

## DISCUSSION ON IRELAND

The original motion I put forward on 8/6/79 was written in great haste in response to the Chris Marshall motion. It was written for an NC discussion and there was no time to give a written motivation to the motion. In the period since then it's clear that certain parts of the motion have been misinterpreted, partly through my compression of the argument and partly through unfortunate phrasing. I now want to clarify the motivation behind the motion so that any differences between myself and CM become clearer and scope for misinterpretations is reduced. Again for the sake of brevity I will be as concise as possible.

1. First, I fully support all of Marshall's point (1) where he states (among other things) "we fully support the right of the Irish to wage war against these (the British Government's) imperialists interests, by any means that they see fit. We also fully support and endorse the main objectives of the Republican Movement - that is, the defeat of British imperialism in Ireland and the establishment of an independent, united Irish state".
2. The central point I am trying to make is as follows. There are two aspects of Big Flame's international politics. First, and of overriding importance, is the aspect from which Marshall's para. (1) is drawn. This comprises support for the classic Marxist and Leninist formulations of unconditional solidarity with all anti-imperialist forces (most importantly the solidarity necessary from those in the imperialist country with those fighting against their state's imperialism) and the right of nations to self-determination. Both these apply particularly clearly for us in Britain in relation to the struggle in Ireland. This is why I can agree completely with Marshall's formulation in para(1). No matter what means they employ to win their objectives this would not affect our solidarity with them.
3. The second aspect is the one I am trying to bring out in my motion. This recognises that a stand on anti-imperialism and self-determination is not the sum total of our politics. We are revolutionaries who believe that the bourgeois state has to be overthrown in order for the transition to socialism to begin. We see the winning of socialism as involving the transformation of all social relations as well as the destruction of bourgeois state power. We see 'prefigurative' aspects of politics (building elements of socialist relations in the here and now) and support for the autonomous movements as essential. We are internationalists who believe that an international dimension to the revolutionary process is essential. We wish to see bourgeois state power in other countries (including the south of Ireland) overthrown by a revolutionary working class movement. We wish to learn from the history of other revolutions ( eg Russia, China) and anti-imperialist movements (eg Vietnam) about how the ways you organise and the political basis on which you struggle affect the struggle against imperialism, the revolutionary process and the building of socialism. Whilst the first aspect described above (anti-imperialism and support for the right of self-determination) determines the vast part of the allocation of time and resources (notably through UTOM) the whole of our politics in relation to Ireland cannot be reduced to that. In our direct political contacts with different anti-imperialist organisations we must also be prepared to raise the second aspect which is aimed in part at helping develop understanding for the political ideas we represent ( and vice versa it should be made clear as well).

Having outlined the general political point I want to make, the following are more specific critical comments on my and CM's motions.

- i) CM paras 2 & 7. His use of the word 'correct' here is I believe mistaken ("If military activity in Britain is helping to achieve Republican objectives it is correct"... "some military activity is

entirely correct".) The confusion I think stems from his argument against condemning actions on "moral" grounds. As far as I know no one in BF is suggesting that some military activity is 'morally' wrong - we are not a pacifist organisation. Nevertheless there are limits to how far you can exclude moral factors from even revolutionary political judgements including on the effectiveness of certain types of action. This is for two reasons. First, 'moral' attitudes among people often have important political weight and therefore help determine whether a tactic is 'effective'. Second there are conceivable tactics which, although perhaps 'effective' according to certain criteria, could be condemned on grounds which include some sort of 'moral' judgement eg poisoning water supplies. I'm in no way suggesting that the IRA or INLA would ever resort to such activities but our political method should be applicable to all situations. Similarly the notion of "effectiveness" poses great difficulties. Who are we to decide if an operation is "effective" or not? I do not see how according to the restricted criteria he uses CM can actually make judgements which would lead to our being "on suitable occasions and in suitable ways, entitled publicly to disagree with the activities of the Republican movement on the grounds of their lack of effectiveness" (para 8) without 'making concessions to national chauvinism'. I support the gist of the argument but the reasoning is faulty, partly because it lacks the second political aspect I referred to above.

ii) CM's paras 4&5 and Campbell's para 3. The first task of Irish and British revolutionaries is withdrawal of troops. However I think CM underplays the central importance of obtaining withdrawal not on a chauvinist basis. I believe that the Irish struggle can be central to the development of a more mass socialist revolutionary movement in Britain. I also think that the real liberation of the Irish from oppression would not be ended by withdrawal on its own, though the army is obviously the most direct oppressor and withdrawal is the precondition for everything else. At the level of the state (eg the repressive state apparatus - police and army) and the economy (big business etc) capital can still render life in a northern Ireland statelet or a unified, capitalist Ireland intolerable for the masses, particularly the minority in the north. I also have disagreements with CM in his apparent suggestion that a "sustained campaign" in Britain would be politically effective. If this interpretation is correct I think his analysis is short-sighted (neglecting other possible consequences of a 'sustained campaign' eg drastic re-inforcement of reactionary politics and of imperialist strategy in the north and state repression in the south). Precisely one of the reasons for the success of the anti-imperialist movements in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau was the 'moral weight' they had politically both internationally and within Portugal (the imperialist nation) and the (largely conscript) Portuguese armed forces, and the ability this gave the anti-imperialist forces in Portugal to undermine and reduce the options open to the fascist state and Portuguese imperialism.

iii) Campbell para (4) lines 10-11. An explanation is due on where I say "we should oppose and if necessary condemn such bombing campaigns etc". This has understandably been misread. By "oppose" I meant, in my own shorthand, take up 'internal' positions on a tactic and, if appropriate, make our views known in suitable ways, and 'privately', to Irish organisations. By "condemn" I meant make such a disagreement public eg by writing an article in the paper, "but in no way morally condemn or ape the bourgeois gutter press". I actually agree with CM's formulation in para 8.

All things considered I am happy to vote for CM's motion provided it is qualified by the substantive points on general method made in my motion as clarified in this document. It is not a question of getting some 'perfect' form of words, rather of agreeing on general method and analysis. Finally I hope that this discussion does not detract from discussing the important developments in the Irish situation recently.