

Communist Workers Movement

Submission on the National Question in the British Isles.

Historically in the British Isles there have been four nations, England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. Equally historically, England incorporated Wales, and coerced Scotland into a partnership-- a partnership of joint exploitation. In Ireland, on the contrary, the relationship was from the beginning nakedly colonial, and in fact has remained so.

The unity of the mainland nations was a considerable asset for developing capitalism--- it ensured one single toll free area, little or no need of land defence forces, and little devastation from warfare.

While the English and Welsh Bourgeoisie developed together as a consequence of Wales' feudal, indeed in parts tribal, society at the time of union, the Scots Bourgeoisie developed independently, and hence there was already developed in Scotland a nation state of Modern kind, as opposed to a feudal, dynastic one. This relative development of Scotland is reflected in her retention of a separate legal and administrative structure, as compared with the total incorporation of the Welsh tribal/ dynastic state into the English polity. It is also reflected in the greater support for Scots Independence among Scots workers as opposed to Wales, in spite of Wales for instance having a larger more viable ethnic language in Welsh, and ~~was~~ lacking the Gaelic /Lallans divide of Scotland.

Geographically also Wales is at a disadvantage in that North and South are divided by Mountains and have their separate axes of transport and economy towards towards respectively the Midlands, Merseyside area, and the South West of England. Despite this however, a sense of Welsh Nationhood has survived, and would appear to be flourishing.

What then should the communist attitude be? We find throughout Marx, Lenin and Stalin etc, what sometimes appears to be a contradictory attitude to nationalities, Marx at one time dismissed Bohemian (later Czech) national prospects as necessarily being absorption into Germany. This did not mean that Marx was a Teutonic chauvinist, or did not respect the right to self determination--- it meant that at the time he wrote the Czech people were not conscious of their nationhood, nor were they demanding it. When later they did so, Marx and later the Bolsheviks supported them.

Similarly British communists, while giving general support to self determination, have for many years not applied it to the British nations because of the relative Quiescence of Scotland and Wales. We must emulate the humility of Marx and reconsider the question in the light of the growing national consciousness of the workers of Wales and Scotland, especially since the increasingly obvious deficiencies of rule from Whitehall and Westminster partake more and more of a national character, in addition to

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class and party political aspect apparent in ~~Britain~~ England itself. Therefore, while giving general support to the principles of self determination, and bearing in mind Stalin's criteria^T for nationhood, we must remember the cultural, Subjective point of nationhood. When we consider support for secession as opposed to recognition of the right to, we must take into account the strength of national consciousness among the people, and especially among the working class. If as seems likely, this consciousness has imbued the Scots workers, then it is the duty of communists in Scotland to link the national question with that of class power, and to fight for a workers state there.

In Wales, where the movement, both nationalist and communist appears weaker, perhaps actual advocacy should be reserved, but as well as advocating the right to self determination we should also actively call for the protection and encouragement of the Welsh Culture-- especially the language.

However, while recognising ~~xxxx~~ the right to self determination, we must also consider several other factors objectively, 1) England wales and Scotland make a coherent economic unit 2) British Workers have developed common traditions of solidarity and Britain is (3) governed by an essentially unitary state (except IRELAND, n&s).

Bearing in mind these considerations we should call for 1) a unitary communist party for England, Scotland and Wales, with separate national sections ~~xxxx~~ with a maximum of local initiative, but under a unified political programme and leadership. (2) Such A party should have as one of the main points of its policy, the call for a federation of Workers' states in the British Isles (including Ireland if possible) (3) Such a party must fight vigorously against any attempt to use national chauvinism to split the working class.

In passing, let us note that Manx, Cornish, nationhood is not justified on any of Stalin's criteria except that of common territory, and that while calling for the encouragement of local cultural differences, we should dismiss these proposals as romanticism, and eccentricity.

Why do we not advocate the party covering Ireland? Because Ireland has been the subject of a colonial relationship in all its aspects, economic, political, and cultural, unlike Wales and Scotland where mainly cultural imperialism was allied to the economic and political partnership of the capitalists of those nations. This relationship of colonialism is apparent even now in Northern Ireland despite the dissolution of Stormont. The 12 MPs from NI at Westminster no more prove ~~the~~ integration into the state system than does the representation of French Overseas Territories in Paris prove that Djibouti for instance has been part of France all this time.

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Ireland is culturally and historically one nation. The purpose of a direct colonial rule in one portipn, is . . . to maintain the even more economically important 26 counties in a neo colonial position.

Hence a prerequisite of genuine national independence in Ireland is British withdrawal from the North. But national independence for whom? The Irish National Bourgeoisie is on the verge of extinction, having signed its own recognition of moribundity in the form of the Free Trade agreement with Britain after 40 years attempts to build a sepearte Iriwh capitalism.

The Irish ruling class is overwhelming dependant on foreign capitalism so much so that the Irish even have their own word for the comprador bourgeoisie-- the gombeen men! Eire govt policy is the encouragement of imperialist penetration into Ireland, with grants , tax holidays etc.

The conclusion is that no genuine independence is possible for Ireland without Socialism, workers state power, and so the struggle for national independence must also be a struggle for dictatorship of the proletariat. Only such united Working class struggle in NI can hope to break the sectarian divide so sedulously fostered by the British and their objective allies on the socalled nationalist side.

"e must use what little influence we have to help build an Irish communist party and lend it full support in its struggle against the British state, but not on the basis of a unitary British Party, but on the basis of a sepearte party, fighting a different form of struggle against our common enemy--- the British Ruling Class , its allies and puppets.

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