

Leading Light Communist Stand-In Line on Ireland

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In the temporary absence of a detailed class analysis of contemporary Irish society, Monkey Smashes Heaven issues the following stand-in line for the Leading Light Communist movement on the state of the class struggle in Ireland today.



The National Question

Ireland is an ancient nation consisting of the entire territory of the island of Ireland and all those regardless of religion, gender or “race” wishing to live within its borders as free and equal citizens bound by the general will. Ireland was England’s second colony (the first being Celtic Wales) and has been nationally oppressed for over 800 years. Although the clientelist ruling class in Ireland did eventually attain a high degree of independent class interests and national consciousness at critical points during this long and brutal history, Ireland’s national development was deliberately restricted by the militaristic English state in the service of, first, feudalism and, later, capitalism. Generally, the Irish proletarian majority was deeply impoverished and oppressed by Ireland’s colonial state, although Ireland’s proximity to the British market has consistently tended to place Ireland in an ambiguous position *vís a vís* the colonial and neo-colonial world.

Since the Tudor plantations of Ireland by English and Scottish settlers recruited by bourgeois speculators in Britain bent on the primitive accumulation of capital at the expense of the colonies, and especially after the Cromwellian reconquest of 1652, Irish society has been divided between a settler garrison populace of bourgeois Protestants loyal to the capitalist British state and the majority Irish people who have striven to break the chains of their national oppression in all fields of life (legal, political, economic, and cultural). Although it was, in fact, bourgeois Protestant individuals (from Swift to Tone) who played the decisive role in crystallising the Irish nationalist and Republican movements as such, Protestants as a social group in Ireland representing the interests of the British imperialist state therein, have been the implacable and ultra-reactionary foes of Irish self-determination. The pro-British

loyalists of Ireland are historically the equivalent, as Comrade Lenin said, of the Russian “Black Hundreds,” the chauvinist monarchist gangs who terrorised the Russian proletariat in the days of the Tsar. Indeed, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) formed in 1913 to oppose in arms the Irish national will to self-determination has a strong claim to being the world’s first fascist army.

Leading Light Communists recognise the cause of Irish national liberation as a just one and support it without reservation. We reject the neo-colonialist attempt to portray the Irish conflict as one revolving around opposed cultural traditions, and affirm that the Irish conflict is one in a long line of attempts by oppressed nations to throw off the yoke of the imperialist oppressor and its local allies. We affirm our opposition to the unionist veto which guarantees that a small reactionary minority in the north-east of the country is allowed the ultimate say on Irish re-unification and self-determination. Let no one assume that Leading Light Communists are stingy. Were we in power, our gift to the loyalists of Ireland who refuse to take their place as members of the Irish nation, free and undivided, would be a one-way ticket back to Britain.

Leading Light Communists, however, have serious doubts as to whether Ireland can still be considered an oppressed nation, when it is clear that a majority of its people have endorsed British rule in the north of Ireland and military and pig repression has demonstrably declined (though by no means disappeared) in the occupied six counties.

The National Struggle and the Class Struggle in Ireland

Over the centuries, the national question and the class struggle have been inextricably linked in Ireland. Leading Light Communists support a stageist approach to the Irish revolution, whereby removal of the British occupiers is the primary task of the proletariat and the Communist movement which leads it so long as Ireland is under colonial rule. Irish Republicans and communists alike have correctly recognised the Irish national bourgeoisie as an ally of the proletariat in the anti-imperialist struggle. However, the Irish national bourgeoisie, which for various reasons of political economy has almost always formed the unchallenged leadership of the Irish national liberation movement, has vacillated and sold out to imperialism time and time again. The line separating the Irish national bourgeoisie from the comprador bourgeoisie has been exceptionally blurred in Ireland because of Ireland’s contradictory position as both an exploited nation transferring its surplus value to the British imperialist state, and an exploiter nation whose economy and society has been indelibly shaped by self-interested participation in the economic and military structures of said imperialist state. As the global contradiction between the First and Third World has advanced, so has the potential of the Irish bourgeoisie to partake in the parasitism characteristic of the former at the expense of the latter.

The Protestant working class in Ireland has historically constituted a labor aristocracy whose wages and conditions of employment, and hence living standards, have been subsidised through sharing in the profits of discrimination occasioned by systematic repression conducted by the UK and Stormont governments, as well as their allies in the partitionist trade union movement and the loyalist death squads, against the Catholic population within the Orange state (“Northern Ireland”). The Protestant labor aristocracy has perhaps constituted the single most formidable obstacle against Irish self-determination and even basic equality of citizenship in Ireland. It was and is at one and the same time the most implacable enemy of socialism and the most vociferous defender of imperialist murder and plunder in Irish society.

It has long been recognised by consistent Irish Republicans and communists that the Irish proletariat was the only class in the country with a consistent and unbending class interest in opposing British colonialism. Leading Light Communists uphold the principle of proletarian leadership of the United Anti-Imperialist Front comprising all the classes and their parties which can and must be united to defeat imperialism. However, we recognise that there is no longer an Irish proletariat upon which to base the anti-imperialist and socialist struggles. Through its membership of the European Union and its integration as a peripheral region within the global imperialist bloc enriching itself exclusively from the superexploitation of Third World labor and the theft of its land and resources, Ireland is an imperialist nation. All of the major classes in Ireland bear the imprint of First World parasitism.

Although Ireland, with its relatively tiny population, is a very unequal society, it is also one of the richest countries in the world. Arguments that Irish economic life is dominated by foreign multinational corporations miss the fact that Irish investment sustains the global reach of these corporations and that it is superexploited Third World labor, not the superwages of Irish unproductive labor, which sustains their profits. In comparison, the Welsh nation is also dominated by non-Welsh multinational corporations, yet only bourgeois national chauvinists would consider Wales an exploited nation. Rather, Wales is a peripheral nation within the UK imperialist state. Ireland, similarly, is a peripheral nation within the European imperialist bloc, having, in fact, strong economic ties to “Great” Britain. Leading Light Communists absolutely reject any claims that Ireland is a nation exploited by monopoly capital and any attempts to calculate poverty and exploitation there on the basis of Irish GDP figures taken in isolation from the rest of the world.

Whilst the vast majority of the Irish population nowadays are “working class”, Leading Light Communists have consistently pointed out that reliance on income from wage-labor is not the distinguishing feature of the proletariat, that class with nothing to lose but its chains. In fact, most of the active population of the First World are wage-earners, from a janitor, to a football player to a CEO (and most of the rest have their own businesses). It is exploitation alone which distinguishes a wage-earner from a proletarian. If a group of workers is paid less than the value of labor as calculated according to the average socially necessary labor time inhering in the sum total of global GDP (which actually inflates the value of labor by including unproductive services as “produce”), then they are exploited proletarians. By no means do Irish workers fit this description. The Republic of Ireland’s National Minimum Wage Act 2000 provides that the minimum wage rate for an adult employee from 1 July 2007 is €8.65 an hour. That places all legal adult workers in the Irish Republic in the top 12% of the world by income (assuming a 35 hour week, 52 weeks a year) or above. In the six counties, the national minimum wage is £5.73 per hour for workers aged 22 years and older, as in the rest of the UK. That also places all legal workers there in the top 12% of the world by income (assuming a 35 hour week, 52 weeks a year). Someone in “poverty” (arbitrarily defined as 60% or less than the UK average) in the north of Ireland, for example, a single adult with no dependent children earning £112 per week, is in the top 15% of the world by income, accounting for a mere 20% of the north’s population.

As well as looking at the superwages of the Irish workforce, we must look at Ireland’s occupational structure and, in particular, at the level of unproductive labor being performed there. Unproductive labor is that labor involved in the circulation and realisation, as opposed to the creation, of value. It is that labor which does not produce tangible commodities for exchange and is not performed under industrial conditions. Thus, labor employed in banks, retail outlets, personal services, advertising, most transportation in the First World, most administration, police and security services, and so on is unproductive labor. It is the faux frais of capitalist production paid for out of profits created in the productive sector (mainly manufacturing, mining and agriculture). According to International Labor Organisation (ILO)

statistics, no more than 32.7% of the total Irish workforce employed is engaged in productive labor (in agriculture, forestry, fishing, construction and “other production industries”). Being extremely generous and including all transportation workers as “productive” (even though most should more properly be included as advertising or retail workers), the six counties has at the uppermost limit 24.2% of its employed workforce in the productive sector. Considering that both sets of figures are inflated by including productive sector managers, administrators, cleaners, and a range of other employees not directly involved in the production process as productive, it is clear that the majority of the Irish “working class” is involved in circulating, realising and protecting value created elsewhere, as opposed to creating it themselves. Meanwhile, the average “productive” laborer in Ireland earns €625 per week which, at €32500 annually, places him squarely within the top 3% of the world by income. Broadly speaking, the occupational structure of the six counties is very similar to that of the UK generally, with the only differences being that there is significantly more health and government employees and significantly less business services employees in the former than the latter.

Leading Light Communism affirms that there is no class in Ireland today which has a material interest in fighting imperialism in the Third World. The Irish working class is a bourgeoisified reactionary parasitic class. Moreover, although significant inequality persists in six county society between the settler Protestant population and the Catholic Irish population, superprofits from the Third World have created a pro-imperialist détente there. Thus, as in America where the Black nation is clearly, and often brutally, oppressed by the white nationalist power structure, the Catholic Irish have had their political militancy anaesthetized by their being in receipt of imperialist superprofits. Whilst affirming the political importance of the integration of Sinn Féin into British imperialist state structures in the occupied six counties, Leading Light Communists believe that it is the material bribery of the wider “working class” Catholic Irish population which principally accounts for the abandonment of the Republican struggle in Ireland, and not the revisionism or “treachery” of the sell-out national liberation leadership. Alongside those real bullets which have so damaged the small base for armed revolutionary struggle in Ireland – the oppressed six county Catholic working class – it is the sugar-coated bullets aimed at the latter, and not at Sinn Féin per se, which have hit Irish Republicanism the hardest.

Communism and the Irish National Struggle

Leading Light Communists recognise that practically every form of “Marxism” in Ireland has been discredited in the eyes of the masses fighting for national liberation. Despite the natural feelings of sympathy and support for socialism felt by oppressed peoples everywhere, the “socialists” of Ireland during the most recent phase of the conflict (the so-called post-1969 “Troubles”) have thought and acted in the most reactionary and self-destructive ways. So-called Stalinism has been discredited (though in no small measure due to the opportunistic misapplication of political labels by Republican opponents of the Soviet Union under Comrade Stalin) by its insistence that the fight for “civil rights” must antedate the struggle for national liberation. Leading Light Communists affirm that the much-maligned “stageism” for which these phoney Stalinists have been rightfully rebuked, is contrary to the theory and practice of the Soviet Communists before and during Stalin’s period of rule, for whom the first stage of the communist struggle in Ireland is not placating the reactionary Protestant workers but the overthrow of British rule upon which equal relations between Protestant and Catholic in Ireland might develop. Trotskyism has been thoroughly discredited in the eyes of Republicans and communists by its insistence on ignoring the national question and the split in the working class brought about by British colonialism. Anarchism, very similarly, is rightly regarded as a sectarian joke in Ireland, a form of infantile ultra-leftism which, with its utopian idealist methodology (judging reality by abstract principles and not abstract

principles by reality), is as incapable of understanding the course of real social struggles in Ireland as it is elsewhere. Maoism has a mixed pedigree in Ireland. Whereas the Cork Workers Group justly upheld the Irish national liberation struggle as the principle one for Communists to engage in, the so-called British and Irish Communist Organisation (BICO) – originally formed as a pro-China split within the Irish Communist Group – has pursued the gravest and most offensive line of capitulation to British rule in Ireland. This group of fake-Maoists have seriously discredited Maoism and Communism by misapplying Comrade Stalin’s criteria for nationhood to the comprador settler population of the north-east and supporting the vicious British national chauvinism of the loyalist death squads of the UDA and the UVF in their onslaught against the Irish Republican movement and the six county Catholic population generally. Truly, all of these brands of phony “Marxists” are the running dogs of imperialism, frightened by the war emerging from the resistance of the oppressed Irish people and seeking any intellectual means available to justify the imperialist status quo.

Leading Light Communism is communism today. We stand for Irish self-determination under the country’s receivership by the Joint Dictatorship of the Proletariat of the Exploited Nations (JDPEN). Whilst Ireland (along with Quebec, the Basque country, and the Black nation held captive within First World state borders) might possibly yet be an oppressed nation, it is decidedly not an exploited nation. Its national interests currently lay four square against the liberation of the Third World from imperialist control. However, we stand in the tradition of Irish Republican internationalism. During the debate over the Treaty of 1921 (when partition and English Crown domination of twenty-six county political, military and economic life was first institutionalised on the basis of a neo-colonial surrender by the then IRA), Liam Mellows and Countess Markiewicz (IRA leaders) argued against signing the Treaty on the basis that it would not only destroy Ireland’s chances of national liberation, but would leave the anti-colonial struggles of the occupied Egyptians and Indians in the lurch, too. Leader of the Irish Republican Socialist movement in the 1930s Peadar O’Donnell also expressed his firm support over the years for the struggles of oppressed Third World nations fighting US imperialism. Mao himself was admired by the IRA leadership in the late 1950s, when a failed plan of focoist guerrilla warfare ostensibly based on People’s War was launched. In more recent years, the Provisional Irish Republican movement has very publicly supported struggles in Colombia, Palestine and Azania, amongst other places under the imperialist jackboot. This internationalist tradition may give the impression to unwitting observers that the Irish people are opposed to imperialism. But Leading Light Communists are quite certain that the more integrated within normalised imperialist state structures that the Irish people as a whole become, the more enthusiastic their support for the culture and policies of imperialism, and their appreciation of sharing in its financial returns, will be. Instead of appealing to the Irish nation to fight imperialism on the basis of its own class interest, an impossible and reactionary piety, Leading Light Communists appeal to the proletarian memory of the Irish people. We urge Ireland, which has suffered so much in the past from colonialist oppression and its enforcers, to remember their deep-rooted traditions of egalitarianism and anti-imperialism and join the Leading Light Communist movement.

Death to Irish Imperialism! Brits out of Afghanistan, Iraq and Ireland! Long Live the Victory of People’s War! Defeat the First World!