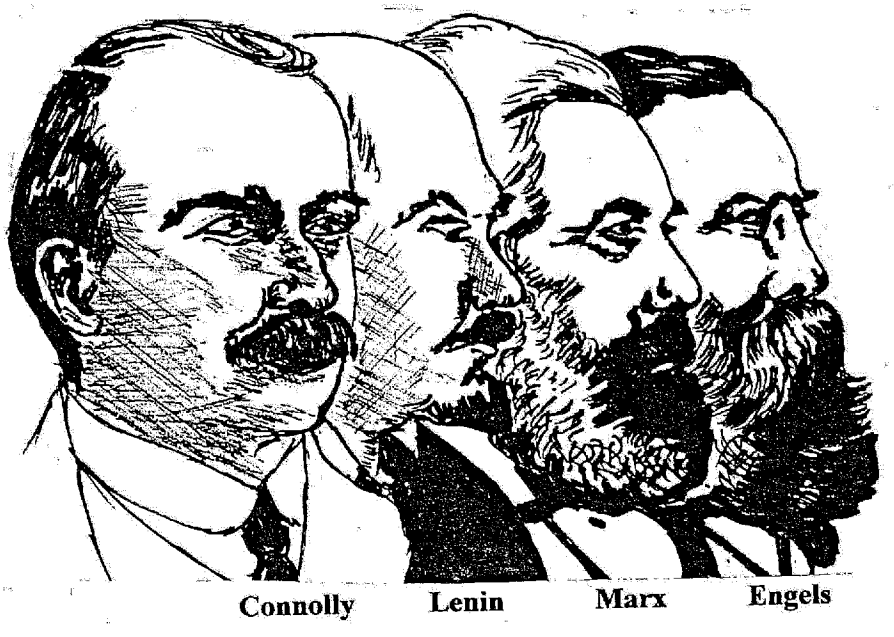
On the Resignation of the Cork Branch of the Irish Communist Organisation



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Introduction

After an existence of 11 months the Cork Branch of the ICO on 31 January, 1971 seceded from the Irish Communist Organisation (ICO) and reconstituted itself as the Cork Communist Organisation (CCO). The decision to secede from the ICO was unanimous and followed several weeks discussion by the members of the Cork Branch. The following pamphlet outlines the circumstances which led to the split. The ICO statement on the split, 'Nationalist Disruption of the Communist Movement' (*Irish Communist,* May 1971) is also commented on in Part One, as are their statements ; 'Nationalist Slander' (*Communist Comment,* 21 August, 1971) and 'Nationalist Disruption 2' (*Irish Communist,* October 1971) in Part Two.

Printing History

The CCO statement which forms Part One of this document was first published as a supplement to the publication, *Cork Worker,* in July, 1971. The comment article by Jerry Higgins, was published within the same issue of the paper. The CCO statement in Part Two was first published in December, 1971. Both statements with the Higgins comment were published as one pamphlet in February, 1972 by the CCO.

This reprinting by the;

Cork Communist Organisation, 9, St. Nicholas Church Place, Cove Street, Cork City. December 1972

On the Resignation of the Cork Branch from the Irish Communist Organisation

In September 1969 an article appeared in the *Irish Communist* which questioned the existence of a second nationality in Ireland. Whenever it was referred to within the ICO it was as the '2 nations' theory article. The Cork Branch understood the conclusions to this theory to be ;

> That a historical perspective was not present 'for the development of two nations in Ireland, that 'what exists is a tendency towards the development of nationalities' and that 'the tendency must be towards the merging of the two national tendencies into one national society.' (emphasis ours, see *Irish Communist* September 1969 or the *Birth of Ulster Unionism*, first edition, March 1970, P. 12 & 13).

About a year later, the theory that a second nationality existed in Ireland was again raised in ICO literature. This time the contributors of the articles claimed the existence of 2 nations in Ireland. How the two national tendencies had become nations, when it had been previously stated that a historical perspective was not present for such a development, was not explained and understandably caused confusion. The Cork Branch held with the earlier formulation and at first accepted the articles as contributions representing only the views of the contributors. However, the regularity with which the articles appeared, in conjunction with other developments within the organisation coupled with a line that was emerging on the Republican Movement, indicated to the Cork Branch that our interpretation of developments on the National Question differed with those of the rest of the organisation or at least with those who were promoting the new formulation. There was much about these developments that we were unclear about and this had the effect of preventing us from crystallizing our position. However, we did indicate our anti-partitionist position on 7 November, when commenting to the organisation on a statement made by Sean Kearney (Donegal) where he said in a letter addressed to the members of the ICO ;

> The ICO has itself developed a partitionist policy which brought it into conflict with every existing group and party in the world, with the exception of Orangism and Paisleyism -- the 2 nations theory is now the most serious obstacle to the development of the ICO in this area.

We commented ;

> That Sean Kearney should say we are partitionist, while we hold the view that we are not, is an indication of the extent of the confusion that exists over the 2 nations theory.

It was decide in Dublin to send people to Rosmuc to sort out the situation with Sean Kearney, however it was not until Pat Murphy went to Belfast to see him that it was finally sorted out. It wasn't considered necessary to send anyone to Cork. The chairman of the Cork Branch, Jim Lane, then wrote to Jack Lane, editor of the *Communist Comment,* asking him when next he could come to Cork, as there was serious unrest in the branch. Jack Lane replied that he would not be going to Cork, but invited members of the Cork Branch to come to Dublin to attend a mid-week public discussion on the '2 nations' theory. Short notice and time venue ruled out such a trip. However, he did reply to several questions concerning developments, his most enlightening statement was ;

> If the British and Catholic Nationalists make an attempt to unite Ireland with the help of leading Unionists, they will have to coerce the Protestant masses and we will find ourselves advocating a partitioned Ireland, along new lines of course.

In a further letter he was asked where the ICO would stand, if the majority of the people of the 6 Counties by democratic vote, opted for a United Ireland against the wishes of the majority of Protestants. It was explained that this situation could come about by a minority of Protestants allying with the bulk of Catholic voters to form a majority in the 6 Counties State. He was sorry, but he could not answer that one. When we put the question in writing to the ICO later and put it verbally at the January 1971 Quarterly Meeting, it still went unanswered.

Earlier, towards the end of August 1970, the Cork Branch became involved in a dispute over the use of terms like, 'fascist' and 'murder' when referring to the IRA and its activities, in ICO publications. These terms were used by a member of the London Branch, Mick Lynch, in both the *Communist* (London ICO publication) and in *Communist Comment.* The Cork Branch refused to sell *Communist Comment* and returned it to Dublin. Our refusal to sell the paper was later accepted by the organisation, from the viewpoint of political substance and not from the viewpoint of formal obligations. However, the question as to whether the IRA was fascist was not resolved at the September Quarterly Meeting, for lack of a comprehensive investigation of the historical facts. The onus lay on Mick Lynch to prove the IRA fascist, but he didn't appear at the meeting. On the day of the meeting, the London delegate distributed a draft on 'Fascism and the Republican Movement', explaining that it was not for acceptance, but for discussion among the branches within the following three months and that in the "meantime individuals writing articles should recognise the fact that these questions (ie. the political nature of the IRA and the concrete nature of fascism) are not yet sufficiently analysed for the organisation to be able to have a position on them" Brief discussion followed and the London proposal was accepted.

Within a month, the Cork Branch were again objecting to a Mick Lynch article, 'Fascism and the Ulster State', *Irish Communist,* November1970. This time he was accusing the IRA of having fomented the pogroms of the 1920s and the 1930s in Belfast and having been Nazi during the early 1940s. No proof was presented. Objections were raised in early November to proposed amendments to the pamphlet , *Economics of Partition* . We also had a disagreement over circumstances surrounding a demand for secession of areas of the 6 Counties to the Free State and this eventually gave rise to a situation where the Cork Branch was accused by Pat Murphy (Dublin) of rallying support

among members who we felt were 'soft' on the '2 nations' theory.

By the end of November in an effort to arrest the confusion surrounding developments on the National Question, we decided to draw-up a paper outlining what we believed the general position of the ICO to be on the National Question. In it we drew attention to the conclusion drawn in the September 1969 issue of the *Irish Communist* and stated that a socialist perspective based on those conclusions and supported by the analysis in the *Economics of Partition* meant to the Cork Branch that the ICO was committed to the unity of Ireland into one national society which would lead to a Workers' Republic. We further stated that the organisation was based on the 32 Counties, "which we were seeking to unite". This paper along with our answer to Pat Murphy's charge of factionalising was circulated throughout the branches from 12 December and was referred to as Minutes Supplement No. 3. A paper on 'Fascism and the Republican Movement' was circulated from 19 December and a draft reply to Mick Lynch's article ('Fascism and the Ulster State') was circulated from 29 December and was titled 'On the IRA - Belfast Brigade Area'. When the ICO met for its Quarterly Meeting on 2 January 1971, apart from setting-up an executive committee and a discussion on an alleged power group (the charge was made at a London Branch meeting that 'a bourgeois intellectual faction exists in the ICO') the main item for discussion related to the Cork Branch. The Cork document, Minutes Supplement No.3 was discussed in conjunction with the document, 'Fascism and the Republican Movement', but the discussion was in many ways unfruitful and moved too quickly to the question of territorial secession.

It was generally agreed that our position on the '2 nations' theory, more or less summarised the then position of the ICO, but that our socialist perspective where we said that the ICO was committed to one national society which would lead to the Workers' Republic was incorrect. However, Pat Murphy commented that ;

> At a meeting a few months ago it was agreed that the ICO stood for the unity of the Irish working class. At that time the ICO might have stood for a 32 Counties socialist republic in certain circumstances. The ICO in the past have not stood for the recognition of the Protestant state, but it would have to take up a position on this in future.

If our understanding of the then position of the ICO on the '2 nations' theory (where we held " that a historical perspective was not present for the development of 2 nations in Ireland") was found to be a correct understanding, it surely followed that those who were claiming the existence of two nations in Ireland, were putting forward conclusions that were not ICO positions at that time. The more recent ICO formulation on the National Question, where they recognise the existence of '2 nations' in Ireland, formed the basis from which several delegates argued at the January Quarterly Meeting, and argued as though it were accepted ICO policy. Cork delegates argued on the basis of the earlier formulation, which while accepting that society was not formed into one unified nation in Ireland, nevertheless supported the view that the tendency must be towards the merging of the two communities into one national society.

In the light of conversations we had with several leading members of the organisation, putting a perspective on the available results of five years analysis of Irish politics by the ICO, and in the absence of a statement to the contrary, the Cork Branch, understandably drew the conclusions that the aim of the organisation was for a 32

Counties Irish Workers' Republic.

Secession

The question of the secession of areas of the 6 Counties to the Free State first arose on 25 October at a meeting in Cork between the Cork Branch and five members of the Dublin Branch, two of whom were founder members of the ICO. At this meeting , the demand for secession was raised by a member of the Cork Branch. That the ICO should put forward this demand was agreed to by all present, including the Dublin members. It was treated by the meeting as a tactical move rather than a right. On the following Friday 30 October, Jim Lane (Cork) raised the question of secession at a public meeting in University College Cork. The following day at an ICO meeting in Dublin, Len Callender (Belfast) opposed the secession demand on the grounds that it was not a communist position to sponsor such a demand on the 6 Counties State, when neither the 26 Counties State or the Northern minority were making the demand. The meeting agreed with his views and decided to drop the secession demand. Cork objected and the result was that it was referred to the next meeting capable of making decisions - the January Quarterly Meeting. What confounded the Cork Branch on this issue, was, if the secession demand was a non communist demand, how did it get approval the previous week, of five Dublin Branch members with long experience of communist politics.

At the January Quarterly Meeting the issue was raised during discussion on Minutes Supplement No.3. By this time the members of the Cork Branch had accepted that the secession demand should not be supported unless it came as a demand from the Nationalist minority in the 6 Counties. However, we were still in disagreement as to whether such a demand by the Free State during the Boundary Commission period in the early 1920s was made and was rejected by the Northern State. Discussion on this proved to the satisfaction of most Cork delegates, that the Free State did not pursue the demand for secession of areas of the 6 Counties, and that both bourgeoisie North and South, agreed to the present territorial boundaries of the two States in Ireland. At this stage the meeting formulised a motion to indicate views on this and only two (Cork delegates) voted against the motion.

When the draft article, 'On the IRA - Belfast Brigade Area' which was a reply to Mick Lynch's, 'Fascism and the Ulster State', was submitted to the meeting, it was done so on the understanding that it was for publication in the *Irish Communist*, subject to the acceptance of suggestions and criticisms from comrades. As the draft was only in circulation for a few days, a complaint was made that not all members had read it and consequently they would not be able to give an opinion. After long discussion a motion that "before the draft is published as a discussion article it will be put to the vote of the organisation as a whole" received the support of the majority of the meeting. When a delegate claimed that the Cork Branch should be accorded the democratic right of having it published as a discussion article if they so chose, he drew the retort that the ICO could not guarantee to publish everything, for instance they couldn't publish a fascist article. What an analogy !

A motion "that the article presented to the Quarterly Meeting on the Belfast Brigade area, agreed to by the Cork Branch, sets out to refute the historical reality that the IRA in Belfast and elsewhere, functioned as a militant wing of Catholic Nationalism. It

fails to do this and as such it means nothing in working class politics" was heavily defeated , mainly because most members had not had time to study the document. Yet the recent ICO document 'Nationalist Disruption' tells us that;

> This document was considered by the overwhelming majority of the organisation to be a mere rehash of Catholic bourgeois nationalist mythology on Partition -- it was generally agreed that it was fundamentally at variance with the ICO position on the National Question.

The leadership of the ICO certainly expressed this view and that they should see themselves as the 'overwhelming majority' in numerical terms, does not surprise us in the least.

During the debate on Mick Lynch's allegation that the IRA fomented the pogroms in Belfast in the early 1920s and mid 1930s, his position was defended by Brendan Clifford, who said that his article was objective and held that he was justified in attributing the blame for initiating the pogroms to the IRA. He claimed that where doubt exists relating to a particular incident like the pogroms, the benefit of the doubt should be given to the Protestants. Continuing, he said, that the ICO should be prepared to bend over backwards to give the Protestant position in the light of the ICO's past attitude to the Protestant people. Supporting this view Pat Murphy said ;

> The primary object should be to break through to the Protestant working-class and the ICO must bend over backwards to achieve this.

A Dublin delegate objected to Mick Lynch doing articles on the Republican Movement, because he found him to be biased. He claimed that while attending a meeting of the Dublin Branch early in July 1970, Mick Lynch on hearing that the British Army had invaded the Lower Falls, jumped up and said, "Great , I hope they fuck the bastards" (the bastards were the IRA and the Catholic inhabitants of the area). Discussion on this was ruled out of order because of the absence of Mick Lynch.

Factionalism

When the discussion on the alleged factionalising by the Cork Branch took place, Pat Murphy who had made the allegations, restated his position where "he had felt that Cork was taking action which was bringing the organisation to a standstill whilst not fully explaining its position and rallying members favourable to their position". In a letter circulated over a month before the meeting, he stated that because of Cork's objections a public meeting scheduled for the Mansion House, Dublin, would have to be cancelled. In fact, the meeting was not cancelled. Because of our objections to the amendments to the third edition of *Economics of Partition,* he claimed that the pamphlet was immediately withdrawn by Dublin, Belfast, and London branches. Wrong again, the pamphlet, which included the amendments objected to by the Cork Branch was in fact sold in Dublin, Belfast, and London. When we questioned why the unapproved amendments were printed and included in the third edition, we were told, " that the *Economics of Partition* amendments had been printed in error and not because they were being pushed through". Of course we must assume they were sold in error also. In the 21 November issue of

Communist Comment it was announced that a policy statement, 'On party organisation in Ireland and Britain' had been issued. As such a policy document had not yet been ratified by the ICO, we immediately wrote to the editor and we were told in reply that the announcement was in error. This then is the organisation Pat Murphy accused us of bringing to a standstill by our objections to developments.

The 'rallying of members' who Pat Murphy alleges were favourable to our position concerns letters written by Jim Lane (during October/November) on behalf of the Cork Branch to three members of the organisation; Sean Kearney (Donegal), John Harkin (Dublin), and Jack Lane editor of the *Communist Comment* at the time. The letters gave and requested views, all in an effort to help the Cork Branch to crystallize its position on the National Question. In point of fact, both John Harkin and Jack Lane were opposed to our views, both are hard line supporters of the later formulation of the '2 nations' theory. When Pat Murphy first made his allegations in his letter to the organisation, we said in our reply ;

> If a group of people or a branch were opposed to a particular line that was developing and the organisation hadn't as yet a policy on the matter, would Pat Murphy be opposed to they seeking support for their views by democratic debate, be it by meetings, letters or otherwise ? We are not saying that this is as yet our position, because what others stand for is unclear to us, we are at present seeking views, but should we find ourselves opposed to Pat Murphy's position, will he object to us seeking support for ours (from letter circulated 12 December 1970)

When at the January Quarterly Meeting, a delegate said, "it is not wrong to solicit support on controversial issues", his remark was greeted by stony silence. When a Dublin delegate attempted to describe the manner of Pat Murphy's objections to the actions of the Cork Branch, when he disrupted a Dublin branch meeting, he was attacked by Pat Murphy who attempted to strike him on the head with a chair. Only the quick action of other delegates prevented Pat Murphy from making his mark. As he was being restrained he shouted to the delegate, "Where were you for the past five years while we were building up the ICO ?" This remark left us in no doubt but that the ICO is the property of a select few and that seniority counts, without it your objections are held to be disruptive. Towards the end of this discussion, Len Callender claimed that Sean Kearney (he did not attend the meeting) had considered Jim Lane to be factionalising with regard to the letter he had received from him.

Within a few days of the quarterly meeting, four members of the Cork Branch indicated their intention of resigning from the ICO, as it had lost all credibility in their eyes. The resignations were temporarily averted when the chairman of the branch called for further discussion among the members of the branch. The ICO was notified on 10 January of the threatened resignations. On the 23 January, Sean Kearney on a visit to Cork, met members of the Cork Branch and informed them that he had not accused the Cork Branch or Jim Lane of factionalising and that Len Callender should not have made this statement at the quarterly meeting. He said that he had brought the matter up later at a Dublin meeting and others who had attended the meeting in Belfast, where Len Callender alleged he made the accusation against Jim Lane, agreed that Len Callender made an untrue statement at the quarterly meeting. Further, they said they recognised at the

quarterly meeting that Len Callender wasn't telling the truth, but that they decided to remain silent. At this stage the members of the Cork Branch had had enough, they unanimously decided to secede from the ICO at a meeting the following day. Within a week they sent their letter of resignation to the ICO. During the debate within the Cork Branch before the decision was taken, the political content of the discussion article 'On the IRA' was endorsed by the members. The more recent conclusions on the '2 nations' theory as put forward by several delegates at the quarterly meeting was rejected. Though we differed with these conclusions, when we split we were not in political disagreement with the ICO itself over the National Question, as they had not at that time formally endorsed a policy. Our disagreement was as to the manner in which developments on a policy towards the National Question was conducted. As a result of the discussions that had taken place at the January Quarterly Meeting, we were also convinced that the ICO leadership was adopting opportunist tactics favouring the Protestant community. Sean Kearney's revelations proved to us beyond doubt that the methods employed by those who were promoting the '2 nations' theory were such as to make it impossible to continue in membership if opposed to their views.

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Letter of Resignation

9, St. Nicholas Church Place,
Cork
31 January 1971

Secretary,
ICO.

After long discussion following the recent quarterly meeting, the Cork Branch ICO by a unanimous vote of all members has decided to secede from the organisation and reconstitute itself as a local communist grouping. Fully realising the implication of our decision for the working-class movement; we feel that in the long term we will be seen to have acted in the best interests of the working-class.

Our disagreement with the ICO is as to the manner in which developments on what has become known as the '2 nations' theory have been conducted . Having accepted both the *Economics of Partition* and *The Birth of Ulster Unionism* as a starting point for developing a policy on the National Question, the Cork Branch drew conclusions as outlined in the first three paragraphs of 'Minutes Supplement No.3'. Later, others in the organisations drew conclusions which went beyond this position, to the extent of claiming full nationhood for both national tendencies. Though this development was not discussed within the organisation (between branches) the publications of the organisation were used to the fullest to propagate this further development in such a way that it was accepted by the readers as official ICO policy. In effect the Cork Branch simultaneous with the reader, read of the developments in ICO publications and not having all relevant facts, members took different positions in relation to these developments. In an effort to sort out the confusion that existed, the Cork Branch through minutes and letters sought information and clarifications, whilst at the same time researching and discussing it further at branch meetings. During this period references were made in ICO publications

to the IRA and the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland that the Cork Branch took exception to. We also discussed and raised objections to the amendments to the pamphlet *Economics of Partition.* The response to our efforts was to be labelled 'disrupters' by the leadership of the organisation.

Since then it has become evident to us following the Pat Murphy affair and the quarterly meeting, that what is required of the Cork Branch is that we perform as hacks. We are expected to accept without question developments handed down to us by the leading ideologists of the organisation. This was all very plain at the quarterly meeting when we were accused of being disrupters and involved in attempting to form a faction within the ICO. Len Callender's lies in relation to his conversation with Sean Kearney where he quotes him as saying that Jim Lane's letter 'stunk of factionalism' (later denied by Sean Kearney in Cork and Dublin) is indicative of tactics that some are prepared to use to score points over those they consider opponents of the developments on the '2nations' theory that they are promoting.

As well as disagreeing with the manner in which developments have been conducted, we are now convinced that the ICO leadership is pursuing opportunist tactics on the Catholic/Protestant conflict by taking sides, all in an attempt to be the first communist organisation to make a breakthrough to the Protestant community. Never hesitating to criticise the role of the Southern bourgeoisie in the anti-imperialist struggle and in the Capital/Labour conflict, it is noticeable that of late like criticism is not forthcoming on the role of the Northern bourgeoisie. It appears that the role of either bourgeoisie to the national conflict is to take precedence over their role on imperialism and labour. However, the present issue of the *Irish Communist* is prepared to mention their respective roles in the anti-fascist war with the object of making the Northern bourgeoisie appear progressive in relation to the Southern bourgeoisie. The statement made by leading members of the organisation at the quarterly meeting that where doubt exists, the benefit should go to the Protestants and that because of past mistakes they are prepared to 'bend over backwards' to the Protestant community, (at the expense of the Catholic community) leaves us in no doubt that the ICO are taking sides. Coupled with this is the fact that in recent times no opportunity is missed to attack and sometimes misrepresent the Republican Movement and the Catholic community. Criticism they deserve at times, but not the 'thin edge of the wedge'. This is a development that would have been abhorrent to the ICO we knew in the past, it is abhorrent to us now.

We have in our discussions considered all avenues for resolving our predicament. To remain within the organisation with a position on the National Question that is not abreast of the position of the ideologists, would further exacerbate the position and could only lead to fragmentation of the ICO. We say this because of the attitude that has been adopted by these people towards those they consider disrupters. We could also remain in the organisation if we were to cease being 'disruptive', that is to accept developments handed down by the ideologists and become hacks. This sort of membership all too prevalent in the British and Irish communist movements in the past with its consequential decline into revisionism, is repellent to us. Therefore, we have taken the only genuine course open to us under the circumstances, that is to secede from the organisation, keep our own group intact, and function as a local communist organisation until such time as developments determine otherwise.

The National Question

The position of the reconstituted group in Cork in relation to the National Question is as outlined in the first three paragraphs of 'Minutes Supplement No.3'. Any further developments from this position will result out of further analysis, followed by democratic discussion and agreement within the group. It should be mentioned that one member, Brian Girvin, states that he accepts the existence of two fully developed nations. Like the rest of the group he is opposed to the manner in which developments have been conducted, the attitude adopted by the leadership towards the Cork Branch and opportunism favouring the Protestant community.

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Further comment on the ICO document 'Nationalist Disruption of the Communist Movement'

INLSF and CCO : The document states that the ICO does not know if the report that appeared in a Belfast newspaper is accurate. The report stated that the Cork Branch of the ICO had resigned and joined the Irish National Liberation Solidarity Front, which is based in London. When a member of the ICO enquired of a member of CCO as to the authenticity of the report three weeks before the publication of the ICO document, he was told that it was untrue. The only relationship CCO (formerly the Cork Branch of the ICO) could have with the INLSF is one of seeking support for the struggle here in Ireland. It would appear to the CCO that it would be an anachronism for an organisation in Ireland to join an Irish liberation solidarity front based in Britain.

> By December there was a general demand in the ICO which could no longer be evaded, that he (Jim Lane) should submit his position in writing to the organisation. He finally submitted a document to the general ICO meeting in January on the 'Belfast Brigade Area' (It was submitted in the name of the Cork Branch, but members of the Cork Branch informed the general meeting that it had not been shown to them until after it was printed, and was being circulated)

There wasn't any demand on Jim Lane to submit his position in writing to the organisation nor in any other form for that matter. The contents of the document, 'On the IRA-- Belfast Brigade Area' was discussed and approved by the Cork Branch before printing and circulation. It in no way related to a demand on Jim Lane to 'submit his position', but was a reply to the article 'Fascism and the Ulster State' by Mick Lynch (London)

> By various opportunist contrivances Jim Lane managed to achieve a temporary unity of the Cork Branch in support of this measure (the resignation of the Cork Branch), and undoubtedly expected that the action would precipitate resignations or conflicts in other branches. But instead of this what happened was that the Cork Branch, now the CCO rapidly lost members who began to see through the opportunist manoeuvres.

We would like to hear what 'opportunist contrivances' were used by Jim Lane, maybe the ex-members could enlighten us! Certainly, when they left they made no complaint of this nature. As for rapidly losing members, we lost one member (Brian

Girvin) after the inaugural meeting of the CCO and an auxiliary member left a month later. If it were our intention to bring about conflict and resignations in other branches in the ICO we would not have chosen the course we did, but would have remained within the organisation. Conflict and resignations were already 'part and parcel' of the ICO and neither the conflict nor the resignations were in any way connected with the actions of the Cork Branch. In fact, the situation was so bad in Dublin, that a well known Christian activist could even enter the organisation and propagate idealism among auxiliary member.

> There is not a single policy proposal on record from ex-members who now constitute the CCO.

True, but very understandable considering our period of membership. We spent the major period of our time studying the ICO analysis which was worked out by the leadership over the preceding five years. Later we found ourselves taxed to the limit trying to rationalize what we had studied and accepted on the National Question, with a new line that began to emerge in ICO publications.

When the document states that the Cork Branch began to propagate the secession line and if by this is meant it was propagated publicly, this is untrue. The reference to a public meeting would seem to indicate that this is what is meant. This meeting was held before disagreement on the secession demand arose within the ICO and in any event secession was only discussed in a general manner at the meeting, it was not raised as an ICO demand. The report of this meeting was published in *Communist Comment,* three weeks later. As the secession demand was in dispute within the ICO by then, and as the report was edited (portions were added and omitted), responsibility for this bit of 'propagating' must surely lie with the editor.

When we left the ICO it had as an organisation lost all credibility in our eyes. Taking into account the embryonic stage and amorphous state of communist politics in Ireland, we considered it sufficient that we should only send to the ICO a letter of resignation. This was the procedure several months previous when a split occurred in the Belfast Branch, no demand was made by the ICO on those who resigned that they should state their disagreements with the ICO publicly. In the ICO, resignations were treated flippantly, as at the January Quarterly Meeting, when Brendan Clifford resigned because he claimed he faced disruption (from another member of the London Branch) if he continued in membership. He later withdrew his resignation. Certainly the Leninist principle is excellent, but only when applied to a viable communist movement.

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In the same issue of the *Cork Worker,* the following comment appeared under the heading, "LIES BY ICO REFUTED" and was written by a former member of the Cork Branch of the ICO and member of the newly formed Cork Communist Organisation.

Following the publication of a document by the ICO on the former Cork Branch of the ICO, I would like to make comment on some items in it that to my mind require immediate clarification, before a more lengthy account of our break from the ICO is published ;

> 1/ By December there was a general demand in the ICO which could no longer be evaded, that he (Jim Lane, former Chairman in Cork) should submit his position in writing to the organisation. He finally submitted a document to the general ICO meeting in January on 'The Belfast Brigade of the IRA'. It was submitted in the name of the Cork Branch, but members of the Cork Branch informed the general meeting that it had not been shown to them until after it was printed, and was being circulated. (ICO document p3&4).

A) There was no demand in the ICO that Jim Lane should submit his position. This can be proved by reference to copies of minutes of all ICO branches presently in my possession.
B) The document by Jim Lane on the Belfast IRA was in answer to an attack on the IRA in the November *Irish Communist.* It closely followed our refusal to sell papers that referred to the IRA as fascists and murderers.
C) It was discussed for a month before it was printed. All members agreed to the intended contents, were present at the printing and then read and discussed it further before circulation. One member Brian Girvin claimed at the general meeting that it was not "shown to them until after it was printed, and being circulated". Five other delegates present said this was not true. In fact, Girvin had the text in his hands for typing seven days before it was printed.

2/ The claim that Jim Lane kept the former Cork Branch together "by various opportunist contrivances" is totally untrue. Where is the proof ? As to the claim that we "rapidly lost members", well, we lost Girvin as expected, after the first meeting of CCO and an auxiliary member dropped out the following month.

3/ The suggestion by the ICO that the claim for secession of areas of the 6 Counties came from "certain private agreement" is typical of the trickery we had to put up with. The meeting in question had an attendance of 15. The five Dublin members present included Pat Murphy and Mick Murray (founder members of the ICO) and Jack Lane, then editor of *Communist Comment.* All agreed to the secession demand, it was no "private agreement".

Jerry Higgins.

On the resignation of the Cork Branch from the Irish Communist Organisation -- Part Two

A statement was issued by the Cork Communist Organisation (CCO) last July in reply to the ICO document 'Nationalist Disruption' . Since then the ICO have,
1/ referred to our statement in an article, 'Nationalist Slander' (*Communist Comment*, 21 August 1971)
2/ issued a further statement entitled 'Nationalist Disruption 2' (*Irish Communist* October 1971).

The article 'Nationalist Slander' came to our notice immediately following its publication, but as we were also informed that it was shortly to be followed by a further statement, we decided to reserve comment until such time as the statement (No.2) became available. The statement was published in the October issue of the *Irish Communist,* but it was not until the second week of November that we read it, when we received a copy from a comrade in London. Such discourtesy in not sending us a copy of the statement is indicative of the malice held by the ICO towards those they disagree with.

The first article 'Nationalist Slander' is signed by two former members of the CCO, Sean Barrett and Mick McGrath, and in it they display a detachment that is unbelievable, more so when you consider that most of the accusations of opportunism etc. made against the present members of the CCO, relate to events that they themselves participated in and yet no attempt is made to explain their involvement. The statement 'National Disruption 2'goes over much the same points as the 'Nationalist Slander' article, but has in addition an attack on the structure of the former Cork Branch of the ICO. This section was contributed by Brian Girvin, another ex-member of CCO, it will be dealt with later. In the statement, the CCO document is variously described as a 'tale', a 'story' or 'gossip', the connotations being that we indulged in lies and groundless rumour. The ICO knowing how firmly based on facts our document was, considered it the best part of their play to shout 'gossip' and then issue firm denials of the facts. Another tactic used is to deny anything that wasn't recorded in the minutes, this despite the fact that on average (judged over work hours of four weekend meetings) less than a typed page of minutes covered two hours discussion. Denials abound, Clifford's resignation is denied, Lynch's vicious references to the Lower Falls siege is denied, that a well known Christian activist entered the organisation with their knowledge is denied, that a split took place in Belfast is denied, Clifford's references to the Protestant community is denied -- we could go on. All in all, it is a totally useless document and is hardly worthy of reply, except for new issues raised.

'Nationalist Slander', for openers, ridicules the Cork Branch's letter of resignation as containing, " some meanderings about improper methods in putting the '2 nations' theory across". What short memories Barrett and McGrath have. Have they forgotten that behind Brian Girvin, they were loudest in their condemnation of these improper methods and that Sean Barrett played a major part in drafting these 'meandering'. They sneer at the CCO statement on the split, that was published in the *Cork Worker*, because of its

briefness. Why the hell didn't they, when they were members of the CCO at the time, demand a more lengthy statement. Praise is lavished on the ICO document 'Nationalist Disruption' (No.1) and we are told, "At last towards the end of July a document has appeared by the CCO" All this makes strange reading, especially when one remembers that the reaction of both Barrett and McGrath to the ICO document, was that it was 'a lot of shit'. This view they held up to a few days before they left the CCO and it had the effect of they both refusing to work on a reply to the ICO document, hence the delay with this CCO document. Their change of attitude to the ICO document was akin to 'Paul's conversion whilst on the road to Damascus'. Significantly, it coincided with their decision to leave college and with their grumbling that the CCO had failed to expand in its four month existence and appeared destined to remain parochial. When they resigned from the CCO they declared their intention of rejoining the ICO conditional on the ICO withdrawing publicly, untrue statements they had made about Jim Lane in the document 'Nationalist Disruption 1'. The untrue statements were not withdrawn, nevertheless both rejoined the ICO. Reference to those untrue statements (see CCO document P9/10) have been avoided in both recent ICO articles.

Dealing with the '2 nations' theory they claim that since the introduction of the earlier formulation further experience and research clarified the position that 2 nations exist, but that we "remained engulfed in bourgeois Catholic nationalism and refused to recognise these realities". The document 'Nationalist Disruption 2' says of the period prior to September 1970, "There was scarcely an ICO publication or meeting in which the question was not discussed". Lets take the meetings ;

1/ At the merger meeting between Saor Eire and the ICO in February, 1970, there was NO discussion on the '2 nations' theory.

2/ At the first Annual General Meeting of the ICO, 27/28 March 1970, there was No discussion on the '2 nations' theory.

3/ At the first Quarterly Meeting of the ICO, 27/28 June 1970, a short discussion took place at the beginning of the first session. No paper was presented to the meeting and nothing new was put forward on the position as stated in the *Irish Communist,* September 1969. It was decided that until greater discussion had taken place further material should not be published on the '2 nations' theory.

4/ At the second Quarterly Meeting of the ICO, 26/27 September, 1970 there was NO discussion on the '2 nations' theory.

These were the four fully representative meetings of the ICO held before the January 1971 Quarterly Meeting and were the meetings at which further developments should have been presented - NO developments were presented. The all important conclusion in the September 1969, *Irish Communist,* that a historical perspective WAS NOT present for the development of 2 nations in Ireland was not challenged.

As for the ICO publications discussing the '2 nations' theory, before the later formulation was put forward by individuals in the Autumn of 1970, a look at the files will

show that several articles relating to the 6 Counties didn't even show the influences of current '2 nations' thinking. Take for example the article in the *Irish Communist,* April, 1970 dealing with the Irish Workers' Party and Communist Party of Northern Ireland merger. The CPNI were chided for in the past declaring against any change in the 'constitutional position' of the 6 Counties and were because of this policy accused of being "a pseudo-socialist appendage of imperialist politics". A queer statement for the ICO to make, if they had moved anywhere near accepting ' the democratic validity of the Northern Ireland State', but as we said in our previous document, the earlier formulation of the '2 nations' theory had not drawn this conclusion. No, it was not until around the Autumn of 1970, that articles drawing new conclusions began to appear. Our reaction was as we said in our previous document;

> The Cork Branch held with the earlier formulation and at first accepted the articles as contributions representing only the views of the contributors. However, the regularity with which the articles appeared -- indicated to the Cork Branch that our interpretation of developments on the National Question differed with those of the rest of the organisation, or at least with those who were promoting the new formulation.

With reference to the decision at the June Quarterly Meeting, that further material on the '2 nations' theory should not be published, until greater discussion had taken place, we would like to make clear that we were not involved in any discussions between then and when the articles began to be published in the Autumn.

Having said that we "remained engulfed in bourgeois Catholic nationalism" (because we refused to accept the later formulation of the '2 nations' theory , that 2 nations exist in Ireland),they then go on to say that we recognise 'the democratic validity of the Northern State' Since the democratic validity of the Northern State, hinges on the recognition of a second nation in Ireland, the realities of which they say we refused to recognised, because we remained "engulfed in bourgeois catholic nationalism", we fail to see how we gave this recognition. Though well aware of the truth of the situation, they press on and refer to a vote taken at the January meeting which followed a debate on secession and state boundaries. At this meeting, the latter half of the first session held on Saturday morning was given over to a discussion, " Should it be the view of the ICO that the present state boundaries of the two states in Ireland, should be redrawn". The reason that gave rise to this discussion originated at the Cork meeting (between Cork and Dublin members), where it was agreed that it would be tactically advantageous to put forward a secession demand for areas of the 6 Counties. Lengthy discussion took place which covered many aspects of secession and the Boundary Commission. No attempt was made to take the ICO position beyond de-facto recognition of the Northern State. The question of the 'democratic validity of the Northern State' did not arise, simply because it was not the basis of discussion. (In fact it was not until after the split, that the ICO discussed and voted on a paper recognising 'the democratic validity of the Northern State'. They subsequently published it as a policy document in May 1971) When the meeting was drawing to a close as we approached lunchtime, it was obvious that the Cork delegates were divided as to whether the secession demand should be put forward. A vote was called for to indicate views, A motion was framed and put to the meeting and was being voted on, when objections arose as to the wording. Another motion was then put ' that the

ICO recognise the democratic validity of the present territorial boundaries or two States in Ireland.' Several objections were made to the wording and to expedite the situation the Secretary intervened and urged that the motion be put on the understanding that 'it was not to be considered a policy vote' but an indication of views on what was discussed. The Cork delegates who voted in favour of the motion, done so to indicate that they no longer supported a secession demand. As some Cork delegates had voted against the motion, we conferred during the lunchtime and both Barrett and McGrath should well remember that the reason given by both sides as to why they voted as they did, related only to the secession demand that had originated at the Cork meeting. The Cork delegates recognised the Northern State -- de facto, but not de jure.

Referring to Mick Lynch and the residents of the Lower Falls, they say ; "if he did in fact make the statement attributed to him, it was and is totally unrepresentative of the ICO position and, indeed, of his personal position". What is the 'if' about, didn't several members of the Dublin Branch relate the incident in question to your good selves. Further, didn't we all when members of the Cork Branch attending the January Quarterly Meeting wonder at the character of the many Dublin members, who had condemned in private, Lynch's views on both Republicans and Catholics, but who remained silent (except for T. Byrne) at the meeting. When Mick Lynch at an earlier date labelled the IRA murderers and fascists, his article got through the editorial committees of the *Communist Comment* and *Communist* , but it was not until the Cork Branch refused to sell the papers as a protest that the rest of the ICO thought such terms may be objectionable. In the light of these events how can it be said with certainty that the statement was, "totally unrepresentative of the ICO position".

As to the incident involving Sean Kearney (Donegal) and Len Callendar (Belfast) the article says, "all that was ever in question was the wording involved and the strength of factionalism accusations". This is a blatant lie. The wording and the strength of Callender's statement were but incidental to the fact, that the statement in substance was a lie. Callender said, that Kearney told him that Jim Lane's letter 'stunk of factionalism'. When Sean Kearney came to Cork in late January, he just didn't deny ever having used the term 'stunk', he denied ever having accused Jim Lane of factionalism. He also told us, that both Pat Murphy (Dublin) and Tommy Dwyer (Belfast) admitted to him that they were aware at the meeting that Len Callender was lying. He said that Pat Murphy didn't offer an excuse as to why he didn't correct Callender, but that Tommy Dwyer did say that he intended to raise the matter, but as it was getting late he left it pass. On the 19 March 1971, over six weeks following the resignation of the Cork Branch, Sean Kearney wrote to Jim Lane saying that on further reflection he felt Len Callender was justified in what he said at the January meeting.

Finally, we are told by Barrett and McGrath, that ,"the CCO has taken the initiative in this campaign by circulating their statement to various groups, e.g. with revisionists and republicans". Wrong. We certainly circulated our statement to various political groups, but we did not take the initiative in this. When the ICO document, 'Nationalist Disruption 1' was issued it was included in the *Irish Communist* as a supplement, but was not given general distribution with *Communist Comment* . This we were informed of by an ICO member, Gary O'Sullivan, who said that it was being distributed on a selective basis - copies were given only to 'political people'. All we did

was to see to it , that the 'political people' also read our statement.

As we said at the outset, 'National Disruption 2' goes over the same ground as was covered by the *Communist Comment* article "Nationalist Slander", but contains much more denials and misrepresentations, much too many for us to be bothered wasting our time on. However, a new issue has been introduced with an attack of a particularly low nature, on the structure of the former Cork Branch of the ICO. We are told that in the Cork Branch, "political discussion was minimised and certain questions were ruled out of order". An example is given of what was ruled out of order for discussion, "contraception, divorce, etc". The connotations here are, that the people who now form the CCO were, whilst members of the ICO, a bunch of reactionaries who refused to discuss questions that even Irish moderates were debating. Pushing this 'red herring' aside, we get to the real question, that Girvin had trouble getting discussion on - SEX. Yes indeed, he did have trouble getting discussion on this subject, but only after he had made every member of the branch sick and tired of discussing it. It was an obsession with him, meeting after meeting, when he didn't even have it on the agenda, he could find a way to bring it up. What eventually happened, after it came to our notice that he was behaving in similar fashion outside the organisation (some of the republicans were even referring to him as 'sex-man'), was that he was advised to give his 'sex talks' a bit of a rest. There is much more we could say of Girvin's activities during his 'sex campaign, but we will let it pass.

Next we are told that Girvin challenged a situation where "members were expected to go along with the decisions of this group (the present members of CCO) and not ask too many questions". It is alleged, that he was told " that the proper attitude would be to go along with what Jim Lane thought best". This little piece of misrepresentation refers to an incident in May 1970, when Jim Lane received reliable information on the Dublin Arms Trial and refused to discuss the matter with Girvin when he met him in a pub. After closing hours when Jim Lane had gone home, Girvin, two other members and an auxiliary member, adjourned to the clubrooms where a discussion took place. Girvin started agitating against Jim Lane and when he again raised a point that he had raised earlier in the pub with Jim Lane - the source of the information - he drew a heated reply from Jerry Higgins who told him that in matters of this kind he should have confidence in Jim Lane's judgement. In fact, the information in question, had already been communicated earlier that evening to the ICO in Dublin, who unlike Girvin, had the good sense not to probe for the source of the information that Jim Lane had received. As to the allegations that "he was informed that it was an internal affair of the Cork Branch; that his allegiance was to the Cork Branch and had no rights to appeal outside it, that in future his activity should be carried on exclusively within the Cork Branch", this is sheer fantasy on Girvins part and is a situation that never operated in the Cork Branch. To our knowledge the only time it was decided to make any matter an internal affair of the Cork Branch, was when a personality clash occurred between two members. The matter was discussed at a meeting and when resolved , it was agreed to strike discussion on the matter from the minutes.

A few other points will be dealt with briefly. With reference to the charge that the Cork Branch , "used the term 'nations' more frequently than any other branch in internal material, and in its brief contributions to the matter in *Comment* it used the term 'nations'

more frequently than any other", we have this comment to make. Yes, we did use the term 'nations', as this was the terminology used whenever the theory was discussed, even when the ICO held "that there is no historical perspective for the development of two nations in Ireland". As for the article in *Communist Comment*, we have already stated in our last statement that we did not accept responsibility for this article, because it was altered by the editor.

Great play has been made by the ICO that we lost several members to them and it is said "that this development occurred for the most part after the exposure of some of Jim Lane's opportunist contrivances in the 'Nationalist Disruption 1' document". Briefly to summarise the facts;

1/ Girvin left the CCO within days of its formation and long before the publication of 'Nationalist Disruption'.

2/ Gary O'Sullivan left a month after the formation of CCO and when asked among other questions, if he had any complaint against the running of the branch, his answer was most definitely -- NO. He also left before publication of 'Nationalist Disruption'.

3/ Both Barrett and McGrath left in circumstances already described . It is important to repeat that though they had decided to re-join the ICO, both made very clear their total opposition to the charges of opportunism that was levelled against Jim Lane in 'Nationalist Disruption'. For the record, by January 1971, the membership of the Cork Branch ICO had dwindled to seven full members and three auxiliary members, since then three full members and one auxiliary member have rejoined the ICO.

We believe the actions of the Dublin Branch, or at least its leadership, greatly contributed to the undemocratic developments that took place in the ICO before we split in January 1971. Their decision to propagate through the *Communist Comment* the later formulation of the '2 nations' theory, in defiance of the decision at the June Quarterly Meeting, which was, that further material should not be published until greater discussion had taken place, can be seen in retrospect to have been an important contributing factor. This decision was taken in the Dublin Branch, after a discussion which brought them to the conclusion that, "in substance the ICO had recognised full national rights for the two communities, though formally the position was that they were nationalities". We have seen in the ICO pamphlet *The Democratic Validity of the Northern Ireland State* (May 1971) their view on secession based on the recognition of full national rights. Yet, when the secession demand was first raised at a meeting in Cork, the five Dublin members present, supported such a demand and these members included the editor of the *Communist Comment* and Pat Murphy. It was not until the following week (31 October, 1970) when Len Callender came to Dublin that the Dublin members changed their minds on secession. Again in retrospect, and bearing other developments in mind, we can see that at this time, the Dublin Branch who were propagating the '2 nations' theory didn't really understand it. In our opinion, only the Callenders, the Cliffords and possibly the London Branch had a full understanding of the later formulation, and the Dublin members were just nodding their heads, willing tools. Even the editor, when he came to

Cork was unable to properly discuss articles that he had undersigned in *Communist Comment.*

The situation that brought about the split in the ICO could and should been avoided by the presentation at the September Quarterly Meeting, of all material relevant to the later formulation. This could have been studied and discussed at branch level in the months following and a decision taken at the January Quarterly Meeting. What most likely would have happened if such a democratic course were adopted, was that a minority position would have been taken by the Cork Branch or by some members in the Cork Branch with some possible support from individuals in other branches. But such a situation did not develop, because some people in leadership positions took it upon themselves to push ahead and thereby cause confusion. Caught up in the confusion, the Cork Branch were charged with being disrupters, when they took positions that called a halt to the gallop.

The minority position that would have emerged, would have been based on the earlier formulation of the '2 nations' theory, which went as far as to say ;

> That what exists is a tendency towards the developments of two nationalities" but that, "a historical perspective was not present for the development of two nations in Ireland" and that " the tendency must be towards the merging of the two national tendencies into one national society". (see *Irish Communist,* September 1969 and *The Birth of Ulster Unionism,* first edition, March 1970, P. 12 & 13)

The transition to one national society would not be by coercion, as coercion would only unite the territory of Ireland and not its people. Unity into one national society could only come about by the free consent of the majority of both states in Ireland. The minority position would have been to commit the ICO to supporting and advocating, the national unity of both communities in Ireland as being in the best interests of the working-class. Consequently, secession demands or any other 'solutions' put forward by the bourgeoisie, would be viewed by the organisation, in relation to their long term effects on national unity. The military 'solution' now being attempted by the British Army would be opposed, in the fashion that the ICO of 1969 opposed the RUC, UVF and B-Specials, who savagely attacked the Catholic community in Belfast.

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