

Wales letter: CLASS AND NATIONAL STRUGGLES

EDITORS NOTE.

We are pleased to publish this letter which raises important questions regarding the class struggle in Britain.

Since we received this letter, the government has been forced to back down and has agreed to grant the Welsh Peoples' right to a separate television channel. They claim that they have done this because they are impressed by the strength of the 'rational arguments' of moderate and influential people. This is obvious nonsense. What has terrified the Thatcher government into backing down for the first time in its term of office is the prospect of a revolutionary alliance forming between the industrial workers of South Wales and the working people, small farmers and petit bourgeoisie of rural Wales, taking the TV channel question as a focus.

Class Struggle will aim to improve its coverage of the Welsh and Scottish peoples' struggles in the future.

Dear Editor,

I was very pleased to see your recent article, 'A Welsh channel for Wales', because I feel that 'Class Struggle' has seriously neglected the struggles of the peoples of Scotland and Wales.

However, I think that the article had an important weakness in that it dealt solely with one campaign and totally failed to situate this in the context of the important class and national struggles taking place in Wales this year - struggles rendered more acute by the monetarist policies of the Thatcher government that lead to the further impoverishment of working people.

Thatcher's heartless statement that Welsh people have a tradition of going elsewhere to find work (some are now having to go to Saudi Arabia!) shows something of the problem.

Two events heralded the new year in Wales - the arson campaign against holiday homes and the steel-

workers strike. The steelworkers - together with the miners who are also fighting to defend their living standards and industry - are a leading factor in the proletarian core of the British working class. The destruction of their industries will have appalling consequences for areas with already high unemployment figures.

Similarly, the arson campaign highlighted the way that they buying of second homes in areas of poverty, high unemployment and some of the worst housing in the United Kingdom was leading to both economic ruination and the loss of national identity.

The significance of these struggles may be lost on some revolutionaries, but it is clearly grasped by the British state. In the wake of the arson campaign the state unleashed repression that it only surpasses in occupied Ireland. Flouting many of its own laws, people throughout Wales were rounded up, held illegally, threatened, maltreated and had their property, particularly diaries and address books, stolen. Those rounded up were, in general, people who obviously had nothing to do with the holiday home fires, and included Plaid Cymru parliamentary candidates and members of various political, cultural, linguistic, historical and commemorative nationalist groups. At night, police roadblocks were set up in rural areas of north Wales and cars were searched, and people questioned, at random. It was a blatant attempt to compile information on legitimate nationalist and left wing political activity - particularly on the newly founded Welsh Socialist Republican Movement - and it has effectively crippled the activities of Cofiw, a historical group that specialises in commemorating important events in the history of the Welsh struggle for national freedom.

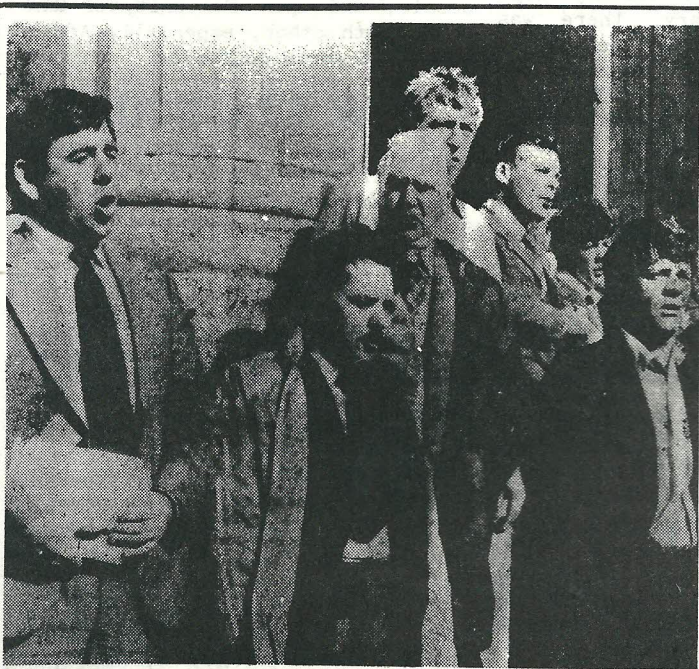
The State also took this opportunity to step up its harassment of Irish patriots living and working in Wales and to probe their links with Welsh nationalists.

Very few of those arrested were charged with any offence at all and those responsible for the arson campaign and the members of the underground nationalist movements such as Mudiad Amdiffyn Cymru (MAC - Movement for the Defence of Wales) have so far escaped capture by the State.

The unity between the class and national struggles was shown most clearly when Thatcher had the cheek to visit Wales. Hounded throughout her visit, on one occasion she had to sneak in through the back door whilst a very militant crowd of almost 5,000 demonstrated outside, some of them with smoke bombs! Those demonstrating included Plaid Cymru and Welsh Language Society members, together with trade unionists, particularly miners and steelworkers - an unwritten united front! The campaign for the Welsh TV channel is now a focus for the struggles of the Welsh people and the threatened hunger strike by Gwynfor Evans - elder statesman of Welsh nationalism - holds out the prospect of militant direct action on a mass scale in Wales, as even Tory MPs from Wales warn.

This focus exists not just because of concern for the future of the Welsh language, moral indignation, or "the absurdity of the present situation, which satisfies none of the TV viewers", as the article in 'Class Struggle' claims. Rather, the cynical reneging on its election promise by the government shows the complete disregard for Wales by all the imperialist political parties at Westminster. The national identity, language and industrial base of Wales are all under attack.

When writing in support of the struggle of the black people in America, Comrade Mao Zedong said that in the final analysis, national struggle was a form of class struggle. The present situation in Wales shows this clearly. The development of the national and social-economic struggles of the peoples of Scotland and Wales are of tremendous significance for the future of the British revolution.



The Tory government has backed down on the Welsh people's demand for their own television channel. But the courts continue to vindictively fine those who refused to buy TV licences. Last week Plaid Cymru MP, Dafydd Wigley was fined £25, although he immediately sent in his money after the government backed down. The photo shows him (first from left), together with supporters, singing the Welsh national anthem on the courtroom steps after the hearing.