

October 17th 1996.

(24)

## STATEMENT FROM IRSP FOLLOWING MEETING WITH INLA.

Over the past week a delegation from the Irish Republican Socialist Party have held a number of meetings with representatives of the leadership - Irish National Liberation Army.

The meetings were arranged at the request of the IRSP to discuss a range of issues including the position of the INLA in relation to the political process and potential for inter-communal violence post Thiepval bombing.

The INLA stated that they were not surprised by the IRA action at Thiepval. They felt that it was a logical progression from the ending of that organisations cease-fire on February 9th last.

They were asked whether this action (Thiepval) had altered the INLA's position in relation to an all out resumption of a military campaign.

In reply the INLA stated that they had never been led by what the IRA were or were not doing. That there was and has been no 'dove-tailing' of strategy between the IRA and themselves. The INLA stated that this was to be regretted as the creation of an anti-imperialist broad front was and is the stated position of the Republican Socialist Movement. Never-the-less it is a matter of fact.

They wished to strongly re-enforce that they (the INLA) were a distinct and separate organisation with a sovereign leadership and political philosophy. Accordingly they had been analysing and observing the situation as it unfolded and would respond as the circumstances dictated.

The INLA conceded that pressure had been mounting on their Leadership following Thiepval and subsequent calls for further repression of the Nationalist community. This was in addition to the accumulated anger and frustration within their ranks over;

- The continued attempt to marginalise and ignore the Republican Socialist position.
- The hypocrisy of the Irish government and political parties, who on one hand urge dialogue as an alternative to violence - yet on the other hand refuse to meet Republican Socialist representatives.
- The political vacuum created by British Conservative party politicking, use of decommissioning and other pre-conditions, Unionist negativity and refusal to negotiate meaningfully.



\* The continuing insistence by the 'loyal orders' to coat-trail through Nationalist communities. The forcing of these orders through Gurvagh and Ormeau Roads. (The proposed Apprentice boys march along Derry city walls was raised as a case in question.)

\* The unchanging role of the RUC as a repressive and blatantly sectarian paramilitary force. The continued presence on the streets of the six-counties of the British army throughout the duration of the Republican cessation.

\* The use of Republican Socialist and Republican POWs as hostages to the political climate. The hardening of treatment towards Irish Political Prisoners in English gaols.

The INLA confirmed that the statement of March 22nd 1996 (outlining their position as one of 'defence and retaliation') remained unaltered. They stated that their intelligence departments in Armagh and south Down had detected increased activity and the targeting of Nationalists by those loyalists dissidents around 'King Rat'. They are keeping a close watch on these activities.

The INLA felt it necessary that loyalists and Protestants in particular should recognise that this was a clear statement of a 'no first strike' policy.

Post Thiepval Nationalist have been subjected to a wave of repression. Stop and search, house raids, harassment of youth and people socialising in local community facilities coupled with never ending convoys of RUC/British army DMSUs are commonplace in working-class communities. This is meant to placate the Tory right-wing and is in keeping with the pro-active Unionist agenda being pursued by John Majors government.

The INLA said that their commitment to accommodate a genuine peace-process remains undiminished. They stated that while loyalist fringe parties and paramilitaries have been lauded and described as "unsung heroes" - no mention has been made of the contribution of the Republican Socialist Movement. While publicly critical of a process that they recognised to be fatally flawed, the INLA ensured that a climate conducive to dialogue remained.

It was made clear that unless all inclusive negotiations are made a reality in the near future a return to a military campaign could not be ruled out. This, it was stated, was not a threat rather it was an objective statement of fact.

In conclusion, a renewed statement of confidence and support for the political line and direction of the IRSP was forthcoming from the INLA leadership. However, IRSP representatives were left under no illusion that there was a distinct hardening of attitude from the INLA concerning Britains intentions.

As part of the ongoing debate within the Movement, the IRSP will be arranging to meet with representatives of Republican Socialist POWs in Long Kesh and Portlaoise to discuss their views on the current political crisis.  
**ENDS.**