

Special Report

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SPECIAL BRANCH

26 day of October 1970

SUBJECT Irish
Solidarity
Campaign

Reference to Papers
400/70/204

1. The following information has been received from a reliable source:-

2. "The Founding Conference of the Irish Solidarity Campaign took place at the Digbeth Civic Hall, Digbeth, Birmingham over the weekend of the 10-11 October 1970. The conference started at 11.30 am on Saturday the 10th and ended at 7 pm. It recommenced at 11 am on Sunday the 11th and ended at 2 pm. There then followed a public meeting in the main hall of the Digbeth Civic Hall during Sunday afternoon. (subject of a separate report).

3. The conference was attended by approximately 60 delegates and about 15 observers. It was chaired by [Privacy] of Birmingham Clann na h'Eireann, and the minute secretary was [Privacy] of Birmingham Clann na h'Eireann and Birmingham IS. The chairman, for personal reasons, had to vacate the chair during the late afternoon on Saturday the 10th and his place was taken for that period by [Privacy] of Birmingham Clann na h'Eireann and Birmingham IS. The Standing Orders Committee (and the Credentials Committee) comprised [Privacy] of London IMG and London ICRSC, [Privacy] of Oxford IS, and [Privacy] also of Oxford IS.

4. Organisations represented at the conference were as follows:- International Marxist Group, Spartacus League, Vietnam Solidarity Committee, Clann na h'Eireann, Independent Labour Party, Irish Civil Rights Solidarity Campaign and International Socialism. Also present were observers from Agitprop and the "Frank KEANE Defence Committee".

5. Fraternal delegates included [Privacy] Republican Movement, [Privacy] of Civil Rights Association, [Privacy] of CRA, and [Privacy] of Peoples Democracy. Also present and welcomed as VIP's by the chairman were [Privacy] family members of a person at present in custody for throwing teargas in the House of Commons.

6. [Privacy] opened the conference by welcoming all those present and stressing the need for a national movement such as the conference was attempting to organise. He was followed by a report from the secretary, [Privacy] who gave a list of organisations which had been invited to send delegates to the conference. This list included nearly every known left-wing organisation including the Communist Party, Civil Rights organ including the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association and Ir organisations including the Gaelic Athletic Association. No invitations had been extended to Maoist organisations or to t

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Irish National Liberation Solidarity Front.

7. Next came reports by delegates from Irish civil rights campaigns from the various centres which were represented. (The delegates in all cases were either IMG or IS and where the organisation to which the delegate belonged is known it has been indicated in brackets).

8. Delegates reports:-

Birmingham: **Privacy** (IMG) reported that the campaign there was founded in July 1969 and was supported mostly by left-wing organisations and Clann na h'Eireann. It had been active organising meetings, marches etc and contact had been made with the Trade Unions.

Nottingham: **Privacy** (IMG) told the meeting that his branch had been in existence for about a year. It had approximately 30 members, mostly left-wing activists and some trade union members, but had attracted very few Irish people. It had organised demonstrations against PAISLEY and against the Army Recruiting Unit which had visited Nottingham. Interest in the organisation depended very much on how events developed in Ulster.

London: Gery LAWLESS (IMG camp) gave a factual account of how ICRSC functioned in London.

9. At this point **Privacy** asked the Chairman to allow **Privacy** to report on the West London Branch of ICRSC. LAWLESS took exception to this and claimed to have been appointed as the delegate authorised by the Steering Committee of London ICRSC to give the official report. A bitter wrangle followed with LAWLESS accusing the West London Branch of having elected their delegates at a packed meeting (packed by IS) and of having appointed a couple of delegates who were unknown in ICRSC circles. This was followed by accusations by **Privacy** that the delegates from the Islington Branch of ICRSC (London was represented by six delegates from West London and six from the Islington Branch) were elected at a 'fixed' meeting also. This row between **Privacy** and LAWLESS was the first sign of the split which was to develop between the IMG and IS camps at the conference. The chairman ruled that **Privacy** be allowed to give a report from West London.

10. West London: **Privacy** (IS) gave a fairly accurate account of the activities of the West London Branch of ICRSC despite interruptions from LAWLESS.

Manchester: **Privacy** stated that the branch there was founded in April 1969, and had organised a number of demonstrations. They had produced a newspaper at the beginning of the campaign but it had lasted only for a few months. The membership consisted mainly of IS with contacts on building sites and amongst bus workers.

Oxford: [REDACTED] Privacy (no further particulars) (IS) claimed that the branch had about 20 members of whom 10 were active. The membership came mostly from IS, IMG and Clann na h'Eireann. Several demonstrations had been organised there. Support for their activities varied according to public interest in the current situation in Northern Ireland.

Bristol: [REDACTED] Privacy (IS) reported that his was a new branch which had come into being during the Spring of 1970. Its membership came mostly from IS, IMG and left-wing groups. The branch had been visited by [REDACTED] Privacy who had published a report in a local newspaper that the branch had been infiltrated by the CP, which had caused a lot of members to drop away. However, the CP faction had been got rid of and members were gradually returning.

Stafford: [REDACTED] Privacy (IMG) stated that this too was a new branch, with about 15 members, very few of whom were Irish. Attempts were being made to attract members by leafletting.

Glasgow: [REDACTED] Privacy (IS); Glasgow branch, which was composed of IS and IMG had been holding public meetings with little or no response. Membership had dropped to about half a dozen but was starting to build up again.

Coventry: [REDACTED] Privacy (IMG) said that IMG and Spartacus League were attempting to set up a branch in Coventry. IS had promised support if they succeeded. They hoped to be active in about a month's time.

11. [REDACTED] Privacy gave his report on Coventry as an observer (not as a delegate) and LAWLESS then asked the chair to have the four comrades from Coventry seated as delegates. This provoked a bitter attack by [REDACTED] Privacy on LAWLESS and the IMG; he said that it was a blatant attempt by IMG to have sufficient delegates to outvote IS at the conference and in this way to take over the ISC. He pointed out that if IS had wished to do this they could have set up branches of the ISC at many more centres than IMG as IS membership was double that of IMG and the Spartacus League. The matter was put to a vote and the Coventry party were seated as delegates. [REDACTED] Privacy pointed out that both IMG and the Spartacus League had four delegates at the conference which was double the representation for IS. The Spartacus League's right to have separate delegates was defended by [REDACTED] Privacy. At this point [REDACTED] Privacy intervened with an appeal for less 'in-fighting' and more co-operation at the conference.

12. At the commencement of the afternoon session the Chairman, [REDACTED] Privacy warned that if there was any more bickering at the meeting that he would leave the chair, as he 'was not prepared to preside over a dog fight'.

13. [REDACTED] Privacy then addressed the meeting and gave what he termed as the 'Prospectives for the Irish Solidarity Campaign'. His speech followed closely the ideas set out in the paper prepared by him with the same title, a copy of which is attached to this report (Appendix 'A'). [REDACTED]

14. **Privacy** said that IS could not agree with the document as a whole, not because of what it said but because of what it did not say, particularly about Ireland. LAWLESS replied by saying that the attitude of the ISC should be that when the struggle in Ireland became more militant then they in Britain should engage in more concrete action, but they should wait until there was a 'big explosion' in Ireland.

15. **Privacy** commenting on the document, said that he thought more emphasis should have been placed on co-operation with the Trade Unions. **Privacy** replied to criticism of his paper by explaining that it was only set out in general terms; he had not gone into specific details particularly regarding which organisations should be encouraged to support the campaign, and had attempted to be non-controversial. **Privacy** asked that the document be noted but not voted on; a vote was taken on his proposal which was defeated and **Privacy** paper was voted 'on and accepted.

16. At this point LAWLESS asked that the conference then elect a President because, as Press Officer, he wished to make a statement to the press and he thought that maximum publicity could be gained by announcing the election of the President at this time. LAWLESS then proposed that there should be Joint-Presidents, and put forward **Privacy** and **Privacy** **Privacy** seconded LAWLESS's proposal, adding that **Privacy** had been a member of IS. Both were elected unanimously.

17. Permission was then given to **Privacy** of the 'Frank KEANE Defence Committee' to make an appeal on behalf of that organisation. **Privacy** gave details of the allegations against KEANE and an account of his court appearances to date. A collection was taken on behalf of KEANE which realised £11 4s 11. Collection sheets were handed to delegates by **Privacy** **Privacy** and **Privacy** with a request that monies collected at branches should be forwarded with the sheets to 'Frank KEANE Defence Fund, **Privacy** **Privacy** (A Collection Sheet is attached to this report at Appendix 'B').

18. **Privacy** outlined what he described as the programme for the campaign. He expanded on the theme set out in 'the document entitled 'Programme proposed by Steering Committee' (Appendix 'C') which recommended the following six points:

1. Support of the Irish peoples right to self-determination.
2. Support for popular movements in Ireland, North and South, fighting political and economic domination by British Imperialism.
3. Release of all Irish political prisoners in British and Irish jails.
4. An end to British intervention in Ireland and the immediate withdrawal of British Armed forces.
5. Opposition to those fostering religious sectarianism in Ireland and preventing workingclass unity.

6. Support of the right of Irish workers to arm and organise in self-defence of their homes from attack by sectarian gangs, the military, and the police.

Privacy elaboration included a statement to the effect that people in this country could not dictate to the Irish people what type of government they should have. **Privacy** replied that IS could agree with points 3, 4, 5 and 6 but he was not quite sure what was meant by points 1 and 2, in view of **Privacy** statement that the people in this country could not dictate to the Irish people what type of government they should have. Certainly IS could never support any organisation which had as its aim a 'Green Tory' Government for Ireland. This caused a long and involved argument between IS and IMG. LAWLESS's theory was that any assistance, military or otherwise would be acceptable from any source providing that the source was anti-Imperialist/Capitalist. **Privacy** view was that assistance in the struggle should not be accepted from a source which did not have 'the correct political, socialist line'. This debate went on at length and became quite bitter at times. **Privacy** (Spartacus League) proposed an addendum to point 2 of the 'Programme'. This read "Because of the need to build a broad, united Solidarity Movement, ISC supports the movement as a whole and not any particular organisation or organisations." **Privacy** in support of the IS argument, against the addendum, said it was superfluous. **Privacy** summed up at the end of the debate and proposed that the 'Programme' with the addendum be accepted. It was accepted after a vote.

19. **Privacy** (Oxford IMG) gave the constitution report (copy at Appendix 'D') and emphasised the need for a workable constitution, acceptable to the many viewpoints within ISC. A number of alterations and additions to the Constitution were proposed by IS but in every case when the motions were voted on they were defeated. The following were proposed by IMG delegates and were accepted:-

Sec. 5 of the Constitution, after (e) add: '(f) Branches should meet at least once a month, (g) Minutes of branch meetings should be sent to the National Secretary'.

Section 7 add to (a)(I): 'and branches to have been in existence at least six weeks before conference', and to 7(a)(II): 'and organisations to have affiliated at least six weeks before conference'.

20. **Privacy** opened the proceedings on Sunday with a report on proposed future activities of ISC. He stressed the need to establish roots and strong support in the Irish Community and Trade Unions. He said that the organisation should not orientate solely towards Irish people but include other sections of the community. He thought that a National Newspaper was needed which should not be too theoretical. He went on to say that a campaign should be launched to agitate against the detention of political prisoners and against the conditions under which they were detained. He said that they were being discriminated against in prison by being more closely guarded than other inmates.

21. He thought that a campaign should be launched against the 'repressive' measures being carried out by the present Government, and that there should be a link-up with other groups engaged in this struggle such as Black Power, Students and the Pilkington workers. He felt the need for "a strong intervention by ISC at the coming Workers Control Conference to be held in Birmingham". ISC should sponsor a National Tour by Bernadette DEVLIN MP on her release from prison.

22. There then followed the election of officers and members of the Executive Committee. There were two nominations for the post of Treasurer: Privacy (IMG) and Privacy (IS and Clann na h'Eireann); Privacy was elected. Privacy was unanimously elected Secretary, but IMG then proposed that there should be co-secretaries (as catered for in the Constitution). IS opposed this, but were outvoted and Privacy (Birmingham IMG) was elected. The following persons were nominated for election to the Executive Committee:-

Part finished from 201

Privacy Gery LAWLESS,
Privacy
Privacy (Birmingham Clann na h'Eireann), Privacy
(IMG Nottingham - if not an actual member of IMG certainly IMG supporter at the conference), Privacy (IS Birmingham), Privacy
Privacy (Bristol IS and Clann na h'Eireann), Privacy and Privacy (believed to be IS).

23. Those successful were:- (an indication of their political leanings is given in brackets after each name).

Joint Presidents: Privacy
National Treasurer: Privacy
Joint National Secretaries: Privacy (Clann na h'Eireann and IS).
Privacy (from Birmingham; believed to be a member of IMG).
Members: Privacy (Birmingham Clann na h'Eireann; IS inclined).
Gery LAWLESS (IMG)
Privacy (IS)
Privacy (IMG supporter)
Privacy (IMG)
Privacy (Clann na h'Eireann & IMG)
Privacy (from Nottingham; believed to be member of Spartacus League)
Privacy (Birmingham Clann na h'Eireann)

See 20



believed IMG inclined)

Privacy (from Oxford, believed to be a member of IMG)

One of the first duties of the Executive Committee will be to decide whether to elect a permanent national chairman or to select one at each EC meeting.

24. After the elections there followed a debate on the 'Future Activities' report given by **Privacy** (Appendix 'E'). The first two proposals (by Birmingham ISC) were accepted by the conference. The third proposal (recommended by the Steering Committee) was amended to read as follows: "In the light of intensified police attacks on Irish Militants and their supporters on the left in Britain, Birmingham ISC calls for the organisation and co-ordination of the defence, financial and legal, for the victims of British imperialism." The last three proposals on this paper were not debated and were referred back to the Executive Committee for action.

25. The fraternal delegates then briefly addressed the Conference. Those who spoke were: **Privacy**, **Privacy** and **Privacy**. **Privacy** (it is believed that **Privacy** did not arrive in Birmingham until the Conference had finished.)

26. The following persons are known to have attended the Conference; (additional details to help with identification and classification are also given; where there is doubt, the item is preceded by a question mark).

*Index
except where
mentioned, each
is referred*

- ✓ **Privacy** Nottingham IMG
- ✓ **Privacy** Nottingham IMG
- ✓ **Privacy** Oxford IS
- ✓ **Privacy** ? Staffs
- ✓ **Privacy** London IS
- ✓ **Privacy** Birmingham IMG
- ✓ **Privacy** ? Manchester
- ✓ **Privacy** ? IS
- ✓ **Privacy** Birmingham Clann na h'Eireann
- ✓ **Privacy** Defend Frank Keane Defence Committee
- ✓ **Privacy** Nottingham. ? IMG
- ✓ **Privacy** IS
- ✓ **Privacy** Birmingham Clann na h'Eireann (Agitprop)
- ✓ **Privacy** IS
- ✓ **Privacy** Birmingham ? IS
- ✓ **Privacy** Frank Keane Defence Committee
- ✓ **Privacy** ICRSC
- ✓ **Privacy** Spartacus League
- ✓ **Privacy** Birmingham IMG
- ✓ **Privacy** West London ICRSC and IS
- ✓ **Privacy**
- ✓ **Privacy** , ICRSC
- ✓ **Privacy** Staffs ? IMG
- ✓ **Privacy** IMG

*Index
as at 1987*

- ✓ **Privacy** Spartacus League
- ✓ **Privacy** Gery LAWLESS, ICRSC
- ✓ **Privacy** Nottingham ? IMG
- ✓ **Privacy** IS
- ✓ **Privacy** Staffs IMG
- ✓ **Privacy** IS
- ✓ **Privacy** ICRSC
- ✓ **Privacy**
- ✓ **Privacy** Birmingham ISC
- ✓ **Privacy** Birmingham IS and Clann na h'Eireann
- ✓ **Privacy** Glasgow IS
- ✓ **Privacy** Bristol IS
- ✓ **Privacy**
- ✓ **Privacy** Bristol IS
- ✓ **Privacy** Birmingham Clann na h'Eireann
- ✓ **Privacy**
- ✓ **Privacy** IS
- ✓ **Privacy** Coventry IMG
- ✓ **Privacy** IMG
- ✓ **Privacy** IMG Glasgow
- ✓ **Privacy** IMG
- ✓ **Privacy**
- ✓ **Privacy**
- ✓ **Privacy** Glasgow IS
- ✓ **Privacy** Spartacus League
- ✓ **Privacy** Birmingham IMG
- ✓ **Privacy** Spartacus League
- ✓ **Privacy** Oxford IMG
- ✓ **Privacy** Oxford IS
- ✓ **Privacy** Birmingham IS and Clann na h'Eireann.

The following persons expressed their intention of attending the Conference; and some of them may have been present, but were not identified:

- ✓ **Privacy**
- ✓ **Privacy**

27. IMG's numerical superiority at the Conference ensured their ability to outvote IS in the elections and subsequently to gain effective control of the Irish Solidarity Campaign. It became clear from the reports of delegates that pre-Conference Irish Solidarity Campaigns throughout the country had failed to attract the ordinary working class Irish people, and had only succeeded in attracting left wing activists. **Privacy** apparently speaking for IS, was overheard to say that many of the IS delegates felt that they should pull out of ISC and devote themselves to industrial action.

28. Special Branch references to persons and organisations





mentioned in this report are given in the attached appendices.

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Detective Sergeant

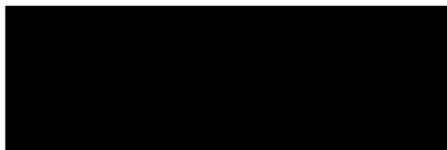
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Detective Constable

Submitted:

Janus
Chief Inspector

R. W. A. T.
CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT



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