

Problems in the IPSC

Noreen Byrne has said more than once at National Committee meetings that, if a code of conduct is necessary to enforce the exercise of collective responsibility by the NC, then there is something wrong with the working of the NC and the IPSC as a whole. I agree: there is an endemic lack of solidarity within the IPSC.

This lack of solidarity manifests itself in various ways:-

- Members of the NC demand the right to contravene established IPSC policy positions in public and assert that to deny them that right is a suppression of their freedom of speech.
- Individuals feel free to bring their own pet political issues into the campaign – the Lisbon Treaty, NATO, etc – instead of focussing exclusively on the Zionist enemy.
- Individuals feel free to denigrate other members behind their backs, not because of their views, or because of what they have done or not done for the IPSC, but because of their political backgrounds.

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To me, it is an obvious truth that the more NC members, and IPSC members in general, speak with one voice in public, the more effective the IPSC is likely to be as an advocate for Palestine. However, at its meeting on 15 August 2009, NC members gave themselves, and by extension IPSC members in general, a license to speak with many voices, allowing members to contravene established IPSC policy positions in public.

From now on, existing IPSC policy positions, for example, that we don't take sides in the internal politics of Palestine, can be contravened in public by any or all members of the NC (and any or all members of the IPSC) without fear of even a rap on the knuckles from the NC. In the past, the NC might have been expected to express disapproval of such a contravention, but, now that it has issued a licence to NC members to dissent in public, it has no grounds for complaint if any IPSC member does so.

It needs to be made clear to IPSC members before the forthcoming EGM that there is no guarantee that any motion they pass will be implemented by the NC – since NC members are free to contravene established IPSC policy positions in public. Indeed, one wonders what is the point of holding any more AGMs or EGMs, since the implementation of policy established by members is now at the whim of NC members.

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To my mind, there should be no question of NC members being licensed to contravene established policy positions in public. When people volunteer to take up leadership positions in any

organisation, they should automatically feel obliged not to contravene in public the policy positions that have been arrived at through the democratic decision-making processes of the organisation. To do otherwise is to treat the members of the organisation with contempt.

If an individual is not prepared to abide by the outcome of the democratic decision making processes of the organisation, then s/he shouldn't volunteer to take up a leadership position in the organisation in the first place. And if, having taken up a position of leadership, the organisation adopts a policy position that s/he wants to oppose in public, then s/he should resign from the position of leadership.

This is the norm in other organisations. The IPSC should be no different.

It has been said that insisting that NC members do not contravene established policy in public is an infringement of their right to free speech. That is absurd. When individuals volunteer to take up NC positions, they implicitly undertake to advocate in public IPSC policy as determined by IPSC members, not their own views. In other words, by taking up NC positions, individuals implicitly accept the possibility that their freedom of speech may be restricted. They can, of course, reclaim their freedom of speech by relinquishing their NC position.

That NC members should not contravene established policy positions is not just a matter of implementing policy as determined by members. It is also essential in order to maintain an organisation that is effective in political lobbying on behalf of Palestinians. We will not be taken seriously as an organisation if leading members express views that are at variance with established IPSC policy. And it matters little if they qualify their statements by saying that they are speaking in a personal capacity. The IPSC will be regarded as an incoherent organisation, which isn't worth talking to since it doesn't speak with one voice.

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At the NC meeting on 11 July, the NC approved the following rule for NC members:

"Members of the IPSC National Committee when issuing public statements in writing, in the print media or online and/or speaking in a public forum should not contravene IPSC policy positions."

Elaine Murtagh, our acting Chair, defended this rule in an e-mail to NC members on 13 July in the following terms:

"Members develop policy and it follows that NC members have a responsibility to respect and follow that policy. IPSC members expended time and energy in drafting and debating motions for the AGM. This process would be totally undermined if NC members issue public statements which disregard those democratic decisions.

"The policy does not stifle debate or prevent us from offering platforms to people who hold particular positions. Continuous debate and discussion is an essential part of solidarity work and the development of our internal thinking. This policy is simply a way of ensuring that NC members act in accordance with the responsibility of their elected positions."

I cannot see how any reasonable person could object to that. But, on 15 August the NC overturned this rule and licenced NC members, and by extension all IPSC members, to contravene established IPSC policy positions in public, as and when they like.

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Freda Hughes and others have suggested that a ban on NC members contravening established IPSC policy positions would restrict what I write in a non-IPSC capacity. It won't – I have already restricted myself, so that what I write doesn't contravene established IPSC positions.

In March 2008, I was invited to be an IPSC political officer, along with Michael Youlton, in order to initiate a campaign of political lobbying. Prior to this, I wrote many articles on Palestine [1], some of which included criticism of Fatah. When I became a Political Officer, I was conscious that, if I continued doing so, criticism of Fatah by me might be interpreted as criticism of Fatah by the IPSC, contrary to the established principle that IPSC doesn't take sides in internal Palestinian politics. So I stopped making criticisms of Fatah.

Likewise, although I am personally opposed to the Lisbon Treaty, and have written against it in the past, I was opposed to the IPSC taking a public position against it and now that the AGM has adopted that stance, I do not intend to write any further articles against it.

As long as I am the Political Officer of the IPSC, I am prepared to restrict what I write in a non-IPSC capacity so that it does not contravene established IPSC policy positions. I am prepared to restrict my freedom of speech in order to avoid any public confusion about the policy positions of the IPSC. I don't understand why other members of the NC are not prepared to do the same. It's a small sacrifice for the good of the IPSC.

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Some IPSC policy positions are more important than others and therefore their contravention in public is more serious than others. I regard our commitment not to take sides in Palestinian politics as extremely important, particularly at this time when, regrettably, the division between Fatah and Hamas is so deeply entrenched.

The IPSC's business is to bring to the attention of the Irish people the historic wrong that has been done to the Palestinian people by Zionism, and to seek to have it reversed. Attacking one side or another in Palestinian politics will inevitably detract from that task.

It invites people to conclude that the problem in Palestine is that the Palestinians can't agree with one another, and it takes the focus away from Israel's responsibility for the problem.

More important, the logical outcome of taking sides in Palestinian politics is that the divisions in Palestinian politics will be replicated in the solidarity movement in Ireland, that we end up with an Ireland Fatah Solidarity Campaign and an Ireland Hamas Solidarity Campaign, and perhaps a few more. That would be a disaster which would make the task of winning support for the Palestinian cause in Ireland impossible.

For these reasons, I think that it is absolutely essential that the IPSC sticks firmly to the principle of not taking sides in Palestinian politics.

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Unfortunately, that policy position was publicly contravened by Raymond Deane in a letter to the Israeli embassy, which he published on *Indymedia* on 1 July [2]. There, he described the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority (PA) as a "Vichy or Quisling regime". In other words, in a letter to Israel, he described a Palestinian entity as fascist. It is difficult to imagine a more deeply insulting remark or a less appropriate letter in which to apply the term to a Palestinian entity. I have been surprised that very few NC members have criticised Raymond for making this awful remark.

Understandably, his remark provoked a letter of protest to the IPSC from the General Delegation of Palestine in Ireland and a threat to break off relations with the IPSC. As a result, at its 11 July meeting, the NC felt obliged to write a letter of apology to the Delegation and to reassure the Delegation that it remained IPSC policy not to take sides in internal Palestinian politics.

Given Raymond's long association with the IPSC, many people reading the *Indymedia* article would have taken it for granted that he was speaking on behalf of the IPSC. To add weight to this view, he was identified in the *Indymedia* thread as the IPSC's Cultural Boycott Officer. Raymond told the NC that he was speaking in a personal capacity and he was to "post an article on *Indymedia* which disassociates his comments and the article from the IPSC" (to quote from the minutes of the 11 July NC meeting). This has not been done.

At this meeting, the NC also established the rule that NC members should not contravene established IPSC policy positions in public (see above). Because this rule was introduced, Raymond resigned from the NC and IPSC the next day. I quote from his resignation e-mail:

"In the wake of yesterday's National Committee meeting, I have decided that there is no point in postponing my announced resignation from the Committee. Under no circumstances will I refrain from publicly voicing my views on such matters as the one-state solution, the iniquity of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, and the corruption and collaborationism of the Palestinian Authority. ...

"Given that, as one Committee member phrased it yesterday, I am 'the best-known IPSC activist nationally *and* internationally', I feel that the rationale behind suppressing the personal freedom of speech of NC members would also apply to me as an ordinary member, hence I shall be withdrawing from the IPSC in the wake of the Cohen concerts."

There, he made it clear that he had no intention of refraining from contravening established IPSC policy positions in public. But he also recognised that, if he contravened IPSC policy positions even as an ordinary member, his words might be interpreted as the view of the IPSC, since he had been a prominent member of the IPSC for such a long time. He therefore announced his intention to leave the IPSC altogether.

This was an honourable position: since he wasn't prepared to abide by the will of the IPSC

membership on policy issues in public, he announced his intention to leave the IPSC. That would have resolved the issue cleanly: Raymond would have been free to speak his mind and we would have been able to make it clear that he was no longer a member of the IPSC, and wasn't speaking for the IPSC. But, he later changed his mind and he remains a member of the IPSC, even though he is not prepared to abide by the will of the IPSC membership on policy issues in public.

Given that the rule established by the NC on 11 July was revoked at the next NC meeting on 15 August, he is now free to rejoin the NC and contravene established IPSC policy positions without restraint.

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This leaves the IPSC with a serious problem: if Raymond Deane, "the most prominent and articulate member of the IPSC", in the words of *Phoenix*, speaks publicly, it will be assumed that he is speaking for the IPSC.

On a range of important issues, Raymond has made it clear that he is opposed to established IPSC policy positions and he has made it abundantly clear that "under no circumstances" will he refrain from stating his own, contrary, views in public.

He has used deeply insulting language about the Palestinian Authority, contrary to IPSC policy not to take sides in Palestinian politics. (If he is serious about this description, he should be demonstrating continuously outside the Palestinian Delegation on Mount Merrion Avenue.)

The IPSC doesn't prescribe any specific "solution" for Palestine, neither one-state, nor two-state, nor any other. We believe that it's up to Palestinians to decide. It isn't appropriate that non-Palestinians sitting in Dublin advocate a specific "solution". That's what imperialists in Washington and London do. Raymond prescribes a one-state solution.

Raymond's proposal to the AGM that the IPSC take a public stand against the Lisbon Treaty was defeated. However, instead of accepting the view of the AGM that the Palestinian cause should not be identified with opposition to the Lisbon Treaty, he (and other NC members) formed IFPAL, thereby identifying the Palestinian cause, and unfortunately the IPSC, with opposition to the Lisbon Treaty. Thanks to Raymond (and other members of the NC) the message is going out that you cannot be pro-Palestinian if you don't oppose Lisbon.

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More fundamentally, Raymond Deane also believes that the Irish Government and the EU are "actual co-belligerents on the side of Israel" against the Palestinians (to quote from his e-mail to IPSCdublin@yahoo.com on 8 August, see Appendix 1). Following logically from this, he regards lobbying the Government and the political parties in the Oireachtas as a waste of time. "Wouldn't we be as well [sic] off ringing up the Israeli Embassy and asking them to be a little bit nicer to the poor Palestinians?", he asked in the same e-mail.

So, the lobbying efforts over the past eighteen months or so, including our presentations to the European and Foreign Affairs Committees of the Oireachtas, have been a waste of time, in

Raymond's view. (How he squares this view with his willingness to represent the IPSC at ECCP meetings in order to lobby the EU is a mystery to me – prior to his resignation, he was scheduled to represent the IPSC at an ECCP meeting in July).

Significantly, nobody on the Dublin Yahoo Groups, the forum for Dublin IPSC members, challenged Raymond's view that the Irish Government and the EU are “actual co-belligerents on the side of Israel” and that political lobbying is a waste of time.

This view runs counter to IPSC thinking since the earliest days of the organisation. Indeed, in 2001, shortly after the IPSC's foundation, a Working Group was set up to develop strategies for political lobbying. However, during the period of Raymond's chairmanship there was in Dublin – the political hub of the Republic - no systematic attempt to lobby politicians about Palestine. This early aspiration of the IPSC was not realised until Marie Crawley became Chair.

Until relatively recently I had the impression that the IPSC as a whole approved of this and appreciated the way it raised the profile of the campaign. No objections were raised at the NC when the lobbying campaign began last year, nor at anytime during the year. Nor were there any negative comments, by Raymond or anybody else, at the AGM when a comprehensive report was presented on all aspects of the IPSC's work, including political lobbying. Nor was any objection raised in the NC, by Raymond or anybody else, to the continuation of political lobbying in our work plan for the coming year.

But in his e-mail on 8 August, Raymond denounced political lobbying, saying it “consisted in perpetual courting of the government, and avoidance of any form of activism that might have alienated us from the government”.

It would have been useful if Raymond had raised his view that the Irish Government and the EU are “actual co-belligerents on the side of Israel” at the AGM or at the subsequent NC meetings, where the matter could have been discussed. It would have been useful, because it has profound implications for IPSC activity – since it means abandoning any attempt to persuade the Irish Government, for example, to support the suspension of the Euro-Med Agreement and to take the matter up in the EU.

What I refer to as Strand 1 activity in my document “What the IPSC needs to do” (see Appendix 2), is out, according to Raymond. BDS activity and activity with civil society groups are the only remaining ways in which we in Ireland can put pressure on Israel. Changing the policy of the Irish Government (and thence the EU) isn't possible.

Raymond believes that the Irish Government is a “co-belligerent on the side of Israel” and that as a consequence there is no point talking to it. He is entitled to that view, but it is a problem for the IPSC. Since he is “the most prominent and articulate member of the IPSC”, if he says this publicly, it will be taken to be the view of the IPSC. And, continuation of political lobbying will be impossible for us. And, remember he has said that “under no circumstances” will he refrain from publicly voicing his views.

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Of course, it may be that, as an instrument for lobbying on behalf of Palestine, the IPSC is already a

beaten docket. As of 14 August, I think it could have been said that, due to our work over the past eighteen months, all parties in the Oireachtas were prepared to listen to the IPSC on Palestine. But, on 14 August, the Phoenix article (see Appendix 3) was published, telling a tale of faction fighting within the IPSC and a "communist" takeover, which had led to the resignation of the chair, Marie Crawley, and of "the most prominent and articulate member of the IPSC, composer Raymond Deane" at odds with the dominant "communist" leadership.

It is difficult to conceive of a portrayal of the IPSC that is more likely to destroy IPSC's credibility in the eyes of the political parties in the Oireachtas and to render it worthless as a vehicle for lobbying those parties in the cause of Palestine. I assume that this was the objective of the IPSC member(s), who supplied Phoenix with the "information" on which the article was based. They have probably succeeded. And, if they haven't succeeded this time, there is nothing to stop them trying again.

Phoenix was not the first to mention the "communist" takeover fantasy (in which 2 or 3 people took control of a 20-member NC). Raymond can take credit for that: in his e-mail to IPSCdublin@yahogroups.com on 8 August (see Appendix 1), he asserted that the IPSC had been taken over by an unnamed "group of far-left NC members", who "clearly had strongly influenced Marie" – and, so far as I am aware, no other contributor to the conversation challenged this view.

(Michael Youlton deserves some credit as well: I'm told that at the Dublin Branch meeting on 6 August he declared that Philip O'Connor and I were members of the British & Irish Communist Organisation and were intent on imposing an external political agenda on the IPSC. This is deeply ironic, given that I have wasted a lot of time since I became an NC member trying to keep the IPSC focussed exclusively on the Zionist enemy, while Michael tried to bring in an array of external issues – the Lisbon Treaty, NATO, Egypt, the Irish Anti-War Movement etc.

Not only did he constantly attempt to bring in external issues, Michael opposed our most successful initiative this year – the placing of a full page ad signed by some 300 people in the Irish Times, which has a readership of over 300,000. Raymond also opposed placing the ad, writing in an e-mail to Marie Crawley on 20 January: "I repeat my disapproval of the waste of scarce resources in publishing such a scarifyingly expensive ad". In fact, the ad cost the IPSC nothing, since the signatories paid 100 euro each.)

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Earlier, in a conversation on Facebook on 3 August (see Appendix 4), Raymond Deane stated that the IPSC had been infiltrated by "Trojans", whom he described in the following terms:

"The Trojans are the 3 ex-Maoists, Stalinists, or whatever, who have acquired powerful positions on the National Committee. ... One of them ... is a former (?) devotee of the enlightened Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha (RIP). The other two are from the B&ICO ... an organisation that since its foundation has specialised in 'entryism', and that at one point was fiercely pro-Israel. Its current position is pro-Palestinian, but tomorrow is another day. Their aim, paradoxically, is to make the IPSC so 'mainstream', so well-loved by the Irish and Egyptian governments and the PA, that it will drown in its own useless respectability."

There you have Raymond asserting that three people in powerful positions on the NC are "Trojans", that is, individuals who joined the IPSC under false pretences for the purpose of destroying it.

Raymond was reluctant to name the Trojans "from the B&ICO". However, Freda Hughes, the IPSC vice-Chair, didn't hesitate:

"David and Philip were both members of B&ICO and it is true that that organisation was once pro-Israeli among other things. The paper they both write for now, The Irish Political Review, appears to be a spin off from B&ICO (British and Irish Communist Organisation). Just the facts as I know them, no opinion, innuendo or sarcasm."

There you have the vice-Chair of the IPSC agreeing with Raymond that I am a "Trojan", who joined the IPSC under false pretences for the purpose of destroying it.

(A striking feature about this conversation, in so far as I have had access to it, is that nobody who contributed to it challenged the consensus that I am a "Trojan".)

It is difficult to imagine a more serious charge directed against an officer of an organisation than that of seeking to destroy it from within. Yet that is what I have been accused of by leading members of the IPSC, including the vice-Chair. If I am a "Trojan" – despite having been invited to be a Political Officer in March 2008 – surely I should be expelled.

There is a problem here, which the NC needs to address.

David Morrison
18 September 2009

References:

[1] www.david-morrison.org.uk/palestine/index.html

[2] www.indymedia.ie/article/92971

Appendix 1 Raymond Deane on Dublin yahoo groups (8 August)

From: raymond deane <rmdeane@...>
 Subject: [IPSCdublin] stormy Dublin meetings - response to Anaheed
 To: IPSCdublin@yahoogroups.com
 Date: Saturday, 8 August, 2009, 3:00 PM
 ...

I hope I'll be around when Anaheed gives her talk on NGO-isation. I believe that what has happened to the IPSC is this: previously it was a rather undisciplined (read: anti-authoritarian) jumble of viewpoints and strategies, and sought to steer a path between them. This often entailed fudges of various kinds. This I believe to be typical of PSCs in general, given the inherent contradiction between their grassroots-activist and political-lobbying aspects.

Under Marie's regime, for better or worse, it was decided in the interests of "efficiency" to eliminate this jumble and this fudge, and to focus everybody on a clearly-defined strategy of lobbying. This entailed restructuring the National Committee along lines of "democratic centralism", i.e. in authoritarian accord with a strict policy line. Thus such extraordinary phrases could be heard as "there is no such thing as a personal capacity" for NC members, one of the arguments behind the "gagging motion" passed at the July NC meeting.

Although this move towards democratic centralism was steered by a group of far-left NC members (who clearly had strongly influenced Marie) there was certainly nothing "leftist" about the policy concerned, which consisted in perpetual courting of the government, and avoidance of any form of activism that might have alienated us from the government - e.g. participation in demonstrations outside the Egyptian Embassy, and any kind of criticism of the PA or its Delegate in Ireland (repeatedly referred to by NC members, reverently and inaccurately, as "the Ambassador").

This raises a number of ancillary questions. (1) If, as I believe, the EU is now clearly a co-belligerent alongside Israel in the latter's war against the Palestinian (and Lebanese, etc.) people, is there any point at all in negotiating with the Irish government? Wouldn't we be as well off ringing up the Israeli Embassy and asking them to be a little bit nicer to the poor Palestinians? (2) At what point do we decide that our policy of "non-interference in internal Palestinian politics" is the equivalent of pro-Nicaraguan activists (in the 1980s and 90s) refusing to criticise the Contras? (This never happened, of course!) In other words, when do we acknowledge that the PA is in fact working on behalf of Palestine's enemies, and hence that this is no longer an exclusively "internal" issue?

Following from these, (3) at what point do we renounce appealing to "the mainstream" if by that term we mean people who are completely brainwashed by the establishment into believing all its propaganda, and concentrate on directly trying to change the views of "the mainstream" even at the cost of our "respectability" (remember, these terms are themselves defined entirely by pro-Israeli propaganda)?

It seems to me that the IPSC in its most recent avatar is more interested in proving its own "respectability" to government, Unions (a big problem, there, I concede) and "the mainstream" than in trying to convince "the mainstream" of the falsity of the propaganda to which it is being exposed: viz, that the Irish and EU governments are potential "honest brokers" rather than actual co-belligerents on the side of Israel, and that the PA represents - to any degree whatsoever - the interests of the Palestinian people.

These issues need to be teased out without fear of recrimination or victimisation. Indeed I believe that they are issues that, mutatis mutandis, are relevant to PSCs the world over, but particularly within the EU.

Raymond

Appendix 2 What the IPSC needs to do

The following is an attempt to set out what we in Ireland can do that has the potential to put pressure on Israel to cease oppressing Palestinians.

Broadly speaking, I think there are three strands to this:

- (1) lobbying the Government and political parties to change policy on Israel/Palestine
- (2) BDS activity by civil society, inspired by us, and
- (3) persuading civil society organisations, for example, trade unions and churches, to adopt a pro-Palestinian stance.

As far as I am concerned, there is no reason whatsoever why the IPSC shouldn't operate these three strands together successfully. There is no reason whatsoever why political lobbying should be at the expense of BDS activity, or vice versa. Sensibly, the NC structure has been designed to enable the various forms of activity to take place simultaneously.

(I am not aware that the current political lobbying exercise, which Michael Youlton and I, as political officers, initiated in April last year has taken resources away from other IPSC activity. Apart from Michael and I, only Marie, Philip and Ronan have taken part in lobbying in Dublin and in Europe.)

Eventual success against Israel will, most likely, be as a result of a mixture of international pressure that hurts it politically or economically and pressure that damages its morale.

In principle, strand (1) activity by us in Ireland is capable of leading to both forms of pressure. To bring about the suspension of the Euro-Med Agreement, which would seriously hurt Israel economically, we in Ireland have to engage in strand (1) activity – one way or another, we have to persuade the Irish Government to support suspension and to take the matter up in the European Council. There is no other way for suspension to be achieved. We have to try.

Strand (1) activity is also capable of damaging Israeli morale. For example, a shift in Irish Government policy in favour of the Palestinian cause will damage Israeli morale, even if this doesn't translate into a change in EU foreign policy. That's why it is useful to try to get the Irish Government to call publicly for various measures, for example, the suspension of the Euro-Med Agreement.

The same is true to a lesser extent of a publicly announced shift in policy in favour of the Palestinian cause by a political party or even a prominent individual.

Likewise, BDS activity in concert with solidarity organisations in other countries is capable of

generating both forms of pressure. It can hurt Israel economically but even the refusal of an Irish supermarket to stock Israeli goods can make a small dent in Israeli morale. Every little helps.

Strand (3) activity is about damaging Israeli morale. For example, if other institutions in Irish society, such as the trade union movement, take up the cause of Palestine, it damages Israeli morale. For that reason, it is worth getting every trade union in Ireland to adopt the ICTU position. For that reason, it is also worth trying to get churches and NGOs to take a public stand in favour of Palestine.

Apart from focussing on these areas, we always need to broaden our popular base and attract new people into the IPSC, so that we have more people to do the things that need to be done. How to do that needs to be thought about carefully, but I have two suggestions:

- That we concentrate on a few meetings with a prominent speaker, who has a good chance of media coverage, giving a clear message about the Israeli oppression of Palestinians, for example, Mustapha Barghouti. The press might even publish something by him and I'm sure TDs would like to meet him as well.
- That we write more letters to the press – every time Israel/Palestine is mentioned in the press we should try to write a letter, with the aim of stirring up discussion. It's usually possible to think of an angle. Given that there is a definite shift amongst politicians in favour of the cause of Palestine, there must be a chance that the letters columns will be more open to our opinions.

David Morrison

August 2009

Appendix 3 Phoenix article (14 August)

IRISH PALESTINIAN GROUP SPLIT

THE most prominent and articulate member of the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC), composer Raymond Deane, has resigned from the group's national committee and the mother of an internal Intifada is now likely at an extraordinary general meeting in the Autumn.

The battle lines are between a group of hard line, old fashioned Stalinists and/or Maoists that has come to dominate the the IPSC leadership and others like Deane who belong to no political group. The Stalinists, whose political origins are in the British and Irish Communist Organisation — they were the intellectual shock troops of the pro-Unionist, Two Nations theory in Ireland — upbraided Deane for some of his recent writings. Deane had criticised the Fatah dominated Palestinian Authority, accusing it of collaborating with the Israelis, a radical but not uncommon view amongst Palestinians and their supporters.

Deane agreed to a demand from the comrades that a letter be sent to the Fatah delegate in Dublin explaining that his statement was a personal one but was then faced with a surprise motion demanding that NC members desist from any public comment even in their personal capacity that might conflict with the IPSC line. Deane then resigned from the NC, although not from IPSC membership, in exasperation.

The irony of the political split is that it is the doctrinaire Stalinists who want to maintain a group that brooks no criticism of the Palestinian Authority. This is, in turn, because it wishes to enjoy cordial relations with Fianna Fáil Arabists and even government members who insist on relating to the Palestinian authority and not the elected government in Gaza which is led by Hamas. Deane's supporters do not want to confine themselves to this political strait jacket, even if it does curry favour with the government.

The IPSC chairperson, Marie Crawley, has also resigned her position but her reasons appear to be more related to disillusionment with the constant faction fighting on the NC.



Appendix 4 Facebook (3/7 August)

Raymond Deane:

The IPSC is not the only solidarity campaign experiencing "Trojans": Tony Greenstein's Blog: Palestine Solidarity Campaign Belongs to its Members Source: azvsas.blogspot.com:

Dear Friend, At the last AGM of Palestine Solidarity Campaign in January 2009, it became apparent that PSC has effectively been subject to a 'take-over...' by a tiny political group Socialist Action and its supporters.

...Read More August 3 at 2:27pm · Comment · Like / Unlike · View Feedback (25) Hide Feedback (25) · Share Partridge Over Ireland and 2 others like this.

Redjade In Hungary:

please Raymond, do tell more :-) August 3 at 3:34pm

Rónan Nolan

Who are the trojans ? Evidence is better than innuendo. August 3 at 3:52pm · Delete

Cogsy M-L

Have you been living under a rock for the past year? Or are you one of the "useful idiots"? August 3 at 3:56pm

John Humphreys:

Very interesting article Raymo, its worryingly similar to our experiences here except on a much larger scale. Thanks for the heads up. August 3 at 4:28pm

Cogsy M-L:

I think there's a political explanation for the schism in solidarity campaigns. Tony pointed to it in his open letter, and its the demoralising effect the PA's capitulation has had on the international solidarity movement. The leaderships of the IPSC and PSC are on the retreat, taking their cue from the PA. Imitating the PA, the leaderships of these groups are clamping down on criticism and debate. Bad organisational practices flow from bad politics. August 3 at 5:12pm

Raymond Deane:

Part of the problem is the definition of criticism of the PA as "interference in internal Palestinian politics", as if criticism (to put it mildly) of the Contras had been interference in "internal Nicaraguan politics". Now that the PA is fully a pawn of the US, EU and Israel - the worst enemies of the Palestinian people - collaboration with the PA, on the grounds that "they're the people the Irish government negotiates with", is itself a form of "interference in internal Palestinian politics". August 3 at 5:26pm

Rónan Nolan:

You haven't answered my question. I asked a specific question, I wasn't looking for external commentary, innuendo or sarcasm. I'll ask it again. Who are the 'trojans' in the IPSC that you're concerned about ? And what is your evidence ? August 3 at 5:58pm · Delete

Raymond Deane:

The Trojans are the 3 ex-Maoists, Stalinists, or whatever, who have acquired powerful positions on the National Committee. This is no secret (except, apparently, to you, Ronan), so there is no innuendo. One of them, now IPSC Secretary, is a former (?) devotee of the enlightened Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha (RIP). The other two are from the B&ICO (... Read More in a number of its most recent avatars), an organisation that since its foundation has specialised in "entryism", and that at one point was fiercely pro-Israel. Its current position is pro-Palestinian, but tomorrow is another day. Their aim, paradoxically, is to make the IPSC so "mainstream", so well-loved by the Irish and Egyptian governments and the PA, that it will drown in its own useless respectability. August 3 at 6:46pm

Anne Key:

Worrying. Let's hope UK PSC doesn't go the same way... August 3 at 6:56pm

Rónan Nolan:

I don't know what you're basing your information on, and from your unwillingness to go public and call a spade a spade (or more correctly name a spade - I can only identify the national secretary), and back it up, your argument is still your opinion rather than hard fact. You're not convincing me by repeating the same line over and over with more volume. August 3 at 11:15pm · Delete

Freda Mullin Hughes:

David and Philip were both members of B&ICO and it is true that that organisation was once pro-Israeli among other things. The paper they both write for now, The Irish Political Review, appears to be a spin off from B&ICO (British and Irish Communist Organisation). Just the facts as I know them, no opinion, innuendo or sarcasm. August 3 at 11:38pm

Raymond Deane:

The increase in volume is from you, Ronan. Clearly you don't pay a lot of attention to the Yahoo mailing lists,

where these issues have already been bandied about. Freda has named these people, you can find their links to the BICO cited on the internet, and the nature of their contribution to the IPSC has already been quite manifest. August 3 at 11:42pm

Raymond Deane:

B&ICO has dissolved into a number of "publishing companies", "historical societies" and "reviews", thus dissimulating its identity - but it remains the B&ICO, so Freda's past tense isn't appropriate. August 3 at 11:47pm