

## OUR MOVEMENT 60 YEARS AGO

'National revolutionary' movements did not share the revolutionary socialist politics of the Communist International. In fact they too were bourgeois-democratic in the final analysis: "There can be no doubt of the fact that any nationalist movement can only be a bourgeois-democratic movement because the great mass of the population of the backward countries consists of the peasantry which is representative of bourgeois-democratic relations." (Lenin) What distinguished the national revolutionary movements from the bourgeois democratic ones was their consistent anti-imperialism. Instead of "the programme of political liberation with the conservation of capitalist order," they were based on the "struggle of the propertyless peasantry for their liberation from every kind of exploitation."

British imperialism's oppression of Ireland and the duty of socialists in Britain in relation to this, was constantly raised in the course of this debate. It was a life and death question for the British revolution to break British workers from the chauvinism which bound them to their own ruling classes. Radek declared: "If British workers, instead of opposing bourgeois prejudices, support British imperialism or tolerate it passively, then they are working for the suppression of every revolutionary movement in Britain today."

As MacAlpine, an American delegate, pointed out, the English working

class had largely failed to understand the problems raised by Ireland, and the same applied to the revolutionaries. The British bourgeoisie were able to use Ireland to divide the working class and create the illusion of a false "community of interests" between the British ruling classes and British workers on the issue of Ireland.

The policies of British socialists about Ireland were not to be some "bourgeois humanitarian reaction to oppression", but rather the expression of common class interests between the oppressed masses of the two countries. It was the duty of British revolutionaries to "help the Irish movement with all their strength, to agitate amongst the British troops, to use all their resources to block the policy that the British transport and railway unions are at present pursuing of permitting troop transports to be shipped to Ireland." (Radek)

**"The British socialist who fails to support by all possible means the uprisings in Ireland against the London plutocracy deserves to be branded with infamy, if not with a bullet"**

**Trotsky**

In the manifesto of the Second Congress, Trotsky underlined it: "The British socialist who fails to support by all possible means the uprisings in Ireland, Egypt and India against the London plutocracy — such a socialist deserves to be branded with infamy, if not with a

bullet, but in no case merits either a mandate or the confidence of the proletariat."

On the issue of the colonial, anti-imperialist struggles, as on all other questions, the Third International marked a clean break with the wretched tradition of the Second International. While the Second International paid lip-service to internationalism, but in practice had turned a blind eye to imperialist oppression, the Third International worked to unite the struggles in both the colonial and imperialist countries into a single struggle for the overthrow of world capitalism.

An abyss separated the two internationals. The Second International combined an elitist, bureaucratic attitude towards the class struggle, believing socialism would come about of its own accord, with a grossly opportunist, class-collaborationist practice. The Third International was to be a single party of world revolution of which the national sections would wage the war against the exploiters on every front of the class struggle. The debates at the Second Congress of the Communist International provided the national sections with the weapons to wage that struggle. As Trotsky put it in his speech to the Congress:

"With your hands, comrades, we have fanned a blaze in our Moscow forge. In this blaze we have heated the proletarian steel to white heat, we have worked it with the hammer of our proletarian Soviet revolution, we have tempered it with the experience of the civil war and forged a splendid, and incomparable sword for the international proletariat."

"We will arm ourselves with this sword, we will arm others with it. We say to the workers of the whole world: 'We have forged a strong sword in the Moscow fire. Take it in your hands — and plunge it into the heart of world capital.'"

