

# IRELAND SOLIDARITY

## Towards a programme

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Introductory: The scope and aim of our activities concerning the Irish question.

A. The revolutionary anti-imperialist struggle of the Irish people for national reunification and independence is of tremendous significance for revolutionaries in Britain. The profound implications of this struggle confront us in all our revolutionary activities. In our struggle against the deep-rooted chauvinism that exists in this, the oldest imperialist country, we are constantly reminded that the Irishman has long preceded the black and the Asian as the favoured object of racist prejudice. In our initial skirmishes with the capitalist state, we are everywhere faced with the fact that the Irish people suffer more developed forms of fascist suppression by this same state, and have in turn built more advanced methods of resisting it. These factors, and many more besides, combine to give proletarian revolution in Britain an 'Irish dimension' which we as communists ignore or belittle at our peril.

B. The scope and aim of our activities in connection with the Irish question is to work for the development of a solidarity movement in this country for the revolutionary struggle being fought by the Irish people under the banner of republicanism - a struggle to overthrow the partition settlement imposed by British imperialism and achieve national reunification and genuine independence.

C. The struggles for democracy and for socialism in Britain have throughout been closely interlinked with the Irish people's struggle against British domination. The periods of the most intense class struggle in Britain have coincided with the most forceful entry of the Irish question onto the British political scene. The activities of many prominent revolutionaries have spanned both countries (the Chartist leader Feargus O'Connor and the great socialist James Connolly, to name but two examples). Marx long ago put forward the view that the proletarian revolution in Britain would occur in the context of the final showdown over the Irish question. Whatever the changes in context that have occurred since his time, this overall perspective still holds good.

D. The scope of our ideological struggle in connection with the Irish question does not extend to the task of laying theoretical groundwork for the development of a programme for the Irish revolution itself. For the Irish revolution, though its relevance for our struggles cannot be overemphasised, is strictly an external factor for us. We would deserve the name of chauvinist if we gave the least grounds for anyone to suppose that we saw it as incumbent on us to try to 'lay down the line' for the Irish people's struggle. The task of our ideological struggle in relation to the Irish question is strictly within the limits of clearing away obstacles that prevent us from building effective solidarity in this country.

E. Nevertheless, this fact in no way absolves us from the duty of concerning ourselves deeply with ideological struggles regarding the nature of the Irish revolution. On the contrary, ideological struggles among Irish revolutionaries are of more direct concern to us than is the case with any other people with whose struggles we are called upon to build solidarity. This is due to the following factors:

- (i) The close geographical proximity of our two countries.
- (ii) The closer incorporation of the 6 counties into the British state than has been the case with any other British colony.
- (iii) The close coordination of the British imperialist state's activities in the 6 counties with its counter-revolutionary preparations against working and oppressed people in Britain itself.

(iv) The fact that people of Irish origin constitute one of the main national components of the British working class and other oppressed groups. At one extreme this factor may be of insignificant influence, limited, say, to the retention of an Irish surname after many generations of full integration with the native population. At the other extreme, however, there may be close identification with Irish affairs, as is the case with large Irish communities existing in most urban centres in Britain.

(iv) The more advanced nature of the struggles waged by the Irish people, particularly during the period 1913-1923 when not only the nationalist forces but also the specifically proletarian revolutionary forces engaged in armed struggle. Ireland has thus provided the most immediate indication to British workers of the road that lies ahead.

F. Where, therefore, the following statement touches on the assessment of the nature and scope of the Irish revolution itself, its conclusions are strictly provisional. The main thrust of our efforts is to confront the issues facing the solidarity movement in this country. As our solidarity work progresses, we shall not only be able to move away from generalities towards a more specific and programmatic level. We shall also build closer unity with Irish Marxist-Leninists and become acquainted with their analyses. On that basis we shall be able greatly to strengthen our ability to struggle for Marxist-Leninist policies in the solidarity movement. The following statement is thus only an initial step towards a programme for Ireland solidarity. Such a programme will be a central element in our overall programme for rebuilding the revolutionary party of the working class in Britain. For the moment, anything we have to say is probably more significant for the questions it raises than for any answers it may provide.

## I. THE EFFECTS OF PARTITION.

### 1. Partition and its economic effects.

- A. The partition of Ireland was achieved by armed force and has never received the acceptance of the majority of the Irish people. As a result there is a continuing national contradiction between that majority and British imperialism.
- B. Every advance in the history of human society has been associated with the creation of a particular social formation which best suits the further development of the productive forces. In the case of rising capitalism, that social formation was the nation state. The Irish national movement has, however, since its inception been viciously suppressed by Britain. As a result, the formation of an Irish nation state that can win genuine independence has yet to be achieved: the national democratic revolution remains on the agenda.
- C. Under the partition settlement, the 26 counties were belatedly conceded virtual constitutional independence, but only as an element in a wider scheme through which British imperialism aimed to ensure the continued subservience of the Irish economy to its needs. For the industrial areas of the North East were still incorporated directly into the British imperialist state by means of the institution of the 6-county state entity. While the 6-county economy produced ships to sail the seas ruled by Britannia and shirts for all who sailed in them, the 6-counties remained an agricultural backwater more helplessly dependent on the vagaries of the British imperialist market for agricultural goods than it had been even in the days of the great famine of the 1840s.
- D. Only reunification has held out the prospect of building an integrated economy in which agriculture and industry give each other mutual support for their further development, instead of each separately serving an aspect of British imperialism's needs. Partition has thus constituted the central obstacle to the development of the productive forces in Ireland and to the achievement of economic independence from British imperialism. The struggle to overthrow the partition settlement is thus the focal point of the Irish national democratic revolution.

### 2. The effects of partition on the Irish labour movement.

- A. Partition has had a catastrophic effect on the Irish proletariat. The industrial backwardness to which partition consigned the 26 counties left the proletariat there quite small, and with a relatively small proportion unionised until recent decades.
- B. In the six counties, labour organisation has of course been extensive throughout, but in general paralysed by the deep-rooted disunity of the working class of the area. At certain times of very militant economic struggle (the Belfast dock strike of 1919, the Belfast unemployed struggles of 1932) spontaneous workers' unity has developed. However, this unity has proved to be extremely difficult to consolidate on any scale, coming as it has under such great pressure whenever the national question has reasserted itself.

### 3. Partition and the changing pattern of imperialist exploitation.

A. In the 6 counties, traditional Orange capitalism remained the dominant economic interest until well after the war. As for the 26 counties, the 1920s were a period of abject submission by the local bourgeoisie to the needs of British imperialism. From the 1930s onwards, the new ruling party, Fianna Fail, put up a certain amount of resistance to this situation and, though remaining firmly within the sphere of British imperialist domination, Ireland during this period achieved some native capitalist development. The pattern of exploitation has changed radically during the post-war decades, with the influx into both parts of Ireland, at an accelerating rate, of a vast amount of finance capital not only from Britain but from other imperialist powers as well. \*

B. By the end of the 1950s, this new investment produced a prolonged boom in the economy of the 26 counties which gathered momentum and did not pass its peak until the mid-1970s. However, this investment has been of a kind familiar in the third world: it has been entirely concerned with quick profit and has not produced the major structural changes which are necessary if Ireland is to achieve economic autonomy. The bourgeoisie of the 26 counties, nothing daunted, happily discarded their economic 'confrontation' (such as it was) with imperialism and threw themselves into the less irksome and more immediately lucrative business of becoming its direct local agents, }

C. In the 6 counties, by contrast, the new capital influx resulted in some quite intense contradictions among the bourgeoisie. For finance capital would have preferred unimpeded mobility throughout Ireland, and partition, with the economic iron curtain which it entailed, was an obstacle to this. This economic demand of finance capital was reflected in the politics of "O'Neillism", which involved rapprochement with the 26 counties and corresponding talk (without practice) of liberalisation of the sectarian state structure. However, traditional Orange politics proved far more intimately linked with the maintenance of the class position of the 6-county bourgeoisie than ever the politics of Fianna Fail were to the bourgeoisie of the 26 counties, and O'Neill was never able to unite his class around his politics. }

D. The period of euphoria induced by the boom - a euphoria which dominated much bourgeois political, as well as economic, life - has now finally come to an end as the boom, now well past its peak, begins to give way to slump. The 26-county bourgeoisie is no longer able to justify its willing collaboration with imperialism quite so easily. Consequently, the politician most closely associated with this collaboration, Lynch, has been ditched, and replaced with Haughey, who has the undeserved reputation of a more rigid adherence to the original principles of Fianna Fail. Meanwhile in the 6 counties, the rebirth of republicanism has long since led the bourgeoisie to fall back on traditional Orange politics and "O'Neillism" is a fading memory.

E. 'Liberal' imperialism has thus been rudely awakened from its dreams of a cosy world in which the contradictions of partition would melt into thin air. For the contradictions associated with the national question continue to reassert themselves. The fact that this continues to happen, whatever changing forms these contradictions have taken, and whatever changes in the pattern of imperialist exploitation have occurred, shows that the national question remains unresolved. The historic task of national reunification thus remains the first task on the agenda of the Irish revolution. }

## II. NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION.

### 1. The republican movement.

A. The national democratic stage of the Irish revolution, which must be accomplished as a precondition for the transition to the stage of socialist revolution, is embodied in the revolutionary republican struggle to overthrow the partition settlement. This struggle represents a very fine anti-imperialist tradition. It is a source of support and strength for the progressive forces of the whole world that such a thorn exists in the side of one of the nastiest and wildest of the old imperialist powers. In particular and most immediately, this struggle is a tremendous source of support and strength for the struggle of the workers in Britain to overthrow the British imperialist state.

B. The historic task that is being undertaken by the republican movement today is the same as in the revolutionary civil war of 1922 to 1923. In that war the consistent progressive nationalist forces were in alliance with the proletarian revolutionary forces, who had some initial organisational and ideological links with Comintern. This revolutionary alliance rejected the partition settlement imposed during 1921 to 1922 by British imperialism and the treacherous 'Free State' section of the Irish bourgeoisie, and conducted a revolutionary struggle to defend the integrity of the Irish republic that had been declared in the 1916 uprising. Though drowned in blood and driven underground by the Cosgrave 'murder government' of the 1920s with full backing from British imperialism, the republican movement has shown that it will continue to reemerge and keep the struggle alive until such time as the national aspirations of the Irish people are satisfied.

C. The assessment of the republican movement can best be made in conjunction with the assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of our sister communist movement in Ireland. During the period 1913 to 1923 the question of an alliance of the proletarian revolutionary forces and the progressive nationalist forces was always on the agenda, and during the high points of struggle (the Easter uprising of 1916 and the preparations for it, the 'Black-and-Tan' war of 1919-1921, the civil war of 1922-1923) this alliance was cemented in blood. Again in the 1930s, the Republican Congress saw attempts to build organisational unity between the republican movement and labour - attempts in which the Communist Party of Ireland participated. However, the consolidation of revisionism in the Communist Party of Northern Ireland (i.e. the section of the CPI which survived after the war) was marked by its acceptance of the partition settlement, and consequently by the decisive severance of its activities from the revolutionary republican tradition.

D. It was in the context of this revisionist betrayal that the rebirth of the revolutionary republican tradition in the late 1960s took an overtly anti-communist form. However, it became clear in the early 1970s that what had been perceived by revolutionary nationalists as 'communism' had in fact been revisionism. The leading organisations of the republican revival were thus, though initially anti-communist in form, anti-revisionist in essence. (Such a situation has parallels in other countries, for instance in the case of the early period of PAC.) By placing the central task of the national democratic stage of the Irish revolution - revolutionary struggle to end partition - back at the head of the agenda, and winning people for revolutionary struggle, they have played a historically progressive role.

## 2. Imperialist 'alternatives' and diversions.

A. There is no way that British imperialism can evade the national liberation struggle of the Irish people. So long as the national question remains unresolved, then so long will the most politically conscious sections of the Irish people be drawn towards the revolutionary republican struggle. Imperialism constantly tries to create diversions and come up with 'alternative' paths to the solution of the Irish question. The period of political and economic euphoria induced by the post-war boom culminated in a spate of talk about rapprochement, convergence, coalescence, and what have you. In the early 1970s this developed into a veritable industry of bright ideas, nostrums, gimmicks, 'new peace formulas', etc., which all boiled down to the same thing: to divert the Irish people from their struggle. One by one they all foundered on the rock of the Irish people's national aspirations as embodied in the on-going republican struggle.

B. The most developed form taken by these imperialist manoeuvres was the Sunningdale agreement of late 1973. This represented the peak of this historical phase, and its defeat at the hands of the Loyalist strike of May 1974 constituted the correspondingly most rude awakening. That strike was a bitter reminder for the 6-county bourgeoisie that the maintenance of their class rule ultimately depended on Orange sectarian fanaticism. Their dabbling with more comfortable forms of bourgeois rule under the signboard of 'liberalisation' thus risked unleashing a counter-revolutionary coup that would engulf the whole of Ireland in a national liberation war. The Sunningdale agreement, the Council of Ireland, 'federation', and all the other fruits of that political era thus burst like bubbles in the air, and by the mid-1970s the old partition stalemate had reemerged.

C. The Sunningdale agreement was the nearest Ireland has ever come to making progress towards eventual reunification in a non-revolutionary form under British neo-colonial auspices. So decisive was its failure that it is difficult to conceive of any circumstances where British imperialism could ever achieve such a solution, or even come as near it a second time. Certainly the current Atkins talks provide hardly the faintest echo of the optimism widely expressed in imperialist circles in the Sunningdale period. However, even in the unlikely event of such a settlement being achieved, it would still be the fruit of the continued revolutionary nationalist struggle. It would be a move forced upon British imperialism - a move whereby it would attempt to cover its retreat, not the fruit of any 'successful initiative', let alone benevolence, on its part.

D. One idea that was current during the early 1970s was that as both Britain and Ireland were entering the EEC, where federal institutions were increasingly to be established, this would somehow ease the path for imperialism towards a negotiated resolution of the Irish question along federal lines. This notion has proved no less illusory than any of the other bright ideas that were current in that period.

E. A recurring feature of 6-county politics has been the calls which are periodically made for the creation of an 'independent' 6-county statelet. These have varied all the way from chauvinist howlings for UDI from Orange backwoodsmen to the idea that such a policy could be a transition to a negotiated settlement in which the 'independent' 6-county statelet would supposedly be able to federate with the 26 counties. Those who advocate such a policy are confronted with the reality of the nature of the partition settlement, which established the 6-county state entity as a means of perpetuating the opposition of the Protestant community to Irish national unity and independence. It is thus hard to see how the formation of such an 'independent' statelet could in any way constitute a progressive step, or be anything other than a manoeuvre to bring about stepped-up Orange fascism and counter-revolutionary civil war against the nationalist community who would resist such a 'solution'.

F. Whether or not the programmes of particular republican organisations include proposals for the application of the federal principle in relation to the two communities, or the four provinces, etc., is the internal affair of the Irish revolutionary movement. This question is not to be confused with the issue of the federal diversions peddled by British imperialism.

### III. PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION.

#### 1. Proletarian leadership.

A. Besides its significance as a revolutionary national struggle against British imperialism, the Irish people's struggle has a further significance for us communists in Britain. For this struggle has, for over a century, seen the participation of the Irish proletariat. At certain times - notably in the Easter uprising of 1916 - the proletariat has played a vanguard role, and has taken the lead in the revolutionary struggle. Throughout the ensuing period up to 1923, the proletariat provided much of the backbone of the revolutionary forces. The experience of the Communist Party of Ireland in the 1930s also saw the development of unity between the proletarian revolutionary forces and the revolutionary republican tradition. The formation of the Republican Congress, in which the CPI participated, was an attempt to organise those sections of the latter which were receptive to proletarian ideology and leadership.

B. Just as the revolutionary struggles of the Irish working and oppressed people during the period 1913-1923 were the most historically advanced that the British Isles have seen, so also was their most notable proletarian leader the revolutionary of greatest stature who has ever hailed from these islands. In his clear conception of the role of the proletariat in history, in his unflinching leadership of revolutionary insurrection, in his practical grasp of the relation between national and socialist struggle, in his attempts to build a proletarian alliance with the downtrodden poor farmers, in his opposition to imperialist war, and not least in his lifelong and straightforward devotion to the working and oppressed people not only of his own but of all countries, James Connolly deserves to be ranked as the Lenin of the British Isles. Just as the Easter uprising brought the vision of armed detachments of the proletariat before the eyes of the British proletariat in a more immediate way even than the October revolution in Russia was to do the next year, so also the teachings of Connolly brought home the application of revolutionary socialism to many British revolutionaries long before the teachings of Lenin were current in this country. Connolly sustained a working relationship with many British revolutionaries, particularly those on the Clydeside, which extended over many years. It was such revolutionaries, many of them of Irish origin, who were to form the Communist Party of Great Britain. Lenin's decisive endorsement of the revolutionary nature of the uprising led by Connolly was often quoted with pride by early members of the CPGB as evidence that Leninism confirmed and summed up the most advanced experience of the proletariat of all countries. Thus Connolly's activities which had made him known, loved and respected by revolutionary workers on both sides of the Irish Sea, played an incalculable part in the preparation for the foundation of the CPGB as well as of the CPI.

C. The culmination of the revolutionary republican struggle to sweep away the partition settlement can only occur in the context of unprecedented mass mobilisation with the proletariat actively involved. The Irish national bourgeoisie is deeply corrupted by its service of British and other neo-colonial



interests in the 26 counties and compromise with unionism in the 6 counties. The proletariat can therefore be expected to bear the main burden of leadership of the national movement from a relatively early stage, and to move on to the socialist revolution as soon as national reunification is off the agenda.

D. This is all the more the case in the new situation that has arisen in the 26 counties since the late 1970s. For with the beginnings of economic slump, there has been an upsurge in the economic struggles of the working class, such as the postal strike and the massive demonstrations against PAYE. These struggles have been on a scale that has not been seen for decades, if indeed in the entire history of the area since partition. This unprecedented mobilisation of the newly expanded proletariat will profoundly affect the future context of the national struggle and link the culmination of the latter all the more closely with the transition to socialist revolution.

E. The fact that the prospects of proletarian leadership in the national democratic revolution are good does not mean that British communists should make their solidarity conditional upon the proletariat exercising leadership. On the contrary, it should be supported in any case even if bourgeois or petty-bourgeois leadership still holds sway in the revolutionary republican movement.

## 2. The Protestant working class.

A. The Irish national democratic revolution will inevitably remain based for some time to come in the nationalist population. The task of winning over the Protestant working class is a long-term one. This task is not an abstract one of persuasion and discussion. Still less is it one of attempting to hold back the revolutionary republican struggle on the grounds that it would be sectarian and counter-productive to press on with this struggle without first waiting until a greater degree of unity develops among the workers of the 6 counties. Rather, the task is one of bringing revolutionary politics to the fore in the course of struggle, in such a way as to extend support for the national democratic revolution beyond its present communal base.

B. Such a task has often confronted revolutionary movements, particularly in situations where imperialism's 'divide and rule' policies have resulted in communal antagonisms. To take one example among many, ZANU initially faced a situation where there was a markedly communal element in the basis of its support. Did this make it counter-productive and sectarian to launch people's war on the basis of the support it had? On the contrary, it went ahead and broadened the basis of support for its policies in the course of struggle. (This comparison is intended merely as one prominent example of an organisation that has successfully broadened its support beyond an initially largely communal basis; it is not intended to suggest any broader analogy between the context of communal politics in Zimbabwe and Ireland.)

C. The regroupings that have characterised the Unionist camp during the past two decades, and in particular the proliferation of new mass organisations and paramilitary groups during 1969-1974, are all ultimately responses to the main force which calls the tune in Irish politics - the revolutionary republican struggle. The fact that these organisations are organised specifically to defend partition and the imperialist system which it serves cannot prevent the inexorable workings of class struggle even within these organisations themselves. Where Irish unity is not an issue, the class stand of the Protestant workers has been very good, as in the case of the strikes of British-based unions - firemen, lorry-drivers, engineers, etc. Against such a background of industrial unity, it is hardly surprising that the reactionary leadership of the paramilitary organisations constantly faces the task of trying to suppress any incipient tendency towards class unity with nationalist workers. Though such tendencies constantly develop, and periodically result even in contact of sections of the leadership with republican organisa-

tions, they have so far proved to be flashes in the pan, and have been promptly suppressed. Their significance should therefore not be magnified. Nevertheless, the contradictions in the Unionist camp which they express could well be utilised by a strong proletarian revolutionary party. Only the experience gained by Irish proletarian revolutionaries in the struggle to build such a party can provide the basis for initiating the protracted struggle to bring 6-county proletarian unity and internationalism out of the realm of wishful thinking (or at the most the occasional flash in the pan) and into the realm of programmatic politics.

D. The experience gained by our Irish comrades in the course of handling the political contradictions existing among the Protestant working class is in turn a factor that can immeasurably strengthen our solidarity work in Britain. For actual progress in developing policies for building workers' unity in the face of such a terrible situation of 'divide and rule' as exists in the 6 counties will lend greatly increased weight and cogency to our calls for proletarian internationalist support by British workers for the Irish people's struggle.

### 3. Ireland and world revolution.

A. The national liberation movements of the third world have in recent decades been the main force rolling back the influence of imperialism, and are thus a tremendously progressive force in world history. Their gathering strength has greatly restricted the freedom of manoeuvre of the imperialist powers. This has been staving off the outbreak of world war between the two superpowers, and thus allowing the world's progressive forces to accumulate strength.

B. The Irish people's struggle has made important contributions to the worldwide national liberation movement. With every moment's pause which the revolutionary republican struggle has given to superpower manoeuvrings for domination in Europe, another moment has been gained for national liberation movements throughout the world to gather force, for socialist China to consolidate its strength, and for the international proletariat to muster for revolutionary struggle. And the continuing Irish struggle should certainly make an intending invader think twice, for any power foolhardy enough to assume the mantle of British imperialism in Ireland inherits along with it a centuries-old tradition of national resistance as persistent as that in Afghanistan!

C. The superpower which has shown itself best able to retain some freedom of manoeuvre in the third world is the Soviet Union. For by trading on the deserved prestige it acquired during its socialist period, it is incomparably better placed to represent itself as a friend of the third world than the US, whose international standing is now such as to place it largely on ~~the~~ defensive politically and strategically. The overall tendency is for the national liberation movements of the world to come into increasing contradiction with the Soviet superpower as its true nature becomes clear to them through direct experience. However, in the shorter term, there is an ever-present danger of the Soviet Union successfully hijacking national liberation movements and using them to further its interests in its inter-imperialist rivalry with the US. This danger confronts us with particular force in the new phase of recent months when intensified Soviet imperialist expansion has taken place under the banner of (don't laugh) increased communist 'militancy'.

D. In such a situation, the international Marxist-Leninist movement has to be very careful to maintain a balanced view of the national liberation movements. Their world outlook of revolutionary patriotism has inspired many of the great progressive movements of recent decades, and can be expected to remain for some time to come the outlook predominating in the main component parts of the world anti-imperialist revolutionary movement. At the same time, as proletarian revolutionaries we aim to bring the ideology of the proletariat to the fore in the course of the national liberation movement. This not only

prepares the way for the transition to socialist revolution, but also provides more all-round and scientific orientation to the national liberation stage than the more limited ideology of revolutionary patriotism can ever hope to do - an orientation that has been summed up by Mao Zedong in his teachings on new democracy.

E. The need for such scientific socialist politics and ideology is nowhere more acute than in the case of the national liberation struggles of today, particularly those directed against US imperialism and its associated imperialisms. For the limited outlook of revolutionary patriotism provides scant resistance against succumbing to the blandishments of the Soviet superpower. In such a situation, proletarian revolutionary leadership based on Marxism-Leninism is of tremendous importance in preventing more national liberation movements from going the way of Cuba and Vietnam. It is a central element in our anti-imperialist solidarity with the Irish people's struggle, and our duty to the world Marxist-Leninist movement, to support Irish Marxist-Leninists and other Irish patriots in their exposures of those like the CPI and the Stickles (Sinn Fein The Workers' Party, formerly 'Official Sinn Fein') who would like to see the Irish revolution misled into catastrophe, Soviet tanks turn Dublin into a new Prague, and Ireland become a military encampment from which the Soviet Union could try to terrorise the proletariat and other freedom-loving people of Western Europe.

F. Ireland has much in common with the oppressed countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. It is partly under direct colonial rule enforced by brutal military occupation. The economy of the 26 counties falls into the neo-colonial pattern so familiar in the third world: for long dependant largely on export, its industrialisation of recent decades has tied it closer to imperialism rather than enabled it to break free. Above all the fact that the national democratic revolution remains on the agenda places the Irish people's struggle firmly within the pattern of the third world struggles.

G. Situated as it is in Western Europe, the Irish struggle brings national liberation struggle into the heart of the 'second world' of declining imperialist powers. It thus adds a fiercely independent-minded element to the European political scene, and provides a bridge between second and third world opposition to superpower domination. This puts it in a position to encourage the further identification of the countries of the second world with the third world in this international struggle. Such is the great importance of the continuing Irish national liberation movement, and such is the great political importance of ensuring gathering support for it throughout Europe. It provides a vision of the road of national resistance that lies ahead for the peoples of Eastern and Western Europe who are subject to, or threatened with, superpower domination and military occupation.

H. Besides its particular importance for the revolutionary movement in Britain and in Europe generally, the Irish people's struggle has also long had profound implications in US politics. The large and influential Irish communities in the US have had the realities of revolutionary struggle brought constantly before their eyes since Fenian times and before, due to the identification with Irish politics which continues on a wide scale in these communities. The support they have traditionally provided for republicanism in Ireland has not been an unmitigated blessing, bringing as it sometimes has a conservative influence to bear, as well as in some cases the danger of acting as a lever in US imperialist manoeuvres to protect its vast investments in Ireland. While there have been problems in the building of unity between the US Irish community and the nationalities in the US which are more severely oppressed, there have been times (notably during the First World War) when the Irish community has been prominent among the progressive forces in the US. The same goes for the Irish communities in Canada, Australia, and other countries, that in Australia having been particularly drawn to revolutionary struggle.

I. The Irish struggle has also been a source of encouragement to the national movements of India, Burma and other countries who have had to struggle for their independence from British imperialism, and who have long looked to the Irish people as allies against their common oppressors.

J. The Irish people's struggle for national reunification and independence is thus not something which holds out revolutionary prospects for the Irish people alone. It is also a struggle whose effects are felt far and wide, and lives deep in the heart of the downtrodden peoples of the whole world in their struggles against imperialism, hegemonism and all reaction.

#### IV. SOME IDEOLOGICAL ISSUES IN THE SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT.

##### 1. One nation or two?

A. The theory that the two religious communities in Ireland constitute separate nations was propounded by imperialist ideologists with the aim of divorcing the British labour movement from the Irish revolutionary republican tradition, which according to this theory is divisive and sectarian as it neglects the justified demands of the Protestant community for national self-determination.

B. This 'two nations theory', in forms of greater or lesser sophistication and subtlety, has a proven capacity for causing confusion in the progressive ranks in Britain. The struggle against it has been waged in and around the CPGB and its predecessors and successors throughout this century as an integral part of the struggle to build a solidarity movement with the Irish people's struggle.

C. In its pseudo-'Marxist-Leninist' form, this theory distorts the history of the bourgeois democratic revolutionary movement in Ireland to suggest that the historical destinies of capitalism in the two parts of Ireland are separate. The development of the capitalist productive forces in Ireland thus provides, according to this theory, the conditions and necessity for the formation of two separate nation states based on the two religious communities which are thus to be seen as separate nations in the 'Marxist-Leninist' sense.

D. The historical truth, however, is that during the period of the formation of nation states in Western Europe, a revolutionary struggle for nation-statehood was waged in Ireland which showed, above all in the uprising of 1798, that the development of capitalism in Ireland provided the basis and necessity for revolutionary unity between the two communities. The urban Protestant communities at that time constituted the main force in the bourgeois democratic movement. The prospects of failure or success in this movement depended, as the revolutionary leader Wolfe Tone urged, on whether or not they could forge unity with the rural insurrectionary forces which were largely Catholic. Revolutionary unity between the two communities provided the only path towards true independence from Britain, and this remains the case up till today, as the crucial role of partition in perpetuating the enslavement of Ireland shows.

E. The latent antagonism between the two communities, whose basis originated in their relationship as settler and native communities, was deliberately kept alive as a means of perpetuating British domination in Ireland. It was kept alive in an organised way, notably through the Orange Order, to break the national unity that had developed in 1798. It was particularly intensively

redeveloped in the era of monopoly capitalism, culminating in the Ulster Volunteer movement under the direct control of sections of the British ruling class.

F. This antagonism is thus not the result of the forward development of Irish capitalism. On the contrary, it is a fetter upon the development of the productive forces in Ireland - a fetter placed upon them to prevent their further development threatening British domination. Its instrument is the religious-communal prejudice which places preservation of the Protestant ascendancy above the interests of the further development of the productive forces. It is a fetter not only upon the productive forces, but upon the national-democratic consciousness of the Protestant community, blinding it as it does with the illusory prospect of an alternative national destiny separate from that of Ireland. No progress towards democracy, independence and economic development can be made without undertaking the struggle to end partition. Unionism thus represents precisely the kind of fetter that, according to genuine Marxism, must be swept away by the national-democratic revolution.

G. Our solidarity movement would therefore be a complete fraud if we failed unequivocally to affirm Ireland's national unity. The words 'Ireland one nation' must be inscribed in bold letters upon the banner of our solidarity movement.

## 2. The current stage of the Irish revolution.

A. The line that the current stage of the Irish revolution is one of socialist, and not of national-democratic, revolution has been propagated in the Ireland solidarity movement in this country by a few individuals in the 1920s and 1930s and by various Trotskyists and others from the 1930s onwards. Such a line would have undermined the struggle to build internationalist solidarity with Ireland as an oppressed nation had it gained widespread acceptance. However, it has remained alien to the genuine revolutionary tradition in Britain and has at no time gained widespread acceptance or respect.

B. The current stage of the Irish revolution is national democratic, and is embodied in the revolutionary republican struggle to overthrow the partition settlement. It is consequently crucial for our solidarity movement to affirm the unity of the Irish national-democratic revolution as an all-Ireland movement.

C. The struggle against partition, and the imperialist domination which partition ensures, obviously has to be carried out in greatly differing circumstances in the two state entities, which are defended by separate armed forces and other state institutions, and which indeed have their own separate political superstructures generally. This fact evidently has profound tactical implications for Irish revolutionaries who are faced with building leadership in a revolution which cannot but assume different forms in the different concrete circumstances pertaining in each part. For our solidarity movement to take it upon itself to assert, however, that this fact results in any difference regarding the stage of the national democratic revolution as between the 26 and the 6 counties would be quite wrong. That would indicate that we denied the all-Ireland nature of the national-democratic revolution. It would suggest that we saw the existence of two Irish questions, not one Irish question. If that were the case, our support for the Irish national democratic revolution, and our affirmation of Irish national unity, would be a complete sham. We must avoid giving the slightest reason for suspicion that we have tried, by sleight of hand, to transform recognition of the differing realities into recognition of the partition settlement! The former is a question of whether or not one is a lunatic; the latter a political question of what one supports and what one opposes.

D. The fact that the current stage of the Irish revolution is national-democratic dictates to us the emphasis of our solidarity tasks. Our emphasis should be on solidarity with Ireland as an oppressed nation, and insistence on its right to reunification and independence. Our work in campaigning on civil rights issues, economic struggles, etc., should thus emphasise the

national question which lies at the root of the oppression of the Irish people, and should not take up such issues in the 'abstract' without regard to the context of the national liberation struggle.

E. The emphasis of our solidarity in connection with the 26 counties should be on those developments which favour the development of revolutionary republicanism. We should not give any cause for suspicion that we place democratic demands within the 26 counties on a par with the over-riding question of national independence. We should not, for example, put forward the demand for separation of church and state in the 26 counties any more than we should take it upon ourselves to call for the separation of state and religion in the case of the Khomeiny government in Iran the way the Trotskyists do. The Irish people have the right to determine their own political system. It is true that Irish revolutionaries, like revolutionaries everywhere, face the task of putting forward democratic policies that take the particular problems of minority communities into account. But to put forward such demands in our solidarity work in this country would make the issue of national independence from British imperialism less clearcut. Such a course of action could only serve to strengthen the chauvinist prejudice against Irish unity which was historically fanned under the demagogic slogan 'Home rule is Rome rule'.

F. Our emphasis in the case of the 6 counties will include all democratic demands including that of separation of religious institutions from the state. For the suppression of democracy in the 6 counties, along with the propagation of the prejudices associated with the Protestant religious institutions there, occurs under the direct auspices of the British imperialist state with the aim of perpetuating the partition of Ireland and the imperialist domination which that partition ensures.

### 3. Tactics in the armed struggle.

A. Many national liberation struggles have been initially characterised by a considerable degree of reliance on spectacular acts of terrorism (aircraft hijackings, eye-catching assassinations, etc.) as a principal, or at any rate a prominent, element in their armed struggle. In certain cases this can pose political and ideological problems for those in the oppressor countries who are faced with the task of building internationalist solidarity with such national liberation struggles.

B. Traditions of individual terrorism as an expression of anti-colonial resistance are deep-rooted in colonised countries. Communists engaged in national liberation struggles face the task of developing this spontaneous form of rebellion into more effective and organised forms of mass struggle and people's war. In doing this, they have drawn on the rich ideological heritage of Marxism-Leninism, which has a long history of polemic against the idealistic and individualistic notions of struggle with which petty-bourgeois ideology continually infects the world's revolutionary struggles.

C. Progress in the adoption of the tactics of people's war by a national liberation struggle has the by-product of making it more straightforward politically and ideologically to build internationalist solidarity for that struggle in other countries. However, there is no way in which a solidarity movement, least of all one in the oppressing country itself, can intervene directly to hasten this progress in the liberation struggle - much as some of those engaged in solidarity work might wish it were possible! For such political and ideological struggles can only be conducted in accordance with the objective laws governing the revolution in the country concerned - laws which can only be grasped by integrating theory with the practice of revolution in that country.

D. In Ireland, there is a centuries-old tradition of individual terrorism as an expression of resistance to British rule. This tradition has been inherited by the republican movement. The main republican organisations still rely to

a certain extent upon the spectacular acts characteristic of that tradition. Comrades in Britain frequently face political and ideological problems in promoting Ireland solidarity as a result of some of these actions - problems which have been particularly severe in cases where such actions have taken place in Britain and have injured or killed workers. However, we should not allow this fact to tempt our organisation into trying to conduct facile beginners' courses in Marxism-Leninism for Irish republican organisations. To do this could only associate the name of 'Marxism-Leninism' with the chauvinist chorus of British imperialism, and would be doubly contemptible in view of the extremely limited activity so far undertaken by British Marxist-Leninist organisations regarding Ireland solidarity. The struggle for the hegemony of proletarian politics and ideology in the Irish revolution is the task of Irish revolutionaries, just as the progressive abandonment of aircraft-hijackings by Palestinian liberation organisations was the fruit of their own political and ideological development, not of the advice of outsiders.

E. Proletarian revolutionaries in Ireland, then, face the task of overcoming the negative aspects of the continuing influence of the traditions of individual terrorism on the republican struggle - an influence which reflects the petty-bourgeois class basis of much of the movement's leadership. Though this tradition runs deep in that struggle, traditions of mass struggle with which it is a more straightforward task for us to build internationalist unity run deep in it as well - traditions which reflect the prominent part that has been played in that struggle by the proletariat. Upon such foundations, proletarian revolutionaries in Ireland will certainly be able to build a party which can bring into play the revolutionary politics and ideology developed by Marx, Lenin and Connolly.

F. The fact that this is a task that rests strictly on the shoulders of Irish, and not of British, revolutionaries, does not mean that we in Britain should guiltily hide our Marxism-Leninism under a bushel every time the question of solidarity with the republican struggle comes up. On the contrary, Irish Marxist-Leninists have a right to expect us not only to show ourselves the most effective and reliable force in the Ireland solidarity movement in Britain, but also to uphold Marxism-Leninism in the course of doing so. This can all play a small part in encouraging Irish revolutionaries who look around the world to be drawn towards Marxism-Leninism as an ideology which has something to offer to oppressed people in struggle. In this way, we can make our own contribution as an external factor - along with vastly more significant factors such as the example of the Chinese revolution - in supporting Irish Marxist-Leninists in their struggle for the hegemony of proletarian ideology and tactics in the revolutionary ranks in Ireland. Any progress made by Marxism-Leninism in Ireland in that respect can in turn greatly assist us in our solidarity work, which is such an important element of the revolutionary movement for proletarian class emancipation in Britain. In such ways, the Marxist-Leninist movements in the two countries support each other's struggle, and indeed the struggles of the international Marxist-Leninist movement throughout the world.

#### 4. Cooperation of British and Irish revolutionaries.

A. Actual coordination of British and Irish revolutionary forces is becoming an increasingly urgent item on the agenda as British imperialism steps up its own coordination of its counter-revolutionary establishment in the 6 countries with its preparations to suppress the struggles of the workers in Britain.

B. The historical experience of proletarian revolutionary organisations from many countries shows that many of their best elements have been from among workers from minority nationalities. This was certainly the case in the CPGB in its revolutionary period, when many of its best members were of Irish origin. We can safely predict that the party we aim to rebuild will include a large proportion of workers from minority nationalities. Those of Irish origin will

constitute a direct link between the British and Irish parties, which will indeed be sister parties.

C. The historical experience of trying to build a single socialist organisation for Britain and Ireland has been a negative one. In the most prominent case, namely the Independent Labour Party in the early years of this century, the project became associated with anti-Irish chauvinism existing among Protestant workers, and was an obstacle to the development of proletarian leadership in the Irish people's anti-imperialist struggle.

D. With the subsequent partition settlement, the project to build a section of the British revolutionary party in the 6 counties would of course have had the effect of giving endorsement to British imperialism's 'divide and rule' policy. It was thus rightly never contemplated by the CPGB.

E. The argument that the position has now changed due to the failure of the struggle to achieve success for some time is a chauvinist reversion to the idea that natives need sorting out if they are unable to solve their own problems. Marxism-Leninism by contrast places no time-limit on the Irish people's struggle, which is bound to achieve ultimate success.

F. The exchange of experience which the early CPGB and its predecessors conducted with Irish revolutionaries was an unequal one; for the more advanced nature of the Irish people's struggle meant that British revolutionaries had most of the learning to do, and the Irish most of the teaching. It hardly needs saying that strengthening our ties with the Irish Marxist-Leninist movement today will be a factor that will enable us to develop the political and ideological strength of our Ireland solidarity work by leaps and bounds.

G. At the same time, the fact that Irish Marxist-Leninists are in a position to give us a good lead on many questions does not absolve us from our responsibility to develop our own self-reliant ideological and political strength in fulfilling our solidarity tasks. No lead we receive from Ireland can function as tablets of stone which we have merely slavishly to follow without further elaboration. For Ireland solidarity in Britain has its own laws of development and its own tempo which require us, in our work to rebuild a proletarian leading centre, to exercise our own initiative in the concrete conditions of the class struggle in Britain in such a way as to carry that solidarity forward as best we can in the context of our overall work.

H. An example of the different 'tempo' of our work from that of Irish Marxist-Leninists is that, as this document illustrates, the main emphasis in our work is to campaign for the Irish people's right to reunification and liberation, i.e. to support the current, national democratic stage of the Irish revolution in the course of a struggle against British imperialist chauvinism. We may well find that the Irish comrades are at this stage concentrating more on campaigning for recognition of the interests of the proletariat as a class, and thus engaged in polemic with, say, particular republican organisations. Blindly to follow their tempo might in such a case give rise to the misapprehension that we fell into the Trotskyist trap of making our solidarity conditional upon proletarian leadership of the revolutionary forces, or, worse, the chauvinist path of claiming the right to step in and refute claims made by particular republican organisations to be proletarian revolutionaries.

I. Coordination of our political and ideological struggles may at times be particularly close in view of the fact that we have many opportunist opponents in common, from the Labour Party, which has a Northern Ireland section (the NILP) to many union bureaucracies which are active in both countries, and from the Bainzites to BICO.



## Conclusions: THE WAY FORWARD FOR IRELAND SOLIDARITY IN BRITAIN.

A. This document reflects the early stage of our involvement in building Ireland solidarity, a stage which has so far been limited to study of available literature, discussions among ourselves, attendance at a few demonstrations, attempts to sustain some coverage of Irish affairs in our newspaper, etc. Our organisation has at an earlier stage taken a decision to make Ireland solidarity one of its main priorities. Yet we nevertheless failed as an organisation to provide anything like the kind of leadership necessary for this work. As a result, we lost the majority of those of our members who were engaged in Ireland solidarity work. One of our tasks in uniting Marxist-Leninists in Britain into a single organisation will thus be to win back such comrades by showing that we sincerely mean to rectify our past errors and learn from our mistakes. Such comrades are sorely missed at this time when we are confronting the issue of Ireland solidarity with such a limited amount of experience by our organisation in this field.

The fact is that we are for some time to come going to be unable to set up a unit specifically for Ireland solidarity work. Taking this work further will thus have to be done by weaving it in among the other party-building tasks throughout which our extremely limited cadre resources have to be spread. In this situation, we are unlikely to be able to take a qualitative leap forward for the moment, but we should aim at the following short-term objectives:-

- 1) Initial involvement in some practical solidarity work. We have already been able to exercise some limited initiative in integrating Ireland solidarity work with our work in the anti-racist struggle, which is for the moment considerably more advanced. In our cultural work we have drawn heavily on the Irish tradition of rebel songs. Every bit of experience which we are afforded by such limited involvement will stand us in good stead when we reach the stage where we can launch an Ireland solidarity unit.
- 2) Building unity with the Irish Marxist-Leninist movement. Much of this document will probably appear naive in the extreme to Irish Marxist-Leninists, and we should begin to learn from their views, analyses and criticisms as soon as we can. There can be no doubt that this will result in a breakthrough in our political and ideological strength in building solidarity.
- 3) Continuing investigation and study in an organised way. Further thorough investigation and study of the Ireland solidarity movement and its history in this country is essential if we are genuinely to apply the method of Marxism-Leninism and not blind empiricism. We should explore the possibility of establishing a study group which can do some groundwork preparatory to our establishment of an Ireland solidarity unit. Such a group could also bear the prime responsibility for coverage of Irish affairs in our press, and if possible publish theoretical studies as well.

These three short-term aims should be regarded as preparatory to a medium-term aim to establish an Ireland solidarity unit within our organisation.

This document should be regarded as strictly provisional. When we have made some progress with the above-mentioned short-term aims, we should review it with the intention of making it more truly programmatic on the basis of further involvement and investigation. In this way we can work step by step towards a programme for Ireland solidarity in Britain - a programme which will be a crucial component of our programme for socialist revolution in Britain.

## PROGRAMMATIC RESOLUTION ON IRELAND SOLIDARITY.

A. The revolutionary anti-imperialist struggle for national reunification and independence being waged by the Irish people under the banner of republicanism is a tremendous source of strength and support for the world's progressive forces, in particular for the struggle for socialist revolution in Britain. It is our proletarian internationalist duty to build solidarity with this struggle.

B. The Irish people today face more sustained and developed forms of fascist suppression by the British imperialist state than those yet faced by the workers of Britain, and have in turn built more advanced methods of resisting it. The fate of socialist revolutionary struggle in Britain today is inextricably linked with the Irish national liberation struggle, just as the struggles of the British people for democracy and for socialism have for centuries had close links with the Irish people's struggle for freedom.

C. The partition of Ireland was imposed by British imperialism by armed force to maintain its domination by severing the industrial centres from the rest of Ireland and thus preventing the development of a genuinely independent Irish economy and society. Partition has never been accepted by the majority of the Irish people. Besides serving as a fetter upon the development of the productive forces, partition perpetuates the antagonism of the Protestant community of the 6 counties towards the rest of the Irish nation - an antagonism systematically cultivated by British imperialism to break the national unity that was born in the period of rising capitalism in Ireland. This antagonism has had a catastrophic effect on the Irish labour movement and all other progressive forces in Irish society. Only the overthrow of the partition settlement holds out the prospect of progress towards democracy, communal reconciliation and genuine economic and political independence from British imperialism. Our key task is thus to build internationalist solidarity with the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the partition settlement.

D. The struggle to overthrow the partition settlement and achieve national reunification and independence is the content of the present stage of the Irish revolution - the national-democratic stage. Whatever the differences of conditions and tasks faced in the two state entities existing under the partition settlement, the national democratic revolution is by its nature a single one at a single stage throughout Ireland. For us to take it upon ourselves to suggest that the revolution is at different stages in the different parts of Ireland would thus be to undermine solidarity for the national-democratic revolution.

E. British imperialism constantly puts forward policies which aim to divert the Irish people into the search for 'solutions' to the Irish question which do not involve national-democratic revolution. The period of economic boom induced by the massive wave of investment by British and also increasingly by other imperialist capital led to a euphoric political climate in the early 1970s in which such nostrums were two-a-penny. But all these attempts have foundered on the rock of the on-going national liberation struggle. In our solidarity work we must expose the true nature of these imperialist schemes to the British working class and oppose any tendency in the solidarity movement to obscure their diversionary essence.

F. The proletariat is the most stalwart anti-imperialist force in Ireland, and has at important phases of the revolution played a conscious leading role, notably during the years 1913-1923. In the revolutionary teachings and activities of James Connolly, above all in his leadership in the Easter uprising of 1916, Irish working class struggles brought forth the greatest achievements of scientific socialism, both in theory and in practice, that the British Isles have seen in this century. The political experience that has been and

is being gained by the Irish working class in the course of this struggle & places it in a good position from which to move forward from the completion of the national-democratic stage of the revolution to the next stage - that of socialist revolution.

G. A key factor for us in developing our political and ideological strength in building Ireland solidarity is to strengthen our unity with the Irish Marxist-Leninist movement.

H. The national-democratic revolution in Ireland can be expected to remain for some time to come based almost entirely in the nationalist community. Whilst earnestly helping the advances in the task of building workers' unity in the 6 counties, we must not stipulate such unity as a precondition for our solidarity with the Irish national democratic revolution, let alone try to intervene ourselves in an attempt to impose such unity from the outside. Such unity can only be developed in the course of the struggle by Irish proletarian revolutionaries to build a revolutionary party of the working class in Ireland.

I. Non-proletarian classes involved in the struggle against British imperialism currently tend to exercise overall political and ideological dominance in the revolutionary ranks at this stage of the national-democratic revolution. We should not allow this fact to lead us to adopt a superior attitude with regard to the tactics often adopted under the political and ideological influence of these oppressed classes. Whilst welcoming the development of hegemony of the proletariat and its politics, ideology and tactics in the Irish struggle, we must avoid giving the impression that such hegemony is a precondition for our solidarity.

J. The Irish people's struggle has long had a powerful influence on the development of the national liberation movements of many countries, and lives deep in the heart of the downtrodden peoples of the world. In the international situation of today, it has great importance as a bridge between the anti-hegemonic struggles of the second and third worlds, bringing as it does the realities of national resistance struggle before the eyes of the peoples of Europe who are under, or threatened with, superpower domination and military occupation. We must build solidarity with all patriotic forces in Ireland who are opposed to the two superpowers, particularly the Soviet Union, which is the more insidious of the two and which has designs on Ireland as a possible base from which to threaten Northern Europe from the West.

K. The short-term aims of our Ireland solidarity work are: some initial involvement in practical solidarity work; building unity with the Irish Marxist-Leninist movement; and continuing investigation and study in an organised way. These policies are preparatory to our middle-term aim of giving organisational form to our Ireland solidarity work. Our long-term aim must be to show ourselves the most stalwart upholders of the great historical tradition of solidarity between the struggles of the working and oppressed peoples of Britain and Ireland.