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A Reply to IB 66

Carolan has muddied the water

Just as with the Falklands debate and the debate on the Labour Party, Carolan has introduced a divisive and 'tactical' document rather than concentrate on the political arguments. The best that can be said about IB 66 is that it is a crude appeal to the ex-ICL comrades. It does not address the arguments to hand but seeks to advocate the Workers Fight/ICL record on Ireland (which is in fact presented as Carolan's record) and to denigrate the record of the old WSL.

It is unfortunate that once again Carolan has to attribute the entire debate to "factionalism" rather than what it is - legitimate political disagreement. Kinnell stressed the same point at the Yorkshire aggregate: "It is very strange that they (the faction) insist on a special conference on Ireland two years after disagreement emerged". It is the same old story - don't listen to their politics, listen to what we say about their motives.

In fact, what we have is not a special conference. It is the third stage of the WSL first annual conference. This is the result of decisions taken by big majorities at the previous conference. Jones has a consistent record on Ireland for the agendas. He argued that Ireland should be on the agenda of the first conference (I voted against him) and submitted amendments to the Ireland resolution for the second conference (amendments on both bombings and federalism). The standing orders committee recommended that Ireland be on the agenda, and the NC successfully opposed it and got it changed.

It is dishonest and destructive now to start saying that it is "strange" that Ireland has come up so late. In fact there have been some benefits from the delay. We are now discussing in a reasonably prepared way. The summer school was largely devoted to Ireland, for example.

The question Kinnell should ask is should the movement discuss Ireland at all? If it should, it must also be right to discuss the points of disagreement. In order to suggest that differences on Ireland are manufactured for factional purposes, Carolan asserts in IB 66 that everyone would have been surprised at fusion if it had been said that differences would emerge on Ireland. But the same could be said about the differences on imperialism which came out of the Falklands war. In fact Carolan knew there were differences on Ireland at the point of fusion, since he cites one of the differences - workers' defence squads.

Carolan's and Kinnell's method of debate questions if they in reality recognise factional rights within the organisation, since it is impossible to raise anything without such charges. We are accused of "venomous denunciations" for characterising Carolan's position on federalism politically as reformist. That view may be right or wrong, but it is a perfectly legitimate view to hold. (Carolan himself is far from immune from harsh denunciations - when the debate on Ireland started in SO, he publicly denounced Jones' position as "libellous" against him.) Our political break with Healy now comes under attack in an attempt to poison comrades against our tradition. We are denounced for having "taken into Cowley the political rubbish of the SLL/WRP". We are accused of "emotional outcry" and "loud assertion", of a "viciously personalised campaign". The same techniques which the TU bureaucrats use against militants. The only critic whom Carolan defines as a "loyal" critic, is Gable, whose support Carolan needs on other issues. Gable is said to have "refrained from wild denunciation and tried to express his own view precisely". (Gable in fact made the sharpest remarks on bombings. He is the only comrade, as far as I know, who described Carolan's position as "capitulationist", something which Carolan complains bitterly about without attributing it to Gable).

EC Minutes

Something must be said about the reproduction of EC minutes (of 11-10-81) on page 26 of IB 66. The reproduction of such minutes brings a new dimension into the methods of Carolan and Kinnell. They know that EC minutes have been highly contentious ever since the fusion - particularly the minuting of discussion. We have complained repeatedly that such minutes have been inaccurate and biased. A year or so ago we reached agreement, because of this, that

discussion would not be minuted, only decisions. Kinnell however has continued taking the minutes just the same. They are never checked or verified in any way, and it has been accepted on numerous occasions that they represent no more than the personal records of Kinnell himself.

Our past fears have been well confirmed by the use of the minutes in IB 66. In those, we are portrayed as making a series of short unconnected statements which convey nothing. The fact that the meeting was a debate does not come out at all. Carolan claims that these minutes show Jones and myself supporting a position of unqualified condemnation of the Chelsea bombing - which we do not and which is not true. Incredibly, this assertion is taken from the garbled minuting of Jones saying, "The actions of the IRA are not what we argue for".

What are the politics in IB 66?

Firstly, it should be said that despite agreement on the main issue of condemnation of the bombings of civilian targets, it is perfectly legitimate to disagree on how that position is presented in our press, particularly the balance of the presentation and how it deals with our support for the nationalist struggle.

Carolan sets out to show that from original agreement on an approach to civilian bombings in the NC resolution of Dec. 1981, we have changed our position and manufactured differences - it is not true!

The NC resolution says the following:

- "1. We give unconditional support to the fight of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland against British imperialism (and its Irish representatives) and for a united Ireland.
- "2. We fight for British troops to get out - unconditionally and immediately.
- "3. We support the right of the IRA to strike against British military and state targets - even if we may question the tactical wisdom - but we condemn attacks on civilians. These criteria apply to events in Britain and Ireland equally.
- "4. We criticise the nationalist and militarist limitations of the IRA leadership, and counterpose a fight to link the struggle against partition with an all-Ireland class movement, under revolutionary socialist leadership, coupled with a campaign of solidarity within the British labour movement. We do not use the socialist programme on nationalism to avoid taking concrete positions on struggles led by petty bourgeois nationalists.
- "5. Debate should continue on the immediate prospects and possibilities of the struggle in the North, etc."

There is nothing wrong with that - we agreed with it then, and we agree with it now. The resolution is the way it is because it resulted from a discussion about the difference over Carolan's article. As far as we were concerned, it reestablished the position as we understood it from the EC (although the resolution was very unclear).

The NC resolution sharply contrasted to Carolan's article. In his article, the first third is devoted to emotive condemnation of the bombing. The next section is devoted to explaining how this is a reaction to the violence of the British state. It is not until the last paragraph of a long article that support for the nationalists in the war is explicitly stated. The NC resolution reversed this emphasis completely.

The balance of the article, and indeed the language used, is also in very sharp contrast to the earlier articles Carolan provides in IB 66 from Workers Fight and the ICL. The article on the Birmingham pub bombings, for example, is very different. Having condemned the bombing, the article states right at the beginning the continued support for the republicans: "We continue (original emphasis) to side with the republicans. We defend their right to liberate their country from the terror regime imposed by the British ruling class and its army in Northern Ireland". At the end of the article it adds the following very clear points.

"We must point out the inconsistencies, the hypocrisies and the double standards. Workers in the Midlands have struck and demonstrated over the Birmingham explosions, but they never turned a hair over the slaughter of 13 unarmed civilians in Derry, nor the hundreds of sectarian murders (almost entirely of Catholics, and over two dozen in the past month alone) made possible by British Army action to suppress the Catholics' self-defence; nor over the concentration

camps existing within the 'UK' for 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ years; nor the British Army terror in Belfast, nor the monstrous injustice of the Orange state, which has been the precondition for all these horrors. The torn and smashed bodies of kids in a discotheque pub are terrible to contemplate. But are they more terrible to contemplate than the mangled bodies of children smashed by British armoured cars in Belfast, women blinded by rubber bullets fired in their faces, babies or old people choked by CS gas, or unarmed people shot down in cold blood by the British army?"

Anyone who fails to see that this is a very different language is not looking at it objectively.

One other example could be made. Piggot is quoted as saying that "When I discuss it in the factory (the bombings), I don't support the bombings, but I focus on British imperialism". Piggot is admonished for this as an inadequate and "high-minded" approach. Yet the earlier WF material had exactly this approach. It spelled out very clearly non-support of the bombings, but countered with the crimes of British imperialism. Carolan has been fond of saying that "we must speak to our own class". But the WF material was far more concerned with presenting a principled position. The article on Marxism and terrorism says the following:

"The military action of the IRA, which we support, needs to have a 'base and favourable response' within the Catholic/Nationalist population, rather than the British working class. This is fundamental. When one nation oppresses another, as Britain oppresses Ireland, as the French oppressed Algeria, as the 'Isrealis' oppress the Palestinians, the oppressed are not required to scruple about the sensibilities of the oppressor nation. After all, are the Vietnamese to scruple about whether they offend American sensibilities in their inspiring heroic struggle? Were the tortured and maimed Algerians to take care not to outrage the 'civilised' standards of the French? No! Of course not! ... One hardly asks for acts of warfare to be sympathetically received by the enemy army or the citizens of the opposing state. The minds boggles at such a concept of war!"

This quote also raises something else if we are talking about Carolan's changes of position on Ireland. IB66 says that the struggle in the North East is not a genuine anti-imperialist struggle, but an "anachronism". The above quote is very different however. There the Irish struggle is equated to Algeria (which Kinnell ridiculed as a comparison in the Yorkshire aggregate), occupied Palestine and even Vietnam.

OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE PEACE MOVEMENT
(with special reference to the women's Peace Movement)

The Women's Peace Movement (wpm) began over 12 years ago mainly as a focus for the anxieties of mothers for their children's future and as an organisation which buttressed the stereotype of women as "the compassionate, caring and naturally pacific sex". Since then it has developed and progressed further than any other branch of the peace movement in Britain, mainly due to the attitudes and activities of the Greenham common women. As such it offers us good opportunities to draw important layers into the anti-imperialist struggle (although we should not be over confident of actually recruiting to our movement from the women's peace movement).

What now distinguishes the wpm, thanks to the Greenham women, from the rest of the peace movement is the challenge it offers to the state. This is due to several factors:-

- as a women's movement it associates itself, however indirectly, with women's fight against their repression by the state and against male violence and with lesbianism, non-nuclear family life and other lifestyles which present a serious threat to bourgeois values. As a women's movement it automatically alienates the most backward layers of bourgeois liberalism - the "SDP element" which is fairly strongly present in the membership of CND.
- it is not under CND discipline and constraints; it does not have to observe the "no party politics" rule of CND and CND's attitude of "a plague on both your houses" towards NATO and the Warsaw Pact.
- although committed to non-violence, it has led the peace movement struggle against the state, sparking off a series of peace camps and blockades all over the country to which even national CND has been forced to pay lip-service. If the Greenham women had not originally refused to pay their fines and go to jail, it is doubtful not only whether the state would have found it necessary to drive them on to a tiny strip of land, confront them with 600 Queen's Own Highlanders in towers inside the fence pointing machine guns at them and (covertly) inspire a press hate campaign and a continuing series of extreme right-wing physical attacks on the camp, but also whether 750 people at Upper Heyford earlier this year would have been prepared to be arrested and photographed by the police.
- the build-up of state repression against them plus the growth of a radical-feminist and lesbian movement internationally against imperialism, militarism and nuclear energy (eg prominent elements in the Women's Pentagon Action in the US and Women Oppose the Nuclear Threat in Britain) have given them a serious anti-imperialist and internationalist outlook absent from much of the British peace movement, eg the links between Greenham women and Armagh support group members in the 6 Counties and the demonstration by Greenham women against the Falklands Victory Parade. Recent months have also shown a greater willingness by the Greenham women to turn to the labour movement, especially to labour movement women.

Thus - despite the wpm's hostility to armed struggle and to what they see as the male-dominated and economistic labour movement and Left, despite their commitment to "non-hierarchical" consensual decision-making, despite their suspicion of "intellectualising" and (to us) excessive enthusiasm for ritualised drama, symbolism and (in many cases) a form of matriarchal culture - the women's peace movement has acted as a pacemaker for the general British peace movement and can more easily be drawn into anti-imperialist campaigning than any other section.

The achievement of the wpm shows up clearly what CND and its satellite bodies have been unable or unwilling to do: to adopt a strategy and tactics outside the bourgeois democratic processes and thereby confront the state; to set the fight against nuclear weapons in the context of the struggles against patriarchal imperialism and militarism; to mobilise an oppressed group (in fact the largest of all oppressed groups). CND has failed to move beyond the struggle against Cruise and Trident and (despite nominal opposition to laser weapon development and to chemical and biological warfare) to generally combat the imperialist war drive. National links with the labour movement seem to operate only on the bureaucratic level; Labour CND, TU CND and YCND are considerably outnumbered by a proliferation of bourgeois offshoots of CND, eg Christian CND, Lawyers Against the Bomb. CND has done little to undermine the myth of the "Soviet threat", apparently being more concerned with spending large sums of money on ads assuring the public that it is not in receipt of Moscow gold. It took a stand against the Malvinas war which

was not forceful enough to alienate its thousands of Alliance and ~~con~~ Labour supporters. At last year's AGM a substantial minority of delegates voted to remove British withdrawal from NATO from CND's aims. Recent issues of 'Sanity' have been occupied by long articles on alternative defence (a concept which assumes the necessity for capitalist defence with conventional weapons) and long lists of unilateralist MPs and candidates. It is hardly surprising that it has made no impact on the xenophobic, militarist and anti-Red feelings stirred to the surface of the British working class by Thatcherism and reflected in the election results.

Besides the women's peace movement, local peace groups which were originally set up independently of CND are often more prepared to stick their necks out over imperialism and direct action against the state than CND groups, even if such peace groups have subsequently affiliated to national CND.

There is therefore considerable scope for our activity within the labour and women movement at local level not only for activity within CND locally by means of affiliations and delegates but also for initiation of anti-imperialist and peace actions by ourselves working for instance local TU branches, Trades Councils, Women's Sections and broad group branches. BC women's subcommittees of TCs could set up series of discussions on imperialism, pacifism and feminism; we could distribute LCI leaflets at peace movement activities and hold broad group meetings on our attitude to the deformed workers' states and the "Russian threat". Exhibitions could show, for example, the potential use of low-level nuclear weapons in, say, Angola or the Lebanon or even eventually in British inner-city areas to "take out" villages and other communities. Through the O and our councillors we should extend the concept and the reality of Nuclear Free Zones into Anti-Imperialist and Anti-Militarist Zones, tangibly linked to liberation struggles.

We should offer critical support to CND while remaining flexible as regards other sections of the peace movement. Above all:

- A. we should be seen as initiators and not as mass-entryist tailenders (unlike the XX);
- B. we must bring the issue of British withdrawal from NATO to the fore of peace movement campaigning, especially in view of a likely withdrawal from this by CND nationally in the wake of the general election;
- C. our commitment to the peace movement should not detract in any way from our initiation of and involvement in anti-imperialist campaigning but should enhance complement and strengthen it.

POTTER -

August 1983

AMENDMENTS TO OUR RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED BY POTTER

1. First Oliver resolution:-

- (i) Substitute 'the peace movement' for 'CND' in a) b) d) and g).
- (ii) Final sentence of a) to read as follows: 'The only way we can turn the peace movement towards the labour movement is to be in or with the peace movement in those struggles it determines which we perceive as forwarding the class struggle'.
- (iii) In b) after 'demonstrations' add a comma and 'blockades, etc'.
- (iv) In c) substitute 'investigate' for 'consider' and delete all after 'Peace Movement', substituting a comma and the phrase 'in particular, END'.
- (v) In d) last part of clause to read as follows: 'At local level we initiate discussions with peace movement speakers at C, TU and broad group meetings, try to draw peace movement activists into the C, TUs and broad group and get local peace groups to see themselves as closely linked with local labour, women's and anti-imperialist movements.'
- (vi) In e) add 'We work to extend the concept of the Zones, making them anti-militarist and anti-imperialist Zones. We consider carefully the implications which support for the Zones has for our own policy on nuclear energy.'

2. 2nd resolution:-

- (i) Substitute 'the peace movement' for CND throughout.
- (ii) In 4, after 'first batch of missiles' add 'and the result of the General Election'. Delete 'over and above the May 24 women's strike.' Delete 'There is action.'
- (iii) For 'TILC partners' substitute 'revolutionaries'.
- (iv) Add 7: 'Our activity in relation to the peace movement must be seen as an integral part of our anti-imperialist work. Campaigning for withdrawal from NATO must be at the forefront of our strategy.'

3. Second Oliver resolution:-

Substitute 'the peace movement' for 'CND' throughout.

4. Amended Cunliffe resolution:-

Third para - for 'has also been a resounding success' substitute 'has had a considerable amount of success'.

SOME QUESTIONS, SOME POINTS

If we examine the positions of Carolan on Ireland more closely and try to find answers to questions such as 'why a reformist negotiated solution to the Irish struggle?', 'what are the links between these positions and other such as Palestine where the same reformist, negotiated solutions have been advanced by Carolan, by not recognising Palestinians' rights for self-determination, hence giving Zionists the right for a veto, the same as protestants in Ireland', we have to examine the world view he presented with Kinnell during the Malvinas discussions in IB 49.

It is not the purpose of this article to reply to IB 49, but to draw from it the necessary conclusions which are relevant to the present discussions on 'federalism'.

Post-War Imperialism and LDCs

Kinnell set out to prove the conclusions he posed in IB 49 as 'Is this a new era of capitalist development? Yes.' (p.35). In his view, the situation in the world economy has changed so fundamentally that Lenin's theses on imperialism can only be a "reference point for us today". (p.35)

A number of developments in post-war economies are outlined to prove that hypothesis; but the arguments are fundamentally based on the developments within backward capitalist countries (LDCs).

LDCs in the post-war period have "large-scale industrial capitalism"; "most 3rd world countries have begun to develop their own manufacturing industry"; a "few LDCs have become sizeable manufacturing countries and have begun to export manufactured goods on a large scale"; "'the gap' between the most advanced LDCs and ACCs (advanced capitalist countries) is decreasing". In his view these developments are so great that "Latin America now is at a level of capitalist development comparable to Western Europe in the first half of this century". Some of these countries have a 6% per year rate of industrial growth "far exceeded the USA growth of about 3% per year".

All these 'facts' are presented to prove that "before WW1, Rosa Luxemburg argued that the essence of imperialism was the relations between capitalist and non-capitalist ~~economies~~ economies". "Today the scene is completely changed" (p.5). It is the new era of capitalist development. Therefore the essence of imperialism is no longer in existence.

There are a great number of problems with this line of arguments. Firstly, the figures outlined have to be examined differently. For example if you concretise the comparison between India's 6% growth to USA's 3%, you will come to figures of \$ 77.4 billion for the USA to 8.5 billion for India. How can these sort of figures represent a "decreasing gap"? in fact it is almost 10 times more of an increased gap than a decrease.

Another example on steel production in page 9 - If you add up the total productions, ACCs have 61.1% of the world total steel production, the Stalinist states 34.2% and LDCs a mere 4.8%. Again, how can these figures ~~re~~ present "reduced reliance" on ACCs? These examples can be increased. Kinnell makes these figures talk in his documents but in a manipulative way, in a way that he wants them to talk to prove his conclusions.

But more importantly, he misses out the fundamental character of post-war industrialisation in the LDCs. That it has been done through borrowing. It is common knowledge that if even only Brazil or Mexico were declared bankrupt, the international banking system would face a massive crisis.

It is this very character of LDCs' development, i.e. massive borrowing from finance capital that makes the LDCs rather more subordinate to the ACCs than reduce their reliance.

So Kinnell's comparison of these developments with that of Western capitalism in 1900 falls flat.

He has to answer the question why is it that the 1900s development of capitalism has laid the basis for the end of social democracy, a new set of

class relations based on concessions and collaboration of classes, and contrary to that, in almost every one of the LDCs ruled by vicious dictatorships.

That is because of the subordinate character of this so-called 'industrialisation', because of it being phoney, not developing from the organic process but being injected from outside.

Of course the real gains made from this post-war LDCs developments were not by the LDCs themselves but by international finance capital; and every one of these LDCs become more and more controlled by imperialism and its finance institutions.

But it is no accident that Kinnell misses out the fundamental aspects of the phenomenon he argues.

He takes the essence of imperialism as "a relation between capitalist and non-capitalist countries" and justifies his positions accordingly.

Contrary to Kinnell, Trotsky argues "...in contemporary literature, at least marxist literature, imperialism is understood to mean the expansionist policy of finance capital which has a very sharp defined economic content." (Trotsky, In defense of marxism, pp. 33-39).

Again, for Lenin, "Imperialism is monopolistic capitalism. A handful of rich countries.... have developed monopoly in vast proportions, they obtain super-profits... they 'ride on the backs' of hundreds and hundreds of million of foreign populations and they fight among each other for the division of particularly rich, particularly fat and particularly easy spoils. This is the economic and political essence of imperialism". (Lenine, Collected Works, xix)

And post-war developments in LDCs have in no way created a new phenomenon where marxists have to think about changing their fundamental theoretical standpoints.

These developments took place within the imperialist framework and imperialists initiated and financed it and in return they increased their super-profits and their total economic and political control over these countries at the expense of greater misery and suffering for the toiling masses of these countries.

What is the link between Ireland and discussions on post-war imperialism?

The political conclusions behind Kinnell's arguments on LDCs is to argue against "anti-imperialism" in LDCs. In his mind, formal political independence and economic developments (reduced reliance, increased gaps, etc.) in LDCs in the post-war period put an end to any anti-imperialist struggle.

This is in my view a legitimate but wrong argument. I hold the view that anti-imperialist struggles in LDCs have not finished, neither objectively nor subjectively in the minds of the masses. "The exploitation of classes was supplemented and its potency increased by the exploitations of nations". (Trotsky, Marxism in our time).

When Lenin says in April 1917 that bourgeois revolution is finished now the proletariat must take power, he did not mean that the tasks of bourgeois revolution have been finished and completed. He meant that revolution put the bourgeoisie in power but they cannot complete the tasks of their own revolution. Similarly, formal political independence in LDCs does not complete anti-imperialist and democratic tasks, only proletarian revolution can achieve these tasks, the agrarian revolution, etc.

Therefore, formal political independence does not put an end to the demands and tasks of anti-imperialist struggles, but it merely transfers these tasks onto the proletariat and proletarian revolution.

We cannot respond to the millions of anti-imperialist masses in LDCs by ignoring the fact that they exist. We cannot condemn millions of masses who find expression for their increased exploitation and misery in anti-imperialist demands; we can only respond to it by trying to give it a working class programme and an independent alternative.

For example, when the IMF delegation visited Turkey in 1979-80 and spent two weeks to study the Government's 'books' to draw austerity plans and when some bourgeois politicians marched and protested against the fact that foreigners were deciding "what we have to do" and got responses from the masses,

.../...