politically confused to provide that. If no ‘new and more powerful leadership’ emerges when the working class are ready to fight they MUST fall back into despair and disillusion. They cannot possibly lead themselves as every Marxist understands. There was none apparent in Britain in the crucial period correctly identified by Bell above, from mid-1920 to mid-1921, as we have seen from our analysis of the best of them, provided by Bell himself. ▲

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**The 1920 delegation**

Acting in response to a resolution passed at a special Trades Union Congress on 10 December 1919 for “an independent and impartial inquiry into the industrial, political and economic conditions in Russia”, a delegation of representatives from the TUC and Labour Party visited Russia during May and June 1920. The delegation travelled in Russia with the assistance of the Bolshevik regime and members met with leading Communists, including Lenin and Trotsky. Delegates also had limited access to political opponents of the regime, including Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries and anarchists.

Delegates: Ben Turner (Chairman), Labour Party; Margaret Bondfield, A.A Purcell and H. Skinner, Trades Union Congress; Ethel Snowden, Tom Shaw and Robert Williams, Labour Party; Charles Roden Buxton and Leslie Haden Guest, Joint Secretaries. The labour delegation was joined for part of the tour by R.C. Wallhead and Clifford Allen of the Independent Labour Party, and by several representatives of the British press, including the philosopher Bertrand Russell.
This is a timeline of the Irish Civil War, which took place between June 1922 and May 1923. It followed the Irish War of Independence (1919–1921), and accompanied the establishment of the Irish Free State as an entity independent from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The conflict was waged between two opposing groups of Irish nationalists: the forces of the new Irish Free State, who supported the Anglo-Irish Treaty under which the state was established, and the republican opposition, for whom the Treaty represented a betrayal of the Irish Republic. The government of the Irish Free State (established as a provisional government in January 1922 and as a full government in December 1922) was ultimately victorious. The anti-Treaty forces called a ceasefire in April 1923 and ordered their men to "dump arms" in May 1923. The war involved both conventional warfare (late June–August 1922) when the Free State forces took the major towns and cities, and then a longer period of guerrilla warfare (September 1922–April 1923) as the anti-Treaty forces were gradually brought to a standstill.

7 January – The Anglo-Irish Treaty is passed in the Dáil (Parliament of the Irish Republic) by 64 votes to 57.

14 January – A Provisional Government is set up to administer the handover from British rule to the new Irish Free State. The Cabinet is almost the same as that of the Irish Republic, with the exception of Éamon de Valera, Cathal Brugha and Austin Stack, who resign over the acceptance of the Treaty.

February 1922

18 February – An Anti-Treaty IRA unit under Ernie O'Malley seizes an RIC barracks in Clonmel, taking 40 policemen prisoner and capturing 600 rifles and thousands of rounds of ammunition.

Anti-Treaty IRA leader Séamus Robinson closes down The Nationalist newspaper (Clonmel) over its support for the Treaty. Rory O'Connor has the Freeman's Journal closed down for the same reason.

March 1922

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go For-
A stand-off occurs in Limerick between 700 pro-treaty IRA men under Michael Brennan and 800 Anti-Treaty IRA fighters under Ernie O’Malley over who will take over the military barracks, which were being abandoned by British troops. After negotiations between the Mayor of Limerick, Stephen M. O’Mara, Anti-Treaty leader Liam Lynch and Pro-Treaty leader Richard Mulcahy, fighting is averted. It is decided that troops from outside Limerick will return to their own areas and that Limerick IRA men would divide the two military garrisons there between pro- and Anti-Treaty units. Limerick Corporation will oversee the maintenance of the RIC barracks. More confrontations result over the occupation of former British garrisons at Birr, Renmore and Templemore.

26 March – IRA leaders meet in an "Army Convention" and vote to repudiate the Treaty. They also reject the authority of the Dáil to accept the Treaty and set up their own 16 man "Army Executive", led by Liam Mellows and Rory O’Connor.

29 March – Anti-Treaty IRA units in Cork under Sean Hegarty raid the British tug Upnor at sea. They take between 400 and 1,500 rifles, 60 machine guns, 700 handguns and over 25,000 rounds of ammunition, which they then distribute to Anti-Treaty IRA units.

The Provisional Government's newly formed National Army takes over the British barracks at Beggar's Bush in Dublin.

May 1922

2 May – Republicans take over the centre of Kilkenny, including the city hall and Kilkenny Castle. The Provisional government sends 200 troops by train from Dublin to dislodge them. Fighting breaks out when the troops from Dublin arrive and there are up to 18 casualties. A truce is then brokered whereby both sides garrison different posts in the town.

3 May – Pro- and Anti-Treaty leaders announce a "truce" in the Dáil to try to prevent civil war.

4 May – Pro- and Anti-Treaty IRA forces clash in Donegal. There is firefight at Buncrana in which two republicans and two civilians are wounded, two fatally.

At Newtowncunningham, Donegal, a Free State motor convoy is ambushed by republicans, one Pro-treaty soldier is killed outright and four fatally wounded.

20 May – Michael Collins and Éamon de Valera sign a Pact, in which the pro- and Anti-Treaty wings of Sinn Féin would jointly contest the upcoming first election of the new state.

There is a fire fight at Gormanston railway station, County Meath, between RIC men and Anti-Treaty fighters. One Anti-Treaty officer and one RIC man are killed.

June 1922

The Four Courts, occupied by Anti-Treaty forces in April and scene of the start of the civil war in June. Michael Collins repudiates the election pact with DeValera in Cork June 1922.

16 June – A free State soldier, William Murphy, is killed.

18 June – Irish general election, 1922 – The Pro-Treaty Sinn Féin party wins the election, despite the Collins/De Valera
Pact stating the election was not to be held on the issue of the Treaty but to form a Coalition Government, with 239,193 votes to 133,864 for Anti-Treaty Sinn Féin. A further 247,226 people voted for other parties, all of whom supported the Treaty (except Unionist Party).

22 June – Assassination in London of Henry Hughes Wilson by IRA men in retaliation for attacks on Catholics in Northern Ireland. Research will eventually come to suggest that it was Pro-Treaty leader Michael Collins who ordered the killing, but at the time, Winston Churchill assumes that the Anti-Treaty Four Courts garrison is responsible and warns Collins that if he does not act, British troops will be used to re-take Dublin. The assassins are hanged by the British on 10 August.


27 June – Collins gives a final ultimatum to the Four Courts garrison to surrender before they are attacked.

28 June – Michael Collins borrows two British 18-pounder field guns to bombard the Four Courts, marking the definitive start of the Civil War.

**Hostilities**

28 June–5 July – Battle of Drogheda
Fighting breaks out in Drogheda between pro- and Anti-Treaty units. One man on either side and a woman civilian are killed in a gun battle in the town. Many other civilians including the town's mayor are wounded. The Republicans are left in control of the town. The Anti-Treaty fighters blow up the railway bridge to the south of Drogheda, isolating it from Dublin. An Anti-Treaty fighter is killed in fighting Tipperary town.

29 June – British give Collins two more 18 pounders to increase the bombardment of the Four Courts. Free State troops storm the eastern buildings of the complex, losing 3 dead and 14 wounded.

Oscar Traynor leads Anti-Treaty members of the IRA's 1st Dublin Brigade to occupy O'Connell Street in order to help the Four Courts garrison. His men also take up positions in York Street, South Circular Road, Capel Street, Parnell Square and Dolphin's Barn.

Skirmish in Listowel County Kerry, Free State troops surrender their arms to Republicans.

Free State troops surround republican fighters at Finner Camp, Donegal. After a two-hour gun battle, two anti-Treatyites are killed and 50 surrender. Elsewhere in Donegal another 200 republicans are taken prisoner.

30 June – Anti-Treaty commander in the Four Courts, Paddy O'Brien is wounded by shrapnel. Ernie O'Malley assumes command. In the morning there is a truce to remove the wounded. Shortly afterward, a massive explosion destroys the western wing of the Four Courts and the Irish Public Records Office along with it. It is thought to have been caused when fires from the artillery bombardment set off munitions stored there, although Free
State troops claim that the building was mined. 20 Free State soldiers are maimed in the blast. O'Malley surrenders the Four Courts when Oscar Traynor sends word that he cannot break through to help them. Members of the IRA Army Executive Liam Mellows, Rory O'Connor, Joe McKelvey and Dick Barret are among the prisoners, but O'Malley himself escapes.

In Dublin, Free State troops bring up a field gun to Henry street, within 100 metres of the remaining republican held positions to fire on them at point blank range. Incendiary bombs are also thrown into the "block", which is set ablaze.

Ernie O'Malley and 250 Anti-Treaty fighters take Enniscorthy in County Wexford after some fighting. They take the Free State garrison there captive but release them on condition that they do not fight again against Republicans. Seán Moylan and 230 republican troops occupy New Ross.

Cathal Brugha, Republican leader killed on 5 July 1922 in Dublin.

A large Free State force takes Drogheda, County Louth. The republicans are based in Millmount Fort, which overlooks the town and also hold the railway station. National Army troops bring up mortars and 18 pounder guns to shell them. After several hours of bombardment, the Anti-Treaty fighters surrender. There is also some fighting at the railway station in the town, which again ends in the surrender of the republicans.

Free State troops from the Curragh attack the Republican post at Ballymore Eustace, County Kildare but are beaten off with 3 killed and 8 wounded.

5 July – End of the fighting in Dublin.

The remainder of Oscar Traynor's Anti-Treaty force in O'Connell street either slips away or surrenders. Republican leader Cathal Brugha is killed outside the Hamman hotel. Anti-Treaty Dublin forces re-group in Blessington.

The fighting In Dublin has cost sixty-five combatants killed, of whom 16 are government troops and 49 are Anti-Treaty IRA men, and 280 wounded of whom 122 are Free State soldiers and 158 are Republicans. The civilian casualties are thought to comprise over 250 killed and injured.

Republicans abandon Boyle in Roscommon when Seán Mac Eoin arrives with Free State troops and an 18-pounder gun.

August 1922

2 August – Naval Landing of Free State troops in County Kerry. Paddy Daly and the Dublin Guard, as well as others, a total of about 800, land at Fenit. They fight their way to Tralee at a cost of 9 killed and 35 wounded.

Two Republican fighters are killed in the fighting and more are wounded. The remainder retreat.

Republican forces under Liam Deasy attack Bruree, County Limerick with three armoured cars, trying to re-take it from the Free State troops but their attack is beaten off.

Republicans abandon Tipperary town and retreat to Clonmel; it is then occupied by National Army troops under Paddy O'Connor.

Fighting around Carrick on Suir between 600 National Army troops un-
der General Prout and 400 Republicans under Dan Breen.

3 August – The Free State forces under General Prout take Carrick on Suir with one man killed and three wounded. Breen's men retreat southwards.

National Army commandant Scally is killed in an ambush by Anti-Treaty IRA men between Swinford and Ballina in Mayo.

Around 250 pro-treaty IRA men from County Clare are embarked from Kilrush to Tarbert in fishing boats and take Ballylongford and Listowel.

4 August – Republican troops abandon Cashel, County Tipperary.

4 August – 150 Free State troops under Paddy Daly take Castleisland, County Kerry. The Republicans abandon their positions after six shrapnel shells are fired at them from an 18-pounder field gun.

Three Free State soldiers, including two commandants, Collison and McCurtain, are killed in a mine and gun attack on a troop lorry in county Tipperary.

5 August – About 2,000 Free State troops under Eoin O'Duffy take Kilmallock, County Limerick. The Republicans retreat towards Charleville.

11 August – Liam Lynch, the Anti-Treaty IRA's Chief of Staff, abandons Fermoy, the last major Republican held town. Lynch issues orders that Republican forces are to abandon the policy of holding towns, and orders them to form flying columns and pursue guerrilla warfare. End of the war's conventional phase.

A Free State Naval landing takes place at Kenmare. Commandant Tom "Scarteen" O'Connor (formerly local IRA commander) lands unopposed with 200 pro-treaty men and occupies Rathmore and Millstreet. Kerry operations in August have cost the National Army a total of 11 killed and 114 wounded.

12 August – Free State President Arthur Griffith dies of a stroke. He is replaced by William T. Cosgrave.

15 August – Free State troops take Clifden in County Galway without resistance. The Republicans abandon the town and burn the local radio transmitter station.

16 August – 300 men of the Anti-Treaty IRA 4th Northern Division under Frank Aiken attack Dundalk. They use two mines to breach the walls of the barracks and temporarily take over the town. Five Free State private soldiers and one Commandant, Byrne in the attack on the barracks and

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go For-
another soldier is killed in the town centre. There are fifteen wounded Free State troops. Two Republicans are killed, accidentally by one of their own mines and thirty wounded. About 240 Republican prisoners are freed from the prison and 400 rifles are taken. However, Aiken does not try to hold the town and, while in possession of it, calls for a truce in a meeting in the town square.

19 August – There is a four-hour gun battle on the border near Dundalk between pro- and Anti-Treaty fighters. The Republicans eventually retreat across the border into Northern Ireland where they cannot be followed. Elsewhere, there are renewed attacks on Free State troops in Dublin and the railway bridge at Carrick on Shannon is blown up and destroyed by Republicans.

In Kerry, a Free State column is ambushed near Listowel, one soldier is shot dead.

In Tipperary, a National Army soldier is shot dead when visiting his family.

20 August – A party of seven Free State troops is ambushed in a car heading from Lisscarrol to Kanturk, Cork. One National Army officer is killed, two others wounded and the remainder surrendered with their arms.

A lorry of Free State soldiers is ambushed at Blessington, Wicklow. One soldier is killed and five are wounded.

September 1922

A civilian, Livingstone Cooke, is shot dead by gunmen though to be anti-Treaty IRA men, at Old Blackrock Road, Cork City.

2 September – Republicans attack Macroom, County Cork with men and a captured armoured car. They withdraw after a seven-hour fire fight.

2 September – Republicans attack National Army troops while they are drilling in front of the City Club in Cork city. They drive up in a lorry and open machine-gun fire on the Free State troops, killing two and injuring six.

2 September – Two National Army soldiers are killed in an ambush at Watergrass Hill, County Cork.

There are also attacks by Anti-Treaty fighters on Free State troops in Dublin city centre and Tallaght and Rathfarnham in County Dublin. In the city centre ambush, one civilian is killed, and a Free State soldier and a civilian are wounded. Two Free State soldiers are wounded in the attack in Rathfranham and the RIC barracks there is destroyed.

Three CID police are shot in an ambush at Dean Grange, Dublin, one later dies.

Anti-Treaty IRA members Leo Murray and Rodney Murphy, Deans Grange are shot in their beds at lodge house of Newpark Lodge, Stillorgan, Dublin. Another, John Joe Stephens, Bellek, Fermanagh is taken from his lodgings at 7 Gardiner Place and shot at Naas Road, Dublin, the following day. National Army or CID personnel are assumed to be responsible.

4 September – Anti-Treaty IRA unit under Liam Pilkington takes Dromhaire barracks, County Sligo. Free State garrison there surrenders.
A civilian is shot dead by Free State troops in a raid on a shop at Capel Street, Dublin.

4 September – A National Army convoy is ambushed near Aughatubrid, County Kerry. Two Free State soldiers are killed and two wounded. One Republican is wounded and captured.

5 September – A secret meeting takes place between Richard Mulcahy and Éamon de Valera, political leader of the Republicans, to try to arrange a truce. However, according to de Valera, they, "couldn't find a basis" of agreement.

A large party of Republican fighters attack Carrickmacross barracks, Monaghan. The attack is unsuccessful but one Free State soldier is killed.

A Free State soldier is assassinated at Barrack Street, Cork, while visiting his family.

There are gun attack on Free State posts in Waterford City. One civilian, Kate Walsh is killed. Separately two bodies of anti-Treaty fighters, buried clandestinely after a previous action are dug up in Waterford.

IRA fighters ambush National Army troops in Glenacone County Limerick, but are worsted in the ensuing action, One IRA officer, D Finich of Cork 2 Brigade is killed and 12 prisoners are taken. Two National Army soldiers are wounded.

6 September – A Free State column is ambushed outside Kilkelly, County Mayo by Anti-Treaty fighters. The Free State troops have five wounded and claim to have killed seven irregulars.

A skirmish takes place in Mitchelstown, Cork. One Anti-Treaty officer is killed and 12 of his men are captured.

8 September – Republican activist Timothy Kenefick is abducted from his home in Cork city by Free State troops. He is shot dead and his body is dumped near Macroom. Anti-Treaty fighters attack National Army posts protecting the railway line around Limerick Junction, County Tipperary. One Free State soldier and one Republican are killed and several others wounded in the fighting.

9 September – Republicans attack and take Kenmare in County Kerry. A total of 84 Anti-Treaty fighters take over the town and shoot dead local pro-treaty officer Tom "Scarteen" O'Connor and his brother after taking them prisoner. They take 120 National Army troops in the town prisoner, but later release them. They capture 110 rifles and 20,000 rounds of ammunition. This action allowed the Kerry Anti-Treaty units to pursue a fairly effective guerrilla campaign for the remainder of the war.

A British intelligence report states that the Free State intelligence unit, the Crime Investigation Department or CID has, "murdered a number of prominent Republicans" in Dublin.

Anti-Treaty fighters attack the barracks at Carrickmacross. One Free State soldier is killed and two wounded in the firing. A civilian is also killed in the crossfire.

10 September – Anti-Treaty ambush of Free State troops near Rathmore,
County Kerry. Seven National Army soldiers are killed. The Republicans retire after an artillery piece is brought up to fire seven shells at them. Republicans take Tarbert, County Kerry, temporarily, capturing 40 rifles.  

11 September – A Free State column travelling from Macroom, Cork, towards Kerry, is attacked with a mine on a bridge at Carrigphooka, west Cork. National Army commandant Tom Keogh and eight other soldiers are killed in the blast. A Republican prisoner is shot dead in reprisal by Dublin Guard troops.  

19 September – Seán Mac Eoin begins a Free State sweep of northern County Sligo to clear it of Anti-Treaty guerrillas. The operation is largely successful. By the end of the operation, Free State forces are in control of all the towns in County Sligo and the conflict there becomes a low level guerilla affair. 54 people are killed in the county during the entire civil war, 22 Free State troops, 21 Republicans and 11 civilians. Of these, all but 8 have been killed by the end of September 1922. During MacEoin's operation, a Republican column, including an armoured car, is cornered north of Sligo town. The car is put out of action and six Republicans flee up the slopes of Ben Bulben mountain. All six are killed by the pursuing Free State troops, four of them, it is alleged, are killed after surrendering. Among those killed are Capt. Harry Benson, and Brian MacNeill, (son of Eoin MacNeill, founder of the Irish Volunteers), who is shot at close range in the forehead. One National Army sergeant is killed in the operation and 30 Irregulars are taken prisoner.  

November 1922  

1 November – A 20 strong Anti-Treaty IRA column encounters 250 Free State troops at Brockagh Fahy, County Mayo. Six Republicans are captured, one is wounded and another is killed. Five civilians are wounded by a grenade blast at an ambush in Henry Street, central Dublin.  

2 November – Skirmish near Headford, County Kerry, one Anti-Treaty IRA man and a Free State soldier are killed.  

3 November – Tom Powell and his East Mayo Anti-Treaty IRA unit are captured in Ballinrobe, County Mayo. Republicans attack Free State General Richard Mulcahy's official residence adjoining a military barracks in Portobello, Dublin. A grenade is thrown into the house and fire is opened with revolvers before troops from the barracks are mobilised. and One Anti-Treaty fighter is shot dead.  

4 November – Ernie O'Malley, Anti-Treaty IRA commander in Dublin, is captured following a shoot out with Free State soldiers on Ailesbury road in Donnybrook. O'Malley is hit over 20 times, but survives. He kills a National Army soldier in the gun fight.  

24 November – Former Treaty negotiator Robert Erskine Childers is executed by the Free State, having been captured in possession of a pistol-which, ironically, had been given to Childers.
by Michael Collins (Irish leader). There are attacks that night on Protobello and Wellington attacks in Dublin but inflicting no casualties.

December 1922

1 December – After a skirmish on the border of County Kildare and County Meath, the Meath Anti-Treaty IRA column, consisting of 22 men under Patrick Mullaney is captured. The Republicans attack a Free State supply truck near Leixlip. One Republican and one Free State soldier are killed in the action and three Republicans are wounded. Five of the Anti-Treaty men, who had previously deserted from the National Army, are executed in Dublin on 8 January 1923 for 'treachery'.

Several hundred National Army troops mount a major operation in Dublin, setting up checkpoints at all major roads in an effort to halt the daily small scale ambushes in the city. They stop and search all in-coming traffic and male civilians for arms. Three men are found carrying weapons and detained. The military barracks at Tallaght, County Dublin is attacked that night. Four Free State soldiers are wounded by gunfire.

Dublin Guard troops end a week of sweeps in Kerry, having raided Rathmore, Killcummin and Barraduff, capturing 39 Anti-Treaty IRA men as well as arms and equipment. A separate sweep in the Currow/Scartaglen area takes another 15 prisoners and 4 more are captured elsewhere in the county.

4 December – A party of 60 Republican fighters ambushes a Free State convoy of 2 lorries on Drimoleague Road, near Dunmanway in West Cork. One National Army sergeant is killed. The National Army troops call for air support and an aeroplane bombs and machine guns the Anti-Treaty fighters before they disperse. Press reports say they suffered, 'many casualties'.

Early December – Kenmare, County Kerry (captured by Republicans on 9 September) is re-taken by Free State troops under General Murphy.

6 December – The Irish Free State is formally established by the British House of Commons.

14 December – Free State garrisons at Thomastown and Mullinavat in County Kilkenny surrender to the Republican column under Tom Barry, which took two other towns the day before. The Free State troops hand over their arms and in some cases join the Republicans.
Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go

15 December – 70 Anti-Treaty IRA fighters ambush a Free State patrol between Rathmore and Barraduff. There is a gun battle of several hours, in which one National Army soldier is fatally wounded. The Army claims that the Republicans took "heavy casualties" in the action. The local priest tries to prevent the ambush and mobilises local people to remove a roadblock. The IRA in response seize 4 of his cattle.

16 December – the Free State post in Carrickonsnannon is attacked and taken by anti-Treaty fighters. One FS soldier and one civilian, are killed. Four Lorries and a large quantity of arms are taken.

29 December – Two Anti-Treaty men are executed by the Free State in Killkenny.

A Free State foot patrol is ambushed by an IRA column near Castlegregory, County Kerry. Two soldiers are killed and two wounded. Their post in the village is burned. The National Army in Tralee threaten to execute four Republican prisoners in reprisal but after a legal appeal their sentence is commuted to penal servitude.

There is a bomb planted at CID headquarters at Oriel House, Dublin. One Free State soldier is killed and two wounded in the explosion. Two civilians are also wounded.

January 1923

1 January – An anti-Treaty IRA column is ambushed by National Army troops at Kyle, County Wexford. One IRA fighter is killed and three wounded. One Free State soldier is also wounded in the action.

3 January – An anti-Treaty IRA Volunteer (Morris) is accidentally killed in County Wexford, after shooting himself while cleaning his revolver.

4 January – A column of 65 Anti-Treaty fighters from Cork and Kerry IRA units, under Tom Barry, attacks Millstreet, Cork, under cover of darkness. They use 12 machine guns and take three National Army posts in the town, taking 39 prisoners and capturing one Lewis gun and 35 rifles. However they fail to take the main post in the Town Hall, held by 23 Free State soldiers. They withdraw after several hours – one party to Ballyvourney in Cork and the other to the Pap mountains in Kerry. Two Free State soldiers are killed and several more wounded. The National Army reports six Anti-Treaty fatalities and 19 wounded but the Republicans admit to only three wounded.

6 January – Skirmish at Ballyconnell on the Cavan-Fermanagh border, Anti-Treaty IRA captain Michael Cull killed by plain clothes Free State officer while raiding a hardware shop.

In the Dundalk area two killings are reported. the body of a man John Phelan is found in Castlebellingham, with the notice 'Convicted spy, IRA' pinned on him, he had pointed out houses of anti-Treatyites to Free State forces which were subsequently burnt. In Dundalk itself, a civilian Hugh O'Donnell of Belfast, reported to be 'of Republican sympathies' is shot dead by unknown gunmen.
26 January – Three men are executed by the Free State in Birr, County Offaly for armed robbery. Although not actually IRA members, having been denied entry on the grounds that they were too young, the three had Republican connections and claimed as 'Republican soldiers' in an Anti-Treaty communique.

26 January – An anti-Treaty land mine outside Terenure College, Dublin destroys a National Army

27 January – Anti-Treaty IRA ambush a party of five National Army soldiers at Abbeyfeale, County Kerry. A Captain Coyle is killed and three soldiers wounded. Free State troops pursue the IRA column, killing one of them and wounding another two.

February 1923

1 February – Moore Hall in County Mayo is burned down by Republican guerrillas, because its owner, Maurice Moore is a senator in the Dáil.

8 February – The Free State suspends executions until 18 February, offering an amnesty to anyone who surrendered before that day.

10 February – Republican officer Tom Barry, after contacts with some former IRA comrades on the Free State side, proposes that the Anti-Treaty IRA call a truce. Liam Lynch turns down the idea.

11 February – The Father of Government minister Kevin O'Higgins is shot dead by Republicans at the family home in Stradbally County Laois. The house is also burnt down.

11 February – Athlone Waterworks is badly damaged by a Republican bomb. A civilian carter, James Finlay is shot dead by anti-Treaty fighters near Tulamore, County Offaly.

13 February – Two Anti-Treaty men are killed in a raid on their dug out at Currahane Strands, County Kerry.

15 February – Mansion of senator Brian Mahon in Ballymore Eustace, County Kildare is burned down by Anti-Treaty forces. In the remainder of the month, a total of 37 houses of senators are destroyed by the Anti-Treaty IRA. Their owners are mainly big landowners, descendants of the Protestant Ascendancy and many of them were unionists before Irish independence. Oliver St John Gogarty is another prominent victim of house burnings. He also survives an assassination attempt in Dublin.

16 February – An unidentified man is found shot dead near Thurles, with the warning pinned on him, 'One out of fifty'.

18 February – Up to 1,000 Free-State troops drawn from Cahir, Cashel, Clonmel and Tipperary town encircle the area around the Glen of Aherlow and move in from all sides simultaneously in pursuit of Republican leader Dinny Lacey and his IRA column, which is billetted in the Glen. Lacey and one of his men are killed and many of his column are captured, having been surprised in two different safe-houses. Three of the Free-State
troops are mortally wounded during the attack on the house. Lacey was the head of the IRA's 2nd Southern Division and his death crippled the Republican's cause in the Tipperary/Waterford area.

March 1923

Memorial designed by Yann Goulet to the Republican soldiers killed by Free State troops at Ballyseedy, County Kerry in a mass killing of prisoners on 7 March 1923. The month of March was marked by a series of such atrocities in Kerry

5 March – A Free state patrol comes upon a 36-man strong Anti-Treaty column about to attack Cahersiveen, County Kerry. The IRA retreat, fighting a rearguard action against pursuing National Army troops through the Garrane mountains. In the running fights, 3 Free State soldiers killed. Two Republicans, including one Anti-Treaty engineer (Dan Clifford) are killed, allegedly after being wounded and then falling into the hands of the pro-Treaty troops. Another later died of wounds. The National Army claims that three more Anti-Treaty fighters were killed in the action and carried away by their comrades. Six Anti-Treaty men are captured, five of whom are executed on 28 March.

6 March – Five Free State soldiers, including three officers are killed by a booby trap mine while clearing a road in Knocknagoshel, County Kerry. Another soldier is badly wounded. National Army commander Paddy Daly issues a memorandum that Republican prisoners are to be used to clear mined roads from now on.

7 March – Nine Republican prisoners are taken from Ballymullen Barracks in Tralee to Ballyseedy Cross, ostensibly to clear a mined road. They are then tied together around the landmine, which is then detonated by National army troops. One man, Stephen Fuller, is blown clear by the blast and survives. The eight other prisoners are killed. All of the dead are from IRA Kerry no 1 Brigade. A riot breaks out in Tralee when the troops bring nine coffins back to the town.

A Free State sentry is killed by a sniper outside a barracks in Tralee, Kerry.

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A Free State sentry is killed by a sniper outside a barracks in Tralee, Kerry.

Con Moloney, Adjutant General of the Anti-Treaty IRA, is captured by Free State troops at the Glen of Aherlow, County Tipperary, in Moore's Wood, Rossadrehid.

8 March – Four more Anti-Treaty IRA prisoners are killed in Kerry by National Army troop from Dublin. They are, as at Ballyseedy the day before, blown up by a mine, ostensibly while clearing a mined road, at Countess Bridge in Killarney. The dead are from IRA Kerry 2 Brigade. One man, Tadhg Coffey, escapes the massacre.

Kerry, Another Republican prisoner, Seamus Taylor is taken from Kenmare jail to Ballyseedy woods by National Army troops and shot dead.

12 March – Five Republican prisoners (this time from IRA Kerry no. 3 Brigade) are killed at Cahersiveen, Kerry. They are taken from a National Army post in the town at gunpoint by Dublin Guard officers, under protest from the
garrison. The prisoners are then shot in the legs to prevent escape and then blown up by a landmine by National Army troops.

12 March – One anti-Treaty fighter and one Free State soldier are killed in a gun battle after an attack on Free State post at Rooskey County Roscommon.

13 March – Three Republican prisoners from Wexford IRA units are executed in Wexford town.

Three other Republicans are executed, two in Cork and the other in Dublin. The Republican 'government' issues a statement announcing a period of mourning and forbidding all public entertainments such as sporting events while executions of their men continue.

A Free State soldier is killed in a gun attack at Glasson, near Athlone.

The bodies of two civilians are found at Morehill, Tallow on the Waterford/Cork border.

14 March – Two Republicans are executed for their part in a bank robbery in Mullingar.

Two National Army soldiers are shot and killed in Dublin. One is seized when unarmed and off duty in Portobello and shot in the head. The other is killed in an exchange of fire when he tries to search two republican fighters near Mountjoy Prison.

Anti-Treaty IRA officer Charlie Daly and three other Republican fighters are executed by Free State troops at Drumboe Castle, near Stranorlar in County Donegal where they had been held since January. They are executed in reprisal for the death of a Free State soldier in a nearby ambush the day before.

15 March – Anti-Treaty officer John Kevins killed in Beaufort, County Kerry.

A Free State soldier is shot dead near Wellington Barracks, Dublin.

March – In retaliation for the execution of three Wexford Republicans on 13 March, Bob Lambert, the local Republican officer, orders the killing of three National Army soldiers captured while drinking at a pub in the county. The soldiers were taken by Anti-Treaty IRA from a Public House at Ballagh, parish of Adamstown. They were taken to the village of Adamstown where they were shot dead later that night or early next morning, on 24 March 1923. A fourth Free State soldier, John Croke, was badly wounded when he was shot in the leg when he resisted the Anti-Treaty IRA as they initially entered the Pub.
23 March – A civilian, Michael Muldoon is shot dead by unknown gunmen Mohill, County Leitrim.
24 March – Anti-Treaty IRA executive meets in County Tipperary to discuss the war's future. Tom Barry proposes a motion to end the war, but it is defeated by 6 votes to 5. Éamon de Valera is allowed to attend, after some debate, but is given no voting rights.
25 March – Republican leader in Leitrim, Ned Bofin and three of his men are captured in the Arigna Mountains. Free State soldiers in Wexford shot dead Michael Furlong (of Ballagh) at Oldcourt, in revenge for the previous days killing of three Free State troops as they suspected that he was an Anti-Treaty IRA member (he had fought in the recent Irish War of Independence in the IRA).
A republican prisoner, Murphy is shot dead by Free State troops in Kerry.
27 March – William Johnson of IFS Citizens' Defence Force killed by IFS Lt. Frank Teeling; Teeling found guilty of manslaughter and serves 18 months.
28 March – Five Republicans who were captured in the Anti-Treaty IRA's 5 March attack on Cahersiveen, Kerry are executed by firing squad.
29 March – Anti-Treaty fighter Bobby Bondfield is arrested on St. Stephen's Green in Dublin by W. T. Cosgrave's CID bodyguards. He is shot dead and dumped in Clondalkin.
Republicans attempt to burn and lay a land mine in Burton Hall, the home of the Guinness family, one of whom is a senator. The fire fails to ignite and the mine is defused by Free State troops.
Press reports that Free State troops have arrested 16 republican fighters around the country.
An Anti-Treaty fighter named Murphy is captured near Tralee, Kerry, and then shot dead by Free State troops, his body is found in Knocknagoshel.
30 March – Four Anti-Treaty IRA fighters are killed in an action at Kyle in County Wexford, between Wexford town and Enniscorthy. A party of National Army troops was travelling from Wexford to Enniscorthy, heavy machine-gun fire was opened on them, when reinforcements arrived from Wexford Military barracks the fighting had ceased but the reinforcements pursued the attackers, it was during this pursuit that the four men were killed.
30 March – The body of an Anti-Treaty soldier is found on Upper Rathmines Road near Tranquilla Convent Dublin. The body of the deceased had 22 bullet wounds. The jury at the inquest found that Thomas O'Leary had been murdered and that the military authorities were uncooperative.
Thomas O'Leary, 22 years old from 17 Armstrong Street Harold’s Cross Dublin.
31 March – An 80-year-old woman, Mrs Fitzpatrick, is shot dead at her home Longford by republicans who were looking for her son, a Free State officer.
In Ballybay, County Monaghan, another civilian, Owen McGuinness, a Treaty supporter, is shot dead by republicans.
April 1923
3 April – Anti-Treaty IRA members Christy Breslin and Joseph Kiernan, are arrested by Free State forces at Georges Street, Dublin and killed at Cabra. Another, James Tierney, is killed later.

The bodies of two National Army Intelligence officers who were abducted while in plainclothes and unarmed near Barne, Tipperary on 23 January and killed by Anti-Treaty forces are discovered. Their bodies had been dumped in nearby cemetery.

Anti-Treaty Volunteer Jerome Lyons is shot dead whilst under interrogation in Kickham Barracks, Clonmel.

6 April – In Kerry, Free State troops mount an operation aimed at rescuing Hannafin, an informer held by the Anti-Treaty IRA. They raid a village at Derrynafeana near Carrauntoohil, where he is being held. Three Anti-Treaty fighters are killed in a resulting skirmish and two more captured. The National Army claims a total of nine Anti-Treaty fighters were killed. Most of the IRA column gets away into the mountains. Hannafin is freed. He had previously been made to dig his own grave prior to his imminent execution.

10 April – Liam Lynch, Republican Commander in Chief, is killed in a skirmish with Free State troops in the Knockmealdown mountains in County Tipperary. He and a group of republicans are caught on a hillside armed only with side-arms and Lynch is shot while attempting to flee. Four more senior Republican officers are captured in the incident. This is part of the same sweep that had captured several other senior republicans a few days earlier. Lynch's death is often cited as the effective end of the war.

11 April – Six Republican prisoners are executed by firing squad in Tuam, County Galway.

Waterford Anti-Treaty IRA Flying Column Leader Tom Keating is mortally wounded. He is transported in a horse and dray and is denied medical attention. The Dungarvan parish priest permits only one mass to be offered for him.

A National Army report states, "Events of the past few days point to the beginning of the end as a far as the irregular campaign is concerned".

12 April – National Army officer in Clonmel barracks shoots dead a prisoner named Jerome Lyons. he allegedly tried to grab the officers revolver while under interrogation.

13 April – Three republican fighters are surprised and captured in a dug out near Gortaglanna, Kerry. One is shot dead, the other two are taken prisoner.

A National Army scout is shot dead in Glenties, Donegal. 14 April – Austin Stack, Deputy IRA Chief of Staff, is captured by Free State troops near Ballymacarbry. He is carrying a document accepting a proposal by the Catholic Bishop of Cashel to end the war by calling a ceasefire and dumping arms.

14 April – Free-State forces converge on a ruined castle at Castleblake, County Kilkenny after receiving information that it was being used as a dugout by the Republicans. Free State Lieutenant Kennedy calls on the occupants to surrender and fires three shots...
through the door. A grenade is thrown from inside the shelter, mortally wounding Lieutenant Kennedy. Free-State troops then rush the building. Two republican fighters (Ned Somers and Theo English) are killed in the firefight and several others captured.

14 April – A 62-year-old woman Bridge Geoghegan is shot dead accidentally by republican guerrillas in Ballybay Monaghan. A weapon discharged when they arrived at her house demanding food and shelter.

15 April – A fire-fight between an Anti-Treaty IRA column and Free State troops takes place at Glenvar, Kerry. The Free State claims that nine Republicans were killed in the action.

18 April – Anti-Treaty IRA column under Timothy Lyons (known as "Aeroplane") is surrounded by Free State troops near Kerry Head. They take refuges in caves on the coast. Two Free State soldiers are killed when they try to storm the cave. After three days siege, landmines are lowered over the cave mouths and exploded, killing three Republicans. Lyons is also drowned in the incident. The remaining IRA men surrender. This is the last significant engagement of the civil war in Kerry. Roughly 180 people have been killed in the county, of whom 85 were Free State troops, 72 Anti-Treaty fighters and 12 civilians.

18 April – Six Anti-Treaty fighters are executed in Tuam County Galway.

19 April – Two Anti-Treaty fighters are killed in action at Kealkil, West Cork.

20 April – Frank Aiken is elected IRA Chief of Staff.

21 April – An Anti-Treaty IRA captain, Martin Hogan, is abducted and killed in Dublin, his body is found in Drumcondra.

A Free State soldier (Stephen Clancy) is shot dead while patrolling in Ennis, Co Clare. An elderly civilian is shot dead during an ambush in Cork City. Another civilian John Melvin is shot dead by the IRA in Ballina, Co Mayo as an alleged informer and another government supporter is shot and fatally wounded while in bed.

22 April – Free State troops surround Frank Aiken, Padraig Quinn and Sean Quinn, the leaders of the Anti-Treaty forces in the Dundalk area, in a safe house in Castletownshend. A firefight breaks out in which the two Quinns are wounded, Sean mortally and subsequently captured. In the confusion, Aiken manages to slip away.

24 April – Free State troops take a republican prisoner, Daniel Murphy, to Knocknagoshel, where 5 National Army troops had been killed on 6 March and shoot him dead.

25 April – Three Anti-Treaty prisoners are executed in Tralee.

25 April – A National Army officer, Peter McNicholas, is killed in an ambush near Kiltimagh, Mayo.

25 April – A Free State Lieutenant, Beehan, is shot dead in an ambush near Castleisland, Kerry, while escorting two Civic Guards.

26 April – One Anti-Treaty fighter is executed in Ennis.
30 April – Frank Aiken, new Anti-Treaty IRA Commander, calls a ceasefire.

3 July – Noel Lemass, Anti-Treaty IRA officer in Dublin, brother of Seán Lemass is abducted by Free State plain-clothesmen and killed. His body is later found in the Wicklow Mountains on 12 October.

August 1923
15 August – Éamon de Valera arrested in Ennis, when he tried to make an election speech. He is imprisoned for over a year at Arbour Hill Prison in Dublin.

17 August – Voting in Irish general election, 1923 takes place. Cumann na nGaedheal win 63 seats; Sinn Féin 44; Independents 16; Farmers 15; Labour 14; and Independent Labour 1. About 415,000 first preference votes were given to Pro-Treatyites and 286,000 to Anti-Treatyites. (64% of the electorate voted.) Some of the Anti-Treaty members elected are still imprisoned.

October 1923
13 October – A mass Hunger Strike is launched by 424 Republican prisoners in Mountjoy Prison in Dublin in protest at their continued detention after the war's end. The strike is joined by up to 8,000 Republican prisoners in prisons and camps around the country.

29 October – The Oriel House CID is disbanded and its members transferred to the Dublin Metropolitan Police. In April 1925 the DMP was amalgamated with the Garda Síochána. CID was responsible for a number of killings of republicans during the war.

November 1923
20 November – Republican prisoner Denny Barry dies on hunger strike in Newbridge camp.

22 November – IRA prisoner Andrew Sullivan dies on hunger strike in Mountjoy prison in Dublin.

23 November – The republican hunger strike is called off. The women prisoners are released but most of the men are detained until the following year.

One of the eight plaques at the Ballyseedy monument, near Tralee, Co Kerry commemorating Kerry’s dead in the Civil War.