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Irish Nationalism

Joe King

1994

Anarchists are for the defeat of British imperialism. We understand that the root cause of the troubles in the six counties lies with the British ruling class and the northern sectarian statelet. That is why we call for Troops Out. But we want more, we stand for the creation of a new society in the interests of the working class and against the bosses, both orange and green.

This is very different from the politics of nationalism, of Sinn Fein. We see the way forward as unity of Catholic and Protestant workers in a common fight against capitalism. Nationalists look for alliances of bosses and workers, they want co-operation with the SDLP and Fianna Fail.

Because they see Northern Protestant workers as unpatriotic, as "pro-British elements"; their interest seems to stop at who can best control them. Hence Gerry Adams speech prior to the 1994 IRA ceasefire which said that Protestants needed a De Klerk to lead them to compromise.

Nationalism tells us that people of a particular nation have more in common than they have dividing them. It is not supposed to

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matter if you are rich or poor, low paid worker or millionaire boss; we're all Irish.

Anarchists are not nationalists, in fact we are completely against nationalism. We don't worry about where your granny was born, whether you can speak Irish or if you drink a green milkshake in McDonalds on St Patrick's Day.

But this doesn't mean we can ignore nations. They do exist; and some nationalities are picked on, discriminated against because of their nationality. Irish history bears a lot of witness to this.

The Kurds, Native Americans, Chechins, and many more have suffered also - and to an amazingly barbaric degree. National oppression is wrong. It divides working class people, causes terrible suffering and strengthens the hand of the ruling class. Our opposition to this makes us anti-imperialists.

Today, in most parts of the world, nationalist movements no longer fight for victory over their enemies. They seek compromise. The last few IRA bombs have not been aimed at getting the British state out of Ireland, they have been attempts to force the British to talk to Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness.

The last few years have seen this process, not only in Ireland, but in South Africa, Palestine, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Chechnya. A major factor in arriving at this position is an understanding that 'independent' capitalist states which can take real control of their national economies are becoming a pipe dream.

\$1.3 trillion moves around the world each day in search of the greatest profit. It is a lot harder for big states to lay down conditions on the rich, it is impossible for a small state. If they won't do what the big bosses want, the investment money is moved to somewhere more 'co-operative'.

And despite sometimes using 'revolutionary' language, the nationalist goal is essentially about maintaining capitalism with its division of society into bosses & workers, rulers and ruled. Though fighting against national oppression, the argument at the end of the day is about who the rulers should be. There is no thought of tear-

ing down the social pyramid which puts most of us at the bottom, and few rich and powerful people at the top.

Anarchists certainly don't want to reduce humanity to one grey mass. We want to foster cultural diversity: languages, music, dress, lifestyles. A rich tapestry of diversity which is a good thing and can enrich the lives of everyone.

But using a national culture (and the 'traditionalists' should remember that cultures are constantly evolving and changing) to feel superior or to treat someone else less favourably creates suffering and plays into the hands of our rulers who know that people who are divided are easier to control and exploit.

So fight national oppression but look beyond nationalism. We can do a lot better. Changing the world for the better will be a hard struggle so we should make sure that we look for the best possible society to live in.

We look forward to a world without borders, where the great majority of people have as much right to freely move about as the idle rich do today. A worldwide federation of free peoples - classless and stateless - where we produce to satisfy needs and all have control over our destinies - that's a goal worth struggling for.