

# HANDS OFF IRELAND!

## REMEMBER BLOODY SUNDAY

The following is an open letter to the British left issued by the Revolutionary Communist Group in support of the Bloody Sunday Commemoration called by Provisional Sinn Fein.

Dear Comrades,

'National self-determination is the same as the struggle for complete national liberation, for complete independence, against annexation, and socialists cannot - without ceasing to be socialists - reject such a struggle in whatever form, right down to an uprising or war.'  
(Lenin CW 23 p34)

On 30th January 1972, 14 unarmed Irish people were shot and killed by the British army in Derry. This slaughter is commemorated annually by Irish Republicans because this event showed so clearly the role of the British army in Ireland. In Britain socialists should take the opportunity to commemorate the victims of British imperialism, to show their opposition to British domination of Ireland, and to demonstrate their support for the struggle of the Irish people against British imperialism.

Provisional Sinn Fein is organising a march in London to commemorate Bloody Sunday. Sinn Fein is in the leadership of the struggle against British imperialism in Ireland. It is therefore the duty of British socialists to give their unqualified support to the Sinn Fein demonstration.

Sinn Fein have made clear, in calling this particular demonstration, that it will not consider participating in a march jointly organised with the British left. Attempts are being made within the British left to use this as an excuse for holding a separate demonstration on its own. There is no such justification. The Sinn Fein have every right to call their own demonstration, and that they are doing so is a clear rebuke to the British left. They are saying that they have no confidence in the ability of the British left to oppose British imperialism. They have witnessed the pathetic level of 'support' which has been forthcoming in the entire period of the struggle. Here is a clear opportunity for the British left to throw off its chauvinism and, instead of giving way to the pressures of British imperialism, to 'give way' for once to the demands of the opponents of British imperialism. Then, and only then, can Sinn Fein put any trust in the British left.

But instead of accepting this rebuke and correcting their behaviour, the British left stubbornly continues on its chauvinist course, accusing the Sinn Fein of 'splitting the movement'. There can be no reason, short of outright chauvinism, for failing to support the Sinn Fein march wholeheartedly. This is the only revolutionary basis for unity of the British left against British imperialism. Anything else is a capitulation to British imperialism, and a chauvinist attempt to put Sinn Fein on an equal basis with the British left. One is leading the struggle of the Irish people for self-determination, the other has failed to put up any serious opposition to British imperialism. How can the two possibly be equated? The endless torrent of speeches and articles about 'socialist unity' which gush from the British left stands in

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sharp contrast to its refusal to unite in action with Sinn Fein. Revolutionary unity, it seems, is an all-British affair - how dare the Irish organisations interfere with 'revolutionary regroupment' by demanding that the left unite in support of them!

The attacks on Sinn Fein are not new. They start with the ruling class and seep down, through the Labour and Communist Parties, down into the British radical left. If only Sinn Fein would stop its 'divisive' struggle, we are told, the ruling class could have its peace, and the left would have its 'working-class unity'. These fables are simply an attack on the anti-imperialist struggle and should be vigorously repudiated.

This Bloody Sunday commemoration is the last chance for the British left. It can either support the Irish people or support British imperialism. There is no middle ground. Every organisation which claims to oppose British imperialism's domination of Ireland should show that they do so by coming on the Sinn Fein demonstration. The choice is very simple and very clear. The slightest equivocation can only be interpreted as a refusal to oppose British imperialism.

The Revolutionary Communist Group calls upon your organisation to support the Sinn Fein demonstration. If you refuse you will be directly aiding British imperialism. You will be aiding British imperialism by dividing the movement; by isolating Sinn Fein and leaving them to face attacks by the British state on their own; by preferring to unite with other cowardly and chauvinist British left groups instead of commemorating the victims of British imperialism, opposing British imperialism and supporting the struggle of the Irish people. Bloody Sunday 78 gives you a choice: either help build an anti-imperialist movement in solidarity with the Irish people or undermine opposition to British imperialism in both Britain and Ireland. The consequences of your decision are clear: a gain for the anti-imperialist movement in Ireland and Britain, or a gain for the British ruling class.

We ask you to publish this letter in your press, and to reply to it.

Yours fraternally,

Revolutionary Communist Group

We call on you to support the Provisional Sinn Fein demonstration and to fight for support in your organisation, trade union branch or student union. All supporters of Hands Off Ireland! are welcome to march behind the 'Hands Off Ireland' banner or the banner of the Revolutionary Communist Group.

### DEMONSTRATION

Sunday January 29th 1978

Assemble 2.00pm Speakers Corner  
Depart 2.30pm, marching to Whitehall

Public Meeting: Remember Bloody Sunday: The Struggle Continues

Those groups who have pledged support for the Sinn Fein march are holding a public meeting to commemorate Bloody Sunday and to rally support for the demonstration. All who recognise the importance of this event are urged to attend the meeting.

Tuesday 24th January at 7.15pm  
NUFTO Hall, Jockeys Fields, London WC1  
(off Theobalds Road, near Gray's Inn)  
Nearest 9 Chancery Lane. Admission 20p