

Articles 2 & 3

What would you do with them?

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Article 2:The National territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its' islands and its' territorial seas.

Article 3:Pending the re-integration of the national territory and without prejudice to the right of Parliament and Government established by this constitution to exercise jurisdiction over the whole of that territory, the laws enacted by Parliament shall have the like area and extent of application as the laws of Saorstát Eireann [26 counties] and the like extra-territorial effect.

Mention the conflict in the North and many people will turn off. Not because they do not care about what is going on but because they do not feel that they can make any difference. Who wants to hear about another death or another bombing? Most people in Ireland were glad to see the release of the Birmingham 6 and the Guildford 4, but in Dublin last Summer only 300 marched against the extradition of Angelo Fusco. The answer to the problem is made out to lie with the British and Irish governments in collaboration with the Unionist leaders. Workers in the South do not see themselves as having a part to play in the solution.

It is in this atmosphere of alienation that talks, and talks about talks, can be portrayed as having an impact. In fact they were just talks. The latest set wound up last November with nothing decided. The banning of the UDA can be portrayed as positive action against the loyalist death squads. Even though they still exist, and are now killing more people than the Provos. And this while it has come out that Brian Nelson, a British mole actually took part in over sixteen murders with official permission.

The Unionists are able to claim that it is the Republic of Ireland's 'claim' to the North in Articles 2 and 3 that is the cause of the 'troubles'. Meanwhile the British State is getting away with occupying the place and few people see this as a problem.

In an upcoming referendum anarchists will oppose the deletion of Article 2. We do so, not because we support the 26 county state over the 6 county one, but because we are opposed to the partition of Ireland. The Article recognises the partition of Ireland and we want to see a united Ireland. For this we will oppose its deletion.

We, however, won't get too excited about Article 3. To support the claim of the Dublin government is to support the authority of one set of bosses over another. We, who want to get rid of the division into bosses and bossed, won't do this.

Why Ireland was divided

Ireland was partitioned because of the conflicting economic interests between capitalists in the North-East and those in the rest of Ireland. Generally speaking the South was less developed and wanted independence to defend its infant economy from cheap British imports.

The North-East was already relatively well developed with thriving linen and shipbuilding industries, both of which depended on Britain for export markets. The partition of Ireland and the creation of the six county state was a compromise between these conflicting interests.

In order to win support for partition the bosses in the North-East stirred up sectarian hatred against Catholics. They made sure there was a material basis for such hatred. Slightly better housing and jobs were given to Protestants over Catholics. It was made clear that these privileges would go if Protestant workers supported Irish independence.

On this basis the sectarian statelet of the six counties was founded. It was built with Protestant working class support on the grounds that they would remain better off than Catholics. These conditions have existed right up to the present day. Protestant workers may be more likely to be unemployed and on lower wages than a worker in London or Manchester. But they know that they are still only half as likely to be unemployed as a Catholic living in the next housing estate.

The loyalist terror groups have their recruiting grounds in Unionist working class areas. They feed off the fear that Protestants will lose their slight privileges over the Catholics. They encourage sectarian hatred by saying that Catholics are the main enemy of the Protestants. That is why Loyalists such as the Ulster Defence Association will target any Catholics. They have been tricked into believing that it is Catholics that are the main enemy and they are all 'legitimate targets'.

In reality the main enemy for both Catholic and Protestant workers is the ruling class. They are the people who set wages, hire and fire, and seek to control peoples' lives in all areas. For socialists, the most important task is to unite Catholic and Protestant workers and convince them to fight together against the bosses.

This has happened before, for example the Outdoor Relief Strike in 1932 when Catholics from the Falls Road and Protestants from the Shankill Road of Belfast fought together for better conditions for the unemployed. And more recently in the health service strikes and DSS strikes against sectarian intimidation throughout the 1980s.

Partition is not only bad because of the way that Northern nationalists are treated. It also has an effect in the South. As Connolly predicted partition led to "a carnival of reaction, North and South".

For most of the history of the state, politics in the South has been dominated by Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. There is hardly a political difference between the two. The influence of the conservative Catholic Church has until recently determined social legislation. In the South the carnival is winding down, but in the North it is still going at full belt.

It is because of this that anarchists are opposed to the deletion of Article 2. A socialist perspective needs to be heard. The question of partition, and sectarian state must be dealt with properly by socialists or it will not be solved.

Nationalists

Anarchists do not support the nationalist point of view. This will be put forward by Sinn Féin, the Irish National Congress, Neil Blaney and such like. They will be fighting for a united capitalist Ireland. Socialists will not get much chance to be heard. We will be told that, yet again, 'labour must wait'.

We are not struggling for a united capitalist Ireland. In any campaign we will be putting forward the socialist perspective that we are against partition because it fans the flames of sectarianism. In its place we want a socialist 32 county Republic uniting both Protestant and Catholic workers.

Unfortunately at the moment anarchists cannot set the political agenda. Our influence is far too small. Most of the time we have to react to events as they occur. We helped to win the referenda on travel and information last year but we recognise that the main event that triggered

the referenda was government action. They injuncted the 14 year old girl and caused the "X" case. It was people's reaction to this issue that forced the changes in the constitution.

Likewise with a referendum to change Articles 2 and 3. While we would prefer to be involved in widespread united strike action of Protestants and Catholics, arguing for socialism, we cannot do so at the moment. If there is to be a referendum we will use it as an opportunity to argue a socialist perspective. This is an opportunity to argue a socialist answer and it should not be missed.

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