

# **THE ‘INTERNATIONALISM FROM BELOW’ CHALLENGE TO LENIN’S BOLSHEVISM AND THE RADICAL LEFT IN POLAND, IRELAND AND UKRAINE (from the founding of the Second International in 1889 to the end of the International Revolutionary Wave in 1921/3**

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a republican socialist analysis - part 2*)

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**Ukraine Solidarity Campaign – a coalition of Socialist and labour movement activists, supported by Sotsyalani Rukh, in support of the working class and oppressed in Ukraine, opposed to Russian imperialism and for Ukraine’s self-determination.**

The first part of this article drew on many arguments that are held in the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign (USC) and Sotsyalani Rukh. However, more of the arguments made in this second part will be contested by some participants because they base their thinking on different political theories. This is to be welcomed in any democratic coalition (or united front in Marxist speak). Before effective unity in action, we need extensive democratic debate. This includes the theories and strategies from which our tactics flow.

But one of the biggest problems on the Left is a pervasive dogmatism, selecting only evidence which backs an assumed orthodoxy rather than using events to deepen our understanding, and enhancing our ability to be effective. The purpose of the second part of this article is to show the relevance of a **Socialist Republican, ‘Internationalism from Below’**, approach to building anti-imperialist solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

This is not an attempt to promote another orthodoxy or set of dogmas. We have long seen this from those who claim to uphold orthodox Marxism, Marxist-Leninism and Trotskyism. So, although this article draws attention to other Socialists, e.g. Kazimierz Kelles-Kreuz, James Connolly and Lev Iurkevich, there is no intention of adding ‘isms’ to their names, nor to try and widen an approved canon of thinkers. This would just represent a secularised theological approach leading to the dogged defence of the orthodox and the casting out of heretics.

Other Left arguments will also be criticised. However, this is not being done in an attempt to demonise their adherents but to encourage a critical engagement between various views so that, where possible, a higher synthesis can be achieved in our thinking, leading to more effective action. And there are certainly other theories in addition to a Socialist Republican, ‘Internationalism from Below’ approach which can add to our understanding of what is happening in Ukraine. *On the Frontiers of Whiteness*<sup>1</sup> by Olenka Lyubchenko, which draws on recent social reproduction theory, is a good example.

The war in Ukraine is probably the most significant global event since 9/11 Twin Towers in 2001 and its consequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, with its wider repercussions. The war in Ukraine will also lead to unforeseen consequences, which require new thinking. New circumstances can sometimes lead us back to past historical events and theories. Some of these theories have been forgotten or marginalised. This has often happened following the retreat and ending of earlier International Revolutionary Waves. But older and then only embryonic theories can have new relevance and be further developed in changed political circumstances. This article will argue that those who contributed to Socialist Republican, ‘Internationalism from Below’ thinking, in the lead-up to WW1 and during the 1916-21 International Revolutionary Wave, helped to develop a theory and practice which is very relevant today.

The purpose behind highlighting such an approach is not to suggest that if only this course had been followed, then the collapse of the ‘Russian’ Revolution after 1921/28/56/91 (take your pick of dates) could have been avoided. There were very powerful international forces which would likely have reversed the 1916-21 International Revolutionary Wave anyhow. But a case can be made that if a Republican Socialist, ‘Internationalism from Below’ approach had been adopted, then the legacy for Socialists might well have provided a case of ‘failing better’. This would be similar to the way that the 1870 Paris Commune provided so much inspiration, despite going down to defeat.

But there are very definite historical reasons, which will be examined in this article, why this approach did not win out on the International Left at the time, although it certainly made an impact. But by appreciating the possibilities of a Republican Socialist, ‘Internationalism from Below’ approach today, then we may be able go beyond ‘failing better’. This could contribute to us now adopting a better path to human emancipation, liberation and self-determination in its widest sense.

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**b) The three components of the International Left and the national backgrounds to the emergence of ‘Internationalism from Below’ politics**



**The Second International founded in 1889**

There were of three components to the **International Left**<sup>2</sup> which emerged in the Second International (SI). They all actively opposed the capitulation by the leaderships of most SI affiliated parties in the face of the outbreak of World War One (WW1). In the process, they began to examine the social imperialist and social patriotic politics which contributed to this. The International Left also took the leading part in trying to advance the 1916-21 International Revolutionary Wave.

Those political organisations and movements which committed themselves to the spread and deepening of this revolutionary wave offered far more than those Social Democrats, Liberals, Conservatives and Fascists who tried to drown this in blood. Of course, this does not mean that the revolutionary upsurges were bloodless. However, they occurred in a context where the imperial powers and their apologists had just imposed one of the biggest ‘blood sacrifices’ in history, with an estimated 15-24 million deaths amongst armed forces and civilians. And bloody violence, other forms of repression and famine had been engrained in the centuries long ruling class attempts to maintain their control over colonial peoples, peasants and workers alike. A comparison can be made during WW1. The 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin has been dismissed as ‘blood sacrifice’ with its 485 civilian

and military casualties. A month later, though, the British and French launched the Somme offensive, which led to over a million casualties, including 300,000 deaths.

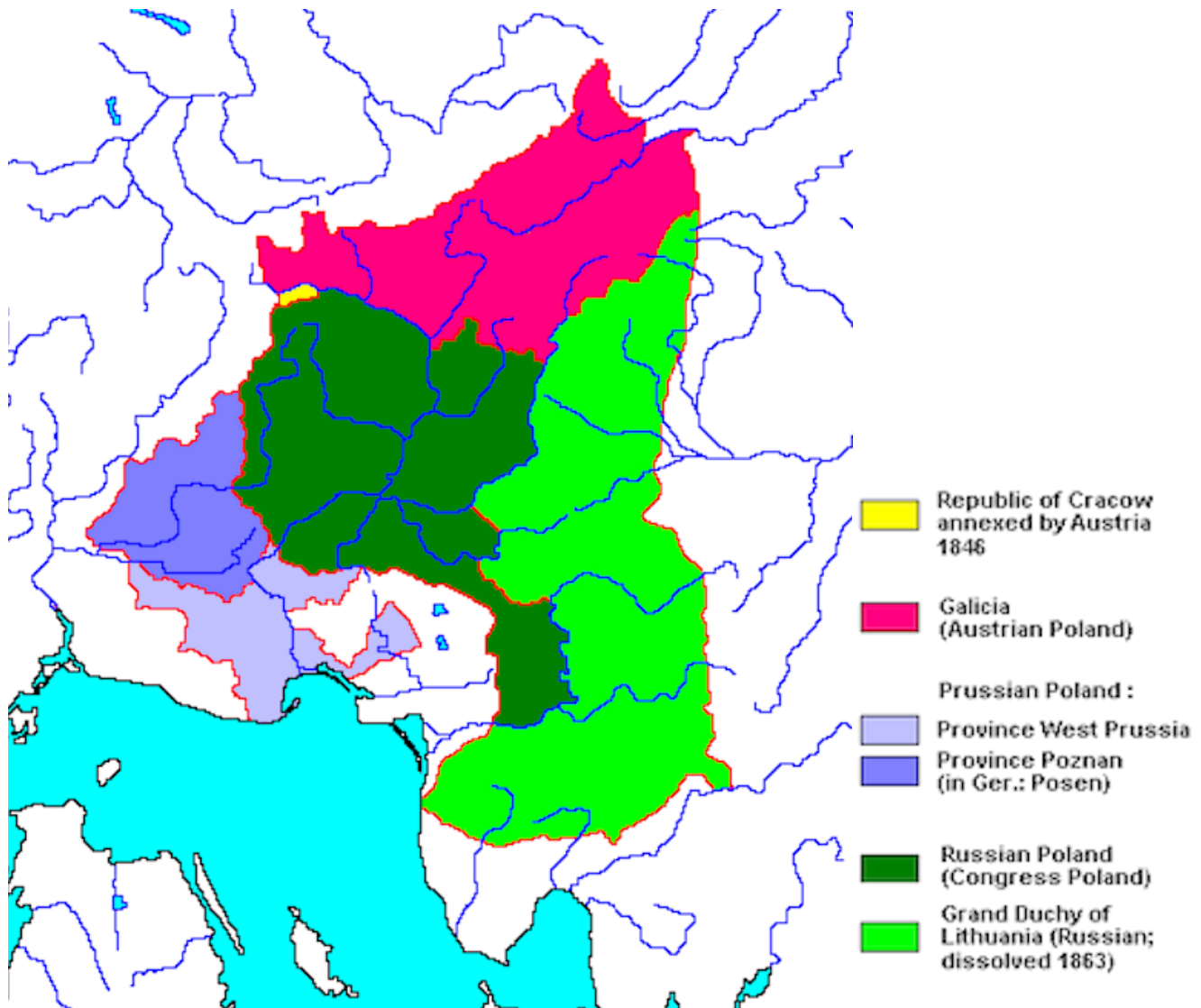


**Figures from the International Left – Rosa Luxemburg, Vladimir Lenin, Kazimierz Kelles-Kreuz and James Connolly (no known photo of Lev Iurekvich)**

The **Radical Left** was one of the components of the International Left. Rosa Luxemburg was its best-known representative. From a Jewish background, she was brought up speaking Polish and German and was able to assimilate to both cultures. Luxemburg took part in the activities of the Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDPKPL) and the Socialist Party of Germany (SPD), both of which had a significant number of assimilated Jewish members. The Balkan Left also supported a Radical Left approach.<sup>3</sup> The second component of the International Left was the **Leninist wing of the Bolsheviks**, part of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) until 1912. Other Bolsheviks were and remained supporters of the Radical Left.

The third component were the advocates of what could best be termed a **Socialist Republican, ‘Internationalism from Below’** approach. They included Kazimierz Kelles-Kreuz in Poland, who died during the 1904-7 International Revolutionary Wave, James Connolly in Ireland, shot by the British in 1916; and Lev Iurkevich in Ukraine, who died in late 1917; the latter two at early stages during the 1916-21 International Revolutionary Wave. Others emerged as Ukrainian Communists and took Iurkevich’s politics further, cementing the politics of ‘Internationalism from Below’.

This article does not have the space to address the work of John Maclean who, with help from both Sylvia Pankhurst and Constance Markiewicz, extended Connolly's 'break-up of the UK and British empire strategy' to Scotland. This also goes for the anti-colonial and domestic Black workers' movements which emerged in the USA, UK and British empire. They all made major contributions to the Socialist Republican 'Internationalism from Below' politics first pioneered before WW1.

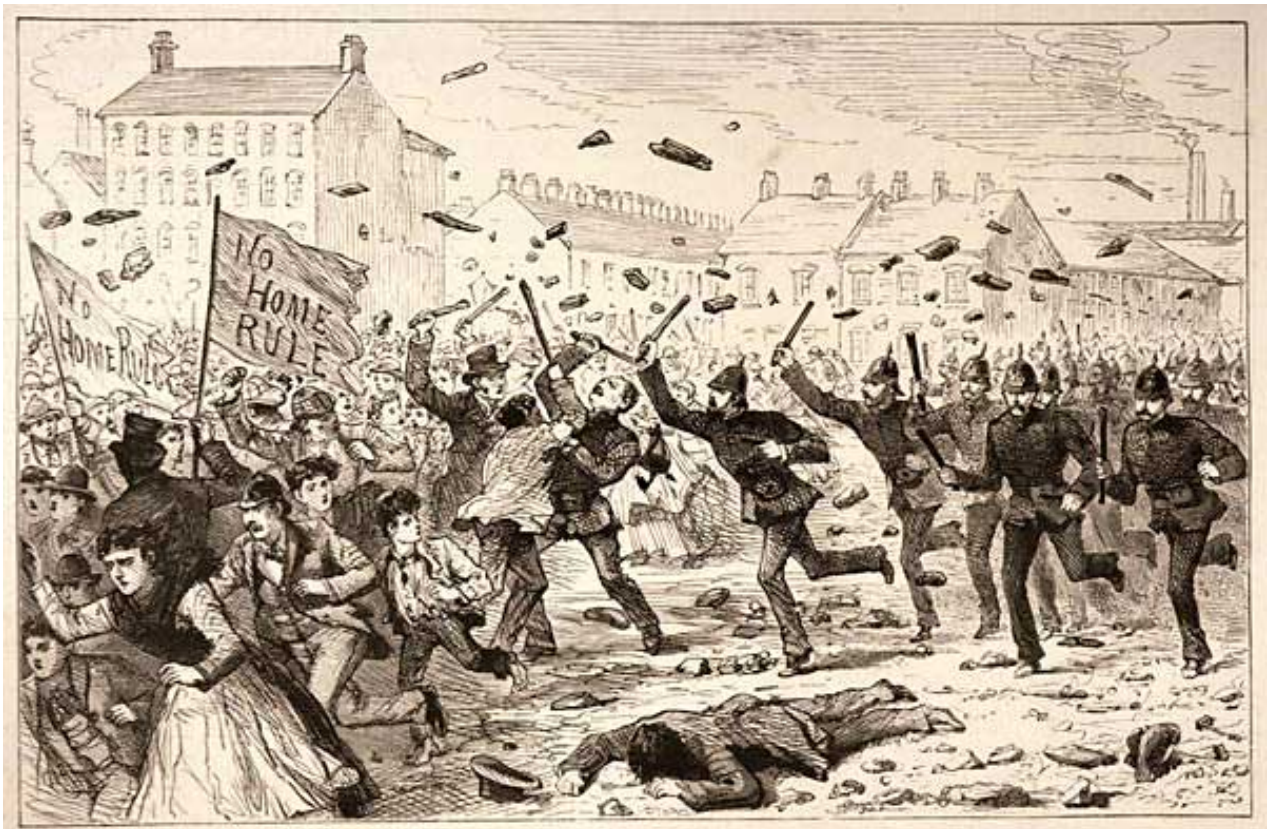


### **Poland after the three partitions and the 1815 Congress of Vienna**

During Kelles-Kreuz's lifetime, Poland was still divided between Romanov Russia, Hapsburg Austria and Hohenzollern Prussia. Post-1815, Russian-held, Congress Poland was overwhelmingly Polish speaking, although also including many Jewish Yiddish speakers. The two earlier partitions had ceded to Tsarist Russia the former Polish-held Grand Duchy of Lithuania, where Lithuanian, Byelorussian and Yiddish language speakers also lived. After the failed 1863 Polish/Lithuanian Uprising, Tsarist Russia no longer gave any national territorial recognition to Lithuania. Nevertheless, the Lithuanian and Byelorussian languages continued to

be spoken by the peasantry mainly due to the low levels of education provided by the state.

In those parts of Poland, which had been awarded to Prussia in three partitions, no territorial recognition was given to Poles living there either. But they contained substantial majority Polish language speaking areas. And the Polish language enjoyed a higher status than the languages of ‘history-less peoples’, especially amongst Radicals and the Left. Yiddish speaking Jewish people formed a substantial minority across all areas of Poland and former Poland. They were at the centre of Kelles-Kreuz’s developing ‘Internationalism from Below’ theories and strategy.

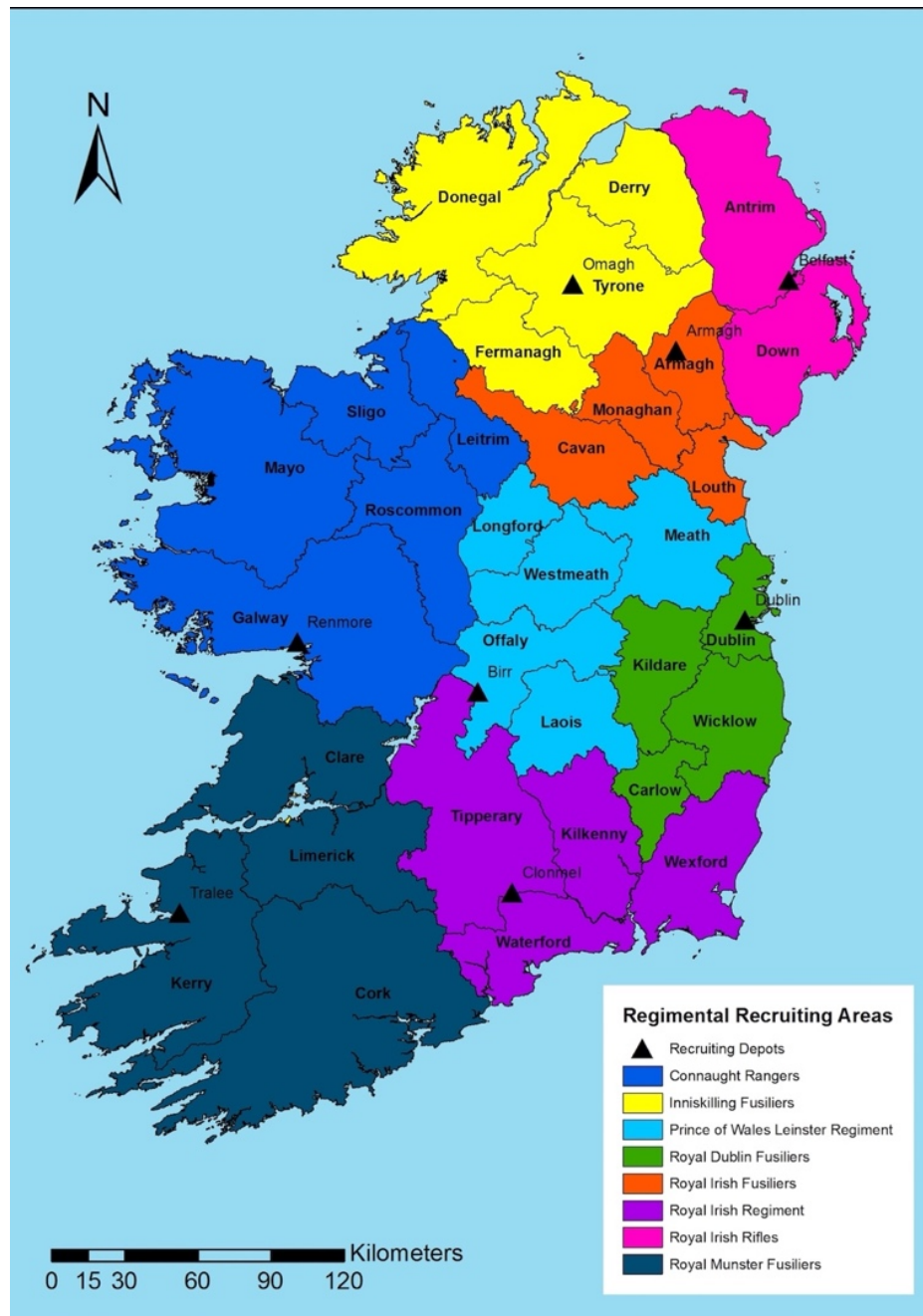


### **Orange Order riots against Irish Home Rule in 1886**

During Connolly’s lifetime, the whole of Ireland was still part of the UK, with a devolved administrative apparatus run by the Crown representative, the Lord Lieutenant, and the Westminster government-appointed, Chief Irish Secretary. Laws granting certain freedoms were often suspended. The Orange Order, sustained by Irish unionist landlords and by businessmen, mainly in north-east Ulster, was called upon when required to provide extra-constitutional pressure to uphold their class interests.

The Orange Order received state backing during the First Irish Home Rule Bill crisis in 1886, when Conservative MP Lord Randolph Churchill decided “to play

the Orange card.”<sup>4</sup> And during the Third Irish Home Rule Bill Crisis from 1912, the Irish Unionist opposition mobilised the Orange Order and other Loyalist forces, particularly in Ireland’s Ulster province.



**Map showing British army recruitment during World War One and its disregard for 9 counties Ulster (recruiting from Louth) or 6 counties ‘Ulster’ (also recruiting from Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan)**

However, Partition was not the Irish Unionists’ original intention. The majority amongst the British ruling class supported conservative and reactionary unionist politics to maintain the Union throughout these islands. Thus, all Unionists initially wanted to keep the whole of Ireland without any Home Rule concessions. During WW1 British regimental recruitment did not acknowledge Ulster, whilst

the still 9 counties-based Ulster Unionists remained a section of the Irish Unionist Party up until 1920. Connolly followed events in Ireland very closely as an active participant, from 1898-1903 and 1910-16. He warned of the dangers of Ireland's incipient Partition and took a leading part in the Dublin Rising in Easter 1916.



**Map showing the Tsarist Russian and Hapsburg Austro-Hungarian provinces which became part of the Ukrainian SSR after 1919 (former Tsarist Russia), after 1945 (former Austro-Hungary) and after 1954 (Crimea)**

During Iurkevich's lifetime, Ukraine was divided between Romanov Russia, Hapsburg Austria and Hapsburg Hungary. The original core area of Ukraine had been formed in 1648 by Cossacks, under Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky with Tatar allies, in a struggle with the Commonwealth of Poland. To keep the Polish state at bay, the Cossacks transferred their allegiance to Tsarist Russia between 1654 and 1686. The Kyiv-based Ukrainian Orthodox church became subordinated to the Russian Orthodox patriarchy in Moscow.

After this, the Hetmanate's loosely affiliated Cossack Zaporozhian Sich was able to extend its territory southwards towards the Black Sea at the expense of the Ottoman Turkish client state, the Crimean Tatars. But Tsarist Russia ditched the

Hetmanate and Zaporozhian Sich between 1764 and 1781. No territorial recognition was given to Ukraine and the administration was Russified. As well as Ukrainian language speakers, Russian and other language speakers were also encouraged to migrate to the new lands in the south taken from the Crimean Tatars.



## The Jewish Pale of Settlement within the Tsarist Russian Empire

Jewish people came to form a significant part of the Ukrainian population, the majority inherited from the Commonwealth of Poland. The territory they were legally allowed to remain in was called the Pale of Settlement. Jewish people who assimilated tended to do so as Russians. Russian language and culture were dominant in the Tsarist empire. Consequently, Jewish Socialists looked primarily to all-Russia organisations, and they formed a significant part of the RSDLP leadership. When Poland's partitioning awarded Hapsburg Austria the Polish province of Galicia, it acquired its eastern area where Ukrainian was the majority spoken language. But the Hapsburgs permitted Ukrainian (then usually termed Ruthenian) nationalist politics as a counterweight to the Polish landlords in Galicia. Hapsburg Austria also acquired Bukovyna, where the traditional boyar landlord class was Moldovan, but northern Bukovyna had a Ukrainian-speaking majority. As in

Galicia, Hapsburg Austria allowed Ruthenian/Ukrainian nationalist politics, this time as a counterweight to the Moldovan boyars.



## Hapsburg Austrian Cisleithania and Hungarian Transleithania

After Hapsburg Austria became the Hapsburg Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy in 1867, Galicia and Bukovyna became part of Austrian Cisleithania. There was also a substantial Jewish population in Galicia. Those Jewish people who assimilated tended to do so as Germans, with Socialists looking to the Social Democratic Workers Party of Austria (SDAPO) in Vienna, where Jewish members formed a significant part of the leadership.

The last area which had a majority of Ukrainian (sometimes identified as Rusyn) speakers was Transcarpathia. Here there had been centuries long battles between the Ottoman empire and Crown of Hungary. In 1867 Transcarpathia became part of the Hungarian Transleithania under the new Hapsburg Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy. Transcarpathia was broken up into counties like the rest of Hungary. As in Tsarist Russian Ukraine, Ukrainian (Rusyn) continued to be the spoken language of the peasantry, again with the lack of widespread primary education contributing to this.

There was also a Jewish population in the Hungarian capital, Budapest. Because of Magyar disdain for participation in industrial development, many of the industries here were run by Jewish factory owners, who spoke Hungarian. Furthermore, initially Magyar nationalists were not necessarily fluent Hungarian speakers, speaking for example Croatian. And many Jews still saw the German

spoken in Hapsburg Austria as a superior language, and one which united them with the vibrant Jewish people and culture of Vienna and Hapsburg Austria.

Most Ukrainian/Rusyn speakers did not adopt the Hungarian language, and there was some Austro Hapsburg encouragement of Rusyn speakers and politics to counter Magyar/Hungarian nationalism.

**c) The challenges of the advocates of ‘Internationalism from Below’ to orthodox Marxism and to Luxemburg and Lenin within the Second International**



**Second International – a clash for the mantle of orthodox Marxism over the ‘National Question’ between Karl Kautsky of the SPD and the Austro-Marxists, Otto Bauer and Karl Renner of the SDAPO**

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there was a complex political situation, as new nationalities emerged from previously ‘historyless peoples.’ This was further complicated by competing imperial powers. The Second International (SI) had to devise political strategies to address this. In the period up to WW1, there were two main tendencies in the SI vying to be seen as the orthodox heirs of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels over the ‘National Question’. One was led by Karl Kautsky, the SI’s ‘Pope of Marxism’ and his SPD backers. The other was led by the Austro-Marxists, particularly Otto Bauer and Karl Renner of SDAPO.<sup>5</sup>

Both Luxemburg and Lenin began by supporting Kautsky and the SPD against the Austro-Marxists. Kelles-Kreuz had also challenged the Austro-Marxists over their attitude, but on different grounds. Kelles-Kreuz came to see Kautsky and the SPD as just another variant of a shared empire-accommodating trend, and in doing so he also challenged the Radical Left, Luxemburg.<sup>6</sup> It took right up to the outbreak

of WW1, before Lenin was to break with Kautsky. Prior to this, Lenin believed the Bolsheviks were applying Kautsky's politics to the specific conditions of the Tsarist Russian empire. Just as Kelles-Kreuz had challenged Luxemburg, so later Iurkevich challenged Lenin and the Bolsheviks.<sup>7</sup>



**Constance Markiewicz, Helena Maloney and Winfred Carney, members of Cumann na mBan**

Connolly challenged Henry Hyndman and the wider British Left. Connolly opposed all-UK organisations and promoted all-Ireland organisations - the ISRP, the SPI, the IT&GWU and the Irish Trade Union & Labour Party. He also supported an autonomous women's section within the IT&GWU, as well as being close to Republican women activists, e.g. Constance Markiewicz, Helena Moloney and Winifred Carney, who went on to join the new Cumann na mBan in 1914. Other women, led by Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, were involved in the Irish Women's Franchise League, which published *The Irish Citizen*.

This support for all-Ireland organisation played a major role in Connolly's Socialist, Syndicalist, Women's Republican and Suffrage and Labour alliance, particularly during the 1913-14 Dublin Lock-Out, before the outbreak of WW1; and in Connolly's Socialist, Syndicalist, Women's Republican and Suffrage and Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) alliance, formed after the outbreak of WW1. During the 1916 Dublin Easter Rising, the Irish Citizen Army, a workers' militia with women participants, led by Connolly, played a major part in the fight for an Irish Republic. Connolly championed the leading role of the working class in the struggle for Irish self-determination and political independence.

Iurkevich was a member of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Labour Party (USDLP). It organised in the Tsarist Russian part of Ukraine. However, unlike Poland, where the PSP united parties and sections in the Romanov Russian, Hapsburg Austrian and Hohenzollern Prussian German empires, there was no united Ukrainian Socialist organisation. There was a separate Ukrainian Social Democratic Party (USDP). In response to this situation, Iurkevich developed an embryonic 'Internationalism from Below' politics.

The 'National Question' emerged as the most significant political difference between the three components of the International Left. Luxemburg and Lenin were later to write major theoretical works on the new Imperialism of the day, which greatly contributed to their views on the 'National Question'. But before this, they already saw 'two worlds' where Socialists should apply different minimum (or immediate) programmes. However, Luxemburg and Lenin differed over the boundaries of their 'two worlds'.<sup>8</sup> For Luxemburg, the 'first world' consisted of the USA, Europe including Tsarist Russia, but not the Ottoman controlled areas in the Balkans. She saw her 'first world' as being already dominated internally by capitalist social relations. However, her 'second world' consisted of the other parts of the world where this was not yet the case, and where a Democratic Revolution was on the immediate cards. Here she argued that Socialists should back bourgeois led nationalist forces. She supported the Greek bourgeois nationalists in Crete and the Armenian bourgeois nationalists in eastern Anatolia against the Ottoman empire. She thought that they could build a new capitalist order which would increase the numbers of the working class.

But Luxemburg would not support the resistance of peasants or what today we term indigenous peoples. For Luxemburg these two groups were associated with socio-economic backwardness. She sometimes condemned the brutal manner by which capitalism and imperialism undermined indigenous peoples' existence but could concede them no agency. She just hoped that, at the end of the day, the majority of those peasants and indigenous peoples who survived would join the ranks of the working class.

Luxemburg was quite aware that most states in her 'first world', including the German Empire (the official name of Prussia-Germany), which became her main political base, still retained earlier socio-economic features inherited from a pre-capitalist past. But she saw the peasantry as a particularly backward class, whose resistance to being proletarianised should be opposed.

Luxemburg, although very much aware of German capitalism's economic dynamism, could understand the political backwardness of the German Empire, dominated by the Prussian Kaiser (emperor) and backed by the Junkers. It was

still made up of 3 other kingdoms, 6 grand duchies, 5 duchies, 7 principalities, 3 free states and the imperial territory of Alsace-Lorraine. But she did not recognise the right of self-determination for any national minority, e.g. the Poles in eastern Prussia, the French in Alsace-Lorraine, or the Danes in the northern part of Schleswig-Holstein. National minorities in Prussia-Germany were to be subsumed within a new unitary German Republic.



## The German Empire, 1871-1914

Such a German Republic could indeed have been a political advance for the German-majority peopled areas of Prussia-Germany, divided between so many outdated German Empire constituent units, which buttressed the power of conservatism and reaction. But the creation of a unitary German Republic would only be an advance once the national minorities, where they formed majorities, had exercised their territorial right of self-determination. Otherwise, any new unitary German Republic would still be the continuation of an imperially imposed regime.

Luxemburg also extended her strong opposition to national self-determination to the other area where she operated - Congress Poland within the Tsarist Russian

empire. She was, though, prepared to accept Congress Poland's autonomy within an all-Russia Republic, but only **after** the Democratic Revolution. She thought that this is what the Polish bourgeoisie would want, and she looked to them to build the Polish working class.

Lenin agreed with Luxemburg about the existence of 'two worlds' under Imperialism (which he later extended to 'three', with the colonies and semi-colonies of Asia, Africa and South and Central America). However, they differed over the 'second world's' boundaries, and hence the immediate need for Democratic Revolution. Lenin's 'second world' included Tsarist Russia on political grounds. The Russian empire was still dominated by the tsarist autocracy, which was completely opposed to a parliamentary democracy. He saw the autocracy's opposition as an obstacle to the rapid development of the capitalism needed to produce a Russian working class.

To counter this, Lenin's version of the Democratic Revolution was designed to lead to a unitary all-Russia Workers' and Peasants' Republic. He understood this to be the most advanced form of capitalist democracy for, and the only one possible in, Tsarist Russia. Here the bourgeoisie was weak and so frightened by the prospects of workers' and peasants' revolution, that they meekly fell in behind tsarist reaction. Under a Workers' and Peasants' Republic, though, capitalist socio-economic relations could develop rapidly, building up the social weight of the working class in the process.

The 1904-7 Revolution in the Tsarist Empire did lead Luxemburg, Lenin and particularly Leon Trotsky, in his *Results and Prospects*,<sup>9</sup> to see the potential of this Democratic Revolution to spread to the more economically advanced western states. They all returned to this in the 1916-21 International Revolutionary Wave, although still differing over the roles of the peasantry and the struggles for national self-determination.



### **Peasant rebellion during 1904-7 Revolution in the Tsarist Russian empire**

After observing the impact of national democratic and peasant movements in challenging the Tsarist regime and empire, during the 1904-7 International Revolutionary Wave, Lenin began to differ with Luxemburg. He offered his support to the right of national self-determination and he gave his support to the peasantry getting direct control of the land. He argued that this would help open up Russia to the most advanced and democratic form of capitalism, which he saw in the USA, with its initial independent small farmer class, not fettered by feudalism or landlordism.<sup>10</sup>

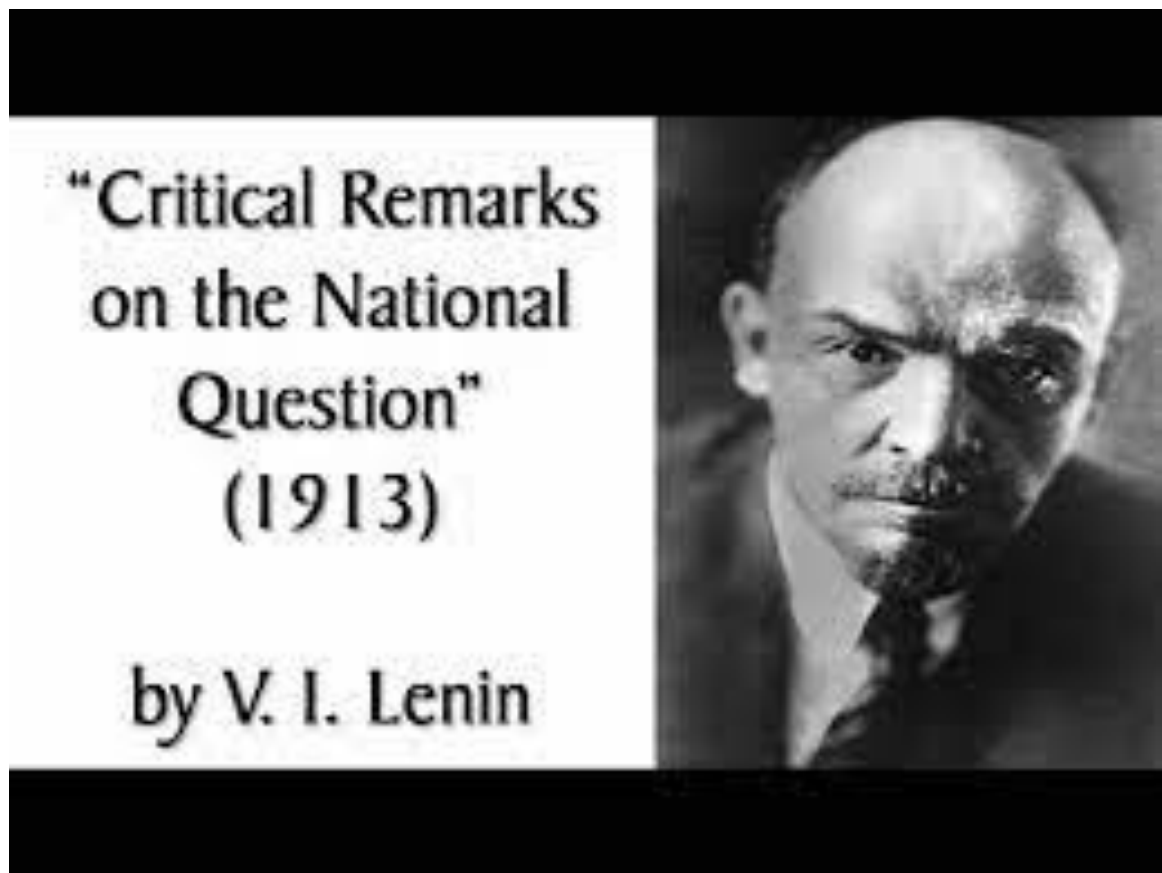
However, there was a contradiction in Lenin's support for the right of national self-determination but not for its exercise. He thought that capitalism and imperialist states were performing a progressive historical role in assimilating national minorities. "Capitalism's world-historical tendency {is to} obliterate national distinctions, and to *assimilate* nations - a tendency which manifests itself more and more powerfully with every passing decade and is one of the greatest driving forces transforming capitalism into socialism."<sup>11</sup>

Like Luxemburg (and some Radicals and even some Liberals), Lenin questioned some of the methods resorted to by the ruling class of their states to bring about assimilation. But using Ukraine as an example, Lenin could only see assimilation as a one-way process. 'Great Russians' and Ukrainians were to become Russians.

"For several decades a well-defined process of accelerated economic development has been going on in the South... attracting hundreds of thousands of peasants and workers from Great Russia to the capitalist farms, mines, and cities. The

‘assimilation’ - within these limits - of the Great-Russian and Ukrainian proletariat is an indisputable fact. *And this fact is undoubtedly progressive.*”<sup>12</sup>

But it was the Ukrainian language that was suppressed by the tsarist state and employers, and the ‘Great Russian’ language that was given a privileged position in law and education, by the established Russian Orthodox church and in wider culture. But for Lenin, despite these “limits”, which he did not spell out, the ‘bad’ ‘Great Russian’ language would become the ‘good’ Russian language. The Ukrainian language would eventually die out as Ukrainians assimilated. In this thinking he continued to follow Kautsky, who was from a Czech background and became an assimilated German.



This privileging of assimilation over integration tended to negate the very important point Lenin had made in 1913 in *Critical Remarks on the National Question*. “The *elements* of democratic and socialist culture are present, if only in rudimentary form, in *every* national culture, since in *every* nation there are toiling and exploited masses, whose conditions of life inevitably give rise to the ideology of democracy and socialism. But *every* nation also possesses a bourgeois culture (and most nations a reactionary and clerical culture as well) in the form, not merely of “elements”, but of the *dominant* culture... In advancing the slogan of ‘the international culture of democracy and of the world working-class movement’, we take *from each* national culture *only* its democratic and socialist elements; we take

them *only* and *absolutely* in opposition to the bourgeois culture and the bourgeois nationalism of *each* nation. No democrat, and certainly no Marxist, denies that all languages should have equal status, or that it is necessary to polemise with one's 'native' bourgeoisie in one's native language and to advocate anti-clerical or anti-bourgeois ideas among one's 'native' peasantry and petty bourgeoisie."<sup>13</sup>

But, if the dominant state used all its powers to enforce its official language, and it wasn't a "native bourgeoisie" but an imperial bourgeoisie which imposed its language in any dealings between employers and their workforces, whilst the Social Democratic organisations themselves always conducted their business in the state's official language, then Lenin's underlying assumption was that assimilation was the preferred outcome.



**Taras Shevchenko (1814-61) - Ukraine's national poet and  
Robert Burns (1759-96)– Scotland's national bard**

Perhaps if some residual recognition of the Ukrainian language and its democratic culture could have been sustained in any new all-Russia Republic (a very big 'if') then it is possible that clubs dedicated to Taras Shevchenko (Ukraine's national poet) might have survived. This would be similar to what happened to the memory of Robert Burns, Scotland's national poet. By 1886, many Scots who supported the Union were members of clubs affiliated to the Robert Burns World Federation. Shevchenko, born a serf, could have been celebrated like Burns, born a poor ploughman's son. They would have been seen as talented representatives of an old peasant culture who spoke what had become quaint and dying languages (Ukrainian and Scots/Lallans), which could be enjoyed and mimicked one night a year. Caledonian and St. Andrew Societies were also extended throughout the

British empire. They celebrated the Scottish role in the empire's expansion. No doubt similar societies could have been formed celebrating the Ukrainian Cossacks' role in the extension of the Tsarist Russian empire.

It was the idea of the progressiveness of assimilation, which did much to unite Luxemburg and Lenin around their strong support for one-state Socialist parties. If there were large national minorities concentrated in particular areas of Prussia-Germany and Tsarist Russia, it might be necessary to have subordinate sections producing propaganda in these languages. However, these sections' political direction would be decided from above by the German and Great Russian, all-state party majority, and assimilation was the ultimate aim. This was very much challenged by the advocates of 'Internationalism from Below.'

#### **d) 'Internationalism from Below' and political organisation**

Kelles-Kreuz, Connolly and Iurkevich were all members of nation-based, not state-based parties, which took part in the activities of the SI (and Iurkevich also related to International Socialist, Zimmerwald Conference in 1915 and Kienthal Conference in 1916).



#### **Flags of the Polish Socialist Party (Tsarist Russia) and the Polish Socialist Party in Galicia (Hapsburg Austria)**

Kelles-Kreuz was a member of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS). This party was organised in Tsarist Poland (including parts of what had once been Lithuania), in Galicia in Hapsburg Austria, and in Polish-speaking areas of Prussia/Germany. It therefore had three sections, one for each area, but their statuses were different. In Tsarist Russia, the PPS operated under conditions of illegality. Although it was open to non-Poles, particularly Lithuanians and Jews, the expectation of the PPS's national patriotic leadership, under Josef Pilsudski, was that they would assimilate (very similar to the attitude held by the RSDLP and SPD leaderships). In Hapsburg Austria, the PPS was a legal party, operating mainly in the province of Galicia.

Here the PPS was also a participant in the confederal All-Austria, SDAPO. In the German Empire, the PPS was a subordinate section of the legal SPD. It operated in Polish-speaking parts of Prussia. But the expectation of the SPD leadership from Right to Radical Left was that this section would encourage Polish workers to assimilate. This included Luxemburg who worked with Right for that purpose.<sup>14</sup>

The PPS was originally dominated by the national patriotic wing led by Pilsudski. Another group was the PPS-Left (PPS-L). The PPS-L drew close to Luxemburg's SDKPL and to its Radical Left politics as both grew strongly in the 1905-7 revolution in Poland. The PPS-Left took over the leadership of the PPS during this period. Both the PPS-L and SDKPL were opposed to Polish independence and did not support peasant struggles. However, as the revolution ebbed, their lack of support for Polish independence contributed to Pilsudski being able to take back control of the PPS in 1909.

Despite their close politics, Luxemburg own émigré faction's sectarianism prevented the political union of the SDKPL with the PP-L. This sectarianism also contributed to a split in the SDKPL and a falling out with the RSDLP to which the party had previously been affiliated. The shared failure of the PPS-L and SDKPL to appreciate the significance of the 'National Question' and the potentially revolutionary role of the peasantry, meant that this political tradition was found wanting again in the 1916-21 International Revolutionary Wave.

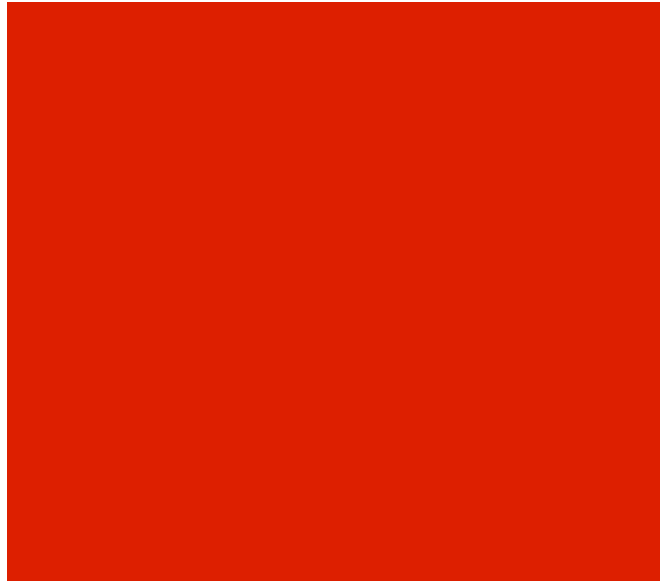
Kelles-Kreuz, though, brought together some pioneering supporters of an 'Internationalism from Below' approach in Poland. He looked to an integrationist, rather than an assimilationist way of involving Jewish members.<sup>15</sup> Sadly, and in an eerie anticipation of the role Connolly's death played for Irish Socialist Republicans, Kelles-Kreuz's premature death in 1905 led to the marginalisation of 'Internationalism from Below' politics in Poland. However, he left a theoretical legacy on the 'National Question', considerably in advance of Kautsky, the Austro-Marxists and the Radical Left he had challenged (see more on this later).



### **Starry Plough, flag of the Irish Socialist Republican Party**

Whilst living in Scotland, Connolly had first been a member of the British, Social Democratic Federation (SDF) and the Independent Labour Party (ILP). But when he moved to Ireland, he helped to create the Irish Socialist Republican Party (ISRP), which gained representation at the SI's 1900 Congress, in the teeth of opposition from the SDF. For a period, Connolly was involved in the Socialist Labour Party in Great Britain and retained membership when he moved to the USA, but he soon came to oppose its leader, Daniel de Leon's political sectarianism. Instead, he joined the Socialist Party of America (SPA) and helped to form its autonomous Irish section, the Irish Socialist Federation, which published *The Harp*.<sup>16</sup> Upon his return to Ireland, Connolly became a member of the largely propagandist Socialist Party of Ireland (SPI). His membership of the Irish Transport & General Workers Union (IT&GWU) was far more important to him and was inspired by his work in the Syndicalist, Industrial Workers of the World in the USA.

The Ukrainian Social Democratic Party (USDP) operated in Hapsburg Austrian Galicia and Bukovyna, after breaking with the Polish Socialist Party of Galicia in 1899. Both were component parts of the federated SDAPO. The legal status of the USDP in Hapsburg Austria encouraged its development, providing an outlet for the sort of constitutional politics which prevailed in western and central Europe. Thus, the USDP leadership followed the SDAPO in its support for the Hapsburg empire in WW1, even looking to extend it at Tsarist Russian expense in Ukraine.



### **Flag of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Labour Party**

However, the Ukrainian Social Democratic Labour Party (USDLP) in Tsarist Russia saw itself as a participant in the immediate democratic struggle for an all-Russia Republic. It argued that Socialists should encourage the working class to take the lead in the struggle for Ukrainian autonomy/federalism (the distinction wasn't clear to them). In contrast to the RSDLP - Mensheviks and Bolsheviks alike - the USDLP saw the national struggle in Ukraine as being a major contributor to the revolutionary struggle for an all-Russia Republic. The Bolsheviks, though, tended to oscillate between a 'Let the Ukrainians have autonomy after the all-Russia revolution' (a local variation of Luxemburg's attitude towards Congress Poland) and a hope that Ukrainians would be assimilated as Russians as soon as possible (a local variation of Luxemburg's attitude towards Poles within Prussia/Germany).

So, the existence of two parties, the USDP in Hapsburg Austria and the USDLP in Tsarist Russia, was not challenged by any Socialist Republican, 'Internationalism from Below', 'break-up of all empires' politics, like those Kelles-Kreuz had developed in Poland within all three components of the PSP. However later, some of the 'Internationalism from Below' thinking, which had been developed by Iurkevich, fed into a new Ukraine Communist Party (UCP), the Ukapists, after his death. It even contributed to such thinking in Ukrainian Bolshevik ranks, during the latter part of the 1916-21/3 International Revolutionary Wave.



### **Map of Ukraine showing Right and Left bank of the Dniro**

During the 1905-07 revolutionary wave across Tsarist Russia, Iurkevich backed an attempt by the USDLP to join the RSDLP as an autonomous section. However, at this time, it was another organisation, the Ukrainian Social Democratic Union (Spilka) which made the biggest impact. Uncharacteristically for any Social Democratic organisation at the time, Spilka saw the Ukrainian peasantry as a significant participant in the immediate revolutionary democratic struggle for an all-Russia Republic. This was very much helped by the fact that many peasants, particularly on the Dniro Right Bank, were also in effect rural workers employed part-time by capitalists. The RSDLP, reunited as a consequence of the revolutionary wave, rejected the USDLP's affiliation, but accepted Spilka. Spilka also had more deputies in the 1907 Second Russian Duma (14 to the USDLP's 1). This rejection of the USDLP had the strong backing of Lenin, Trotsky (who was from Ukraine) and Luxemburg.

However, the Spilka leadership had hoped that their Ukrainian section would be able to perform a similar role in the RSDLP to the Latvian Social Democratic

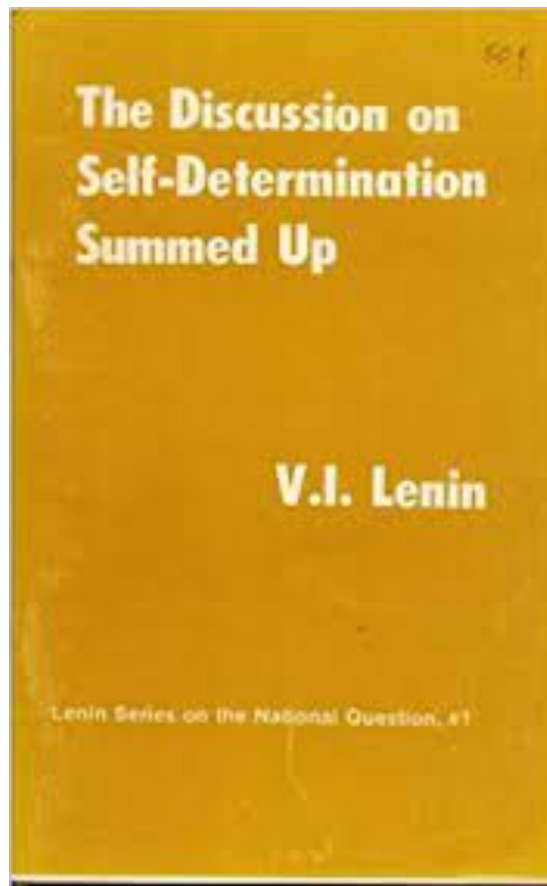
Labour Party (LSDLP), which organised workers from all nationalities in Latvia. The LSDLP was admitted to the RSDLP as a territorial section in 1906. But the only role given to Spilka by the RSDLP leadership was to transmit the party's policies to Ukrainian speaking workers and worker-peasants. But even the use of the Ukrainian language was seen as undermining many RSDLP leaders' essentially assimilationist policy towards Ukrainians. Trotsky took over Spilka's journal, *Pravda* and then published it in the Russian language. Whilst Spilka's orientation on peasants/rural workers also challenged much Marxist orthodoxy at the time.

There was no Ukraine territorial organisation in the RSDLP, or later in the Bolsheviks or Mensheviks, just Russian provincial organisations based on Tsarist administrative divisions. Therefore, the RSDLP's bureaucratic 'internationalism from above' (in reality, often just a disguised form of Great Russian chauvinism) produced a national patriotic response. Many former Spilka members moved across the border and joined the Ukrainian nationalists in the neighbouring less repressive, Hapsburg Austrian, east Galician part of Ukraine. However, other Spilka members remained and joined the USDLP in the Tsarist Russian empire.

Iurkevich took on a role analogous to the Menshevik Internationalists (but they only emerged in 1917 in Russia). This meant opposing the USDLP Right, and also the USDP during WW1, to which he directed much of his criticism in *Borotba*, the journal he published in Berne, whilst in exile. This was also the time when Iurkevich challenged Lenin's 'Great Russian' politics, adding to the theoretical legacy of 'Internationalism from Below' made by Kelles-Kreuz and Connolly (again see later).

However, Iurkevich still held on to some aspects of Menshevik-type politics. But with regards to the immediate need for a Democratic Revolution in Tsarist Russia, these had also originally informed the Bolsheviks' thinking, even if they looked to different agents to accomplish this. But, like many other Social Democrats, including the Mensheviks (but not the post 1904-7 Bolsheviks), the USDLP continued to question the revolutionary role of the peasantry, and this remained a weakness in their politics.

In contrast, Lenin already appreciated the revolutionary role of the peasantry. This is why he sought their support in creating a Workers' and Peasants' Republic (and he further developed this in his support for peasant soviets and the post-October 1917 coalition with the Russian Left Social Revolutionaries).



**Lenin's *The Discussion on Self Determination Summed Up*, influenced by the 1916 Easter Rising, looked to a new International Socialist Revolution**

And Lenin's *The Discussion on Self Determination Summed Up*,<sup>17</sup> published soon after the 1916 Dublin Rising, examined the impact of WW1 on the 'National Question'. This work forecast a linked 'first', 'second' and 'third' world **International Socialist Revolution**. In this, initial democratic revolutions in the 'second world' would trigger socialist revolutions in the 'first world', which would in turn rebound back on the 'second world', opening up the possibility of socialist development and greatly accelerate developments in the 'third world'. This proved to be remarkably far-sighted. But even after Lenin's return to St. Petersburg's Finland Station in April 1917 he had to win over some older Bolsheviks, who were still thinking in the earlier Bolshevik Workers' and Peasants' Republic terms.



**Leon Trotsky, Alexandra Kollontai and Georgi Chicherin; previously non-Bolshevik RSDLP members who moved over to support soviet power in 1917**

The possibility of further shifts in Iurkevich's own thinking were cut short by his death in 1917 (again uncannily following the precedent of Kelles-Kreuz in 1905 and Connolly in 1916). Under the growing impact of the International Revolutionary Wave, the re-emergence of soviets in the old Tsarist Russian empire and workers' councils elsewhere, others coming from a non-Bolshevik background joined the Bolsheviks, including Trotsky and some Left Mensheviks, e.g. Georgi Chicherin and Alexandra Kollontai.

A new group of Ukrainian Communists emerged as the International Revolutionary Wave advanced. They moved from supporting a parliamentary-based Democratic Republic to supporting soviets. They also upgraded Iurkevich's federalist version of an all Russia Republic to arguing for a new federation of independent soviet republics, as opposed to subordination within the RSFSR. Their thinking was linked to the need for independent national party organisation within an International but opposed to branch office status within a RSFSR state-wide organisation. The first party to follow this course was the Ukrainian Communist Party (borotbists) - UCP(b) - formed in May 1918. They were followed by the new Ukrainian Communist Party (UCP) in January 1920.

Thus, one of the uniting features of the 'Internationalism from Below' component of the International Left was its support for independent parties in oppressed nations (those denied the right to exercise their self-determination). They tried to integrate all nationalities living within their nations' territories and wanted to be part of a Socialist or later Communist International. Being located in oppressed nations, these national parties also had an appreciation of the disguised 'great

nation' chauvinism masquerading as 'internationalism' found in those parties based on the principle of one state/one party.

**e) The theoretical contributions of Kelles-Kreuz, Connolly and Iurkevich to 'Internationalism from Below'**

But what theoretically did Kelles-Kreuz, Connolly and Iurkevich contribute to 'Internationalism from Below'? In Poland, Kelles-Kreuz's early theoretical contributions on the 'National Question' were very important. He challenged the orthodox SI view that capitalism led to the assimilation of 'historyless peoples' and smaller nationalities and nations. This idea was widely promoted, including by Kautsky, Luxemburg and Lenin. On the contrary, Kelles-Kreuz thought that the uneven advance, and linked imperialist nature of capitalism, had the effect of converting 'historyless peoples' first into modern nationalities (ethnic groups).<sup>18</sup>

This process produced competing politics amongst these nationalities. Some sought autonomy within the existing states (known as Home Rule in the UK), some sought new nationality-supremacist states (e.g. Roman Dmowski's Polish supremacist, National Democracy), and others wanted new multi-nationality nation states, open to all who chose to live there (e.g. Kelles-Kreuz and his supporters in Poland, the ISRP in Ireland, and the USDLP in Ukraine). This integrationist approach also allows for voluntary assimilation and mixed nationality partnerships. A more recent example is the civic multi-national approach which formed the basis for the Scottish independence referendum campaign from 2012-14.



**Bund election poster**

Kelles-Kreuz took great interest in the Jewish people. He began to learn Yiddish and developed a closer relationship with the Bund, the largest Jewish organisation involved in the SI. To orthodox Marxists, Jews were either a religious group (adherents of Judaism), who would assimilate with the growth of toleration then secularism, in the same way that previously oppressed Protestants or Catholics had to the dominant nationality in the state they lived in. Or, Jews were viewed as a 'caste', a socio-economic remnant from the Middle Ages, when they faced legal restrictions in much of Europe which confined them to particular financial and petty trading roles.

In contrast, Kelles-Kreuz viewed Jewish people as an emergent modern nationality. This followed growing secularisation and he linked this Jewish nationality to the vibrant new Yiddish language and literary culture.<sup>19</sup> But like other new nationalities, conflicting politics also emerged amongst this Jewish nationality. Some wanted to be recognised as equal citizens within their existing states, often joining one-state parties, e.g. the SPD, SDAPO and RSDLP. Zionist Jews formed their own parties, and many wanted to create a new Jewish supremacist state, seeking backing from imperialist powers to promote Jewish settlement in Ottoman-controlled Palestine. Others of a Jewish nationality, looked to the Austro-Marxist model to create autonomous national areas (Jewish Socialist Workers' Party) or to cultural autonomy (the Bund) within reformed states. Kelles-Kreuz tried to work out a way the Jewish people could become integrated, despite the geographically separated nature of most Jewish communities, compared to many other nationalities in Romanov Russia and Hapsburg Austria-Hungary.<sup>20</sup>

Connolly was an educator/agitator, socialist propagandist, militant trade unionist, co-operator and military leader. He took a keen interest in languages (learning several including Esperanto), culture (writing songs and a play) and the Women's movement. He was probably the most rounded working class figure to have emerged in the history of these islands. As early as 1897, Connolly had already anticipated the role of neo-colonialism and bourgeois nationalism in sustaining empire.

"If you remove the English army to-morrow 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 array of commercial and individualist institutions she has planted in this country."<sup>21</sup>

Connolly also dealt with those on the British Left who showed a disdain for national minorities and their languages. Arguing that Socialists should support

Irish Gaelic, he wrote, “I have heard some doctrinaire Socialists arguing that Socialists should not sympathise with oppressed nationalities or with nationalities resisting conquest. They argue that the sooner these nationalities are suppressed the better, as it will be easier to conquer political power in a few big empires than in a number of states”. He answered by stating, “It is well to remember that nations which submit to conquest or races which abandon their language in favour of that of an oppressor do so, not because of altruistic motives, or because of the love of the brotherhood of man, but from a slavish and cringing spirit. From a spirit which cannot exist side by side with the revolutionary idea”.<sup>22</sup>

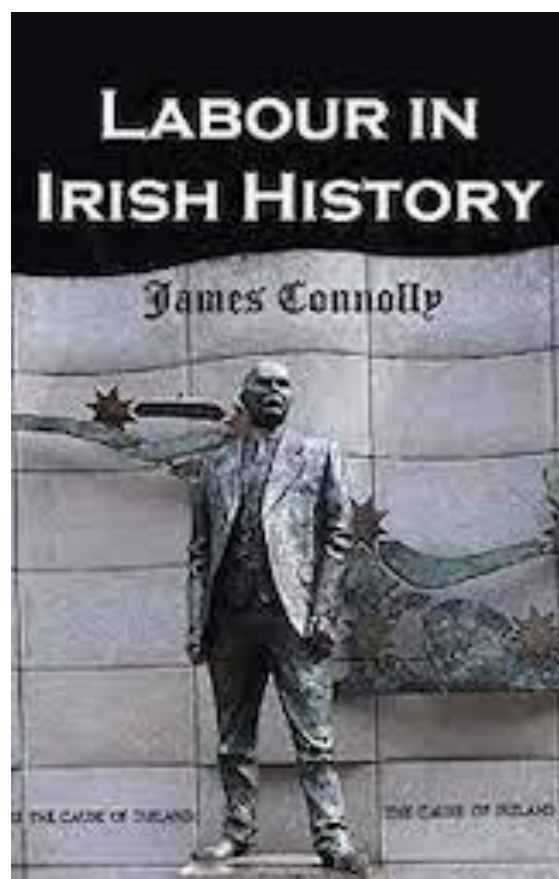
Connolly also displayed an internationalist approach to language. He wrote, “As a socialist, believing in the international solidarity of the human race, I believe the establishment of a universal language, to facilitate communications between the peoples is highly to be desired. But I incline also to the belief that this desirable result would be attained sooner as the result of a free agreement which would accept one language to be taught in all primary schools, in addition to the national language, than by the attempt to crush out the existing national vehicles of expression. The complete success of attempts at Russification or Germanisation {he was writing for Poles}, or kindred efforts to destroy the language of a people would, in my opinion, only create greater barriers to the acceptance of a universal language. Each conquering race, lusting after universal domination, would be bitterly intolerant of the language of every rival, and therefore more disinclined to accept a common medium than would a number of small races, with whom the desire to facilitate commercial and literary intercourse with the world, would take the place of lust for domination.”<sup>23</sup>



## Connolly's election address to the voter of Wood Quay in the Dublin Corporation elections of 1902

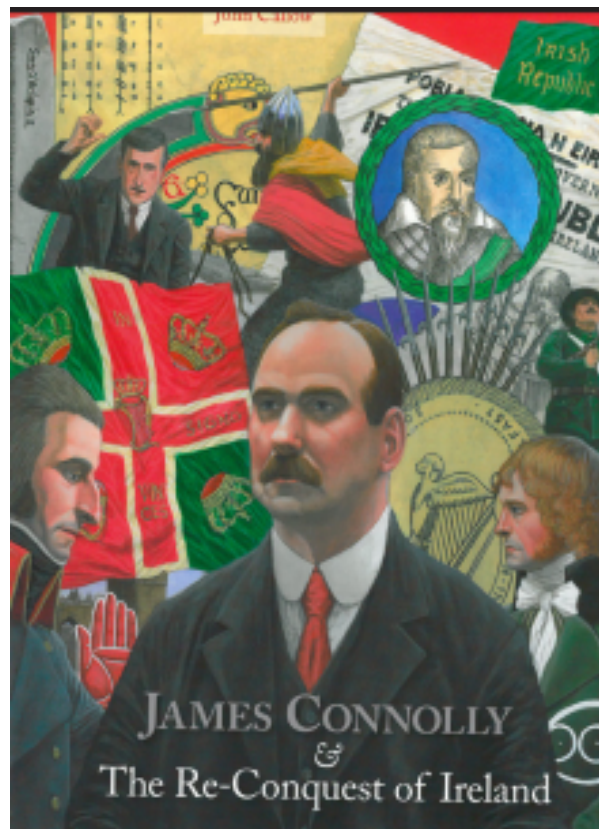
Despite the relatively small Jewish population in Ireland, Connolly ensured that his ISRP address to electorate of Wood Quay in the 1902 Dublin Corporation elections was also issued in Yiddish.<sup>24</sup> Connolly attacked SDF leader, Hyndman's resort to anti-Semitism during the Boer War to divert attention from the role of British imperial state.<sup>25</sup> And when addressing the Boer War itself, the 1899 IRSP resolution framed by Connolly made sure it was linked to "India, Egypt and other portions of the British Empire {with} other and much larger populations also kept down in forced subjection."<sup>26</sup> This was to counter those Irish Nationalist sympathisers of the Boers who only saw them as fellow white farmers up against British imperialism. And this wasn't a one-off, as Connolly's 1908 *The Coming War in India, It's Political and Social Causes*.<sup>27</sup> highlighted.

Recently, Robbie McVeigh and Bill Rolston, in their *Anois ar theact an tSamhraidh –Ireland, Colonialism and Unfinished Revolution*,<sup>28</sup> have shown the continued pressure by British imperialism and the EU bureaucracy to define partitioned Ireland as 'white'. And, as Olenka Lyubchenko has pointed out in her *On the Frontiers of Whiteness*<sup>29</sup> this is the same as the intentions of US, British and EU member states' imperialisms with regard to their support for Ukraine in the current war; whilst Putin and his backers would define Ukrainians even more narrowly, as the 'Little Russian' section of 'Russia One and Indivisible '. Over a century ago, Connolly was already pointing to the Socialist Republican, 'Internationalism from Below' anti-imperialist strategy to counter such thinking.



Most of Connolly's work was written for either immediate propagandist or more limited educational purposes. But they already revealed cogent underlying theories of both Imperialism and National Self-determination. Connolly went considerably further in his more extended *Labour in Irish History* (1910).<sup>30</sup> This was a history of the exploited and oppressed, which examined the introduction of feudalism and capitalism in Ireland, and outlined the development of anti-sectarian, Republican, Social Republican and then Socialist Republican politics. *Labour in Irish History* challenged the exploiters and oppressors, whether they were Norman-French, English, British or Irish.

This work was considerably superior to *History of the Working Classes in Scotland* (1920) written by Thomas Johnston (ILP/Scotland and *Forward* editor). It concentrated more on the misery of the exploited working classes (or the wider exploited for whom he also used this label) in Scotland and largely ignored their history of resistance. This was so they would look to elected Labour politicians to improve their lives. And Connolly's approach to Irish history was opposed to the British chauvinist, racist and jingoist thinking underpinning *Britain for the British* (1902) written by Robert Blatchford (ex-Fabian Society ex-SDF, ex-ILP and editor of *The Clarion*). Blatchford was a major contributor to the British Left unionist, 'British road to socialism' tradition. This has been seen most recently in Left Labour, Communist Party of (the no longer so Great) Britain and then UNITE general secretary Len McCluskey's support for a 'British Jobs for British Workers', which played its part in the creation of 'Brexit Britain.'



Connolly also wrote *The Reconquest of Ireland* in 1915.<sup>31</sup> *The Reconquest* acted as a programme for the alliance he started to build for the struggle for an Irish Republic, as soon as WW1 broke out. *The Reconquest* was advertised in every issue of the *Workers' Republic*, the journal which helped prepare the way for the 1916 insurrection. Connolly's new alliance was mainly based on the IT&GWU (in both Dublin and Belfast), Republican-supporting women in Cumann na mBan, a section of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) and cooperators. *The Reconquest* included a special section, *The Schools and Scholars of Ireland*, with an appeal for new non-sectarian "Palaces of Education". Connolly argued that these could revive the "land of saints and scholars" on a modern secular basis, to bring about "the progress of human enlightenment and freedom". Even Connolly's most immediate political appeals included a strong element of self-determination in its widest sense.

And this understanding of the importance of education in a new Irish Republic probably brought Connolly closer to Padraig Pearse, a pioneer of radical education. He was one of the IRB members who had supported the IT&GWU and ICA in their struggle against the Dublin Lock-Out. These were the people who formed the Republican component of Connolly's WW1 alliance for an insurrection to establish an Irish Republic.

In Ukraine, Iurkevich also made important theoretical contributions on the 'National Question'. In particular, he highlighted the largely decorative role of the SI's official support for the right of national self-determination. This was used by the Right to support national movements in imperial states, which competed with their own, and by many Social Democrats including Lenin and the Bolsheviks to avoid giving any practical support to existing national democratic movements. Furthermore, Lenin, at this stage, "was opposed to federation in principle, it loosens economic ties, and is unsuitable for a single state. You want to secede? All right, go to the devil, if you can break economic bonds.... excuse me, but don't decide *for* me; don't think that you have a "*right*" to federation."<sup>32</sup> Lenin's only choice was between a unitary state, dominated by a particular nationality, which would determine its relationship with subordinate nations or going it entirely alone – take it or leave it!

Lenin's view of national self-determination was linked exclusively with the political right to secede from an existing state. There were no other political or cultural aspects to his views on self-determination. Thus, Lenin's self-determination was a very limited political concept, not one of the three alternatives which, in its wider sense, along with emancipation and liberation, counter the basis of capitalism - exploitation, oppression and alienation.

But, unlike the Radical Left, Lenin still thought that retaining the paper right to national self-determination could undermine the ruling class in existing states, particularly Tsarist Russia. However, he argued that if there were to be an all-Russia Democratic Revolution these nations and nationalities would no longer need to exercise his version of self-determination. He thought that in this situation support for independence would fall away. And here Lenin showed his continuing, albeit masked Great Russian politics. He claimed any such support would now have become counter-revolutionary. Iurkevich astutely commented, "A strange freedom is it not, which the oppressed nations will renounce the more nearly they approach its attainment!"<sup>33</sup>



**Alexander Herzen, Prince Trubetskoi and Vladimir Lenin - identified by Lev Iurkevich as promoters of all-Russia state unity**

Iurkevich went deeper to show the connection between earlier revolutionary democratic and contemporary liberal attempts to maintain Russian unity and Lenin's approach, quoting nineteenth Russian revolutionary Alexander Herzen and twentieth century Kadet-supporting Prince Trubetskoi.<sup>34</sup> Iurkevich didn't want the separation of Ukrainian and Russian-speaking workers but for them to unite in struggle on the basis of national equality.

Iurkevich also criticised Lenin when he claimed, in a letter to the USDLP, to be "profoundly outraged by the advocacy of the segregation of Ukrainian workers into a separate {Social Democratic} organisation.". Iurkevich countered, "Throughout the whole nineteenth century and our own, Ukraine has been in the position of a Russian colony; moreover, the repression of the tsarist government has always been merciless. The Ukrainian printed word was banned for thirty

years before the {1905} revolution and has now been banned once more since the beginning of the present war".<sup>35</sup> Lenin was dismissive of attempts by non-Russians in the Socialist moment to raise the issue of national culture, dismissing this as bourgeois nationalism.

Yet, WW1 having already started, Lenin wrote *On the National Pride of Great Russians*, describing himself as a fellow Great Russian. "Is a sense of national pride alien to us, Great-Russian class-conscious proletarians? Certainly not! We love our language and our country, and we are doing our very utmost to raise *her* toiling masses (i.e. nine-tenths of *her* population) to the level of a democratic and socialist consciousness."<sup>36</sup> But Ukrainian, Jewish and other workers could only become 'class-conscious proletarians' through assimilating as Russians.

Iurkevich also clearly saw the connection between the Middle Ages creation of the earlier despotic Russian imperial state and the later Tsarist Russian empire within a wider imperial world. "The capitalist states' strivings for conquest serve as a kind of continuation of the system of oppression of the nations within these states. The Muscovite state, for example transformed itself into the modern Russian empire, only when it subjugated Poland and Ukraine... The oppression of nations within a state, like the oppression of a colonial population, is conducive to the development of imperialist greed in the government of a 'large state', which, in order to make its war plans, makes use not only of its own people, but the vast masses of oppressed peoples that, in Russia, as in Austria, comprise the majority of the population. From the nations that it oppresses the centre extracts great resources, which enrich the state treasury and allow the government to maintain the army and bureaucracy that protect its dominance."<sup>37</sup>

This also has contemporary relevance, when some claiming Marxist orthodoxy want to reserve the term Imperialism for the monopoly capitalist imperialism which emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, or to deny the Russian imperialist nature of the USSR, or even of Putins's Russian Federation (see part 1).

But Iurkevich also predicted a possible future, if an all-Russia Republic was to be created. "Considering the blatantly reactionary character of the Russian bourgeoisie, one can say with certainty that it will not only not oppose the weakening of tsarist centralism but will strengthen it, turning it from an exclusively bureaucratic system into a social system for the oppression of the Russian Empire."<sup>38</sup>

Unwittingly, Iurkevich was remarkably far-sighted in this prediction. Only it was not the Russian bourgeoisie, but the leaders of the USSR One Party-State, who

were to bring about such a system under Stalin. Russian imperialism bridged the old Tsarist Russia and the new USSR. Nevertheless, an independent Ukrainian Communist challenge was to impact upon the Bolsheviks during the Civil War. This challenge was later contained by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) from 1923-31 with a new policy of 'Ukrainisation'.<sup>39</sup> This was a form of devolved unionism, which paralleled other forms of experimentation at the time, e.g. the initial promotion of cooperation in the agricultural sector. These were later largely terminated though, especially after Stalin came to power in 1928.

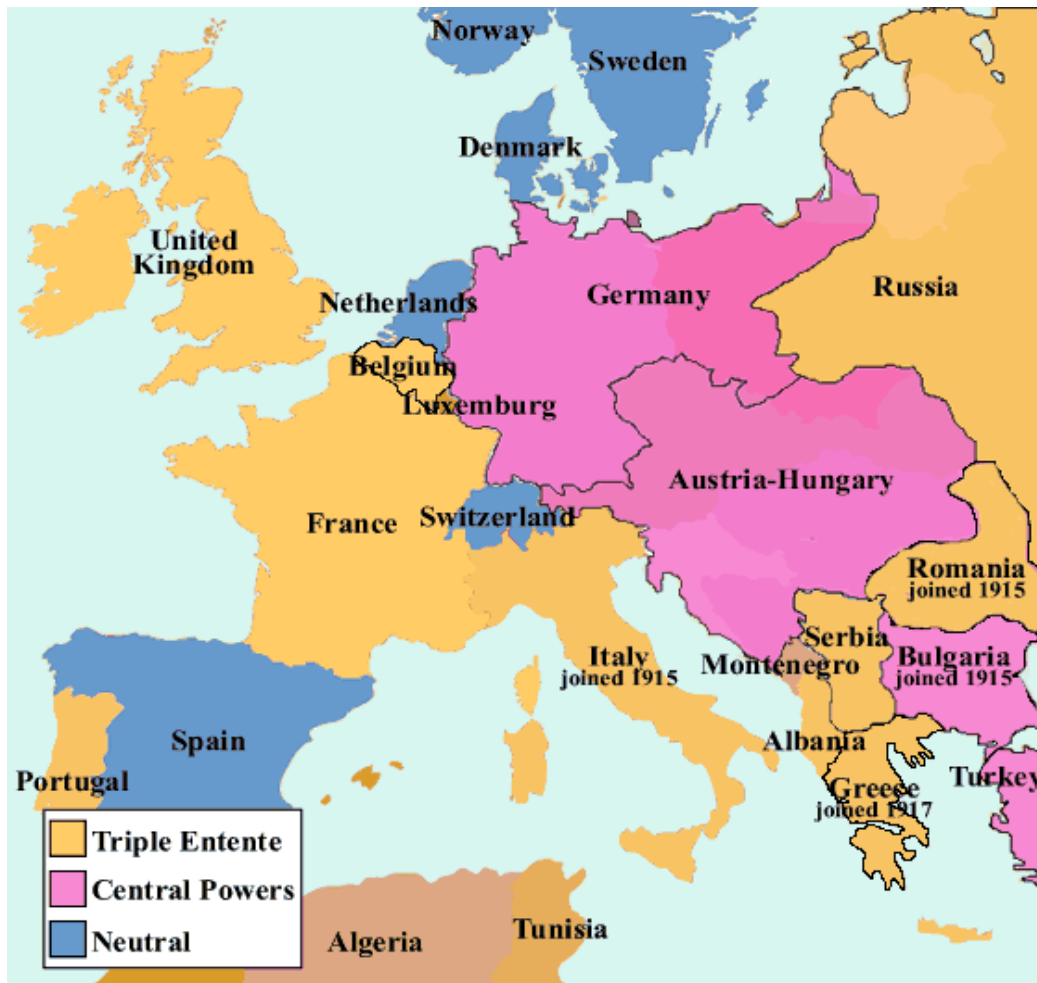
Thus, Connolly, Kelles-Kreuz and Iurkevich developed theories, based on the experiences of the exploited and oppressed in Poland, Ireland and Ukraine, to challenge those claiming to represent Marxist orthodoxy, whether in its SDF, SPD, SDAPO or RSDLP colours.

Iurkevich, though, still saw the need for an immediate all-Russia Democratic Republic, but with extensive Ukrainian autonomy. He pointed to the lack of any Bolshevik Ukrainian territorial, merely various 'South Russian' provincial, organisation, showing the hollowness of their claim to support Ukrainian autonomy. Kelles-Kreuz highlighted the fact that, despite the SPD and SDAPO leaders' differences over how to go about bringing political change, both were motivated by a desire to keep their imperial states' territories united. From this flowed their support for one-state parties, whether unitary (SPD and RSDLP), or confederalised (SDAPO). But both approaches led to these parties' retention of either a largely German or Russian speaking leadership, who thought they represented the most advanced culture in their states and empires. And this thinking was true of Karl Kautsky (originally in the SDAPO then in the SPD).

Many one state/one party advocates were also concerned that rising national democratic movements could lead to inter-imperialist wars. Hence, they argued against any national movements trying to exercise their self-determination, in case they attracted the support of neighbouring competitive imperial powers and triggered wider wars.

In contrast, those advocating an 'Internationalism from Below' strategy sought to break-up all the existing empires – the British, Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Prussian/German, seeing this as a better way to prevent inter-imperialist wars. Connolly and Kelles-Kreuz were aware quite early on, that the one-state/one-party leaders' passivity towards their existing imperial states often reflected a desire not to overthrow them but to become their heirs.

## f) The declaration of World War One – the first testing ground



**European alliances during World War One**

All three components of the International Left responded to the outbreak of the First World War by declaring their opposition to those they saw as their own domestic imperialist war promoters - the Prussian/German state for Luxemburg, the Tsarist Russian state for Lenin and Iurkevich and the British state for Connolly.

Luxemburg, Lenin, Iurkevich and Connolly all understood the inter-imperialist nature of WW1, which was to be fought out between two European imperial alliances. However, they were to take a different attitude about how best to oppose this war. Despite the collapse of the SI, Luxemburg and the Radical Left still saw the Left of the Social Democratic parties and trade unions, with working class backing, as the only social force whom Socialists should support, believing they alone could bring about any political progress. Central to Luxemburg's view was the lack of any real distinction between oppressor and oppressed nations in WW1. All states were either imperialist on a global scale, expansionist on a more regional scale, or they were powerless imperialist clients. Connolly and Lenin saw other elements to this war, in addition to the misery brought to the working class,

including their families, and later those embittered ‘workers in uniform’ serving in the imperial armies.



**The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and his wife by revolutionary nationalist Gavrilo Princip on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1914**

The trigger point for WW1 lay in Hapsburg controlled Bosnia-Herzegovina. There had long been tension between Hapsburg Austria and the Kingdom of Serbia over this territory. Young Bosnian revolutionary nationalist, Gavrilo Princip assassinated the Hapsburg empire’s successor, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1914. In response, Hapsburg Austrian ministers deliberately drew up an ultimatum that the Serbian government (although not responsible for the assassination) was given no option but to reject, so the Hapsburgs could invade.

Luxemburg was quite clear what this meant. “A classic example of such ‘national wars’ is Serbia. If ever a state, according to formal considerations, had the right of national defence on its side, that state is Serbia. Deprived through Austrian annexations of its national unity, threatened by Austria in its very existence as a nation, forced by Austria into war, it is fighting, according to all human conceptions, for existence, for freedom, and for the civilisation of its people.”<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, Luxemburg welcomed the stance of the “Serbian socialists Laptchevic and Kaclerovic {who} have shown a clear historical conception of the real causes of the war. In voting against war credits they therefore have done their country the best possible service. Serbia is formally engaged in a national war of defence. But its monarchy and its ruling classes are filled with expansionist desires as are the ruling classes in all modern states... Thus, Serbia is today reaching out

toward the Adriatic coast where it is fighting out a real imperialistic conflict with Italy on the backs of the Albanians, a conflict whose final outcome will be decided not by either of the powers directly interested, but by the great powers that will speak the last word on terms of peace. But above all this we must not forget: behind Serbian nationalism stands Russian imperialism. Serbia itself is only a pawn in the great game of world politics. A judgment of the war in Serbia from a point of view that fails to take these great relations and the general world political background into account is necessarily without foundation.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, for Luxemburg, such ‘small nations’ as Serbia had no right to defend themselves against imperialism, since their ruling classes had their own expansionist aims and could only be pawns of greater imperial powers.

There was a recent history to the emergence of a Balkan Radical Left (and some other Balkan Social Democrats) who won Luxemburg’s admiration. Much of the Balkans was located in an area that Luxemburg (and Lenin) considered to be part of the ‘second world’. So here, Democratic rather than Socialist Revolutions were on the immediate political agenda. The problem, though, was which social and political forces could bring this Democratic Revolution about?

Luxemburg, like most other Marxists, had identified progressive national bourgeois forces in the transition from feudalism to capitalism in western Europe up to the 1870s (e.g. in England, Netherlands, France, Germany and Italy). But in Luxemburg’s now ‘first world’ East Central Europe, she could only identify the progressive Polish bourgeoisie in Tsarist Congress Poland. She thought they wanted, not political independence, but autonomy within a new united Russian democratic state, which she supported.

For Luxemburg, this meant those belonging to other nationalities under either the Tsarist Russian or Hapsburg Austro-Hungarian empires (e.g. Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, other Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Ukrainians, other Romanians, other Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) should be assimilated as Germans, Russians or Hungarians, just as the Jewish Luxemburg had assimilated. She recognised no Jewish nationality and held particular contempt for the Bund and its associated Yiddish language.

And in her ‘second world’ Ottoman Empire, Luxemburg could only identify the Greek and Armenian bourgeoisie as progressive forces. She supported their demands for political independence (although in practice, those advocating Armenian independence were amongst the most dependent on other imperial sponsors).



### **European imperial plotters decide the fate of the Ottoman Empire – ‘The Sick Man of Europe’**

The Ottoman Empire, identified as the ‘Sick Man of Europe’, had begun to disintegrate in the nineteenth century. This became even clearer in a series of wars between 1875-8 and the two Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, leaving only a rump Thrace (including Istanbul/Constantinople) in Europe remaining under Ottoman control.

Hapsburg imperialism, which had a long history in the northern Balkans and on the Dalmatian coast, extended its influence further south and annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878 (and for a period the adjacent Ottoman Sanjak of Novi Pazar). A new Italian imperialism seized the Dodecanese Islands in the Aegean Sea in 1912 and tried to get a foothold in Albania.

The pre-existing Ottoman breakaway states of Greece (independent 1832), Montenegro (autonomous from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, independent 1858), Serbia (autonomous 1820, independent 1878), Romania (autonomous 1856, independent, 1878) and Bulgaria (autonomous, 1878, independent 1908) all increased their territories in the process, particularly during the First Balkan War. Albania, a very late state (with a Muslim majority), was declared independent in 1912, but as Luxemburg indicated, it was very dependent on imperial backing from Austria Hungary, Italy and the UK. Greece sponsored the Autonomous Republic of Northern Epirus (southern Albania) from February 1914 (and then occupied it on the outbreak of WW1).



**The Balkans prior to World War One showing Serbian, Montenegrin, Greek, Bulgaria and Romanian gains after the First and Second Balkan Wars**

The First Balkan War from 1912-3 led to widespread atrocities on both sides - the four Orthodox Christian, Balkan League states (Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Greece) on the one hand, and those Muslims still loyal to the Ottoman Empire and those who began to look to an independent Albania, on the other. But, later in 1913, after their victory over the Ottoman empire, the Balkan League's Orthodox Christian unity soon broke down on new ethnic grounds, in the Second Balkan War. Orthodox, Serbs, Greeks, and soon Romanians too turned upon Orthodox Bulgarians. The intra-Orthodox Christian nature of the war did little to lessen the atrocities committed against each other, whilst those Moslems, now subjects of Balkan League states, were once more targeted. The Ottoman forces which also entered the war against Bulgaria in Thrace again added to the atrocities.

With the Radical Left (along with the Austro-Marxists) opposing the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the northern Balkans, and with Luxemburg only having given support to the Greek bourgeoisie in its fight against the Ottoman empire in the southern Balkans, this left a rather large area in between, where she could identify no progressive national forces. Therefore, she gave her support to the Balkan Radical Left, who led the Serbian Social Democratic Party (SSDP) (founded in 1903) and the Bulgarian Social Democratic Labour Party (BSDLP)

(Narrow Socialists) (also founded in 1903). But there were other Social Democrats in the Balkans who had earlier taken a different line, which left the relatively small Balkan Socialists politically divided.

Many Social Democrats elsewhere, including Lenin (in *The Social Significance of the Serbo-Bulgarian Victories*<sup>42</sup>) welcomed the Serbian and Bulgarian victories in the First Balkan War. They understood these to be successes in the battle for self-determination and national unity against the Ottoman empire in an ongoing Democratic Revolution. Lenin's support over-rode the nationalist expansionist aims of Serbian and Bulgarian war leaders and the bourgeoisie; the backing the Balkan League received from Tsarist Russia; the growing inter-imperialist tensions this would lead to; and the wider western racist support the Serbians and Bulgarians gained because they were European Christians not 'Asian' Turkish Muslims.

Despite all these limitations, Lenin argued that Socialists and the working class should develop their own presence within this struggle, with the political aim of setting up a Balkan Republican Federation. But as in Tsarist Russia, where the working class was also in a decided minority, Lenin understood that peasant struggles against landlordism would also need to be part of any successful Democratic Revolution. He thought that Socialists should give their support to the actually existing struggle for national self-determination in the Balkans and peasant struggles, rather than falling back on the detached abstract propagandist, 'internationalism' favoured by the Radical Left over this issue.

The parallels with present the war in Ukraine are quite evident, although in today's case an oppressive Russian imperial invasion replaces the oppressive Ottoman imperial defence in the First Balkan War. The USA and NATO are in an analogous situation with regard to Ukraine that Tsarist Russia was in regard to the Balkans. They want to manipulate and control an anti-imperialist movement from below for their own imperialist ends. The working class in Ukraine today is proportionately larger than in the pre-1914 Balkans. And Socialist Republican 'Internationalism from Below' supporters today, in giving their support to the defence of Ukrainian self-determination, also link this with the struggles of the Palestinians, Kurds, Yemenis, and Uighurs against other imperialisms, and for the welcoming of all refugees whatever their colour or religion.

There can be little doubt that the Balkan Socialists had a difficult job on their hands, not only in uniting Socialists across such a large and disparate area, but even more so in trying to advance the Balkan Democratic Revolution. The Radical Left came up against other Socialists who had welcomed the Young Turk revolution in 1908,

led by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). Initially the CUP seemed to want to reform the Ottoman empire, through democratisation, secularisation and opening up Ottoman citizenship to all the main nationalities still living there - not only Turks, but non-Turkish Moslems in Europe, Arabs, Jews, Armenians, Macedonians and Greeks.

And in the first Ottoman general election, held in December 1908, representatives of the Left nationalist, Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (with some SI connections), the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaks) (with some SI connections), the Armenian Social Democratic Hunchakian Party (SI affiliated) and the multi-ethnic (albeit mainly Ladino-Jewish and Greek) Socialist Workers Federation in Selanik/Salonika (with strengthening SI connections) all took part. The mainly Turkish, Bulgarian and Armenian, Ottoman Socialist Party (with SI connections) was formed soon afterwards.



### **Proclamation of Young Turk constitution in 1908 gives rise to ‘Turko-Marxism’ in the Balkans**

Thus, in response to the Young Turk revolution, although never organised as such, a ‘Turko-Marxism’ emerged in and beyond the Ottoman empire. This was analogous in some ways to the Austro-Marxism found in the Hapsburg empire. ‘Turko-Marxists’ saw in the reformed Ottoman empire the anticipated Democratic Revolution.

However, under pressure from the traditionalist Moslem section of the Ottoman ruling class, from continued ethnic tensions in the Balkans and eastern Anatolia, and with growing working class challenges, the CUP went into headlong retreat. In the process the CUP abandoned its initial aim of creating an Ottoman empire with citizenship open to all its nationalities. Instead, it competed with the Ottoman traditionalists in wanting to maintain the Ottoman empire, not on a Moslem but

increasingly on an ethnic Turkish basis, although it took the experience of the First World War and its aftermath for this to come fully to fruition. Furthermore, in trying to win over traditionalists, who had challenged them in an attempted counter-revolution in 1909, the CUP found common ground in the promotion of anti-Armenian pogroms. Over 20,000 Armenians were massacred in Adana in eastern Anatolia.<sup>43</sup>

By the time the Balkan Radical Left were able to organise their first conference in Belgrade in Serbia in 1910, support for a 'Turko-Marxist' version of CUP-led Democratic Revolution was already looking decidedly misplaced. The conference specifically excluded all those Socialist organisations which had openly or tacitly adopted a 'Turko-Marxist' approach to the Democratic Revolution in the Balkans. The conference included delegates from the SSDP, the BSDLP, the Armenian Hunchaks, and individuals from Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and a telegram was received from Greek Socialists.



**Dimitar Blagoev, Bulgarian Social Democratic Labour Party,  
Radical Left promoter of a Balkan Republican Federation**

Some of the participants, though, seemed more interested in confining activity to a diplomatic internationalism between organisationally independent Socialist parties. However, Dimitar Blagoev of the BSDLP, with some SSDP backing, was looking more to forming a Balkan mini-international. He was the original promoter of the idea of a Balkan Republican Federation in the BSDLP journal *Workers' Spark*. Given the still-remaining religious and the growing nationality differences, the Balkan Radical Left understood that it would not be possible to create a unitary republic, as many Socialists had supported in Germany and Italy. The Balkan Republican Federation was meant to include Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, Macedonia, Thrace<sup>44</sup> and possibly Slovenia. (Albania had not yet emerged from the Ottoman held territories). Its supporters argued that this would speed up capitalist development, and hence increase the social weight of the working class.

The bourgeois democratic forces in the existing states of Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, Bulgaria and Romania were very weak and subordinated themselves to the traditional landlord classes and the monarchical regimes there. In this respect, these states were more like mini-tsardoms. In Tsarist Russia, Lenin and the Bolsheviks argued the weak bourgeoisie was incapable of bringing about a Democratic Revolution, so that meant forming an alliance to create a Workers' and Peasants' Republic. But the Balkan Radical Left followed Luxemburg in their hostility to the peasant struggles. They confined much of their practical activity to workers' strikes and demonstrations, coupled with making propaganda for Socialism.

Furthermore, those Balkan Socialists living within Hapsburg Austria already had a legal framework for their activities and the Vienna mini-international of the SDAPO. But Hapsburg Austria-Hungary was still an aristocratic, landlord and clerical dominated state in no hurry to convert super-exploited peasants into workers. Sections of its ruling class, though, including Archduke Franz-Josef, were considering the possibility of reforming the Hapsburg Dual Monarchy into a Triple Monarchy of Germans, Hungarians and Slavs. This policy had more purchase amongst Czech, Polish, Croat, Slovene and Ukrainian Socialists including their nationality sections in the SDAPO, but less so amongst Serbs still living within the empire and beyond in the Kingdom of Serbia.

Therefore, the demand for a Balkan Republican Federation, based on the nations represented by Social Democratic delegations participating in the Belgrade conference in 1910, itself took on a largely propagandist role. This was due to the inability to find the wider social forces which could make the demand more of a reality. The second planned Balkan conference in 1911 did not go ahead. All the Balkan Socialists were soon overwhelmed by the two Balkan Wars.



**Declaration of Albanian independence 1912**

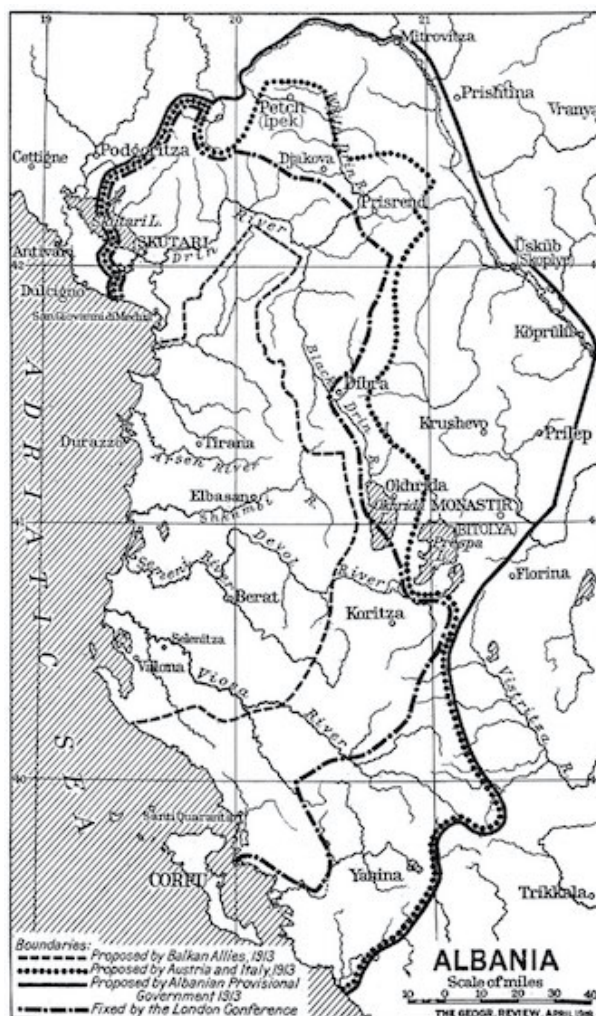
In the First Balkan War a new Albanian nationality emerged. Albanians were one of the groups of Muslims most subjected to the war's violence and atrocities. Serbian-speaking Muslim Bosniaks in Hapsburg-controlled Bosnia-Herzegovina were spared this, but not those in the Sanjak of Novi Pazar (abandoned by the Hapsburg Austrians in 1908 in exchange for international recognition of their annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina), the Bulgarian speaking Pomaks and the Macedonian speaking Torbeshi (both in an analogous position to the Muslim Bosniaks), or the settled Turkish population throughout these until recently Ottoman controlled areas. And right at the centre lay Macedonia, which some considered a nationality or nation in itself, something which was contested by most Bulgarians, Serbians and Greeks.



**Dimitrie Tucovic, Serbian Social Democratic Party  
supporter of the Radical Left**

These tensions contributed to the outbreak of the intra-Orthodox Christian Second Balkan War. Radical Left SSDP theoretician Dimitrie Tucovic acknowledged that, “the general national revolt of the Albanian population against the barbaric behaviour of their neighbours, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro, {is} a revolt that is a great step forward in the national awakening of the Albanians.”<sup>45</sup> However, the bourgeois component of this new Albanian national movement was weaker than any in the ethnic Slav-led states. So, to an even greater extent than any of

these, Albania looked for imperial sponsorship from Hapsburg Austria, Italy and the UK.



**The new Albanian state in 1913**

Official recognition was given to Albania by the Conference of London in July 1913. This did not create much territorial stability, as Serbs, Montenegrans and Greeks occupied or ethnically cleansed Albanian majority areas, particularly the Serbs in Kosovo. This contributed to the creation of a long-standing area of conflict, passed on to both post-WW1 and post-WW2 Yugoslavia, and its successor states.

However, one very revealing feature of this would-be Albanian (until recently Ottoman Muslim) ruling class was its fear of the Albanian peasantry. As a result, the majority of Muslim peasants remained pro-Ottoman “believ{ing} that the new {Albanian} regime was a tool of the six Christian Great Powers and local landowners, that owned half of the arable land.”<sup>46</sup> The Balkan Radical Left remained blind to the possibilities of winning over super-exploited peasantry by supporting the end of landlordism. They did not support peasant struggles, which could advance a Workers’ and Peasants’ Republic, as the Russian Bolsheviks were trying to do.

The Balkan Radical Left understood the duplicitous role of their local bourgeoisies and recognised that their domestic working classes were still relatively small. They committed themselves wholeheartedly to working class struggles (and championing women's rights, gaining considerable respect in the process). But they tended to wait for objective historical forces, linked to a foreordained rise of capitalism, to bring about the growth of the working class. Beyond this, the Balkan Radical Left had no real strategy other than hoping for a more favourable turn of events. The various national dynastic regimes, backed by landlords, military officers and tail-ended by their weak bourgeoisies, were largely left to fight the imperial invaders or to make deals with their imperial competitors. When WW1 broke out, many Social Democrats in the Balkans were conscripted, imprisoned or forced into exile.

After the hammer blows of two Balkan wars and the outbreak of WW1, it took until 1915 before a second conference of Balkan Social Democrats was organised in Bucharest in neutral Romania. This had support from the BSDLP and SSPD (both in competing warring states), and from some Greek Socialists (Greece was still neutral), but there was no representation from SDAPO affiliated parties in the northern Balkans, nor from European Turkey. Support for a Balkan Republican Federation was reiterated, but neither the nature of this federation (both the very different USA and Swiss models were given as examples), nor its national nor territorial make-up were made clear.<sup>47</sup>

Appreciating the support given by Luxemburg for their stance in very publicly opposing war credits, they initially looked more to the anti-war Social Democrats in the advanced 'first world' and a reform of the SI to transform the political situation. In immediate terms they looked for a break in the 'social peace' imposed by Social Democratic and trade union leaders in most belligerent states and the re-emergence of working class economic and social struggles.

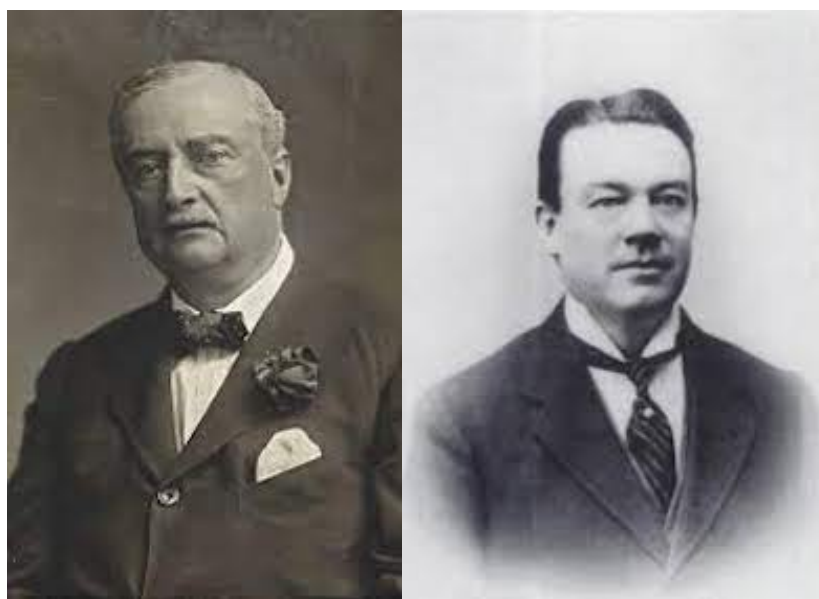


**Cumann na mBan banner**

But in Ireland, Connolly, now the leading representative of the Socialist Republican, 'Internationalism from Below' politics, pointed to a different way to challenge imperialist war. Prior to the outbreak of WW1, Connolly had built an alliance of Socialists (SPI), Syndicalists (IT&GWU with its autonomous women's trade union section), Republican women in Cumann na mBan, women Suffragists and Irish Labour (ITUC&LP), particularly during the 1913-14 Dublin Lock-Out. Connolly's aim was to use the promised new Irish Home Rule parliament in Dublin to push for immediate reforms which could benefit the working class, and to provide a political forum to advance the cause of an Irish Workers' Republic.

However, Connolly didn't passively accept the constitutional methods being pursued by nationalist Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) or its breakaway All-for-Ireland League (A-f-IL). Connolly could see the reactionary Unionist attempts to use all the most anti-democratic powers of the UK constitution, the British Army High Command and the extra-constitutional forces in the Orange Order and other Loyalists, to prevent Irish Home Rule. The IPP and A-f-IL had no answer to this.

Connolly was also very much aware of the Irish bourgeoisie's desire to get a settlement, which left it in a position to undermine even the limited social reforms brought about by the post-1905 Liberal governments. This way the owners of Ireland's larger scale industries, in the primary and secondary sectors (e.g. cattle ranching and the processing of farm produce) could better compete in the British imperial market. They began to oppose the extension of some Liberal social reforms to Ireland, the better to lower labour costs, and to ensure they were the principal beneficiaries of any Irish Home Rule.



**John Redmond and Joseph Devlin (Ancient Order of Hibernians), leaders of the Irish Parliamentary Party**

The IPP was prepared to compromise over its own limited Home Rule proposals. A key indicator that the IPP was bowing before reactionary pressure was its growing accommodation to Partition. Connolly famously anticipated the consequences of Partition. “Such a scheme as that agreed to by {IPP leaders} Redmond and Devlin... 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.”<sup>48</sup>

Connolly had supported efforts by Socialists internationally to prevent the outbreak of inter-imperialist war. But soon after WW1 broke out on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1914, Connolly wrote on August 15<sup>th</sup> in *A Continental Revolution*, “What then becomes of all our resolutions; all our protests of fraternisation; all our threats of general strikes; all our carefully built machinery of internationalism; all our hopes for the future? Were they all as sound and fury, signifying nothing?”<sup>49</sup>

Connolly had been putting up a defence of the very existence of the IT&GWU in the aftermath of the Dublin Lock-Out, and he was still challenging the retreats of the IPP over Home Rule. He had not anticipated the immediate outbreak of WW1. But Connolly was far less surprised than other International Left, Social Democrats, including Lenin in Tsarist Russia and Luxemburg in Prussia/Germany, at the betrayal of the SI. And Connolly could easily anticipate the blatantly pro-imperial stance taken by the British Labour Party and TUC. *A Continental Revolution* went on to outline the horrors of war in a manner that surpassed that of most Socialists, including Luxemburg and the Radical Left.

“When the German artilleryman, a socialist serving in the German army of invasion, sends a shell into the ranks of the French army, blowing off their heads; tearing out their bowels, and mangling the limbs of dozens of socialist comrades in that force, will the fact that he, before leaving for the front ‘demonstrated’ against the war be of any value to the widows and orphans made by the shell he sent upon its mission of murder? Or, when the French rifleman pours his murderous rifle fire into the ranks of the German line of attack, will he be able to derive any comfort from the probability that his bullets are murdering or maiming comrades who last year joined in thundering ‘hochs’ and cheers of greeting to the eloquent Jaurès, when in Berlin he pleaded for international solidarity? When the socialist pressed into the army of the Austrian Kaiser, sticks a long, cruel bayonet-knife into the stomach of the socialist conscript in the army of the Russian Czar, and gives it a twist so that when pulled out it will pull the entrails out along with it, will the terrible act lose any of its fiendish cruelty by the fact of their common theoretical adherence to an anti-war propaganda in times of peace? When the socialist soldier from the Baltic provinces of Russia is sent forward into Prussian

Poland to bombard towns and villages until a red trail of blood and fire covers the homes of the unwilling Polish subjects of Prussia, as he gazes upon the corpses of those he has slaughtered and the homes he has destroyed, will he in his turn be comforted by the thought that the Czar whom he serves sent other soldiers a few years ago to carry the same devastation and murder into his own home by the Baltic Sea”.<sup>50</sup>

But even before this, Connolly argued as early as August 4<sup>th</sup> in *Our Duty In This Crisis*, that, “Should the working class of Europe, rather than slaughter each other for the benefit of kings and financiers, proceed tomorrow to erect barricades all over Europe, to break up bridges and destroy the transport service that war might be abolished, we should be perfectly justified in following such a glorious example and contributing our aid to the final dethronement of the vulture classes that rule and rob the world”. In this Connolly could have been supported by the rest of the International Left. And he was already planning an organised response “to save the poor from the horrors this war has in store... Let us not shrink from the consequences. This may mean more than a transport strike, it may mean armed battling in the streets to keep in this country the food for our people. But whatever it may mean it must not be shrunk from. It is the immediately feasible policy of the working-class democracy, the answer to all the weaklings who in this crisis of our country’s history stand helpless and bewildered crying for guidance, when they are not hastening to betray her”.<sup>51</sup>

And in a remarkable demonstration of his Socialist Republican, ‘Internationalism from Below’ politics, Connolly linked his planned resistance in Ireland to International Socialist Revolution, before Lenin (and Grigori Zinoviev) issued *Socialism and the War* with its call to “turn imperialist war into civil war”.<sup>52</sup> Connolly wrote, “Ireland may yet set the torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last throne and the last war lord.”<sup>53</sup>



**Liberty Hall IT&GWU HQ in 1914 with Irish Citizen Army and banner  
‘We Serve Neither King Nor Kaiser, But Ireland’**

Furthermore, Connolly was also amazingly quick to appreciate the dramatically changed political situation in Ireland. He already understood that the IPP and A-f-IL leaders' hopes of being rewarded for their loyalty to the British empire by being granted Home Rule after a British victory were dead in the water. This opened up the possibility of campaigning for an Irish Republic to be established by means of an armed insurrection to directly challenge British imperial rule. Connolly ensured that the IT&GWU's Liberty Hall displayed a prominent banner declaring "We Serve neither King nor Kaiser, but Ireland".<sup>54</sup>

But in *Our Duty In This Crisis*, Connolly also wrote, "Should a German army land in Ireland tomorrow we should be perfectly justified in joining it if by doing so we could rid this country once and for all from its connection with the Brigand Empire that drags us unwillingly into this war"<sup>55</sup> But, unlike many in the IRB, who looked first to imperial Germany (when it appeared to be winning the war) and later, after Connolly's death, to Woodrow Wilson's imperial USA (when it joined the war and helped turn the tables on Germany), Connolly had placed no great trust in imperialist diplomacy. Although he did see Germany as being more economically advanced than Britain, that would have gone even more so for the USA, but it was not involved in the war whilst Connolly was alive. Connolly supported Jim Larkin, not in getting US backing for Germany, but in trying to keep the USA out of the war.

Unlike Luxemburg, Lenin had appreciated the significance of the national democratic component in the struggles contributing to WW1. Thus, in September 1914, a month after Connolly, Lenin wrote in his *War and Russian Social Democracy* that "the German bourgeoisie has launched a robber campaign against Serbia, with the object of subjugating her and throttling the national revolution of the Southern Slavs."<sup>56</sup> However, despite his recognition of a National Revolution, Lenin agreed with Luxemburg and supported the stance taken by the Balkan Left, now, unlike during the first Balkan War, seeing only the possibility of imperialist war.

In contrast, Connolly had already seen the struggle for national self-determination as a major component in the battle against the imperialism. In this Connolly was continuing the 'Internationalism from Below', break-up of all empires approach, which he and Kelles-Kreuz has been developing for over a decade. Again, this approach has relevance in the Ukrainian war today.

## **g) The Easter Rising triggers the 1916-21/3 International Revolutionary Wave – the second testing ground**



**International Socialist conferences at Zimmerwald 1915 and Kienthal 1916 in Switzerland**

In August 1914, Luxemburg joined with others to form the International Group (IG) (predecessor to the Spartacists), based on Radical Left politics, to actively oppose the war. They organised within the SPD. Closely watched by the authorities, Luxemburg was imprisoned in February 1915, where she wrote *The Crisis in German Social Democracy*.<sup>57</sup> She was released in April 1915 and the IG gave her a pseudonym, Junius, to publish *The Crisis* as a pamphlet in 1916.

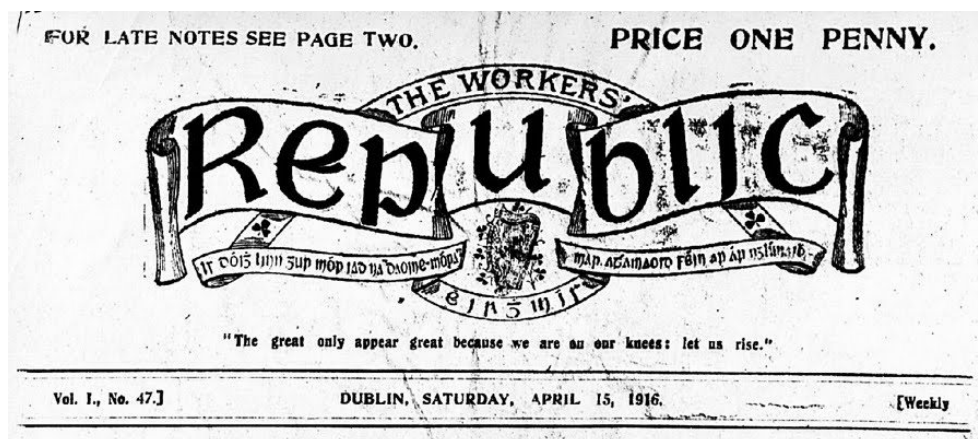
However, from June 1916, Luxemburg was again imprisoned, this time in jails in Prussian Poland. Thus, Luxemburg was unable to take part in the organisation of the wider International Left, which was making the first steps in breaking from the SI at the Zimmerwald Conference in September 1915 and the Kienthal Conference in April 1916 (coinciding with the Dublin Easter Rising).

Lenin, as an émigré, spent most of his time trying to create the basis for a third International. This meant pushing for a fundamental break with the SI and those Social Democratic party leaders who had failed to oppose WW1. For Lenin, from September 1914, this meant, “The conversion of the present imperialist war into a civil war.”<sup>58</sup> Maintaining contact with the Bolshevik underground in Tsarist Russia was also vital. This provided an example of the illegal work which he argued all parties must conduct to effectively challenge the imperial war. Lenin saw the Kienthal and Zimmerwald conferences as opportunities to advance these politics and methods of organisation.



**Karl Radek, former SDPKPL and later SPD member, and supporter of the Radical Left**

However, despite Luxemburg's absence, the Radical Left was still present at these conferences. Its most prominent advocate was now Karl Radek, a delegate from the SDPKPL (and an ex-SDP member). He lived within the Socialist émigré community in Switzerland, which also included Iurkevich, Lenin and briefly Trotsky too. Like Luxemburg, Radek (born Sorelson) came from a Jewish background and had worked in Polish-speaking and German speaking parties.



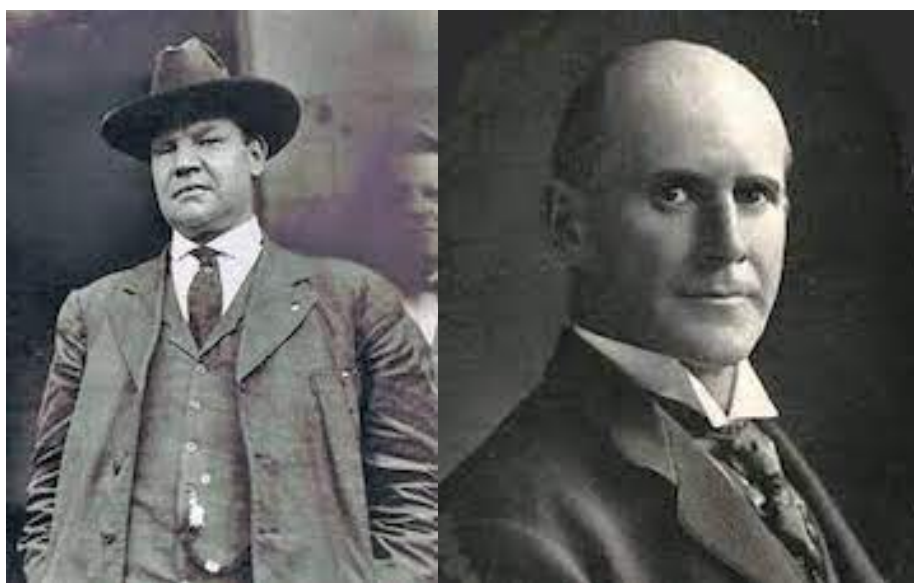
### ***The Workers' Republic* – Connolly's organiser for the 1916 Easter Rising**

Connolly, however, after the declaration of WW1, had remained free in Ireland. He moved from Belfast, where he was the IT&GWU organiser, to Dublin. Here he could use Liberty Hall for trade union organising, and to publish and, when necessary, physically defend *The Workers' Republic* (named after the old ISRP journal) in the face of government attempts to suppress it.

*The Workers' Republic* was his main educational and propaganda instrument for preparing an insurrection. It was a remarkably ecumenical journal. It included contributions from sincere pacifists (who would not report clandestine activities to the authorities), women Suffragists and Republicans, co-operators, trade unionists and Socialists in states on both of the warring sides and those neutral in WW1.

In Dublin, Connolly could also be involved in drilling the ICA. Dublin was the place where most of the Republican women in Cumann na mBan (CnmB) lived, as well as those IRB Military Council members he was to make contact with in January 1916. The IRB had a significant influence on those Irish Volunteers who had refused to follow their IPP leaders in signing up to fight for the British in WW1, although the dissenting Volunteers were still led by the cautious Eoin Macneill of the Gaelic League. Connolly returned regularly to Belfast, where his family remained and Winifred Carney was the organiser of the IT&GWU-affiliated, Irish Linen Workers' Union. He also maintained his contacts in Scotland through Belfast.

However, although the ITUC&LP, which had formed a key part of his pre-WW1 alliance, issued a statement condemning WW1, they were not going to support any armed uprising. Furthermore, the ITUC&LP also represented unions whose leaders saw the IT&GWU as a Syndicalist threat to their own sectionalism and to their eagerness to focus activity on gaining seats at various tables, shared with the state and employers. Although the IWW was obviously a major influence on Connolly and the IT&GWU, he made no attempt, when he had returned to Ireland in 1910, to get the SPI to duplicate the political role of the SPA, which he had also been a member of in the USA.



**Big Bill Haywood (IWW) and Eugene Debs, both members of the Socialist Party of America**

The SPA acted as an interventionist organisation with leading militants like Big Bill Haywood taking a prominent part in the IWW; whilst the SPA also campaigned openly in elections, including standing Eugene Debs as a presidential candidate. The SPI, however, acted as a purely propagandist organisation. It sometimes backed Labour candidates in elections, but as with any SPI members, who held trade union office bearers' jobs, there was no attempt to enforce any SPI accountability.

Sinn Fein had a much better record of involving women, so even those CnmB members who worked closely with Connolly and were actively involved in the Dublin Lock-Out gravitated towards Sinn Fein. CnmB acted as a bulwark of Republicanism in a Sinn Fein that, under its leader Arthur Griffith, was still a supporter of Dual Monarchy (British and Irish) following the Hapsburg Austro-Hungarian model.



### **James Larkin, IT&GWU member in Ireland, IWW member in the USA**

Nevertheless, with the ITUC&LP's, the IPP's and A-f-IL's opposition to conscription, and the growing influence of a wider peace movement, Connolly's alliance was able to build a growing presence. It gained in strength as the horrors of the war became more apparent. This undermined the IPP and A-f-IL as Connolly had anticipated at the outbreak of the war. Furthermore, Connolly's anti-war work was complemented by James Larkin, still IT&GWU general secretary, but now living in the USA and working with the IWW. Larkin was central to the political campaign to prevent the USA joining the war, despite the IWW's Haywood trying to concentrate on the economic struggle. But the SPA, and particularly Irish-, Finnish- and German-American Socialists were also strongly opposed to US participation in the war. These activities were covered in *The Workers' Republic*.

Many Socialists, both in Ireland and the UK, have since viewed Connolly's support for an Irish Republic as a 'retreat' following the defeat of the more economically motivated, trade union-backed, Dublin Lock-Out. However, far from representing a retreat, Connolly's understanding that WW1 was going to lead to a situation where the state itself – in this case the British UK and its empire – was going to face a fundamental challenge led him to take a revolutionary step. Connolly was even more determined than he had been with his pre-WW1 alliance that the working class would be to the fore of Irish politics.



### **Eoin MacNeill, Gaelic League and Honorary Secretary of the Irish Volunteers after the split in 1914**

Others have made the criticism that when MacNeill, the Irish Volunteers' leader, cancelled the planned insurrection, at the last minute, Connolly was leading the ICA on a suicide mission. Their assumption seems to be that Connolly and other Socialists would have been better using the war-time demand for labour to rebuild the organisational strength of the IT&GWU and to further advance the ITUC&LP. However, Connolly pushed for the April 1916 Easter Rising to proceed anyhow, with the help of the IRB's control of the Dublin Volunteers and the assistance of of CnmB.

Connolly was already aware of the wavering of MacNeill and was preparing for two scenarios. Both his optimistic and pessimistic scenarios led him in the same direction - the continued necessity for an armed uprising. In the optimistic scenario, taking a decisive lead could trigger an immediate wider rising throughout Ireland. In the more pessimistic scenario, the heroic example of an attempted Republican rising confined to Dublin, albeit initially militarily unsuccessful, would become the future political baseline, when workers and others eventually began to openly resist due to the consequences of the horrific war. The key thing was that the ICA

should take part as an organised and disciplined force, which showed courage, and made a good account of itself against the British forces.



**Inside the Dublin GPO during the 1916 Easter Rising –  
Robert Ballagh painting**

The 1916 Easter Rising proved to be a turning point in WW1. But, up to this point, Lenin, like Luxemburg, had offered no support to those leading struggles for national self-determination during WW1. In his preparations for a new International, Lenin had been trying to fend off the Radical Left, e.g. Junius (Luxemburg)<sup>59</sup> and fellow Bolshevik member Georgi Pyatakov,<sup>60</sup> who both opposed any support for the right of self-determination, even in the largely paper form that Lenin confined it to. And Lenin had also initially opposed the wording of the resolution which came out of the Zimmerwald Conference in 1915. This resolution sought political autonomy for oppressed nations and nationalities and working class leadership in their struggles. Iurkevich, from his ‘Internationalism from Below’ perspective, outlined the resolution and Lenin’s proposed but not accepted amendment.

“As long as socialism has not brought about liberty and equality of rights for all nations (compare with Lenin’s ‘further merging’), the unalterable responsibility of the proletariat should be energetic resistance *by means of class struggle against all oppression* of weaker nations and a demand for the defence of national minorities on the basis of full democracy... {Lenin} “while recognising the right of nations to self determination, actually supports a policy of hostility to the liberation of nations, counterposing to the Zimmerwald liberty and equality of rights for all nations’ {his} own ‘further merging.’ Supporting the struggle for national liberation, the Zimmerwalders display a concern deserving of every recognition for ‘national minorities’ and demand democratic autonomy for oppressed

nations.”<sup>61</sup> Thus Iurkevich highlighted Lenin’s continued hostility to Socialists taking the lead of national democratic movements, even for autonomy within a reformed state. Lenin’s proposal for “further merging” was at one with his support for assimilation and one-state parties.

But the impact of the Dublin Rising led Lenin to a significant shift in his thinking. He added a special section 10 to *The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up*, the earlier part of which he had been preparing for some time to challenge the Radical Left. This new section, entitled *The Irish Rebellion of 1916*, took his arguments onto a new plane. Lenin wrote that “It is the misfortune of the Irish that they rose prematurely, before the European revolt of the proletariat had *had time* to mature.”<sup>62</sup> Thus Lenin very much appreciated the Dublin Rising’s wider significance. It proved to be the start of the 1916-21 International Revolutionary Wave.

However, up to this point Lenin had largely shared the view of the Radical Left that national struggles in the context of WW1 could only assist one imperialist side or another. Hence his support for the stance taken in 1914 by the Radical Left in their opposition to the war. But now he moved much closer to Connolly’s ‘Internationalism from Below’, ‘break-up of empires’ approach.

Thus, Lenin lambasted Radical Left, Karl Radek “who described the Irish rebellion as being nothing more nor less than a “putsch”, for, as {Radek} argued, “the Irish question was an agrarian one”, the peasants had been pacified by reforms, and the nationalist movement remained only a “purely urban, petty-bourgeois movement, which, notwithstanding the sensation it caused, had not much social backing.” To this Lenin countered, “Whoever calls such a rebellion a “putsch” is either a hardened reactionary, or a doctrinaire hopelessly incapable of envisaging a social revolution as a living phenomenon. To imagine that social revolution is *conceivable* without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie *with all its prejudices*, without a movement of the politically non-conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against oppression by the landowners, the church, and the monarchy, against national oppression, etc. - to imagine all this is to *repudiate social revolution*... Whoever expects a “pure” social revolution will *never* live to see it. Such a person pays lip-service to revolution without understanding what revolution is.”<sup>63</sup>

But in Lenin’s recognition of the wider significance of National Democratic revolts, he still saw these, rather like the peasant struggles for land, as being led by the petty bourgeoisie and to the degree the working class became involved this

remained “a movement of the politically non-conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses.”

Meanwhile Lenin thought that the politically conscious proletarians and semi-proletarians would be in one-state parties with their national minority workers undergoing assimilation. Lenin was unable to see that unlike the peasantry, which did indeed have separate class interests, the multi-national nature of the working class was not a problem to be overcome through assimilation, but something which placed the working class in a position to lead movements for national self-determination.



## Proclamation of the Irish Republic, Easter 1916

Connolly was remarkably foresighted in anticipating the undermining of the IPP and A-f-IL once they signed up for support British imperialism in WW1. He was equally astute in anticipating the rapid transfer of Irish working class, small farmers and advanced intelligentsia to supporting the Irish Republic. This was first very publicly proclaimed on the steps of Dublin GPO and broadcast to the world by radio.<sup>64</sup>

However, Connolly had entrusted fellow SPI member and friend, Thomas Johnson to uphold the Socialist Republican pole of attraction in the burgeoning Irish Republican movement. Johnston took no part in the Rising. And when it came to the delayed ITUC&LP conference, held in August 1916 in Sligo, Johnson, its president, made no working class claim on the proclaimed Irish Republic. Instead, acting in his official capacity, he distanced himself, and “ensured that support was given both to those union members who had lost their lives during the Rising and those members who had lost their lives fighting in the trenches.”<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, no other SPI members challenged him. This contrasted with the as yet still small International Left forces who were beginning to organise independently of the Social Democratic and Labour Party leadership, and publicly challenge them, as shown at the Zimmerwald and Kienthal conferences.

And at this stage, Sinn Fein (which had been falling back electorally compared to Irish Labour in Dublin Corporation elections) was unable to make any claim on the proclaimed Irish Republic. Sinn Fein was led by Arthur Griffith, a Dual Monarchist, who took no part in the Rising (but like many others uninvolved was still arrested and jailed). Historians have often emphasised the role of the IRB, particularly Michael Collins, in winning Sinn Fein round to support the proclaimed 1916 Irish Republic. But it took until a special conference, held in Dublin’s Mansion House in October 1917 before Sinn Fein was able to do this.



### **Irish Women Workers' Union**

And arguably, more important than the IRB, was the role of CnmB, the Irish Women Workers' Union and women members of the ICA. The IRB was a secret organisation, whereas CnmB members were publicly involved in a whole variety of arenas. Markiewicz brought them together as the League of Delegates<sup>66</sup> in April 1917. This was to ensure that a reformed Sinn Fein should take on the UK state

as an openly Republican, pro-1916 *Proclamation* party which did not retreat into social conservatism and where women were given a key role.

Before the 1916 Rising, the influence of Connolly and other key members of the ICA had been mainly exerted as strongly motivated individuals, holding key posts in the ICA, IT&GWU and in some other unions, and through their international connections in Scotland and the USA. But by 1917, unlike the role played by CnmB members through the League of Delegates, there was no organised Socialist Republican equivalent, which might have openly claimed its role in 1916 Rising and *Proclamation*. The SPI remained an abstract propagandist organisation which met irregularly.

But another opportunity presented itself to Socialists. A desperate British government, promoting a now never-ending 'blood sacrifice', wanted to extend conscription to Ireland. The power of the working class was soon demonstrated again. After a series of electoral defeats, at the hands consecutively of abstentionist, Republican, then Sinn Fein candidates, the IPP and A-f-IL felt compelled to join Sinn Fein and ITUC&LP in organising opposition to the government's conscription plans in April 1918.



### **Irish anti-conscription demonstration April 1918**

But it was the ITUC&LP called general strike on April 23rd, which effectively scuppered the government's plans. Yet the ITUC&LP made no effort to emphasise any independent working class role, being quite happy to go along with future

appeals to Irish businesses and the Catholic hierarchy for any further action if this proved necessary.

Johnson revealed his hand at the ITUC&LP conference in August 1918 in Waterford. He argued that the organisation should change its name to the ILP&TUC. This was to place it in a better position to participate in future Irish elections "to secure labour representation, independent, able, strong, efficient and constructive on all our public bodies both national and local"<sup>67</sup>



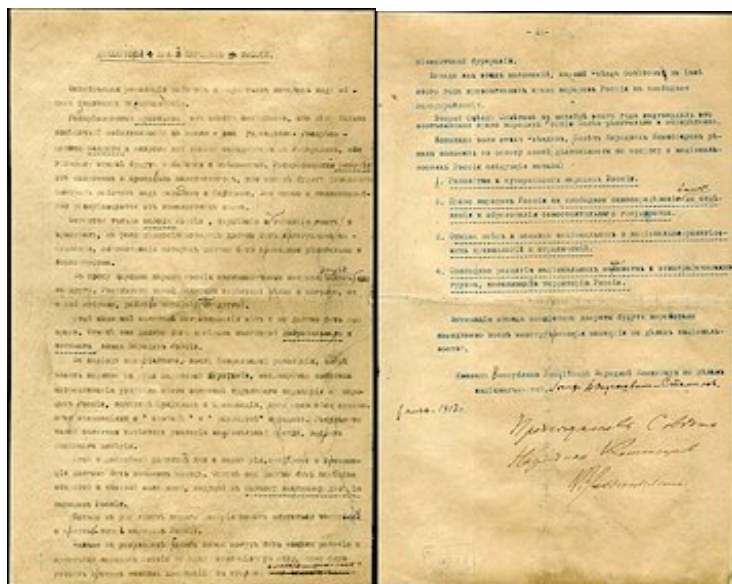
### **Cathal O'Shannon, former IRB member, SPI member, IT&GWU organiser**

It soon became clear that it was to be left to Sinn Fein to set up any new Irish state first, so Irish Labour would not be contesting the next election. This cemented Sinn Fein's claim to be the sole inheritors of the 1916 *Proclamation*. Cathal O'Shannon, an SPI member and Socialist Republican, opposed this Labour abstentionism, pointing out that it would mean that Irish Labour would have no representation at any up-and-coming international conferences.

Furthermore, the ongoing eclipse of Socialist Republicanism in Ireland meant the abandonment of 'Internationalism from Below', just at the time that Sinn Fein was pursuing a new 'internationalism from above' strategy. This was based on winning the support of the US President Wilson, now that the USA had entered the war.

## h) The October ‘Russian’ Revolution spills over to Ukraine – the third testing ground

The International Revolutionary Wave intensified greatly following the October 1917 Revolution in the old Tsarist Russian empire. Lenin became Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars (Sovnarkom), the coalition government of the Bolshevik and Left Socialist Revolutionary (SR) parties in the new Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR). When the clash between a government based on the Mensheviks’ and Right SR’s hoped-for future parliamentary representative system and the now existing Sovnarkom based on the soviets came to a head in January 1918, there was very little immediate opposition to the closure of the recently elected Constituent Assembly. Its main supporters, who had supported the earlier post-February 1917 provisional governments, had achieved little, other than allowing the continuation of the imperialist war and leaving the gates open to the unbridled reaction of ‘Russia One and Indivisible’.



### The original draft of *The Declaration of the Working and Exploited People*

On November 15<sup>th</sup>, the Sovnarkom published *The Declaration of the Peoples of Russia*<sup>68</sup> followed on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1918, by *The Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited People*.<sup>69</sup> The support given to workers’ and peasants’ self-determination, as opposed to popular national self-determination, placed Lenin and the Bolsheviks’ stance on the ‘National Question’ to the fore of the International Left’s understanding of the ‘National Question’ for the remaining period of the International Revolutionary Wave and beyond. This was to cause problems. And despite these Declarations’ ambiguities, their abandonment in practice by the end of the International Revolutionary Wave, and the much-

changed political conditions today, they have retained a near scriptural status for many on the Left.

*The Declaration Rights of the Working and Exploited People* declared that “The Russian Soviet Republic is established on the principle of a free union of free nations, as a federation of Soviet national republics... At the same time, endeavouring to create a really free and voluntary, and therefore all the more firm and stable, union of the working classes of all the nations of Russia, the Constituent Assembly confines its own task to setting up the fundamental principles of a federation of Soviet Republics of Russia, while leaving it to the workers and peasants of each nation to decide independently at their own authoritative Congress of Soviets whether they wish to participate in the federal government and in the other federal Soviet institutions, and on what terms.”

*The Declaration* also proved to be political dynamite, when placed alongside the war aims of the Entente powers. These were exposed by Trotsky when, in November 1917, he published the secret 1915 Treaty of London and the Constantinople Agreement. All the talk of ‘peace without annexations’ promoted by Right and Centre Social Democrats were shown to be so much hot air. They had backed the Entente in the ruling class war for their imperialist aggrandisement.



### **President Wilson's Fourteen Points**

1. Open diplomacy
2. Freedom of the Seas
3. Removal of economic barriers
4. Reduction of armaments
5. Adjustment of colonial claims
6. Conquered territories in Russia
7. Preservation of Belgian sovereignty
8. Restoration of French territory
9. Redrawing of Italian frontiers
10. Division of Austria-Hungary
11. Redrawing of Balkan boundaries
12. Limitations on Turkey
13. Establishment of an independent Poland
14. Creation of an Association of Nations

However, the USA entered the war late, and was untainted by these treaties. Woodrow Wilson drew up his *Fourteen Points*<sup>70</sup> in an attempt to counter *The Declaration*. The *Fourteen Points* made promises of self-determination for nations which had been under German, Austro-Hungarian or Ottoman (Turkish) control. And this promise was also ambiguously extended to the Russian empire, now the Tsarist Entente-supporting regime had collapsed.

But when it came to those nations and colonies within the US, British, French and Belgian empires there was complete silence. But very soon, under British and French imperial pressure, it became clear that not only were these states not prepared to concede national self-determination to nations and colonies under their own control; they also wanted to take over large areas of the Ottoman empire and all the German overseas empire, whilst trying to find a niche for Italian, Greek and Zionist territorial aggrandisement to fulfil conflicting promises made to win their support in WW1.



**Map of the territorial concessions (except for Finland) made by the Bolsheviks under the March 1918 Treaty of Brest Litovsk showing territory already occupied by Germany and allies since the December 1917 Armistice.**

In March 1918, the German imperial leaders also showed their own contempt for national self-determination, when they imposed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on the new RSFSR government. To enforce compliance, large parts of the old Tsarist Russian empire had remained occupied, whilst further military advances were made after the November 1917 Armistice, when the Bolsheviks tried to prevaricate over any new treaty, in the hope of the revolution rolling west.

Under the Treaty, the infant RSFSR, as the inheritor of the old Tsarist Russian empire, had to give up Poland (already lost), Finland (now largely controlled by a German-allied Right-wing government), the Baltic nations (already largely occupied), much of Byelorussia (already partly occupied) and Ukraine (partly occupied). Those areas not directly annexed to Russia/Germany were to become German client states with imposed leaders, leaving a smaller RSFSR. The Bolsheviks and the RSFSR were acceptable, for the moment, since they opposed any further war with the German, Austro-Hungarian or Ottoman empires.

The majority Moslem Turkish/Kurdish, Kars-Ardahan and other recently Russian occupied territories in western Armenia were restored to the Ottoman empire. The Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic (which the RSFSR did not control) was given independence, although it soon fell apart into its constituent units – Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan - due to the sort of ethnic conflicts that had wracked the Balkan League, and led to renewed Ottoman invasions.

Only two of the nations, which became the subject of the Treaty of Brest Litovsk, were mentioned in *The Declaration* - Finland and Armenia. “The Council of People’s Commissars proclaim{s} the complete independence of Finland ... and proclaim{s} freedom of self-determination for Armenia.” The absence of an ‘Internationalism from Below’ strategy had already led to a missed opportunity in Finland<sup>71</sup> (and Ukraine<sup>72</sup>) in July 1917. By December, the Sovnarkom recognised Finland’s independence and the counter-revolutionary government of Pehr Evind Svinhufvund, although the Bolsheviks still tried to provide clandestine support to the Finnish Reds. The Sovnarkom was in little position, however, to influence the course of events in Armenia.

*The Declaration*’s underlying assumption about the “free union” of nations in the other areas of the former Tsarist Russian empire was that they were already united through the soviets in Socialist revolution. The decision about the boundaries of which nations or other territorial units would constitute the new RSFSR could be decided later. Indeed, any Communist who raised the issue of the actual exercise of national self-determination, as understood by Lenin, was soon to be characterised as a ‘National Communist’ or as an agent of imperialism.

As the revolutionary wave spread, beyond Russia proper, to other areas of the old Tsarist Russian empire, “workers and peasants of each nation” were never given the right “to decide independently at their own authoritative Congress of Soviets whether they wish{ed} to participate in the federal government.” These decisions were made above their heads by the leadership of newly founded all-Russia Communist Party (bolsheviks) (RCP(b), which replaced the RSDLP (b).

At this stage, nobody in the one-state RCP(b) questioned the name of the party or the new state – the Russian SFSR. The very powerful link of the Russian name with the imperialism, within which Tsarist Russia was formed, was denied. This meant much Great Russian chauvinism was left unchallenged, including that found amongst workers and RCP(b) members. This is similar to the way that many on the British Left still deny the very powerful link of ‘British’ with Union and Empire.

Apart from the minority, particularly Ukrainian Communists, who came to advocate ‘Internationalism from Below’, with the complete dismantlement of empires, the issue of the exercise of national self-determination was seen by both Lenin and his supporters, and the Radical Left, as secondary to the implementation of the economic and social measures, they thought necessary to bring about Socialist transition.



**The Third International, founded on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1919**

However, whenever the 'National Question' was raised in the future, those clauses of *The Declaration* addressing this issue remained the touchstone for the Third International (Comintern) and the RCP(b) officially recognised parties. But initially these principles were seen more as an ideal to be implemented under more favourable international conditions. Over time though they became a dead letter, as defence of as much as possible of the old Tsarist Russian imperial territory became equated with 'internationalism'.

Ukraine was one of the first places where external force was used by Sovnarkom to impose the rule of the RSFSR. In Russia itself, Lenin had been very careful not to attempt to push for Socialists to take power too early. In the 1917 July Days, many workers, soldiers and sailors in Petrograd (one of the three corners of the revolutionary triangle of Petrograd, Riga and Helsingfors/Helsinki) made a tentative bid for power. But without wider support in the soviets throughout Russia, Lenin saw this as adventuristic and ordered a halt.

This retreat led to a temporary resurgence of the Right. But the situation of Dual Power between the Provisional Government and the Executive Committee of the Soviets still remained, and behind them lay the more revolutionary local soviets of workers, peasants, soldiers and sailors. Many in these soviets, and for a time many Bolsheviks too, wanted a government formed solely from those parties claiming to be Socialist - Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and SRs. But the failure of the Left Mensheviks and the SRs to break with their Right/Centre party leaderships' accommodation with bourgeois parties - mainly the Kadets - meant that possibility was ruled out. These parties, making promises for the future only, continued their support for the war and stymied the economic and social changes demanded by peasants and workers.

It wasn't until October 1917, when the Bolsheviks had won wider support in the Russian soviets, that Lenin now eagerly gave his backing to a seizure of power from the Provisional Government. Although the Left SRs were very late in making the break with the party's Right, many ordinary members had participated in the peasant soviets and were engaged in revolutionary struggle to gain control of the land. It was only after the October Revolution that those Left SRs, who had sided with the insurrection, declared themselves an independent party.

Lenin was persuaded by other Bolsheviks to let the Left SRs into the new government to widen its support amongst the peasant soviets. He saw their struggle for the land as central to a successful revolution. It wasn't the Bolshevik-supported workers' soviets' demand for an eight-hour day, which had formed the centrepiece of Bolshevik propaganda for 'All Power to the Soviets', in the run-up

to the October Revolution, but ‘Peace, Land and Bread’, designed to win over peasant, soldier and sailor soviets and appeal to hungry workers too.

But in most parts of Ukraine, the revolutionary timeline moved more slowly. The issue of Ukrainian self-determination also became central. For much of the post-1917 February Revolution period, the main element of Dual Power lay between the Russian Provisional government and the Ukrainian Central Rada, first set up in March by the Ukrainian Party of Socialist-Federalists (UPSF). Despite its name, the UPSF was more concerned with promoting Ukrainian culture and largely ignored the economic issues which also motivated workers and peasants.

However, the Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionary Party<sup>73</sup> (founded in April 1917), and the USDLP soon made their influence felt, the first through the All-Ukrainian Peasants’ Congress<sup>74</sup> held from the 10<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> June 1917, and secondly through the All-Ukrainian Workers’ Congress<sup>75</sup> held from 24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> July 1917. Their leaders differed over their attitude to the soviets, immediate peace and land redistribution. But they supported maximum autonomy for Ukraine within a future Federal Democratic, all-Russia Republic. This placed them on a collision course with successive Russian provisional governments.

Those workers, peasants and soldiers’ soviets with a dominant Russian or Ukrainian-Russian character pursued two conflicting paths. Some (the Mensheviks, the Bund and SRs) looked to the Russian Provisional Government, and others (Bolsheviks and later Left SRs) looked to its overthrow.

Those soldiers, peasants, and workers’ congresses with a more Ukrainian character, and a greater USRP and USDLP presence, wanted a reformed Rada, based on Socialist parties (Ukrainian, Russian and Jewish). They did support Ukrainian cultural reforms, and meaningful Ukrainian autonomy in particular, but were also motivated by the same concerns as Russian Socialists, particularly peace, land reform and the eight-hour working day.

The Ukrainian congresses had little time for the Russian provisional governments. These continued to resort to Russian controlled institutions of local government in Ukraine in order to bypass the Central Rada. They also threatened to use the Russian army to suppress opposition in Ukraine.



**Ukrainian military congress, May 1917**

For much of the Central Rada's initial period, the most revolutionary force lay in the soldiers, largely Ukrainian 'peasants-in-uniform', since they had experienced the harshest conditions and high death and injury rates during the war. The first Ukrainian Military Congress was held from 18<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> May 1917, before those of the peasants and workers. The second congress, held from the 18<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> June, met in defiance of the Russian Provisional Government.



***The First Universal* issued after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ukrainian Military Congress in June 1917**

This military congress gave the Central Rada the confidence to issue the *First Universal*.<sup>76</sup> This had nine points advocating extensive and immediate autonomy over eight and part of another province (this excluded Crimea, part of the old Taurida province). It was these provinces which formed the basis for those ex-Tsarist Russian territories which constituted the Ukrainian nation and proposed state. This was later added to, after WW2, from former Polish, Slovakian, Hungarian and Romanian Ukrainian territories - all once part of the old Hapsburg Austro-Hungarian empire.



But in 1954, in breach of the earlier recognition of Crimea, as lying outside Ukraine, it was transferred from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR by administrative fiat under the Ukrainian-Russian, Nikita Khrushchev. This was probably done to curry Ukrainian favour, after the rump Moldavian ASSR, which had been part of the Ukrainian SSR, was transferred to the new Moldavian SSR in 1944. In 2014, before Putin's annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, the population was 68% Russian, 16% Ukrainian and 11% Crimean Tatar.

Although Crimea is a bone of contention between ethnic Russians and Ukrainians (backed by the Russian Federation and Ukraine), far less attention is given to the Crimean Tartars. Before Tsarist Russia's seizure of Crimea in 1783, a large majority of its population were Crimean Tatars. The plight of the Jews in Tsarist

Russia, subjected to wholesale discrimination and pogroms, was more than matched by the plight of the Moslem Circassians, subjected to genocide<sup>77</sup> and mass expulsions from nearby Kuban, or the Crimean Tatars expelled from their lands.<sup>78</sup> And during WW2, Stalin forcibly removed the remaining Crimean Tatars to Central Asia during which estimates from 22% to 44% died.<sup>79</sup> It was only on the eve of the collapse of the USSR, that Crimean Tatars were finally allowed to return to Crimea, but not to their old homes if these were occupied. Under the newly independent Ukraine, Crimean Tatars made considerable economic and social advances, but their confiscated lands were still not returned to them. When the Russian Federation annexed Crimea in 2014 it abolished the Mejlis (parliament) of the Tatar Peoples, repression was once more stepped up.<sup>80</sup> Alternatively, if there was agreement from the Crimean Tatars, Crimea could become an autonomous republic within Ukraine.

But another possible solution would be for Crimea to seek its own independence, giving recognition to Russian-, Ukrainian-, and Tatar-Crimeans. Crimea has a population of 2,400,000. The population of Estonia is 1,332,000, Latvia, 1,843,000, Lithuania, 2,836,000, and Moldova, 2,604, 000. All of these are politically independent, although that, of course, still means, as small states, they have strike deals with major economic forces, e.g. US and Russian imperialism and the imperialism of the leading EU member states.

Although Putin claims that it was Lenin who first created an ‘artificial’ Ukrainian entity, Ukraine (not including Crimea) was reluctantly recognised by the Russian Provisional Government on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1917. At the time, Lenin had little idea of what constituted the territory of Ukraine, and the Bolsheviks (like the Mensheviks) had no overall territorial organisation for Ukraine, just three ‘Russian’ regional bodies. But later, with the exception of Crimea, Lenin did largely accept today’s internationally recognised Ukrainian territorial boundaries formed from the old Tsarist Russian empire.

But the real support for a Ukrainian nation, as opposed to its supposed ‘artificiality’ in Great Russian thinking, was shown in the results for the All-Russia Constituent Assembly elections in November 1917. In Ukraine, 61.6% of the vote went to parties supporting the Central Rada. And the Socialist USRP, either alone or in coalition with the USDLP, gained 45.3% of the vote. The Russian SRs gained only 24.8% and the Russian Bolsheviks only gained 10% of the vote in Ukraine.<sup>81</sup>

As the Russian Provisional Government’s authority receded towards the end of 1917, the Central Rada was compelled to step in and extend its own authority. In response, the Russian Provisional Government made threats which it could not

enforce. Although the Bolshevik/Left SR seizure of power was supported by the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, held in Petrograd between November 9-10<sup>th</sup>, Ukrainian Socialist participation was very low<sup>82</sup> (and confined to all-Russia parties).



**Central Rada, Kyiv, where Third Universal was declared on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1917**

So, the outcome of the toppling of the Russian Provisional Government, also distrusted by the Rada, was the publication of the Third Universal.<sup>83</sup> On November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1917, a Ukrainian Peoples' Republic was declared. Its supporters still looked to the creation of a democratic all-Russia Republic following the convening of a Constituent Assembly. They wanted extensive Ukrainian autonomy or federation. But in immediate terms of power in Ukraine, Dual Power was initially resolved in a different manner from Russia itself, with the Central Rada winning out over the Russian Provisional Government.

The Ukrainian soldiers', peasants' and workers' congresses, analogous to the Russian soviets, were at an earlier phase in a revolutionary transition. They still gave their support to the Central Rada, just as the majority of soviets had once supported the Russian Provisional Government. However, in contrast to his thinking in July 1917 in Russia, when Lenin thought workers needed political arguments, he now thought that Russian military force could act as a substitute for winning more popular support in Ukraine (and soon elsewhere too). A coup

was attempted by small Bolshevik forces in Kyiv on December 12<sup>th</sup>. The Central Rada forces arrested them, but they were soon released.

But Lenin had also pushed the Bolsheviks in Kyiv to call for the convening of a special all-Ukrainian Congress of Workers, Peasants and Soldiers from December 17-19<sup>th</sup>. This was designed to ratify the all-Russia Sovnarkom declared in Petrograd on the November 20<sup>th</sup>. But with the Bolshevik coup in Kyiv having failed, Lenin threatened to invade Ukraine instead unless the Rada capitulated.

When the 2500 delegates in Kyiv met only 80 voted for the Bolshevik motion to hand power over to the Sovnarkom. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of Congress delegates saw the highhanded behaviour of Lenin and the Sovnarkom as just the latest manifestation of Great Russian chauvinism to which they had been treated by the Russian provisional governments.

Although the Central Rada, and most Ukrainian congress supporters still looked to the convening of the promised Constituent Assembly, they were no supporters of the Russian Provisional Government which had been overthrown. Sovnarkom's recognition of the Central Rada, linked to the Bolsheviks' and Left SR's continued freedom to agitate, and the soviets continued freedom to organise, would have meant there was still an opportunity to build up support for the direct implementation of 'Peace, Land and Bread' in Ukraine. This approach would also be seen as honouring the promise of made in *The Declaration of Rights of People of Russia* recognising "The sovereignty of the peoples of Russia."<sup>84</sup>

After their political defeat in Kyiv, the Bolshevik delegates retreated to Kharkhov/Kharkiv, where the Bolshevik-dominated Donetsk-Krivoy Rog Congress of Soviets was meeting. When the Kiev Bolshevik delegates demanded this much smaller congress constitute itself as the Ukraine Congress of Soviets and declare the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), they were initially received with some hostility. Many delegates did not consider themselves to be Ukrainian at all. Although the industrial cities and towns they mainly came from were surrounded by Ukrainian speaking peasants, Russian speaking industrial workers, along with the Tsarist Russian governors, administrators and professionals, often held Ukrainian speakers, particularly peasants, in the same sort of contempt that the Irish-British (and the soon to be 'Ulster'-British) held the 'mere Irish'.

But the Kiev Bolsheviks had the support of Lenin. So, the decision made by the RSDLP(b) (soon to be the RCP(b)) ratified by two previously Russian regional RSDLP(b) groups, in Kiev and the somewhat reluctant, Donetsk-Krivoy Rog group; and, in effect, one regional Soviet body – that of Donetsk-Krivoy Rog –

declared a Ukrainian SSR. This now claimed to supersede the UPR and its Central Rada.

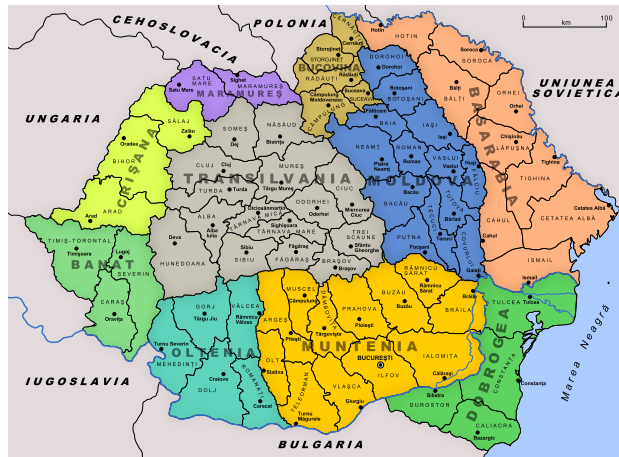


### **The Odessa Soviet Republic and the Moldavian Democratic Republic**

There was a third Bolshevik organisation in the territory of Ukraine. It took part in the Soviet of the Romanian Front, the Black Sea Fleet and the Odessa Oblast (of the old Tsarist Russia). Its Central Executive, Rumcherod, gave no recognition to the existence of Ukraine.

Odessa/Odesa was a cosmopolitan port city, which attracted many nationalities, and had a substantial Jewish population too. They had been well represented in local Social Democratic politics and many supported the Bolsheviks. The Ukrainian speakers were in the rural areas, largely unrepresented in the Rumcherod. The Bolsheviks won over the Rumcherod to recognise the RSFSR and the Sovnarkom at its conference from December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1917 –January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1918.<sup>85</sup>

Furthermore, in Crimea, with its substantial Russian population (42%), a congress of the Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies was held between February 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>, 1918. Consisting of Bolshevik and Left SR delegates, it recognised the authority of the Sovnarkom and went on to create the Taurida Soviet Socialist Republic on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1918.<sup>86</sup> This meant the overthrow of the previous Crimean Democratic Republic<sup>87</sup>, set up by the Crimean Tatars on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1917. (It wasn't until the end of the Civil War in this area, that the ambiguous status was changed, when it became the Crimean SSR within the RSFSR). As in the Moslem majority Baku in Azerbaijan and in 'Russian' Turkestan, the Bolsheviks tended to adhere to the Great Russian chauvinism of Russian settlers and their descendants. They used armed force to get their way. The Crimean Democratic Republic, though, had been recognised by the Ukrainian Central Rada. Ukrainians only formed 11% of the population.



**The expansion of the Kingdom of Romania (independent from 1878 and made up of former Ottoman, Moldovia and Wallachia – Oltena and Muntenia), to include former Bulgarian Dobruja (1913 and 1918), former Hapsburg Austrian Bukovyna (1918), former Hapsburg Hungarian Transylvania, Maramures, Crisana and Banat (1918) and former Tsarist Russian Bessarabia (1918)**

Most Bolsheviks, particularly those on the Radical Left, equated ‘internationalism’ with the expansion of RSFSR power over former Tsarist imperial territories. These territories also included the one-time governate of Bessarabia, which had declared itself the Moldavian Democratic Republic (MDR) on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1917. Ironically, the MDR declared its independence by invoking the Sovnarkom’s November 15<sup>th</sup>, *Declaration of the Peoples of Russia*.<sup>88</sup>

Bessarabia/Moldavia was very mixed, with no nationality forming an overall majority. The territory included those who considered themselves Moldovans, Romanians, Russians, Ukrainians, Gagauz (Turkish speaking Christians), Jews, Germans, and probably many peasants who would not have prioritised any national affiliation, thinking more in religious or local terms.

The forces in the MDR, at the Rumcherod’s disposal, were mainly soldiers from the Russian army’s south-western front. Radical Left Bolsheviks in Odessa held to traditional anti-peasant attitudes and made little of the peasant seizures of land in the MDR.<sup>89</sup> These peasants were largely Romanian speaking but did not necessarily think of themselves as Romanian by nationality. As in so many other areas where the Radical Left had an influence, e.g. the Balkans and Poland, this rejection of the peasantry as a potentially revolutionary force, especially if allied with the working class, was a continuing weakness on their politics.

The Rumcherod preferred to treat the future of the MDR as a struggle between the RSFSR and the Kingdom of Romania (which had French imperial backing) and

did not acknowledge the need to defend Moldovia's right to self-determination, both against the Tsarist Russian imperial legacy and the revanchism of the Kingdom of Romania. On Rumcherod's chosen battleground, the Russian forces were defeated. The short-lived MDR was ended by the Romanian imposed Union of Bessarabia with the Kingdom of Romania on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1918. This was followed by a brutal clampdown on the peasantry of all nationalities.

Over much the same period, the Bolsheviks leading the RSFSR also saw the task of the new Ukrainian SSR, which they did acknowledge and had been created in Kharkhov, to be the invasion of the territory held by UPR to topple the Central Rada in Kyiv and assert the power of the RSFSR's Sovnarkom. This denial of the exercise of national self-determination was very much in breach of the spirit of the *Declaration of the Rights of the Working and Exploited People*. Therefore, a move had to be made to disguise the clearly subordinate nature of this Ukrainian SSR to the RSFSR and the Sovnarkom.



**The two faces of Great Russian repression in Ukraine  
Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko, and General Mikhail Murayov**

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On December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1917, the Ukrainian SSR military forces were placed under Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko. He was from Ukraine, although he was a supporter of all-Russia politics. He had been a former Menshevik, but after his recent conversion to Bolshevism he became attracted to its Left Radical wing. However, both Menshevism and Left Radicalism shared a hostility to the peasantry. So, as

Soviet forces invaded, the Ukrainian peasants faced Antonov-Ovseenko's punitive armed food seizure detachments. Thus, any Bolshevik support gained in Ukraine through their recognition of peasant land seizures was soon negated. Many Bolsheviks only saw in Ukraine a 'Little Russian' peasantry, whom they often held in contempt.

The Sovnarkom also appointed the Left SR, General Mikhail Murayov, who led the Russian forces heading for Kyiv. He issued Order No. 14, stating that he was "bringing freedom 'from the distant north' on sharp bayonets"!<sup>90</sup> During the Russian occupation, public manifestations of Ukrainian national identity were suppressed. Those speaking the Ukrainian language were often treated as potential counter-revolutionaries. New statues of Taras Shevchenko, which had been erected in Ukraine after the February Revolution, were removed. An unacknowledged Great Russian chauvinism underpinned the Sovnarkom's policies, but it was particularly marked amongst the Radical Left, where it was masked as 'internationalism'.



**Georgi Pyatkov and Evgenie Bosch, two Radical Lefts who headed the Kiev Bolsheviks and opposed Ukrainian self-determination**

Although Murayov was a Left SR, many Bolsheviks held very similar attitudes to Ukrainian language speakers and cultures. Radical Left, Georgi Pyatkov and Evgenie Bosch, who headed the Kiev Bolsheviks, had agreed with Lenin about the formation of a Ukrainian SSR at the Kharkov Congress of Soviets in December 1917. But this was not motivated by any support for Ukrainian self-determination, which they opposed, but by a bureaucratic top-down attempt to create more territory under RSFSR control. They hoped this would extend RSFSR influence on the Austro-Hungarian and Romanian fronts.



### **Symon Petliura, Right USDLP and Vsevolod Holubovych, Right USRP**

But opposition to the exercise of Ukrainian self-determination had the opposite effect, creating a real barrier to internationalist cooperation. It provoked anti-Russian sentiment, which reinforced the Right wing of the USDLP led by Symon Petliura, and the Right wing of the USRP led by Vsevolod Holubovych. Petliura became Secretary of Military Affairs for the UPR; Holubovych became its President.

This split led to greater passivity amongst many Ukrainian speaking peasants and workers who, despite often supporting the Sovnarkom's policies on land and labour, were not prepared to support its Great Russian chauvinism, or seizures of their produce. It was to take some time before a genuinely Ukrainian, as opposed to RCP(b)-Ukrainian frontist, Communist politics developed.

During the Bolsheviks' and their Left SR allies' attempt to take over Ukraine, wherever ethnic Russians or assimilated Russian Ukrainians formed a majority in the cities, they were usually successful in initiating a number of Red Guard takeovers. But greater military force became increasingly necessary as the Red Army moved into the more ethnic Ukrainian majority areas. They captured Kyiv between the 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> February 1918, forcing the Central Rada west to Zhymotir, where it only controlled a small sliver of territory.

Since the German/Russian Armistice in November, the German High Command had been negotiating with the Bolsheviks. Their strategy, now the Bolsheviks had overthrown the pro-Entente Russian Provisional Government, was to use the opportunity to release troops from the eastern front for transfer to the western front. Furthermore, grain and other resources in Ukraine were desperately needed to feed

the German war machine. This meant that in any negotiations at Brest Litovsk, the German High Command wanted to exclude Lenin's government from Ukraine.

So, after being defeated by Murayov's Red Army forces in February 1918, Petliura and Holubovych now turned to Germany. They asked for support to restore the Central Rada and UPR. This the German High Command was prepared to give. Thus, the German negotiators only recognised the Bolshevik negotiators' jurisdiction over a RSFSR which excluded Ukraine. In Ukraine they recognised the Central Rada's jurisdiction, despite, or probably because, it had been weakened and now controlled only a tiny territory.

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### **The German Occupation of Ukraine from January to November 1918 (Kharkiv was captured by the Germans in April 1918)**

So 'Bayonet Bolshevism' only held sway for a few weeks, before the German Army arrived and the Central Rada was restored in Kyiv. Under the March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1918, Treaty of Brest Litovsk, Hapsburg Austria was given control over Ukraine. However, Austrian forces were so much weakened, that Germany remained the effective guarantor of the Treaty's provisions.

By April 30<sup>th</sup>, the Taurida Soviet Socialist Republic was also overthrown. Some Crimean Tartars took their revenge on the Taurida SSR chair and the local Bolshevik leader. They shot them on 29<sup>th</sup> April. Initially the German authorities didn't restore the Crimean Democratic Republic but handed it over to the UNR, However, a Crimean Regional Government was formed on June 25<sup>th</sup>, 1918 under

Lithuanian Tatar, General Maceij (Suleyman) Sukiewicz,<sup>91</sup> who soon earned the same hostility from the population as the German appointee in Ukraine, Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky.

Prior to their own ousting by the Bolshevik and Left SR led forces, the leadership of the Central Rada had not been prepared to introduce any economic and social measures to satisfy Ukrainian peasants, workers or soldiers. However, now back in office, they were not prepared to reverse the gains the peasants had already made through land seizures. This meant the Central Rada did not take any action against the peasants, who were no more prepared to make grain deliveries to the German and Austrian authorities, than they were to the Bolsheviks.



**Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky and Generalfieldmarschall Herman von Eichhorn, assassinated in August 1918**

The peasants resisted. The result of this was that many German and Austrian military units, intended for transfer to the western front, had to be retained in Ukraine. So, the Germans and Austrians ousted the Central Rada on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1918, replacing it with the more compliant Hetman Skoropadsky. He had the backing of the major landowners who began to take back the land seized by the peasants. But in reality, the person in real control was German Generalfieldmarschall Hermann von Eichhorn.

The Hetmanate's attacks just led to intensified peasant resistance. And over the next few years, although the peasants might at times give support to one party or another, this was very conditional. They were determined to hold on to the land.

particularly against the ex-landlords and their Rightist backers; and their produce, particularly against Bolshevik food detachments or marauding bands.

The Ukrainian and Russian parties organised their own opposition to the German/Austrian forces and the Hetmanate. The Second All-Ukrainian Congress of Peasants (supported by the USRP) was convened secretly in a forest outside Kyiv on 21st-23<sup>rd</sup> May 1918. The Second All-Ukrainian Congress of Workers (supported by the USDLP and USRP) was held illegally in Kyiv on 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> May. Both declared their support for the now ousted UPR and Central Rada. Significantly, though, there was no further military congress. Official, if now clandestine UPR military power, was left to Petliura and his allies.



***Borotbba* (Struggle) the paper of the Ukrainian Communist Party (borotbists)**

However, in May 1918, a USRP breakaway, the Ukrainian Communist Party (borotbist), soon to be known as the Borotbists, unhappy over the rightward drift of the USRP, was also formed. The Borotbists were the most politically advanced, specifically Ukrainian party to emerge up to this time.<sup>92</sup>

The Russian Left SRs (having broken with the RCP(b) as a consequence of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which they opposed), organised Eichhorn's assassination on July 30<sup>th</sup> in Kyiv, with some Ukrainian Left SR assistance. Meanwhile, the RCP(b) now needed a better front for its Ukrainian politics than they had prior to

their short-lived invasion and takeover in January. They faced a number of internal problems. However, the Odessa based Rumcherod, which had never recognised Ukraine, had been forced to retreat after the Treaty of Brest Litovsk and to dissolve in May 1918. The Bolsheviks of Donetsk- Kriyoy Rog, never that happy at having been merged into the First Ukrainian SSR, attempted to continue as Donetsk Krivoy Rog Soviet, in defiance of the RCP(b) leadership. However, in the RCP(b)'s preparation for a Second Ukrainian SSR, they were just ignored.

Instead, a new RCP(b) 'branch office' - the Communist Party (bolshevik) of Ukraine, CP(b)U, was created in July 1918. This move had the support of Pyatakov and Bosch for their own Radical Left reasons. They opposed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and wanted to use the CP(b)U to launch an attack on the German-Austrian occupation and the Hetmanate in Ukraine. They also wanted to use their CP(b)U base within the RCP(b) to challenge Lenin's support for the right to national self-determination - although this was being revealed as increasingly nominal in practice.

The CP(b)U initiated some clandestine activity, including organising railway strikes. But following further German/Austrian military advances, Kharkhov, the capital of their rump Ukrainian SSR, had to be abandoned in August 1918, leaving it with only a sliver of territory around Luhansk. The RCP(b)'s most successful activity, though, practiced on all military fronts, was to encourage fraternisation with German troops, leading the German High Command to doubt their reliability.

When the Germans and Austro-Hungarians finally surrendered to the Allies on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1918, the situation on the ground in Ukraine was complex. There were a series of risings against an increasingly isolated Skoropadsky, who now looked to the 'Russia One and Indivisible' Whites for support, without success. He was finally toppled on December 15<sup>th</sup>, a month after the annulment of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. In Crimea, the unpopular Sukiewicz was replaced by Kadet member Solomon Krym, a Crimean Karaite on November 25<sup>th</sup>, 1918, who saw Crimea as part of Russia. But this government only lasted as long as the French and Greeks continued to occupy Crimea, from November 1918 to April 1919.<sup>93</sup>

Support for the re-establishment of the UPR and for a Socialist Rada was strongest in parts of the Dnpr Right Bank. Here, with Kyiv as its capital, Petliura was able to re-establish the UPR, although this was contested by Communist Borotbist forces. Significantly Petliura did not restore the Central Rada. To free himself

from political control, Petliura gave up his USDLP membership. Combining his role as head of the UPR and its army, he set up the Directorate.

Petliura decided to base the Directorate's main activities on the otomans or military commanders (some of whom drew some inspiration from the Ukrainian Cossack tradition). He became Otaman-in-Chief of the UPR, now increasingly known as the Ukrainian National Republic (UNR). In the ensuing struggles, otomans often acted as local warlords, and were particularly prone to anti-Jewish pogroms.



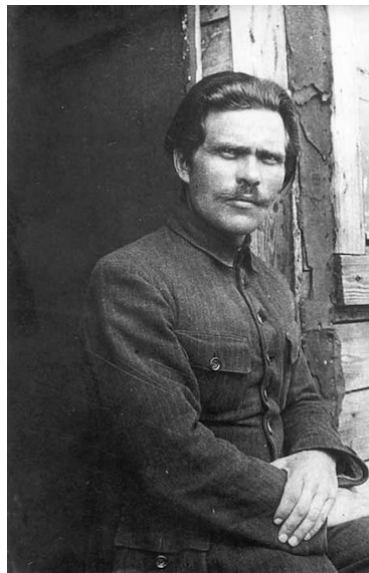
**Christian Rakovsky, Radical Left, founder member of the Revolutionary Balkan Social Democratic Labour Federation, joined the Russian Bolsheviks and became Chair of the Second Ukrainian SSR**

When the days of the Hetmanate looked increasingly numbered, the Bolsheviks organised a Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of Ukraine, beyond its borders in Kursk, on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1917.<sup>94</sup> This was chaired by another Radical Left, Christian Rakovsky. His political background lay in Romania and in the abortive Revolutionary Balkan Social Democratic Labour Federation founded in 1915 in Bucharest.

With Petliura in Kyiv re-establishing the UPR/UNR, and Rakovsky moving over the border from Kursk to Kharkhiv to declare the Second Ukrainian SSR in December 1918, the scene soon became set for a deja-vu repeat of the December 1917 - February 1918 clash. This was once again largely between Ukrainian Right nationalism and Great Russian chauvinism cloaked in Radical Left colours. The Directorate was unable to meet the needs of peasants or workers, who had become even more discontented under Skoropadsky's Hetmanate. Demobbed soldiers no

longer faced the WW1's lethal front lines but were returning largely as 'peasants-in-uniform' determined to get control of the land. Rakovsky, acting for the Second Ukrainian SSR, saw his duties as extending RSFSR controlled territory and delivering food to the Red Army, so 'Bayonet Bolshevism' and the punitive armed food detachments returned.

Rakovsky's Radical Left contempt for the peasantry also led him to dismiss the struggle for Ukrainian self-determination as something "imposed on the masses' by the intelligentsia."<sup>95</sup> This is very similar to Putin's ideas about Ukraine. In today's period of growing reaction, we can see the embryonic origins of the Great Russian 'Red' gloss some Socialists put on Putin and his 'Russia One and Indivisible' politics supported by the Far Right.

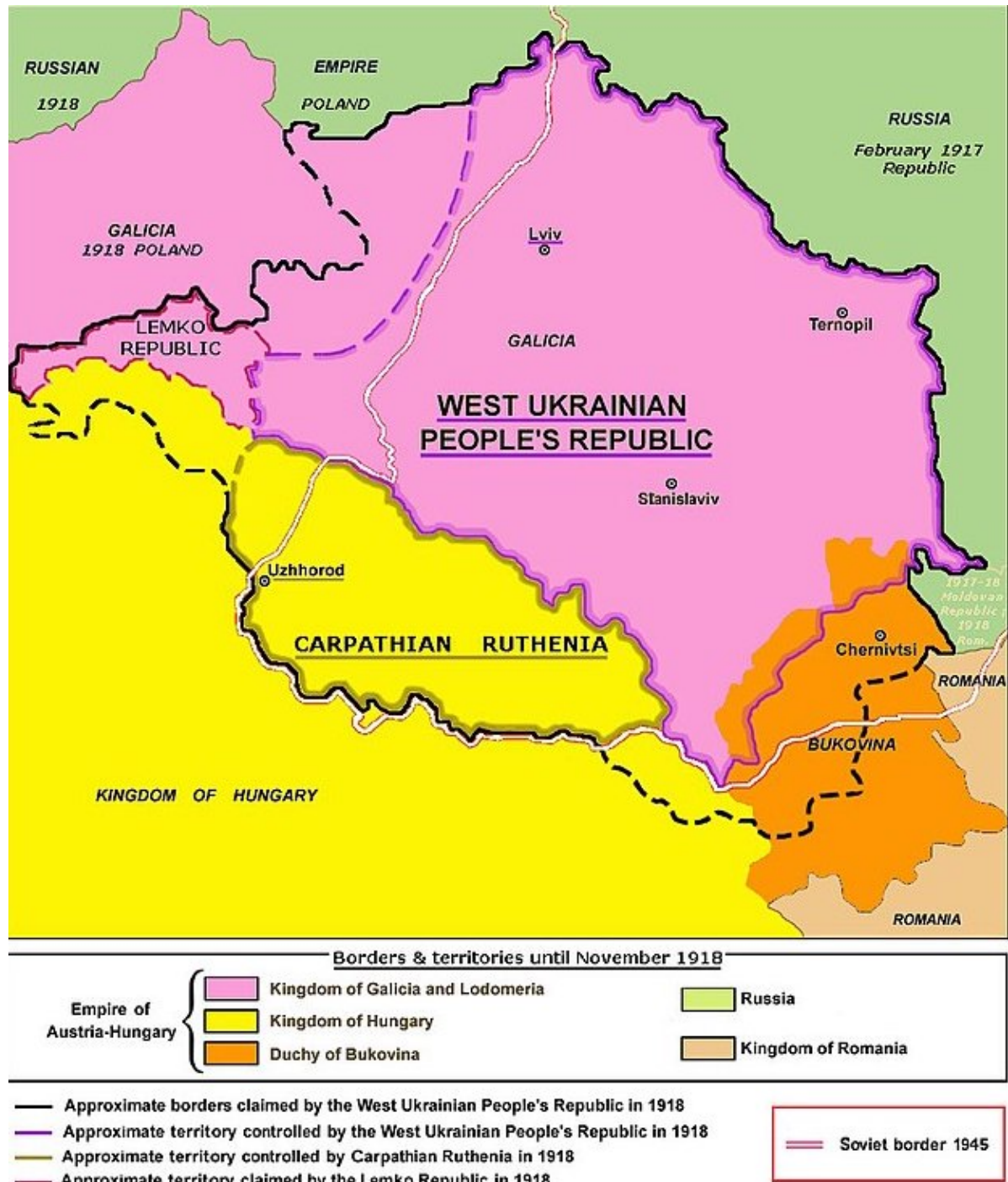


**Nestor Makhno, leader of the Anarcho-Communist forces in eastern Ukraine**

From July 1918, the Ukrainian Anarcho-Communist, Nestor Makhno began to organise an effective armed opposition centred on Huliapole, in what had been the Yekaterinoslav governate. Forces in the Maknovshchina territory successfully fought German/Austrian occupying forces and those of the UNR.

With the cancellation of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk after the end of WW1, Hapsburg Austrian control over Galicia (with its majority Ukrainian-speaking east) and Bukovyna (with its majority Ukrainian speaking north) had also been ended. Different areas became subjected to competing Ukrainian, Polish, Romanian, and Czech forces.

Furthermore, France was eager to create a barrier of states to box in post-war Weimar Germany. France saw alliances with Czechoslovakia (created in October 1918), Poland (created in November 1918), Romania (backed by France against Hungary and in the Moldavian Democratic Republic) and the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (created in December 1918) as the best basis for doing this. So that meant France pleasing the first three of these states and their designs on the Ukrainians/Ruthenians/Rusyns.



## The West Ukrainian Peoples Republic from November 1918 to July 1919

In former Hapsburg Galicia, Bukovina and Carpathian Ruthenia, the Western Ukrainian Peoples' Republic (WUPR) was declared on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1918. The WUPR lay to the west UNR and the former MDR (by now part of the Kingdom of Romania). The UNR and WUPR were formally united on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1919, but soon both were facing attacks. The WUPR was invaded by Poland and Romania, and the UNR first by the RSFSR and then the 'Russia One and Indivisible' Whites. Parts of Carpathian Ruthenia (formerly part of Hapsburg Hungary) formed the Rus'ka (Rusyn) Rada on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1918. Some declared their support for the WUPR, but with the WUPR unable to exert its authority this soon waned.



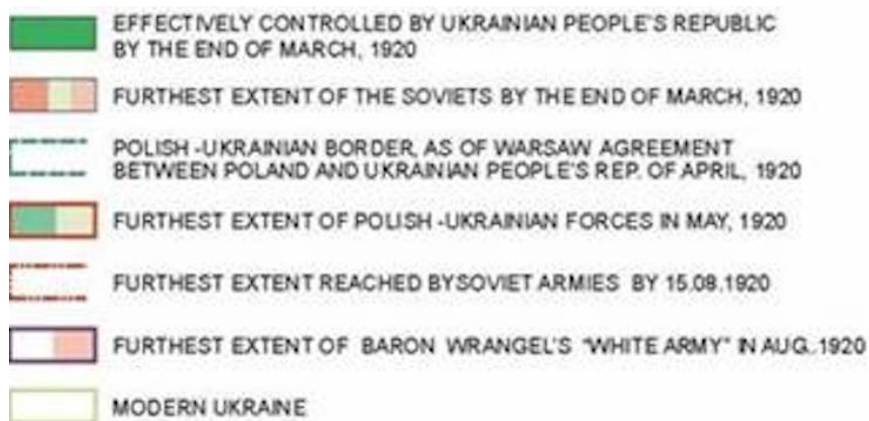
**The core area of territory controlled by Makhno and the wider area of Makhnovschchina activities from July 1918 to**

Upon the collapse of Hetmanate in December 1918, the Maknovshchina was able to exert its control over quite an extensive part of the eastern Ukrainian territory, although this was contested by Denikin's White forces to the east and south, Petliura's forces to the west, the Bolsheviks to the north, and for a short time by Otaman Nikifor Grigoriev. Nevertheless, Makhno's forces remained in the area, despite initial setbacks.

Furthermore, a remarkable opposition emerged within the CP(b)U, towards the end of 1918. This was led by two veteran Bolsheviks, Serhii Mazlakh and Vasyl' Shakhrai. They argued that the CP(b)U should recognise the significance of the national movement in Ukraine and acknowledge the sovereignty of the Ukrainian SSR it had set up. They also pointed to the Great Russian chauvinism in both the RCP(b) and CP(b)U in its Right and Left guises. They even compared Lenin's promises of national self-determination with Wilson's *Fourteen Points*. Their

book *On the Current Situation in the Ukraine* was published in January 1919.<sup>96</sup> Their thinking represented a further development of the ‘Internationalism from Below’ politics, which was growing in Ukraine.

Mazlakh, with his Jewish background (Robsman), was unusual in giving such support to Ukrainian independence. Mazlakh and Shakhrai were expelled from the CP(b)U in June 1919. Mazlakh was reinstated and later employed by the Ukrainian SSR (being purged in the 1930s by Stalin). Shakhrai joined the underground opposition in the White-held Kuban and was captured and executed in the autumn of 1919.



**The balance of forces in Ukraine by the end of March 1919**

Throughout this period, the Bolsheviks remained opposed to making any but the most temporary alliances with other Socialists/Communists in Ukraine. In the risings against the Hetmanate in December 1918, the Borotbists had taken action independently under red banners and formed their own government on the Dnpr Right Bank.<sup>97</sup> They had wanted to join the Third International as an independent party, and for Ukraine to enjoy a federal relationship with the RSFSR. They made overtures to Rakovsky's Bolshevik controlled Ukrainian SSR in Kharkiv. But the Bolshevik controlled CP(b)U, having made considerable (but what turned out to be temporary) headway against Petliura, by March 1919, scorned the Borotbists. Instead, individual Borotbist members were instructed to join the CP(b)U, which some did, particularly in the face of the growing threat from the Whites.



**Otoman Nikifor Grigoriev forces enter Odesa after forcing the evacuation of French-led troops**

The Bolsheviks had also originally been encouraged by the success of their dubious alliance with Otoman Nikifor Grigoriev,<sup>98</sup> in forcing the evacuation of the French-led forces in south-west Ukraine and Crimea. These imperial forces had occupied the area in December 1918, following the end of WW1. The Bolshevik-led workers played a key role within Odesa, assisting Grigoriev's cavalry forces in forcing the French to evacuate the city in March 1919. The French also evacuated Sevastopol in April. Here the Bolsheviks established a Crimean Soviet Socialist Republic on May 5<sup>th</sup>.<sup>99</sup> This time some Crimean Tatar participation was allowed.

Grigoriev, though, had a chequered political history. He originally supported the UPR, but then in turn gave his support to the Hetmanate, the Directorate, pro-

Bolshevik Borobists, and the Bolsheviks, before organising a peasant revolt against the Bolsheviks, which led to several anti-Jewish pogroms. The Bolsheviks, at this stage still advancing, forced Grigoriev to flee to the Makhnovschchina held territory in May. Makhno, though, opposed Grigoriev's anti-Jewish politics, and also suspected that he was about to join Denikin's forces. So Grigoriev was shot.<sup>100</sup> Some of his troops joined Makhno. Winning over such troops was necessary for both Makhno and the Bolsheviks in the battles they faced. But politically educating these troops out of their anti-Semitism often proved difficult, and any setbacks would see its revival.

Makhno led the reinvigorated Anarcho-Communist forces in Left Bank Ukraine, now organised as the Revolutionary Insurgent Army of Ukraine (RIAU). He was prepared to ally with the Bolsheviks against the Whites, Petlura and opportunistic otomans. RIUA supporters wanted the freedom to organise. But Makhno too was to be scorned, despite key Bolsheviks like Antonov-Oseenko and Bela Kun acknowledging both his military skills and strong peasant support. Yet the Bolsheviks still sent punitive expeditions against Makhno. This weakened Makhno's position, since he was now fighting on two fronts. Furthermore, these Bolshevik attacks contributed to a White breakthrough of the Bolsheviks' own front lines.



**Anton Denikin, Commander-in-Chief of the 'Russia One and Indivisible', Armed Forces of South Russia and a promoter of anti-Jewish pogroms**

A major consequence of the Bolsheviks' failure to engage positively with the Borotbists (mainly on the Right Bank) by recognising the importance of Ukrainian

self-determination, or with Makhno's RIAU (on the Left Bank) with its commitment to non-party controlled soviets, was the creation of a divide which enabled the White forces to advance. Their Armed Forces of Southern Russia (AFSR) were led by Anton Denikin, a strong supporter of 'Russia One and Indivisible'.

By this time, the remaining Entente allies were already reconsidering their tentative support, under Wilson's *Fourteen Points*, for national self-determination in the territories of the old Tsarist Russian empire. With the German and Austro-Hungarian surrender, the Entente was no longer looking to appeal to any nationalist forces there, who might continue participating in the war, in return for Entente recognition. They were now looking to the direct overthrow of the RSFSR. Denikin's AFSR, with its backing for 'Russia One and Indivisible' seemed to fit the bill.



- EFFECTIVELY CONTROLLED BY UKRAINIAN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC BY THE END OF NOVEMBER, 1919
- FURTHEST EXTENT OF RUSSIAN WHITE FORCES BY NOVEMBER 15, 1919
- "CURZON LINE": BRITISH-RECOMMENDED TEMPORARY EASTERN BORDER OF POLAND, 08.12.1919
- MODERN UKRAINE
- FRENCH OCCUPIED ZONE UP TO APRIL 1919
- AREA NEAR ODESA CONTROLLED BY GRIGORIEV UNTIL MAY 1919

### The balance of forces in Ukraine by the end of November 1919

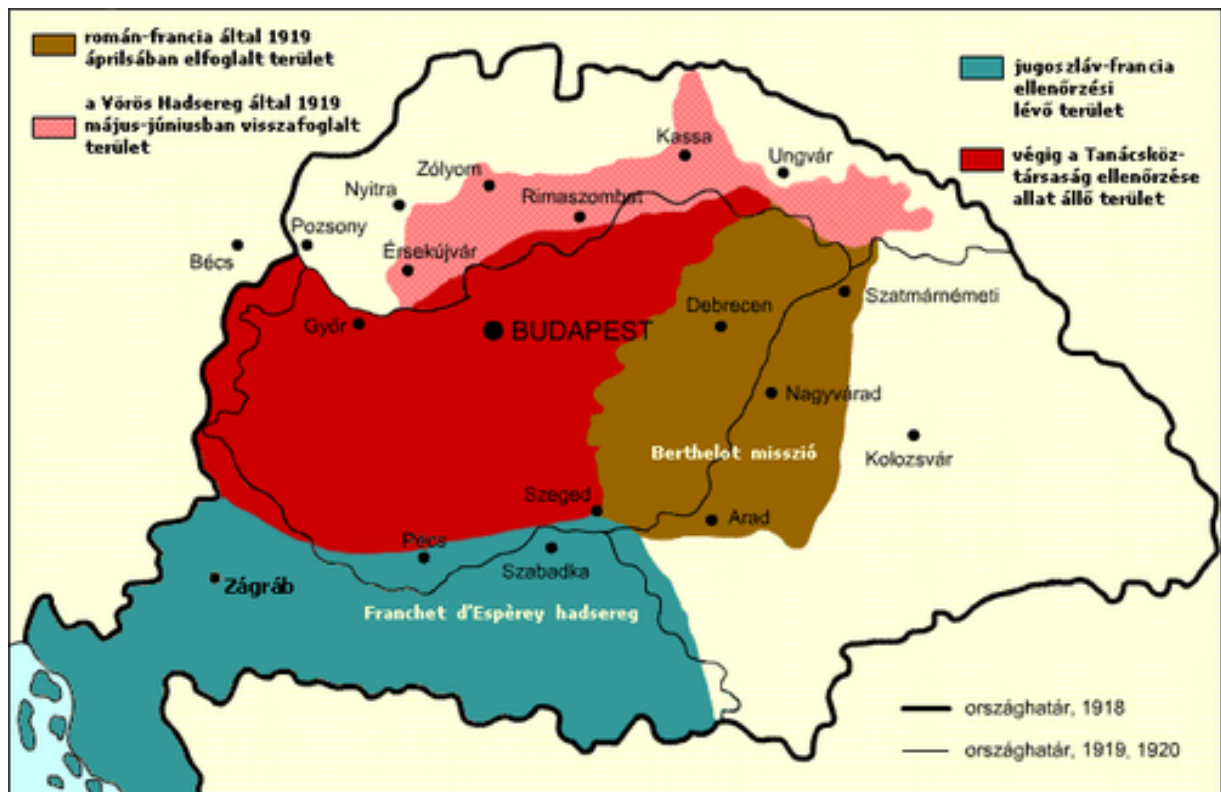
The AFSR made big inroads from Kuban into Bolshevik held territory. They overturned the Crimean SSR between June 23<sup>rd</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> 1919. In a desperate last-minute attempt to block the AFSR's advance on Odesa in August, backed by the British navy, the Bolsheviks tried to enlist peasants from the surrounding villages. Many deserted to the Whites. When the navy bombarded the Bolshevik garrison, the Bolshevik leaders decided to leave, some fighting their way to Zhitomir, ironically the last area held by the UPR after the RSFSR offensive in January 1918. After the fall of their Odessa Soviet, Bolshevik control hold over Ukraine had ended.<sup>101</sup>

By November 1919, the Bolsheviks held virtually no territory in Ukraine. A major contributory factor to this situation was the Bolshevik failure to appreciate the revolutionary possibilities of supporting the exercise of national self-determination, first in Moldovia, and then in Ukraine. Once the Bolsheviks had established the RSFSR and Sovnarkom, they no longer saw any role for this policy. Even when they made concessions, it was assumed these would be temporary before further 'assimilation' took its course. The Bolsheviks suppressed those trying to lead the struggles for national self-determination.

The Bolsheviks' failure to live up to the Sovnarkom's promises in the *Declaration* meant that they were often seen by others as upholders of Great Russian chauvinist policies. The Radical Left, who were strongly placed in the CP(b)U didn't help either, with their additional contempt for the peasantry.

The 'united' UNR and WUPR fared little better. The UNR had already lost Kyiv, their capital, to the Bolsheviks in January 1918, before it was taken by White forces in August. A much-shrunken UNR was now run from Vinnitsa. However, Polish forces had overwhelmed the WUPR by July 1918, ending the loose union established in January. The WUPR had received no help from Petlura. These territories would not be united again until the end of World War 2, in the wake of the Red Army's counter-offensive against the German Nazi forces.

However, in September 1919, Makhno regrouped the RIAU and rolled back the White offensive in eastern Ukraine. Makhno organised regional workers' conferences to bring about an Anarcho-Communist order. Although the Bolsheviks were quietly thankful for this first serious reverse to White forces on the southern front, they still were simultaneously planning the overthrow of the Makhnovshchina, as soon as circumstances allowed.



AREA SHOWN IN RED

Hungarian Soviet Republic, 21.3.-1.8.1919

AREA SHOWN IN PINK

Slovak Soviet Republic, 16.6. - 7.7.1919

AREA SHOWN IN BROWN

- Romanian armed forces

AREA SHOWN IN BLUE

Yugoslav armed forces

\_\_\_\_\_

Hapsburg Hungarian borders in 1918

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Hungarian borders in 1920

## Revolution and counter-revolution in Hungary and Slovakia from March to August 1919

When the chance next occurred to spread the revolutionary wave south-westwards, the Bolsheviks' recent actions undermined this, creating a hostile barrier area. They had done this by suppressing any manifestation of the exercise of Ukrainian sovereignty and alienating so many of the Ukrainian peasantry, in what turned out to be a crucial area in the ongoing International Revolutionary Wave.

The Hungarian Peoples' Republic had been unofficially declared on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1918. However, such was the level of dissatisfaction in a war-crippled Hungary that a Hungarian Soviet Republic was formed on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 1919. A Slovak Soviet Republic was then declared in the former Hapsburg Upper Hungarian province on June 16th.<sup>102</sup> For a short period, a Rus'ka Soviet was formed in a

Rusyn peopled part of Carpathian Ruthenia, which also had formerly been part of Hungary. This merged with the earlier Rus'ka Rada. They were keen to unite with the RSFSR rather than the WUPR,<sup>103</sup> but still lay beyond any effective RSFSR support, due to the RCP(b)'s counterproductive opposition to genuine self-determination.



**Bela Kun, founding member of the Party of Communists of Hungary and leader of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, 21.3.19–1.8.19**

The Hungarian Soviet Republic was led by Bela Kun (who came from a Jewish Hungarian assimilated background - the Kuns once being the Cohns). Kun was a founder member of the Party of the Communists of Hungary (KMP), formed in December 1918. This party drew its members mainly from the Social Democratic Party of Hungary (MSZDP). They had long looked to expected capitalist development to increase the numbers of the working class. They took little interest in the Hungarian aristocratic landlords' exploitation and oppression of the peasantry, waiting instead for many to be forced by poverty into the Hungarian working class.

Despite Kun claiming RSFSR support for the Hungarian SR against invading imperialist-backed Romanian, Czechoslovak and Serbian forces, the Sovnarkom was unable to provide any such military assistance. Bolshevik policies in the territories once controlled by the MDR and in Ukraine had undermined the possibility of making such links. By mid-1919, the RSFSR's Red Army was too heavily involved in its own struggles trying to halt the White advance in Ukraine (and Russia) to provide help for the Hungarian SR.

Furthermore, support for the KMP, was largely confined to Budapest and a few other industrial centres. Isolated from the RSFSR and with virtually no support in the countryside, the KMP had to depend on limited local support. It resorted to Red terror in an attempt to maintain control. Support began to wane. The Hungarian SR could not muster enough forces to counter the Romanian army invading from the east.

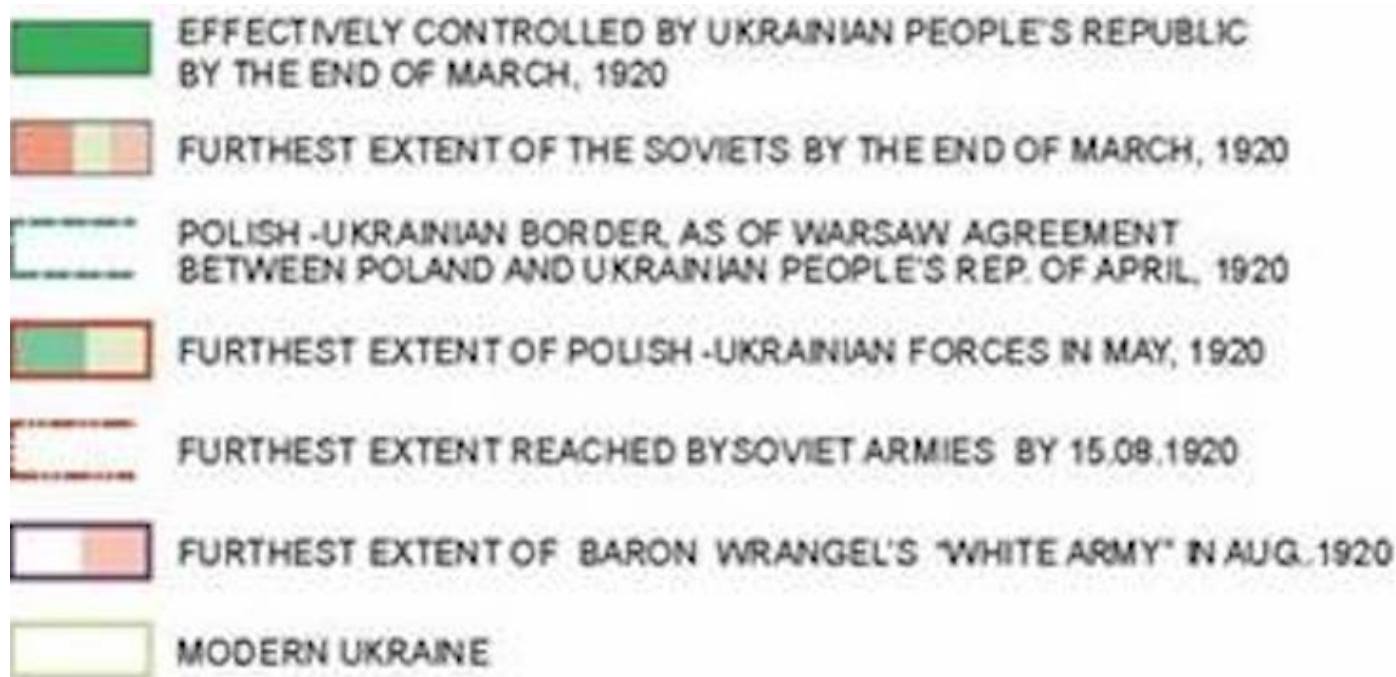


**Former Admiral Miklos Horthy and Pal Prónay, brutal Hungarian National Army officer, and White Guard officer responsible for White Terror and anti-Jewish pogroms from August 1919 until 1920**

The Hungarian SR was overthrown on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1919. Hungary was soon subjected to White terror and anti-Jewish pogroms led by Hungarian National Army officer, Pal Prónay, backed by former Hungarian Admiral Miklos Horthy. Prónay was a sadist who sought to “restore the traditional good relations between the landlords and estate servants, ‘which in essence meant enforcing obedience by the Hungarian servant class.’”<sup>104</sup> The viciousness with which the new counter-revolutionary regime suppressed the peasantry, who had not given their support to the Hungarian SR regime, suggests that traditional MSZDP indifference to the peasantry, inherited by the KMP, also contributed to a missed opportunity here.

Meanwhile the Romanian government took over the majority Romanian-speaking Transylvania from Hungary. But it also continued its occupation and looting of other remaining Hungarian state territory until 1920.

The revolutionary road south-west to Budapest and Vienna had been well and truly blocked. However, the belief amongst many Bolsheviks, that workers and peasants would welcome an invading Red Army on a class basis, and not just see them as the latest version of Great Russian imperialism, was to come to the fore again in 1920, when Bolshevik forces advanced upon Poland's capital, Warsaw.



### Ukraine between March and August 1920

After the major setbacks the Sovnarkom forces had faced by November 1919, they began to advance again in 1920 in both Russia and Ukraine. Rolling back both White and UNR forces, they created a wedge between them, asserting control over most of Ukraine once more (as they had in January 1918, and by March 1919, before being forced to retreat).

The 'Russia One and Indivisible' Whites' support for the landlord class, and the UNR's courting of the Poles (who had formed the landlord class in western Ukraine) made many Ukrainian peasants see the Bolsheviks as the 'lesser of evils.' The Bolsheviks might forcibly requisition their produce, but they left the peasants in control of their land. The approach from the west of the Poles, also led to mounting concerns amongst the Ukrainian peasantry.

Under such threats, and also under Bolshevik pressure, Borotbist members, dissolved their party in May 1920. Borotbist members were admitted to the RCP(b) front organisation, the CP(b)U.



**Yurii Lapchynsky – former Federal Oppositionist in CP(b)U and founder member of the Ukrainian Communist Party - Ukapists**

A smaller Left breakaway from the Right/Centre dominated USDLP, was formed in at a conference in Kyiv between 22<sup>nd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> January 1920.<sup>105</sup> One of the

founding members of this new Ukrainian Communist Party, usually known as the Ukapisty, was Yurii Lapchynsky. He was a former comrade of Shakhrai (co-author of the *On the Current Situation in the Ukraine*). In 1919, Lapchynsky had headed a Federalist Opposition within the CP(b)U.<sup>106</sup> He had wanted a Ukraine, equal and federated with the RSFSR and for the CP(b)U to be an independent party within the Third International. The Ukapisty supported the first demand but, understanding the RCP(b) branch office nature of the CP(b)U, now wanted to be the direct Ukrainian Communist representatives at the Third International. Ukapisty also attracted some former Borotbists members who had not joined the CP(b)U. The Ukapisty were the latest manifestation of the Ukrainian 'Internationalism from Below' which began with Iurkevich in the old USDLP, had been seen in the Borotbists, and in the opposition within the CP(b)U.



**Semyon Dimanstein and Esther Frumkin, two leading members of the Yevsektiya, the Jewish section of the RCP(b)**

The experience of Jewish people in Ukrainian cities and shetls, under both the White and UNR otoman pogromists, also pushed members of specifically Jewish parties towards the Bolsheviks. There were pogroms in Bolshevik held areas, but the Bolsheviks disciplined such actions. For many Jews, from different class backgrounds, it was often a question of little more than 'the least of all evils'. The Bolsheviks had long had Russian assimilated Jewish members in their leadership (something the Right highlighted, both in 'Russia One and Indivisible' and their

international allies). Now, as in Ukraine with the CP(b)U, the RCP(b) created a front organisation. The Yevseksiya was set up for Jewish members in 1918.<sup>107</sup> The Yevseksiya supported eventual Jewish assimilation. Even many Bundists, with their recent close links to the Mensheviks and initially to the UDR, turned towards the Bolsheviks and joined the Yevseksiya



**The flag of the Jewish Communist Party (Paolie Zion) – the Ekopists**

But it was the Left in the Marxist Zionist party, Poale Zion, which created a Jewish Communist Party (Poalie Zion), often known as Ekopists.<sup>108</sup> The Ekoptists' first conference was held in August 1919, in Gomel (just north of Ukraine), whilst its second conference was held in Kharkhiv in July 1920. Their working language was Yiddish. In Ukraine, the Ekopists had both Right and Left Bank bureaux. Unlike the Ukrainian Communists, the Ekoptists did not seek any territorial self-determination (except in Palestine, facing the same 'problem' as other Zionists, where Arabs formed the large majority of the population) but supported the Yiddish language and promoted other aspects of Jewish culture in the new RSFSR. The Ekopists argued for a more autonomous Jewish section of the Third International than that provided by the Yevseksiya. This was denied.

As the RSFSR's forces advanced again, Symon Petliura, leader of a shrinking UNR, had decided to seek the support of Josef Pilsudski's Polish forces. Pilsudski had already been fighting against the Soviet forces in Byelorussia, although now stalled there. He still entertained thoughts of the newly independent Poland recreating the historic Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania (with its Polish, Lithuanian, Byelorussian and Ukrainian territories). Petliura made a deal by which the UNR abandoned any claim to the WUPR, in return for Polish armed assistance against the Bolsheviks.

Furthermore, even after Denikin's resignation from the AFSR in April 1920, the Whites' reformed Russian Army, now under Pyotr Wrangel, continued to receive some, albeit declining, support from the British. So, the threat of both Polish revanchism and of 'Russia One and Indivisible' chauvinism, and of even more anti-Jewish pogroms, increased the pull of many on the Ukrainian and Jewish Left towards the Bolsheviks.

Pilsudski launched a joint Polish/UNR offensive in late April 1920. They captured Kyiv by May 7<sup>th</sup>. Wrangel's Russian Army also advanced out of Crimea towards Kherson. However, an unexpected Soviet counter-offensive, launched in June, pushed Polish forces back almost to Warsaw by August. For many Bolsheviks, particularly Trotsky and the Radical Left, this seemed to open up the revolutionary road west to Berlin, or a second attempt to do what the Bolsheviks had not been able to do in response to the outbreak of the Hungarian Revolution in 1919 – spread the revolution beyond the old Tsarist empire's borders.

However, this prospect was to be thwarted again by the limitations of both the Russian Bolsheviks' and the Polish Radical Left's understanding of the issue of national self-determination. For Lenin and the Bolsheviks, this was no longer of any concern in most former Tsarist territory, now that the Sovnarkom held power in Moscow. For the Polish Radical Left, now Communists, the issue of national self-determination had never been of any immediate concern, just something to be settled administratively after the revolution was over.



**A demonstration organised by the Communist Workers Party of Poland in Lodz on May Day 1919**

The Communist Workers Party of Poland (KPRP) had been formed through an amalgamation of Luxemburg's old SDKPL and the PPS-Left in December 1918. This party inherited two features of the Radical Left – its opposition to Polish

independence and indifference to the plight of the peasantry. In the immediate post-WW1 days of largely unfocussed revolutionary enthusiasm, the KPRP was initially successful in creating over a hundred workers' councils in Poland.<sup>109</sup> But opposition in these councils from PPS members, strongly supporting Polish independence, and counterposing this to immediate revolutionary economic and social measures, meant that these workers' councils were unable to form an Executive to contest power with the new Polish government. The government also applied armed pressure to the workers' councils. By July 1919 these councils had been brought to an end.

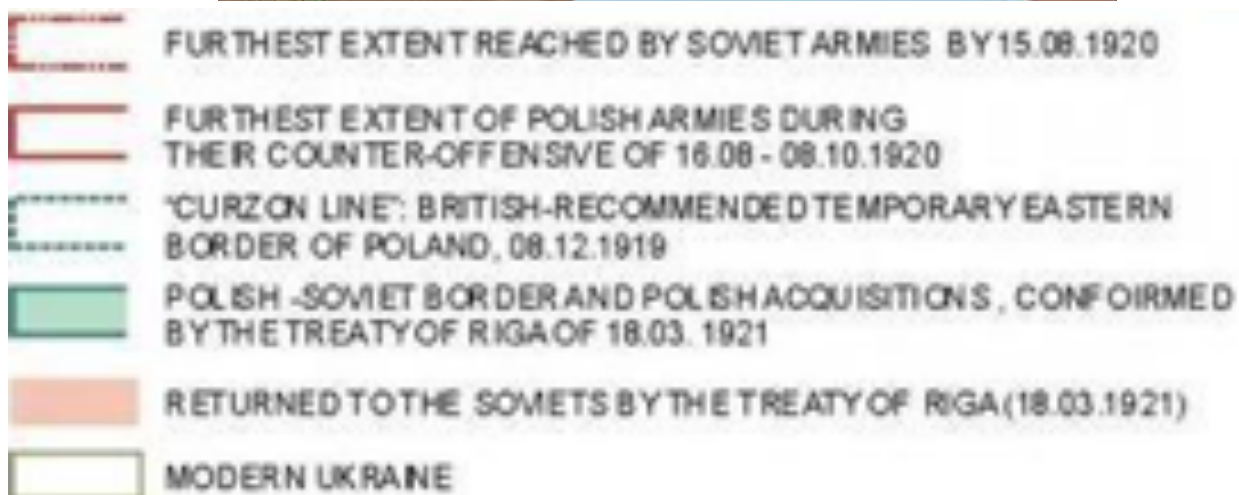
The KPRP's attitude towards the peasantry also proved to be counterproductive. Opposition to landlordism was strong enough that the peasant based, Republic of Tarnobrzeg,<sup>110</sup> was formed between November 1918 and Spring 1919. It was led by the radical priest Eugeniusz Okon and Tomasz Dubai<sup>111</sup> (who later joined the KPRP and became Vice-President of the Comintern's Krestintern – the Peasants' International - only to be killed later under Stalin's purges). However, in 1919 the KPRP did not support peasant control of the land.

By the time of the Soviet invasion in 1920, the KPRP knew that it didn't enjoy enough workers' support to mount supportive action in Poland's cities. Instead, the RCP(b) leadership created a KPRP-fronted, Provisional Polish Revolutionary Committee (PPRC) in Moscow on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1920. In the wake of the invading Soviet Army, the PPRC got no further than the Polish border city of Bialystok. A similarly motivated Galician Revolutionary Committee (GRC) was created by the RCP(b)'s front organisation, the CP(b)U in Kyiv on 8<sup>th</sup>, July. On August 1<sup>st</sup>, in the wake of another invading Soviet Army, the GRC was able to set up a Galician Soviet Republic in Ternopol (in what had been the eastern area of the WUPR until July 1919). This initially enjoyed better prospects than the PPRC, since here there was some significant Ukrainian opposition to Pilsudski's Polish forces, unlike in Poland itself.

But it wasn't only widespread opposition in Poland to what were seen as Great Russian invading imperialist forces, that stalled the Soviet offensive. France, Poland's ally, had already provided a French Military Mission to Poland, under General Paul Prosper Henrys to work with the Polish General Staff.<sup>112</sup> Their training and intelligence services proved to be useful in the Battle for Warsaw between Polish and Soviet forces between August 12<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>. Furthermore, although not required, a wider Inter-Allied Mission to Poland, including the British, had also been set up. There was unlikely to be an easy revolutionary road west to Berlin.

Following their defeat near Warsaw, the Soviet armies were now in retreat. But the Polish counter-offensive slowed down, once it had regained all its own recently lost territory and enough of Ukraine (mainly in eastern Galicia) and Byelorussia to satisfy Polish nationalist demands. Polish forces only moved further to occupy Vilnius/Vilna in October (Poles 56%, Jews, 36%). This largely Polish peopled, city with a large Jewish minority (sometimes called the ‘Jerusalem of the North’), had been in the hands of the RSFSR’s Lithuanian ally, following the Soviet-Lithuanian Treaty of July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1920.

The RSFSR had already been making treaties on its western border with other newly established Baltic states, so that they would act as a barrier to European imperialist interventions. The Treaty of Tartu with Estonia was signed on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1920, following White Russian, General Nikolay Yudenich’s attempted invasion from Tallinn to Petrograd. The Treaty of Riga was signed with Latvia on August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1920.



## **Borders after Treaty of Riga on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1922, between the RSFSR and Poland**

Both Poland and the RSFSR had a motivation to come to an agreement. On March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1921, the RSFSR and Poland signed another Treaty of Riga. This satisfied Poland, which gave up some occupied territory. Bolshevik thinking was that the truncated Byelorussian and Ukrainian SSRs would act as poles of attraction for Byelorussian and Ukrainian minorities within Poland. The Communist Party of East Galicia (later West Ukraine) and the Communist Party of Western Byelorussia<sup>113</sup>, were set up as autonomous parties within the KPRP to promote this strategy in Poland.<sup>114</sup>

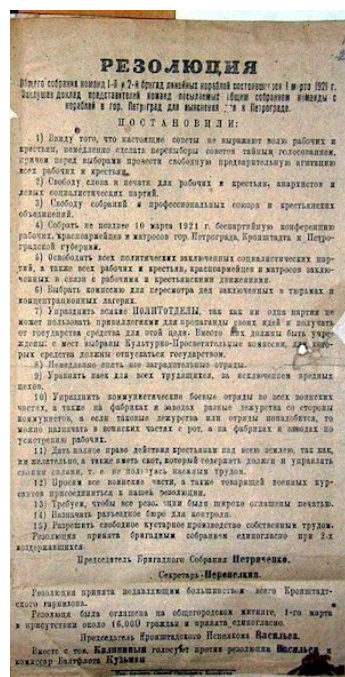


**Map showing Moldavian Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic formed in 1924 from the Ukrainian SSR territory.**

This thinking was further extended in 1924 when the Moldavian ASSR was carved out of Dnstr territory in Ukrainian SSR<sup>115</sup> to act as a pole of attraction to Moldavians. This ASSR was absorbed into the new Moldovan SSR, created from conquered Romanian territory, following the Hitler Stalin Pact in 1939. The whole of Moldavia was then lost when Hitler reneged on the Pact and handed Moldavia and Odesa to the Romanians in 1941. When the Red Army conquered Romania, the Moldavian SSR was recreated in 1944. However, with the collapse of the USSR, a new Republic of Moldova was formed in 1991, but Russian backed separatists remained in control of the Transnistrian territory, but they now increasingly ditched any Moldavian identity. Territorial decisions taken in these early days of the RSFSR and USSR have had long-standing effects.

Although, RCP(b) attempts to ‘internationalise’ their revolution had failed, in the post-1917 years of the 1916-21 International Revolutionary Wave, so too had

Allied attempts to intervene in the RSFSR. Admiral Alexander Kolchak, White Russian ruler in Siberia had been the British chosen successor to the ousted Provisional Government. He declared himself the Supreme Ruler of Russia. He pursued a ruthless policy of bloody counter-revolution, but his forces were defeated by the Red Army. The Bolsheviks now controlled all of Siberia west of Lake Baikal. Kolchak was arrested and shot on the February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1920. This led to the Allies transferring their support to first Commander-in-Chief in South Russia, Anton Denikin, who resigned in April 1920, and then to General Pyotr Wrangel, with decreasing enthusiasm and success. Meanwhile, in July 1919 the White Russian Northern Army had also been left behind by the US occupying forces in Archangelsk and the British occupying forces in Murmansk. Many in the White Army defected to the Reds and these cities were taken on February 21<sup>st</sup> and March 13<sup>th</sup>, 1920.<sup>116</sup> Wrangel's White Russian Army was defeated by the Red Army in Crimea by November 1920,<sup>117</sup> with many evacuated, whilst those remaining were nearly all killed. Those who were evacuated were then subsequently completely demobilised.<sup>118</sup>



## The Petropavlosk Resolution from the March 1921 Kronstadt Rising

It took until August 1921 for the Bolsheviks to finally defeat Makhno and his RIAU.<sup>119</sup> This was less than six months after the Kronstadt Rising of March 1<sup>st</sup>–18<sup>th</sup>.<sup>120</sup> It was during this Rising that the Petropavlosk Resolution<sup>121</sup> was issued by a delegation of Kronstadt-based ship crews. The essence of this resolution was the demand to restore real power to the soviets. The sailors had visited striking workers in nearby Petrograd. Lenin's, Trotsky's and Zinoviev's response to this was brutal suppression.

One attack made by Bolshevik leaders on the rebel sailors was that their ranks had been diluted by Ukrainian peasants.<sup>122</sup> However, three quarters of the Kronstadt sailors were 1917 veterans. But, given their own experiences, any former Ukrainian peasants now also there may have been particularly keen supporters of two points in the Petropavlovsk Resolutions - “8. To abolish immediately all Bolshevik units armed to suppress traffic and confiscate foodstuffs”, and “11. To give the peasants full freedom of action in regard to their land, and also the right to keep cattle, on condition that the peasants manage with their own means; that is, without employing hired labour.



**Map of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics formed in 1922 showing the extent of the Russian SFSR (pink), Ukrainian (pale green) Byelorussian (mauve) and Trans-Caucasian (yellow) SSRs and the Bukharan and Khorezm Peoples' Soviet Republics (green).**

The bloody crushing of the Kronstadt Rising marked the end of the 1916-21 International Revolutionary Wave. From this point any possibilities of soviet regeneration disappeared and the RSFSR soon became consolidated as a new unionist state – the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics declared on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1922. This course was decided by the RCP(b) leadership, but signed in the name of the Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian and Transcaucasian SSRs.

However, the change of name by the all-Russia CP(b) to the All-Union CP(b) - A-UCP(b) - came somewhat as an afterthought three years later on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1925. Although the increasingly rearguard actions of Ukrainian Communists, particularly the still legal, but heavily RCP(b) monitored and manipulated Ukapists, had their effect.

The Ukapists pushed the leaders of the new USSR initially to pursue a more liberal devolutionary unionist policy in Ukraine, termed 'Ukrainisation'.<sup>123</sup> 'Ukrainisation' brought about some undoubted benefits. This policy was even supported by some former Radical Left supporters, like Rakovsky, who was now beginning to worry about Stalin's Great Russian bureaucratisation of the state.<sup>124</sup>

However, Rakovsky was unable to get any support from Trotsky, who had been asked by an ailing Lenin, to challenge Stalin's own hypocritical support for Korenizatsya (indigenisation) (especially with regard to Georgia) at the 12th party Congress. Instead, Trotsky made a deal with Stalin,<sup>125</sup> which allowed Stalin to appear to be the main proponent of Korenizatsya at this congress.



**The Peoples Commissariat of Nationalities (Narkomats) showing its Chair, Josef Stalin in second row, next to Lenin**

Therefore, having crushed all initiative from below, 'Ukrainisation' was always going to be implemented in a top-down manner, by officials appointed by the People's Commissariat of Nationalities (Narkomats), with the approval of the A-UCP(b). But any political self-determination was impossible in what, after the

Kronstadt Rising, had become a One-Party State, where that one party treated the raising of this issue to be a crime against the state.

And Korenizatsya seemed to resemble the old Austro-Marxist support for cultural autonomy, as a substitute for political self-determination. This had been previously much denigrated by Lenin in particular. But now that the Bolsheviks exercised control over a large proportion of the inherited Tsarist Russian empire, support for cultural autonomy could help perform the same function as it had for the Austro-Marxists. Only now this was done to maintain the imperialist unionist state of the USSR. A Radical Left like Rakovsky could support this, at a time when it appeared that the revolution was secured following the defeat of the Whites and their imperial allies.

But whatever is granted by a bureaucratic state can be taken away by it under different political circumstances. Stalin was leader of the Narkomats when Korenizastya and ‘Ukrainisation’ was introduced and when they were suppressed. Stalin, though, was able to retain the individual Socialist Republics (SRs) constituting the USSR. This was done by his vicious personal dictatorship, exercised through his control of the A-UCP (b) and its branch offices in the individual SRs. The only remnant of Korenizatsya was the appointment of local leaders. But their job was now to transmit orders downwards from Stalin. Thus Nikita Krushchev, whose family moved to Ukraine when he was very young, became head of the CP(b)U at the height of the Great Purges<sup>126</sup> and the Holodomor.<sup>127</sup>

Putin hasn’t the same degree of central control over the Russian Federation that Stalin gained over the USSR, but he is aware of the older more liberal unionist, ‘Ukrainisation’ policy. So, in order to erase its memory, Putin has fallen back on an even older tradition – ‘Russia One and Indivisible’. And his state licensed ‘opposition’, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, invoke Stalin’s later turn. They support the Putin-led Brown/‘Red’ alliance and his war against Ukrainian independence.

## **i) Conclusion**

This article has outlined the development of ‘Internationalism from Below’ politics by focussing mainly on three significant contributors, Kazimierz Kelles-Kreuz in Poland, James Connolly in Ireland and Lev Iurkevich in Ukraine. They

challenged the two competing orthodoxies found in the Second International, when it came to the 'National Question'. These were represented by Kaul Kautsky of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) and Otto Bauer and Karl Renner, members of the Social Democratic Labour Party of Austria (SDAPO), who have been called Austro-Marxists. These two parties operated in the Hohenzollern German and Hapsburg Austrian empires respectively. The first of these empires was overwhelmingly German by nationality, the second had large German, Hungarian and Slav populations. This led the SPD and SDAPO to adopt different approaches to the 'National Question'. But common to both was their desire to retain the territorial unity of their empires.

And underpinning such thinking was a deeper Social Democratic theory, advocated by Kautsky in particular. This argued for the 'progressive' nature of the assimilation of nationalities, nations and their peoples' languages under capitalism and imperialism. Both Rosa Luxemburg and later Vladimir Lenin supported Kautsky over this and attacked the Austro-Marxists, who supported greater cultural self-determination. But along with Luxemburg and Lenin, the Austro-Marxists remained strong supporters of the continuation of a single territorial state, the one they hoped to inherit from the empires they lived and worked in.

Luxemburg thought that she was strengthening Kautsky's theory by abandoning any support for the right of national self-determination (apart from in the pre-capitalist world) in order to speed up assimilation. As somebody from a Jewish background, she had assimilated to both German and Polish-Russian cultures. Lenin, quoting Kautsky, was just as keen a supporter of assimilation, although acknowledging the need for some transitional use of minority languages.

Lenin also argued that support for the right of national self-determination remained important, first in his 'second' (and later 'third') 'worlds' then, after the 1916 Easter Rising, in selected parts of his 'first world' too. However, Lenin also thought that as soon as the exploited and oppressed (or later the party claiming to act on their behalf) took power, then this demand became counter-revolutionary. At this point, Lenin shared much common ground with the Luxemburg's Radical Left supporters.

Today, we are far more aware of the importance of maintaining diversity - ecological and human. The first view forms a much sounder basis for a sustainable society than the assumed 'progressiveness' of increased capitalist domination of

the environment and homogenisation of society, once supported by most Social Democrats, as providing the basis for a future Socialism. We increasingly understand that subjection to capitalist and imperialist conditions leads to environmental degradation with a decline in the number of species and reduced genetic diversity. This threatens humanity with another form of barbarism, previously only associated by many Socialists with increasingly deadly military technologies and wars. So rather than the prospect of severe societal retrogression or human extinction, Eco-socialists promote re-diversification in a more environmentally sustainable society.

The second view also questions those Social Democrats who argued that increased human equality was linked to the ending of much human diversity, including 'minor' languages and 'non-historic' peoples. Thus, many Social Democrats joined imperialist ideologues who thought that such 'progress' was inevitable, even when this led to the extinction of particular peoples or cultures and languages.

But now more people recognise that standardisation and linguistic assimilation usually takes place in a destructive manner under capitalist and imperialist conditions. This has contributed to an understanding that the elimination of economic and social inequality is the best means to encourage greater diversity, whether it be cultural or in personal relationships.

Modern-day Communists (who also act as Republican Socialists in the immediate political conditions we face today) look beyond anti-capitalism and the nationalisation promoted by nation states. In the past, some Socialists were prepared to support those incipient nationalities and nations which were being drawn into capitalist relations. Today, though, there is a recognition that there are still indigenous peoples on this planet who have little desire to be subjected to capitalist relations. This we need to support Indigenous struggles defending their land, environments, communities and languages.

And the championing of migrant rights is also very important today. There are an estimated 280 million migrants in the world, making them the fourth largest group, after the Chinese, Indians, and US Americans. We support women and people of all sexualities - LGBT+. We seek to unite our class in its diversity. When support for BIPOC, migrants and LBGT+ is linked to the struggles for the exercise of national self-determination, this represents a civic national approach, which can act as a transition to a world without borders, under changed socio-economic

conditions. Thus, we can see this as preparing the ground for a more diverse society in the future.

During an earlier period of history, instead of states privileging particular nationalities as they do today, they were often based on the supremacy of particular religions – Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Calvinist or Moslem (Sunni and Shia). But few people today would argue that, in order that people can be secure in the practice of their religion, the state must either enforce territorial supremacy or privilege for their particular religion. And few would have any difficulty in recognising that those who currently are trying to enforce Christian, Jewish and Muslim supremacy or privilege constitute one of the most reactionary forces in the world.

Wherever religious supremacy has been ended in secular states, specific religions have not been eliminated. This has led, not just to a growth in agnosticism, atheism and non-religious humanism, but to a greater diversity of religions. In the future, it is possible to envisage an analogous post nation-state society, where people are free to express their national and linguistic characteristics without the need for a state to privilege their nationality or language over those of others. And under such conditions assimilation and hybridisation would also occur, only it would be voluntary not coerced, as is often the case at present.

Connolly and Kelles-Kreuz were already thinking in terms of defending diversity when they pointed out the destructive role of British, Russian, German and Austro-Hungarian imperialism. They defended the struggles of oppressed nations, nationalities and their languages in the face of imperial pressure. This is what led them to demand, not the reform of existing empires, or the retention of inherited imperial frameworks to advance Socialism, but a Socialist Republican, ‘Internationalism from Below’ break-up of existing empires. This is a key feature of an ‘Internationalism from Below’ approach to politics.

Kelles-Kreuz, before his premature death in 1905, was already taking on not just Kautsky and the Austro-Marxists, but Luxemburg too. Lenin had not yet emerged as a major international figure. Over a decade later, although Iurkevich never came round to advocating the complete break-up of the territory inherited from the Russian empire, he showed how Lenin’s paper support for the right of national self-determination, in the absence of any Socialist organisational commitment, would merely lead to a Great Russian supremacy in a new form. Iurkevich also

had a better understanding of the early tsarist forms of empire and their Great Russian continuity under changing economic conditions.

This article has also emphasised that Kelles-Kreuz, Connolly and Iurkevich developed a distinctive organisational practice. For Kelles-Kreuz, this took the form of a defence of PPS sectional autonomy within the SPD, over which he clashed with Luxemburg. Both Connolly and Iurkevich championed the need for independent parties, based on the nations of the oppressed (those denied the right to exercise national self-determination), operating within an International. Connolly clashed with the British Left (SDF/BSP and ILP in particular) and Iurkevich with Lenin and the Bolsheviks over this. These three Socialist Republicans' organisational practice formed another key feature of an 'Internationalism from Below' approach to politics.

Such organisational practice was developed in pre-war struggles, which included the 1904-7 International Revolutionary Wave, World War One (WW1), and the consequent International Revolutionary Wave from 1916. Within these struggles, the advocates of 'Internationalism from Below', sometimes worked alongside, and at other times contested, the supporters of the Radical Left (often inspired by Luxemburg) and Lenin's Bolsheviks.

The last three sections of the second part of this article show how the politics of the three components of the International Left played out after the outbreak of WW1 in 1914, through the 1916-21 International Revolutionary Wave, to the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1922.

Connolly was to the fore when WW1 broke out. He created a Socialist Republican, Syndicalist, Women's Suffragist, Cumann na mBan (CnmB) and Irish Republican Brotherhood coalition in Ireland. This was linked to Jim Larkin in the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and the Irish-, Finnish-, and German-American Socialist opposition to the US signing up for WW1. They formed a significant part of the opposition which prevented the USA joining the war until 1917. Connolly and his coalition also played a leading part in undermining Irish recruitment to the British army. This led to the Irish having a lower WW1 death rate than Scotland, Wales or England, when the Irish, along with Scots, had been previously over-represented in the British army.

Connolly was shot after the 1916 Easter Rising and his own Socialist Republican pole of attraction within the wider Republican coalition became marginalised.

However, the activities of CnmB activists highlights the possibilities that existed if a specifically Socialist Republican organisation could have been maintained. CnmB campaigned to ensure that Irish Republicanism became linked to ending women's oppression. It was probably the most committed organisation supporting social Republicanism during the attacks of the 'counter-revolution within the revolution' of the Civil War (June 1922 to May 1923).

Following the outbreak WW1, both Lenin and Iurkevich had to live in exile in Switzerland. Luxemburg spent most of the time in German jails. They all tried to develop a new international organisation. Lenin was present at, and Iurkevich was involved in the Zimmerwald and Kienthal International Left conferences in 1915 and 1916. Luxemburg, writing under a pseudonym, could only get occasional contributions smuggled out, particularly her *Junius* pamphlet. Nevertheless, other Radical Left supporters, e.g. Karl Radek, who had made it into exile, contributed to the debates over the 'National Question'.

The 1916 Easter Rising, which occurred at the same time as the Kienthal conference, played a major part in the subsequent debates. In the absence of any major Irish contribution, following Connolly's execution, it was Lenin's response which contributed most to the thinking of the International Left. But his *The Discussion on Self Determination Summed Up* was largely confined to a debate between Lenin's view of national self-determination, the Kautskyites and particularly the Radical Left. On the International Left this work came to be seen as authoritative on the Rising, and Lenin's most advanced contribution on the wider 'National Question'.

Of greater significance for the then immediate future, Lenin saw the Rising (and other national and social revolts), which had by now broken out against the brutal effects of the war, or the war itself, as marking the shift to a period of International Socialist Revolution. Therefore, Lenin continued his work to prepare for a new International and to clandestinely build the political organisation in the Tsarist Russian empire, which could contribute to this.

Following the outbreak of the February 1917 Revolution, Lenin transformed the Bolsheviks' Workers' and Peasants' Republic variation of what had previously been orthodox Social Democrats' recognition of the need for an immediate Democratic Revolution. Now Lenin argued that the new political order should be based on the soviet not parliamentary democracy. These soviets were for both workers and peasants (as well as for soldiers and sailors).

The outbreak of the 'Russian' Revolution in February 1917 soon persuaded any wavering Bolsheviks of the reality of International Socialist Revolution. They had also developed an organisation, the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (bolshevik) (from 1912) and soon the all-Russia Communist Party (bolshevik) from March 1918, to influence the course of events. And for the wider International Left, the October 1917 Revolution confirmed the old Tsarist Russian empire was now the epicentre of the International Revolutionary Wave.

All three components of the International Left saw the International Revolutionary Wave as the direct consequence of prior capitalist and imperialist developments. These had led to the First World War and the massive 'blood sacrifices' demanded of the exploited and oppressed. Those Social Democrats on the Right and Centre had closed down the Second International in order to retreat behind their own ruling classes. Hoping that their own particular ruling class would emerge victorious, they shut up shop, and suspended class politics until the end of the war, waiting for the restoration of 'normal' parliamentary politics.

But the outbreak of the International Revolutionary Wave, which spilled over state boundaries, also threatened any return to 'normal' parliamentary politics. So now these self-same Social Democrats had to fall in behind Right wing clampdowns, or in the defeated states, e.g. Germany, initiate the Right wing clampdown. These attacks were targeted upon Social Democracy's previous, but now more disillusioned and angry supporters amongst the exploited and oppressed and the new Communist forces leading them.

And when the International Revolutionary Wave broke out in Russia, the imperial ruling classes, lesser national ruling classes seeking national aggrandisement, and the old Social Democrats denied this, and only saw local phenomena, the product of particular national conditions. Furthermore, they maintained there was no deep discontent (or any that could not be addressed) in their own states. They claimed that any attempts to build international solidarity were down to the machinations of the International Left, or more colloquially just the 'Bolsheviks'.

One particular role, though, was reserved for those Social Democrats, who had, or still did, share party and trade union organisational membership with the Communists. To undermine their influence, these Social Democrats claimed that Russia was too economically underdeveloped, and hence needed a long period of capitalism before they proceed could to Socialism. This revealed two things, first

their own view that Socialism was an affair confined to national states. Secondly, despite being Social Democrats in the economically more developed states which were needed to develop Socialism, they were still remarkably reticent to bring this about when this meant challenging their own ruling class and state.

The ruling classes in the post-WW1 victor nations were prepared to restore 'normal' parliamentary politics, but only to a minority of the exploited, those within the dominant state, and certainly not those in their empires. Such excluded territories could be very close to home, as UK state actions showed in Ireland. Here 'normal' parliamentary politics (which had never been that normal anyhow) were not restored, since the Irish had temerity to democratically vote to secede from the UK. And the Orange regime in the remnant Northern Ireland proved to be far from normal either. And when it came to Black and Asian migrants and their descendants, they too did not come within the scope of 'normal' parliamentary politics but were subjected to vicious attacks in the so-called 'race riots' of 1919.

And the ruling classes in the defeated imperial states (e.g. in Germany); those who felt they had not received enough of the victors' booty (e.g. in Italy); and those ruling classes in nation states looking for further territorial aggrandisement (e.g. Poland and Romania), showed little commitment to 'normal' parliamentary politics even within their own states. Instead, they resorted to various forms of Authoritarian Right regimes, including Fascist. Furthermore, the 1929 Great Crash also undermined the economies of the victor states. Growing sections of their ruling classes began to question 'normal' parliamentary politics too; just like their equivalents today, following the 2008 Financial Crash.

But during the 1916-21 International Revolutionary Wave, the International Left had never made any claim that Socialism could be successfully built in economically less developed states, or in individual economically developed states for that matter. They all saw the International Socialist Revolution, which toppled the weakest link in the imperialist chain, Tsarist Russia, as providing an example and a trigger for the toppling of other regimes, beginning with those most weakened by WW1.

The International Revolutionary Wave was real, and despite the accusations of the Social Democrats, would have occurred anyway. The job of the International Left was not to manufacture what wasn't there, but to provide organisational focus leading to the transformation of society, to avoid the repeat of such disasters. Failing this, capitalism would impose its own brutal conditions for the

reimposition of order and profitability and prepare for new wars. Following the International Left's defeat, this is indeed what happened.

After 1919, the International Revolutionary Wave ebbed, it became much more difficult to spread the revolution, turning the infant RSFSR in on itself. However, the advocates of 'Internationalism from Below' argued for a different way of relating to the national democratic struggles which had become widespread in this revolutionary wave, especially within the former empires. And the key empire, at the epicentre of this revolutionary wave, was the Tsarist Russian empire. The deeply embedded imperial relationship between Russia and its many constituent nations, nationalities (already existing or embryonic) and indigenous peoples did not disappear because a revolutionary leadership had taken control of its territories. The new Russian SFSR took over many of these territories, and under the new all-Russia CP(b) began to replicate a Great Russian way of handling politics.

However, in Ukraine, this was challenged by Communists who went beyond Iurkevich and accepted the reality of immediate International Socialist Revolution and the centrality of soviets. The emergence of the Ukrainian Communist Party, (borotbist) – the Borotbists - from the Left of the Ukrainian Social Revolutionary Party in May 1918 was a significant indicator of this. So was the emergence of the Ukrainian Communist Party – the Ukapists in January 1920 from the Left of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Labour Party, which Iurkevich had been a member of. Furthermore, such was the impact of the unfolding struggle from below, it impacted directly on the Bolshevik-led Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU). Serhii Mazlakh and Versyl' Shakhrai published their devastating *On the Current Situation in Ukraine* in January 1919. Shakhrai's Bolshevik comrade, Georgi Lapchinskii, formed a Federalist Opposition within the CP(b)U before moving over to the Ukapists.

The Ukrainian Communists' main critique of the Bolsheviks was to oppose their view that national democratic struggles were counter-revolutionary, in the aftermath of the creation of the RSFSR. The oppressive actions of RCP(b) in Moldovia and Ukraine, including its Radical Left component (e.g. Georgi Pyatakov, Evgenia Bosch and Christian Rakovsky), placed considerable obstacles in the way of providing help to Communists in states immediately beyond these areas where revolution broke out, e.g. in Hungary in June 1919.

We can be far from sure that if the 'Internationalism from Below', 'break-up of empires' approach had been adopted then the International Revolutionary Wave

would have deepened and pushed much further. The imperialists still retained considerable strength in depth, particularly in that burgeoning global power, the USA. So, adopting 'Internationalism from Below' politics may have still led to failure, but 'failing better' as in the case of the 1871 Paris Commune. This would not have led to the bitter memories of Great Russian oppression being linked to the Left and not just the traditional Right. Or worse, as we are seeing today, following some earlier precedents, a Red-Brown alliance in support of Putin's 'Russia One and Indivisible' imperialism.

But the 'Internationalism from Below' politics, originally developed by Kelles-Kreuz, Connolly, Iurkevich, Mazlakh, Shakhrai, Lapchinskii and others, do not just have an historical justification. There has been a growing tendency on a Left in retreat to emphasise 'pure' working class politics. Those adopting such thinking often want their politics unsullied by the concerns of the wider oppressed. They accuse them of pursuing 'identity politics.' They relegate such issues to a secondary importance. They remain blind to their own promotion of a particular identity politics. When you look at their version of the working class, stripped of other oppressions, it begins to look remarkably white, male and straight and be 'native' to its state. But women, LBGT+, BIPOC, members of other nationalities and migrants are members of the working class and often in higher proportions. So, we can only unite our class in its diversity.

Connolly was already saying that the working class and small farmers included Irish speakers, and this was to be welcomed and supported. Kelles-Kreuz argued that when Jewish workers wanted to retain the use of the Yiddish language, they also welcomed a wider Yiddish cultural renaissance, and they were helping to create a language of cultural resistance to oppression. And Iurkevich and the Ukrainian Communists thought that by championing the Ukrainian language, rather than passively adopting the language of the oppressor (termed 'progressive' assimilation by Kautsky, the Bolsheviks and Radical Left), they were also contributing to communities of resistance.

Thus, championing a Socialist Republican, 'Internationalism from Below' 'break-up of empire' politics leads to solidarity with communities of resistance and their support for self-determination. Capitalism is a linked system of exploitation, oppression and alienation, so our answer has to challenge all three through emancipation, liberation and self-determination in its widest sense. Putin's invasion of Ukraine highlights the necessity to understand this more clearly.

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- <sup>116</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North\\_Russia\\_intervention#Increasing\\_conflict\\_with\\_the\\_Bolsheviks\\_and\\_setbacks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Russia_intervention#Increasing_conflict_with_the_Bolsheviks_and_setbacks)
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- <sup>122</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kronstadt\\_rebellion#Fleet\\_composition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kronstadt_rebellion#Fleet_composition)
- <sup>123</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukrainization>
- <sup>124</sup> RatU, op cit., *The Twelfth Party Congress*, pp.77-87
- <sup>125</sup> *ibid.*, *Introduction*, p 30

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