
Communist Federation of Britain (ML)

Letter from Ireland

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WE ARE PLEASED TO PRINT BELOW A LETTER RECEIVED FROM A COMRADE IN IRELAND. COMRADE MCDERMOT IS A MEMBER OF THE BELFAST COMMUNIST WORKERS GROUP (MARXIST LENINIST) WHICH IS NOT A MEMBER OF THE COMMUNIST FEDERATION OF BRITAIN (MARXIST LENINIST) AND THEREFORE VIEWS EXPRESSED ARE NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF THE C.F.B. (ML). WE FEEL HOWEVER IT IS USEFUL TO HAVE FIRST HAND IMPRESSIONS FROM COMRADES DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE STRUGGLE IN IRELAND AND THAT THESE IMPRESSIONS WILL BE OF INTEREST TO BRITISH WORKERS.

LETTER FROM IRELAND

Dear Comrades,

The situation in the six counties in the North of Ireland is at a crucial stage. Whilst the six counties are an integral part of the British economy the working class is divided into two communities which are kept apart by history, politics and culture. With the working class divided there is a tendency to view the matter on the basis of two communities. This is an over simplification of the issue.

It should be remembered that despite these differences between the sections of the working class there has been a great deal of intercourse between both communities at many levels throughout history and in contemporary times. It is at times of political crisis that these differences are brought to the fore and are highlighted and used by the ruling class to fan hatred and bigotry. During periods of apparent peace there have been;

practically no efforts by 'working class' politicians to attempt to overcome on a class basis the sectarian divisions in the six counties.

PRESENT DIVISIONS

The present divisions of the two communities came to the fore as a result of the changing political and economic developments in the 26 counties in the South towards the U.K. and the acceptance by British monopoly capitalists for a need for a change in the political set up in the six counties. This was accompanied by agitation carried out by Catholic bourgeois politicians for their 'place in the sun'. These politicians were supported by working class Catholics and many 'left' organisations in Ireland and Britain. The revisionist Communist Party of Northern Ireland (CPNI) played a significant role in this and were involved in the leadership of the NICRA (Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association) from the beginning. It was due to pressures from leading members of the CPNI in the NICRA that 'working class O'Neillite unionists' were witch-hunted out of the NICRA in its early days thus breaking down unity on a class basis and developing sectarianism.

RECENT UPHEAVALS

Unemployed workers action committees became linked in their activities and demonstrations. Along with the social democratic demand of 'one man - one vote' there was a call for jobs and houses which affected workers more than petty capitalists.

ROLE OF REACTIONARIES

A reaction whipped up by the capitalists to these political

events was the rise of the unrelenting, unmovable, all or nothing unionist brigade. What these reactionaries saw was not a bourgeois social democratic reformist movement but revolt of a lower class of people demanding more than they deserved. The Ideology of the Ulster Unionists has always been permeated with the 'master race' ideology and this racist ideology of the Reformed Presbyterians has always perpetrated the idea that catholics and celts are an inferior people who are lazy and ignorant.

Since 1968 the class struggle in the North of Ireland has had its ups and downs. There have been demonstrations and counter-demonstrations, pogroms, riots, persecutions of whole areas, shootings, bombings, tortures, barricaded no-go areas, internment and imposed direct rule. Many politicians of all shades have been 'made' or 'broken' by recent events. The U.D.R. has been established to replace the U.S.C.

and the R.U.C. have been re-armed. The strength of the British Army in Northern Ireland has risen from 2500 men in 1969 to 21000 men accompanied by heavy armour. The emergence of the Official and Republican wings of the I.R.A., Vanguards and the U.D.A. results from this upheaval.

With the introduction of internment the situation became much more difficult for the British ruling class and in an effort to reduce the situation to a political level Direct Rule



Craig and Powell - enemies of British and Irish workers

The reactionaries saw the emergence of the Civil Rights movement as a death knell to their 'master race' ideology which they used to maintain their privileged position and line their pockets.

was imposed. The Ulster Unionists were unable to see the writing on the wall and could not withdraw from the political grave they had dug themselves.

The military and oppressive campaign of the British Government was a failure insomuch as it drew large sections of the Catholic community to look uncritically on the I.R.A. as their protectors. The tactics of the British Army were in effect a recruiting campaign for the I.R.A. in Catholic areas. However when the people in these areas ceased supporting the provisional wing of the I.R.A. it was not due to efforts of Whitelaw and the British Army but the I.R.A.'s tactics in attacking civilian targets and intimidation in the no-go areas.

EFFORTS TO FORGE UNITY

Working Class must oppose these divisive bourgeois developments and work to develop a party to embrace the needs of the working class in both communities. The working class movement will have to purge itself of nationalism in its ranks if it has any intention of building for socialism.

The comrades associated with the B.C.W.G.(M.L.) believe that

the development of a clear working class line in opposition to bourgeois sectarian nationalist

Despite the military presence, internment and direct rule there has been no great effort to forge unity on a class basis between the two communities yet within each community there are political and social upheavals taking place along class lines. There is a drive amongst different factions to develop political alliances in the separate communities. The

politics is essential for real progress to be made.

The contradiction of sectarianism in the working class must be resolved and in this respect it is necessary to advocate unity of the working class in both communities on day to day and long term issues to overcome sectarianism.

W.J.McDermot (Belfast)