

ment. *This* is the correct reason for Welsh and Scottish parliaments, and for regional councils in England too (and is the reason which imposes limitations on the functions of Welsh and Scottish Parliaments); *not* specious appeals to nationalist sentiment and the dogmatic application of the

concept of the right to self-determination.

As a final fling at the advocates of separation, may I add a rider that they should amend Marx's famous appeal in the *Communist Manifesto* to "Workers of the World, Unite; but only after the Welsh, Scottish and English workers have divided".

Bert Pearce

IDRIS COX is right that this is a complex problem and his help in continuing the battle for clarity on it is valuable, because it is a problem to which we must find fuller answers now. I am sorry if the remark about "a Philadelphia lawyer's interpretation" was felt as a cheap retort. It was not intended that way, and it certainly was not aimed personally at him. But I would agree that it was a loose and flamboyant phrase which the article would have been better without. What it really reflected was some of my own subjective feeling, after sharing in many discussions, at various levels, which have seemed to get bogged down on this precise point of fitting the definition of a nation, and have proceeded no further.

This was all I intended to express, and certainly no suggestion that the issue is unimportant or that Idris himself denies the rights and national aspirations of the Scots or the Welsh. In my opening article I spoke of his pioneering work in Wales. Very few comrades will be unaware of his stand in the Party, and in the wider movement, for Welsh national rights. It is on the basis of the work done by him and other comrades that we are now trying to carry the argument and the work further forward.

But in explaining the points on which he disagrees, I think he misrepresents my argument, and his conclusion that the Welsh and Scots are not at present nations does not seem to me to be correct or justified by his case.

I do not think I used the words "nation" and "nationality" as synonymous anywhere. Meanings here can become so confused—"nationality" can be defined in many ways, including as the quality of belonging to a nation—that I thought it safer not even to use the words with the distinction that Idris Cox employs ("the Welsh and Scots are nationalities who can become nations"). I used the terms "national groupings" or "peoples" becoming nations.

Idris charges Jimmy Reid with advancing the claim to nationhood with "no analysis. No argument. No explanation." and says I adopt a similar attitude, besides supporting Barbara Ruhemann in her assertions that "nations have existed from the dawn of history".

After re-reading both my articles, with their lengthy statement of the historical development of nations, and the specific case for Welsh nationhood today, I do not think this criticism stands up. I took one sentence to recognise Barbara Ruhemann's very helpful clarification of the classic definition—meaning her correction of the wording and interpretation of Stalin's formulation. I then followed with two paragraphs in which I corrected her too sweeping statements on the formation of nations, by emphasising the role of economic factors and market relations, and saying "the relations created by commercial capitalism, trade and manufacture, at first within feudalism, played a big part in the coalescing of peoples into *nations*, as well as in their expression later in state forms".

Wales a Nation

When did Wales become a nation? Idris Cox says not at all, as yet, and gives as his reason that, despite having many of the features of a nation—national culture, and consciousness, affinity of language, and so on, its economy has been divided into two regions, by British capitalism, so it has "no community of economic life". Travel between North and South Wales is difficult, across an underdeveloped "no-man's land", and the water and electricity resources are exploited for the benefit of big cities in England.

But why does all this mean that the Welsh are not a nation? Not to mention the Scots (whose geographical and industrial position, and communications, relative to England, are very different). The Welsh people all live in one of the most developed capitalist economies in the world. Idris Cox argues that after 1536 English rule prevented the growth of those characteristics which constitute a nation. Surely the outstanding fact is that the Welsh, having already developed those features of nationality to which Idris refers, have maintained them, despite English dominance, and have also shared in the experience of a *common economic system* and development, including all its exploitation and distortion. A "community of economic life" does not necessarily imply a completely separate, independent or self sufficient system.

The exploitation of their country, and its grossly uneven pattern (which can be paralleled within the regions of England itself) does not mean that the Welsh do not all live and struggle under predominantly the same kind of economic and social system. The fact that coalfields or power resources, or coastal belts have economic ties with neighbouring industrial regions across the border, or that railway travel from North to South is bad, cannot of themselves cancel out a historically developed nationhood. Many nations in the world contain such problems of transport and industrial regions straddling state and ethnic borders.

I believe that this problem of "definition of a nation" has proved so intractable in previous discussions of the matter in Britain, partly because of this wrong interpretation of such conditions as "a common language" and "a common economic life", and partly because of the mistaken assertion that if we admit the Welsh or Scots are a nation then we are *bound* to insist on full separation, state independence etc. The logic of this in reverse is that *only* a fully-defined nation is entitled to self-determination.

The sooner we take our stand firmly for the rights of peoples and nations to self-determination, and for the recognition that the English, Scots and Welsh are three nations who have developed together within one capitalist state, the stronger we shall be to combine the fight for national rights with the fight for socialism, and to work out, as Idris Cox has rightly emphasised we must do, the best form of governmental structure in the interests of all three.

Nations and Nationalism

Comrade Searchfield's contribution is new to the discussion and opens up so much historical and cultural ground that it would be impossible to deal with in this comment. His argument against Hugh McDiarmid takes up issues raised elsewhere (the *Morning Star*) and which I also answered in the *Morning Star*. I will not repeat my disagreements with McDiarmid here, but I am sorry that Searchfield should say that McDiarmid's views are "racialist" and therefore should not have been printed! We will never sort out our Marxist views on the question like that. And devoting himself to answering McDiarmid's case for a "break-away" he makes no mention at all of the Communist policy for national parliaments without separation which is the constructive alternative to McDiarmid's proposal, and was the basis on which the discussion opened.

In trying to link Desmond Greaves to a sort of ignorant bash-the-English trend, I think comrade Searchfield himself has a bash at one or two phrases

but ignores the whole historical analysis which Greaves made. Greaves does not dispute the role of Scottish landowners and capitalists as willing partners of English capitalism and imperialism in the exploitation of Scotland and of the rest of the Empire. Why must we pose bitterness towards the Scottish exploiters against bitterness towards the English exploiters? Surely both are ingredients in the consciousness that will link the struggle for national rights with the struggle against imperialism. The Scots and Welsh are well aware of the special exploitation of their countries and of their own coalowners, landowners and the rest. What Greaves was emphasising was that as yet many English people are little aware of the deep feeling aroused in both peoples by the military (pacification of the Highlands) and economic savaging of their countries under the English dominated rule of the past three centuries.

I am sorry that Bert Ward feels I did not tackle all his points made in the August 1968 issue. In detail I could not. He made a good many with many quotes from my original article. I have re-read them carefully and still find that many of them are rhetorical expressions of disagreement with things which in fact the article did not say. Some are simply based on a misreading of the argument. For instance Bert Ward says I invite him to believe that "the survival of the idea is the cause of the growing national consciousness". But in fact the very next sentence to the one he quotes (page 343, Nov. 1967) says—"The facts of history make clear the basis of this resilient sense of nationality" and then goes on to detail some of these facts.

Separation?

I tried, and I still feel, reasonably accurately, to distinguish Bert's main theme and to answer it. The central contradiction in it comes out even more clearly in his rejoinder. He says I was explicit in advocating separation of Wales from Scotland and England. I have never said or supported any such thing—either explicitly or implicitly. The whole line of my argument has been that while we must support the *right* to self-determination for the Welsh (as for any other people) our policy in present circumstances should be to oppose separation. This is said so many times in both articles (e.g. page 354, Nov. 1967) because I am convinced that it is the special responsibility of Communists to show that the fullest development of the genuine national interest of the Welsh people need not and must not conflict with the united struggle for a socialist Britain.

It is Bert Ward who has now argued himself into an unnecessary knot. He says that to argue that separation in a given case is wrong but still to

uphold the people's *right* to decide is an abrogation of leadership. On the contrary it is the only way to exercise any effective leadership in the matter. Bert Ward's argument leads him to deny the right of secession to anyone, including the Soviet Republics, because he does not think it expedient. He is confused here over an issue that has increasing significance for Communists the more influence and power they achieve. We have the duty to argue with the people as to how they exercise their rights in any field. But we do not have the right to say to a people—"Because we do not agree with what you might do with your independence, we will remove your right to it".

Recognising the rights of the Welsh people is the first step towards having serious consideration of our views as to how they should use them.

As for "workers of all lands unite—but first divide etc."—did not Marx, Engels and Lenin each specifically warn that genuine unity can only be built out of common struggle and not imposed. And especially that where any degree of nationality was involved unity could only be based upon mutual respect for rights and voluntary adherence.

In *State and Revolution* Lenin, to emphasise this very point, quotes Engels' reference to a federal system for England (Britain) where the two islands are peopled by four nations, and says:

"Even in regard to England (Britain), where geographical conditions, a common language, and the history of many centuries would seem to have 'put an end' to the national question in the separate small divisions of England (Britain)—even in regard to that country Engels reckoned with the patent fact that the national question was not yet a thing of the past and recognised in consequence

that the establishment of a federal republic would be 'a step forward!' "

Bert himself now seems to conclude that while devolution might be to regional councils in England it should be to Parliaments in Scotland and Wales. I agree. But when he asks would we try to lead the struggle for a National Parliament if it was a bad thing? Of course not, but it is a curious question. The struggle for democracy, or for national rights, are not good or bad in themselves. They can be misused by reactionary forces according to the class which assumes leadership. That is why it is vital now for the working class to take the leadership of this good and positive national struggle and ensure it is not diverted against the basic cause of Socialism in Britain.

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