Socialist Voice

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Wolfe Tone Oration 2017 'Ireland has been subjugated by neo-liberalism and global capitalism; our domestic sovereignty has been sacrificed on the altar of capital'
John Douglas

"What a fool I was! I was only a puppet, and so was Ulster, and so was Ireland, in the political game that was to get the Conservative Party into power."
Edward Carson (1921).

▲ The Peadar O'Donnell banner led the march. John Douglas speaking with the Colour Party in the back ground

Bordering on the ridiculous

Jimmy Doran

THE CONTINUING drip feed from the Brexit negotiations on the future of the border between the two parts of our country, and the inability to do anything about it, illustrate the total lack of sovereignty we have as members of the imperial club.

We may be members, yet we are outside the talks process. We can lobby on matters affecting us, and look for support from other states; that's about as much input as is available to us.

Under EU rules, we and Britain are forbidden to have parallel discussions on the alternatives that might be possible between the two parts of the country. We will not be allowed to do it after Brexit either, as EU rules forbid all members to come to bilateral arrangements on trade with other countries.

So whatever is decided in Brussels regarding the border, the only say we will have on the outcome will be when we are allowed to vote on it, which will reflect our population within the EU—about 2 per cent.

So make no mistake about it: we have practically no say in the outcome.

Britain has indicated that it wants to have trade agreements with several other countries after the Brexit negotiations are completed—because even though they are leaving they are bound by EU rules until they actually reach agreement on the departure, and they are not allowed to start those negotiations yet.

These agreements will be made in the interests of British Big Business.

'Break the connection with imperialism: out of the EU, an end to partition, united and free to build the socialist republic for all of our people'

They will do deals that will allow them to import goods at prices that suit the capitalist class, and export goods elsewhere with a similar deal. This will be in the interests of British business.

If there were a "soft border" between the 6 and 26 counties it would expose the interests of EU capital to all sorts of smuggling and tax evasion, by letting goods and services in and out through the many back doors that would exist, from Omeath to Pettigo. It is the equivalent of looking for a soft border between Russia and the EU: not very likely, unless Britain were to remain in a customs union, which is not going to happen—and, as pointed out here before, if it did they would be liable to all the conditions of CETA, TISA, TTIP and all the other trade agreements that are at various stages of discussion between the EU and others.

So when Britain does leave, the myth of the EU being such a wonderful social and democratic arrangement will be plain for all to see. It is quite possible that, in order to protect EU interests, we may end up with a very hard border.

As for Irish concerns, they will be taken into as much consideration as they were when Brussels forced this country to pay for 42 per cent of European banking debt, despite having only 2 per cent of the population. Within the EU, sovereignty does not exist for Ireland; and that will become very clear over the coming months.

Once Brexit happens, it is quite possible that Britain and the EU will enter into a trade agreement. If so it could lead to a soft border. It will depend on what best suits the owners of British capital. They may prefer to look to China, Russia or India for new markets and resources to do free-trade deals with; that would be the prerogative of British imperialism, now free to follow a path independent of the EU.

Would the hegemony of US imperialism allow this to happen? Britain will have to comply with American interests or suffer the consequences, despite the "special relationship" that exists between them. This is the nature of imperialism: you are either with us or against us.

At least the North will be shaking off the shackles of EU imperialism. One down, two to go: British and American next!

The CPI has consistently called for Ireland to leave the EU. This is the anti-imperial route for both parts of our country. Break the connection with imperialism: out of the EU, an end to partition, united and free to build the socialist republic for all of our people. ★

Public ho

Eugene Byrne

THE SAYING "After all is said and done there is usually more said than done" would nicely sit with the Dublin government at this time, especially in their response to the housing crisis. If we are to believe the media, Simon Coveney more or less begged the previous taoiseach, Enda Kenny, to hand him the housing portfolio, with the promise of sorting out the homelessness problem in a year. He is on record as saying that no children would be in emergency accommodation by July 2017.

Needless to say, when he left office for his new post in the Department of Foreign Affairs the numbers in emergency accommodation had risen, to six hundred families.

"Emergency accommodation," for those who don't know, is not two-up two-down houses or anything similar: it's usually hotel rooms, at the back of the hotels, hidden away from the hotel residents like pariahs: children shepherded out of the rooms early in the morning for the school run before any of the residents come down for breakfast; families living on top of each other in one room; children having no space to play, with a recent report claiming that these children will be affected later in life.

We have all stayed in a hotel at one time or another; but can you imagine living in that room for years on end? They are designed for a short stay and are definitely not suitable for bringing up a family.

using is the only solution

The same applies to hostels, with shared bathrooms and shared kitchens. It's not the way forward; some prisons have more liberty and better conditions.

The new man in town, Eoin Murphy, has come into the job as full of beans as Coveney was, with a new catchphrase: "Rebuilding Ireland." He says he is looking at vacant rooms above shops, take-aways etc. to relieve the crisis.

The Blueshirt-led government in the South and the British Tory set-up in the North are totally ignoring what people want and are demanding: public housing, affordable homes built by county councils, like what was done in the 1930s and even right up to the 70s.

'A home is a human right: it should not be a commodity for making money from. We should not become, or allow our children to become, slaves to private banks or mortgage companies' vulture funds'

When I was serving my time as a carpenter I worked for Louth County Council, building these types of houses. The county councils were one of the biggest employers of construction workers at the time. The blueprint is there: we don't have to reinvent the wheel.

James Connolly, in the manifesto of the Irish Socialist Republican Party, stated: "Gradual extension of the principle of public ownership and supply of all the necessaries of life." A home suitable for your family is a necessary of life; it's a basic human right.

One of the main reasons for the rising homelessness figures is the fact that people are being evicted from their homes because they can no longer pay the mortgages they were tied into during the crazy days, when banks were throwing money at families to buy overpriced houses from the private market. At present one in ten mortgages is in distress, and this government want to return to that scenario again, leaving all the supply of homes and accommodation in the hands of the private market.

This is typical capitalism: run down the public sector by starving it of investment and then portray the private sector as our only saviours.

All the incentives so far offered by the government have been geared to helping their cronies in the private rental sector. The housing assistance payment (HAP) scheme can support you in a privately owned house, but they can't find you a publicly owned house; so this money is being sucked up by rich landlords.

A home is a human right: it should not be a commodity for making money from. No home is worth two generations of the same family paying a mortgage just to keep a roof over their head. We should not become, or allow our children to become, slaves to private banks or mortgage companies' vulture funds.

So why, you may ask, is the minister for housing not making any progress on this issue?—especially in the light of a homeless man dying in a doorway a few yards from Dáil Éireann, and a late-night tour around the capital by the former taoiseach, Enda Kenny, to see for himself the scale of the problem.

There are at present 180,000 vacant homes in the twenty-six counties, built during the so-called boom years—all private, which the ministers say can't be used, for this very reason. During those years virtually no public housing developments financed by the department were tendered for by developers, as this would be a contradiction of private developments, and also produce lesser profits for rich developers and speculators.

So under capitalism, can we expect the homelessness crisis to be sorted out? I'm afraid not, as it's the capitalist system that caused it; but what we can do is expose the contradictions in capitalism and, hopefully, raise people's consciousness in the process.

In the last British general election Jeremy Corbyn talked about public ownership. If the Labour Party is returned in the next British election we can look over the pond to our neighbours and see what is meant by public ownership of the necessaries of life: housing, health, education, and so on, just as Connolly wrote in the programme of the Irish Socialist Republican Party all those years ago. ★

CPI

Essential to break with the EU and the euro

Communist Party of Ireland, 20 August 2017

RECENT PROPOSALS by the British government regarding a possible border between the British state and the European Union expose how marginal the interests of the Irish people are in relation to the negotiations now under way.

The terms of Britain's relations with the EU will be decided between Britain and Germany, in the interests of their ruling classes.

History has shown our people that the British state will do what is in the interests of the British ruling class. The economic and political border between the EU and the British state will be imposed in a manner best suited to the needs and interests of British imperialism, with no regard whatever for the Irish people.

Neither the Irish state nor the political institutions established in the north of Ireland have any real say or influence in these talks or their outcome.

The Irish establishment has long since abandoned its last vestiges of national democracy and sovereignty, the very tools that are required in order to have effective influence either in these negotiations or in world affairs. Reasserting our national democracy and sovereignty would allow us to deal directly with the British state, other states and the EU and to secure a better deal as Britain leaves the EU.

Irish communists continue to oppose both the continued partition of the country and its submersion in the EU imperial state structures.

The only positive option facing our people is to demand an Irish withdrawal from the EU, especially a break with the euro, to allow greater economic and fiscal independence and make it possible to pursue economic and social policies that favour the people and not European monopolies, finance houses, banks, and industrialists. ★

Encouraging signs of growin

Tommy McKearney

A RECENT FEATURE in the *Financial Times* might cause some surprise among Ireland's eight thousand homeless, or the many others struggling with the spiralling cost of renting even modest accommodation.

The article reported that the Republic is now enjoying one of the most remarkable economic revivals the European Union has seen, and that the country's sovereign borrowing costs are now the same as those of France.

This piece of good news, for some at least, was part of a recent "Person in the News" article that gave a glowing account of the new taoiseach, Leo "early rising" Varadkar.[1] The article contained the type of trite nonsense more often produced by Varadkar's social-media spin machine. Young, handsome, clubbable, assertive prime minister, and—wait for it—"probably more centre-right as opposed to the non-ideological person which Enda Kenny was."

Well, there you have it: journalistic licence at its most unperceptive. To speculate that any leader of Fine Gael could possibly be "non-ideological" requires a lively imagination, but to suggest that Leo Varadkar might be centre-right is to do a hard-line neo-liberal a grave injustice.

For almost three decades after the beginning of the Thatcher-Reagan era's onslaught on working people's rights and entitlements, capitalist ruling classes everywhere were able to maintain control and hold the political high ground.

They achieved this through a combination of factors. The collapse of socialist states in eastern Europe removed the threat of a competitive alternative. Their control of media and educational institutions granted the world's oligarchs an almost uncontested telling of the political and economic narrative. Moreover, the creation of unlimited and ultimately unsustainable credit provided an illusion of prosperity and dynamism that offset opposition from the left, or indeed words of caution from the small number of critical classical free-market economists.

The political calm enjoyed and exploited by capitalism's elite ended with the economic crisis heralded by the collapse of Lehman Brothers and the subsequent imposition of what is euphemistically called austerity. Working people in Europe, the United States and elsewhere reacted angrily to a brutal attack on their standard of living and challenged the legitimacy of the status quo. While the response over the entire spectrum of the working class has not always been progressive, it is nevertheless of concern to the ruling elite.

Consequently, we are now seeing the emergence of a twin-track strategy from within capitalism. Firstly, there is the emergence of reactionary politicians posing as non-ideological centrists. Leo Varadkar and the promotional propaganda he generates exemplify this phenomenon in Ireland.

Secondly, and almost invisibly, there is a subversive and corrosive campaign to legislate for and implement free-market trade agreements beneficial only to global corporate giants. While Donald Trump spoke loudly during his presidential campaign of ending such agreements, he has not made good on his boast since arriving in the White House. Although he stalled development on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the EU and the United States and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), almost all other trade deals remain in place.

And now, in another spectacular U-turn, his associates are intent on resuming negotiations in September on a pernicious treaty called the Trade in Services Agreement (TISA).

State-appointed delegates from twenty-two countries, together with the EU, represented by its Commission, have been meeting in secret in Geneva since 2013. Regrettably, the Irish state is complicit in this scheme, about which the EU's own web site says: *"Like any other trade negotiations, the TiSA talks are not carried out in public and the documents are available to participants only . . ."*

What we do know is drawn from leaked sources obtained by the International Trade Union Confederation and published in a report, "All About TISA."[2] This report tells us that TISA would (*a*) lead to a massive transfer of power from governments to transnational corporations, (*b*) lead to strangulation of the regulation of banks and finance, and (*c*) hasten the "Uberisation" of many more jobs.

Moreover, there is heavy emphasis on an all-encompassing locked-in clause, which simply means that, once enacted, there would be no retracting any aspect of the treaty.

Any such trade pact would have detrimental consequences for Ireland. Not only would transnationals, such as Shell and Apple, gain increasing influence within the state but also our already limited ability to control the financial sector would disappear completely. Interestingly, Scott Sinclair, a senior researcher with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, now argues that TISA would also make it harder for governments to regulate vital services, such as energy and water[3]—a barely visible clause that would potentially offer the Varadkar-led Fine Gael–Fianna Fáil axis a vehicle with which to reverse the gains made by the campaign against the water tax.

As a Swiss trade unionist recently said, despairingly, if this treaty is implemented national parliaments become virtually irrelevant, and popular sovereignty is grabbed by transnational capital.

Fortunately, though, all is not lost, and there is an answer to our difficulties. The above-mentioned water campaign provides a lesson in how to organise a peaceful and democratic mass movement capable of foiling the designs of neo-liberalism.

Moreover, we have witnessed recently the beginning of an encouraging and indeed significant coming together of crucial progressive forces. Rallying under the slogan *Unity of our people, unity of progressive forces, unity of our country,* communists, republicans and trade unionists came together to hear a leading trade unionist, John Douglas, deliver an inspirational oration at the grave of Theobald Wolfe Tone.

A central theme of the speech was the need to build a progressive movement in order to reverse the damage done by neo-

ng unity

liberal austerity in general and to prevent specific attacks on workers, such as the TISA treaty. *"There is an untapped hunger for change and justice in Ireland that we need to give expression to,"* he said, *". . . and we can only do this through the unity of* progressive forces." He went on to add: *"Our task now is to build from the ground up, to educate, to agitate. We need to build a movement that is capable and confident and which grows with every victory."*

John Douglas has undoubtedly got it right. To build a movement sufficiently confident and capable of opposing and overcoming the neo-liberal agenda we must create unity among progressive forces. The recent united commemoration for Wolfe Tone was not only a positive first step along this road but indicated the real potential that exists.

Evidence of success will be when a future *Financial Times* "Person in the News" article publishes the story of a leading Irish trade unionist who is causing as much distress for capital as Varadkar is providing for its comfort today. ★

1 Laura Noonan, "The bright young man leading an Irish revival," *Financial Times*, 19 August 2017.
2 (a) International Trade Union Confederation, "All about TiSA" (www.ituc-csi.org/all-about-tisa); (b) further information is available on the UNI Global Union web site (http://bit.ly/1Qlw9xf).
3 Scott Sinclair, "TISA Troubles: Services, Democracy and Corporate Rule in the Trump Era," Rosa Luxemburg Institute (www.rosalux.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/2017/TISA-UK.pdf).

Dublin bus up for grabs

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

PRIVATE GRAVY TRAIN

Jimmy Doran

IN AUGUST, at the end of the tendering process for 10 per cent of Dublin bus routes, two bidders remained: Dublin Bus itself and the British transport corporation Go-Ahead. It's no surprise that, despite Dublin Bus putting in a very good tender and meeting all the criteria, the private British company got the "go-ahead."

As a result, a tenth of public transport routes in our capital city will now be in the hands of private capital.

This is the agenda being pursued by all the major political parties and many independents in our political system. The plan was designed by Fianna Fáil and the Green Party, implemented by Fine Gael and the Labour Party, and completed under the present arrangement in Dáil Éireann.

Let us not forget that Irish Water and their plans for the privatisation of that resource followed the same route.

As Connolly wrote, "'governments in capitalist society are but committees of the rich to manage the affairs of the capitalist class." It doesn't matter which party is in power: the result will always be in the interest of big business and the owners of capital.

Go-Ahead has been consistently voted Britain's worst-performing transport company by its passengers. Since they took over railway services in Britain, passengers have suffered from increased delays, higher fares, overcrowding, and cancellations. At the same time profits soared by 31 per cent in the last two years, to £25.7 million, while the chief executive officer's pay rose by 10½ per cent, to £2.163 million a year.

This is what privatisation is about: handing over services to the profiteers, whose only aim is profit—not to supply a decent transport service. The state abandons its responsibility to its citizens and hands it over to those who finance, run and control the political parties.

Despite all the publicity about improvements with competition, privatisation never leads to more frequent, cheaper or better services for the public—quite the opposite, in fact. Everything is geared towards profit, which will inevitably also lead to workers' wages being slashed and a lessening of conditions of employment—but of course not for the CEOs and their golden circle.

The trade unions bear some of the responsibility too, as they agreed to this process a number of years ago. Under the pressure of "austerity" they were forced into "getting the best available at the time for their members."

This narrative must be made a thing of the past. They did manage, however, against the odds, to block full privatisation; but this agreement opens the door to it in time, unless we organise and fight back.

But times have changed since then, with recent victories for workers and their unions in Luas, Dublin Bus, and Bus Éireann, and the heroic fight-back by workers in Tesco and Dunne's Stores. It is time the balance was tipped back in favour of workers. The 1990 Industrial Relations Act needs to be repealed, along with all the other anti-union legislation. We need to restore the weapons of our class—full union rights and the right to strike, when and where we see fit—which will allow workers to stop the neo-liberal agenda of privatisation, pay cuts and deregulation from destroying this country of ours. ★

The existential crisis of the

Gearóid Ó Machail

Now that we've literally reached the business end of the annual GAA season, it is perhaps timely to reflect on the trajectory that Ireland's pre-eminent sporting, cultural and community organisation appears to have ingloriously embarked upon in recent decades.

Just last month, sporting twitterati and print journos went apoplectic in reaction to the blasphemous observation made by leading GAA pundits on live television (thereby circumventing RTE's editorial censors) that Cumann Lúthchleas Gael had become a victim of the ravenous and all-consuming capitalism that has come to characterise 21st-century Ireland. The GAA football stalwart Colm O'Rourke even went so far as to posit "more socialism" as a potential remedy for the modern organisation's ills.

The mainstream bourgeois and corporate media in Ireland are not renowned for a propensity to discuss the political ideology that governs virtually every aspect of our contemporary economic, social and cultural relations. Therefore, when the words "capitalism" and "socialism" were juxtaposed on prime-time television before an audience of over half a million viewers, one could almost hear the collective gasp of a nation unaccustomed to any mention of the two ideologies that have competed for influence in the governance of human society since the middle of the nineteenth century.

The GAA, with about a million members and an increasingly global reach, is, in the words of its most colourful pundit, Joe Brolly, "a sleeping giant, with vast untapped potential to expand our social, cultural and even political work to ensure a better, more just society." Yet the mushrooming grass-roots hostility surrounding the "Sky Deal," the "Super 8s," GPA (a free-market limited company that in turn has enriched a handful of elite players) and creeping professionalism have left the GAA facing what can only be described as an existential crisis.

Brolly, a Dungiven barrister and former all-Ireland medal winner cum *enfant terrible* of the GAA, has for a considerable time been chronicling and documenting the GAA's rapid drift to the right. He has become notably more pointed in recent years in his criticism of the GAA hierarchy and its submission to commodification, commercialism, capitalistic relations, and elitism.

While doubtlessly the most prominent critic of the organisation's subsumption into the neo-liberal world order, Brolly is far from alone among the GAA fraternity in his despondency about the Croke Park authorities' seemingly unassailable direction of travel.

In a heartfelt and moving article entitled "Paradise Lost" for the blog rabble.ie, Gearóid Ó Riada, himself an all-Ireland winner with Kerry, lamented the GAA's shift from "an organisation comprised of radical thinkers and idealists who would play a significant part in the nation's fight for independence . . . towards neo-liberal values and corporate greed."

As a cross-class nationalist organisation the GAA is hardly renowned for its avant-garde political consciousness-raising or indeed anguished deliberations based on left-right ideological debate. However, the class fissures and political divergences within the "GAA family" are rapidly sharpening and becoming increasingly embittered. As Ó Riada observes, at present there are few areas of Irish life that have not in some way been tainted by greed and self-interest, the GAA being the latest casualty of these poisonous ideologies.

Such observations reflect a deepening concern that capitalism has, even by its own warped standards of morality, gone too far and in the process endangered the cosy alliance of classes that has been bonded for over 130 years by the national movement of the GAA. It's hard to disagree with Ó Riada's assessment that the organisation is now beginning to split into a grass-roots faction opposed to the future commodification of the GAA, and officials and corporate bodies seeking solely to profit from high-profile inter-county teams and competitions. Such a split, it is feared, may even lead to the ultimate death of the GAA itself.

It's difficult also to question his assertion that the use of the term "GAA community" has always been a misleading generalisation that presumes that grass-roots members, governing bodies and parasitic corporations involved in the organisation are a homogeneous and harmonious entity: "such an idea is akin to a Marxist analysis of society that fails to differentiate between the proletariat and the capitalist class."

In an incisive analysis of Brolly's increasingly vociferous critique of his own organisation's downward spiral into soulless and joyless capitalistic relations, Rónán Burtenshaw offers the following:

"Ideology plays an important part in the GAA, which as well as being one of the largest amateur sporting organisations in the world has also, as an institution, often been on the side of conservative forces in Irish politics. In certain respects sport has a similar social function to religion, bonding communities, giving them rituals to share and

establishing a sense of tradition. But any organisation of that kind that lasts under capitalism will have the GAA's contradictions—partly playing a role in reproducing the system, partly providing ordinary people relief from its hardships.

"And so on the one hand you have an organisation of over a million members, operating on a communitarian ethos, rooted in local communities, with a genuine sense of ownership for the grass roots, and at the same time its assets are over €2.5 billion, many fans are priced out of its biggest games, its former leader sits in the European Parliament with Fine Gael and its most notable moment in 2014 was when it tried to force through a series of multi-million dollar concerts against the wishes of a working-class urban community."

So while we, the one million-plus adherents of the Gaelic sporting codes, look forward to the thrills and spills of a frantic month of heroic endeavour at GAA headquarters, it is difficult to reconcile our enthusiasm for amateur games that are supposed to be a life-enriching experience, that teach us values of communalism, patriotism, *dlúthpháirtíocht,* and the great satisfaction that comes from collaboration and hard work, with the capitalistic and exploitative corporation that profits from our free labour and good will.

Thoughts on ideology

Jenny Farrell

THE IDEAS that reflect the objective interests of a class are its *ideology*. The ruling class in any society imprints its ideology on "mainstream" thinking, as expressed in all the official opinions of the state—in politics, economics, philosophy, art, religion, and so on.

As it expresses the interests of the ruling class, it has a class character. It reinforces the claim of this class to rule society in its exclusive interest. This class bases its power on the ownership of the means of production (including land), and it will defend this right with all means available: in the education of its citizens, in the media, through the laws it makes, and, if necessary, by violence.

Pre-socialist class ideologies portray propertied class society as eternal and unchangeable. This is in their ideological interest.

In its rising phase, the bourgeoisie presented capitalism as the most rational society possible and declared their own class interests to be those of all citizens. This era is called the Enlightenment, which gave birth to classical liberalism, emphasising the "freedom" of the individual from the control of church and state/monarch. This ideology had to be adapted as capitalist development produced ever-higher levels of poverty and the working class began to articulate its own ideological interests in the nineteenth century. This resulted in classical liberalism being forced into social liberalism, which meant providing a degree of social welfare to pacify the dispossessed.

However, with capitalist society driven onto the defensive, its ideology has needed to adapt. One such ideological defence strategy has been *reformism*, an adjunct of social liberalism. It claims that fundamental reform of capitalism is possible and desirable for the working class. It attacks socialism as an alternative. As part and parcel of this, working-class and liberation history are revised. Bourgeois ideologists assert that classes and class struggle no longer exist.

The objective interests of the working class also define its ideology: the Marxist understanding of history as the history of class struggle, leading ultimately to the abolition of exploitative class society, not its reform.

Working-class organisations, arising in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, expressed growing awareness that capitalism was contrary to their interests and that they were gaining the strength to challenge this. At the time of its inception, the Social Democratic Party of Germany was a revolutionary party, which waged its struggle according to a Marxist programme. Connolly and Larkin established the Irish Labour Party in 1912 as the political wing of the Irish Trades Union Congress. The Labour Party in Britain was a trade union based movement, which became a political party only in 1918.

In other words, social democracy is in its origins a working-class *movement*. It is not an ideology. With the transition to imperialism, *reformism* rapidly became the dominant *ideology* within social democratic parties, aided by bribed leaderships and supported by petit-bourgeois members. However, alongside the bourgeois ideology of reformism, a proletarian ideology co-existed. Such division split and weakened the working-class movement and caused alienation between socialists and communists. In the war-torn first half of the twentieth century, this division facilitated the rise of fascism.

The existence of socialist countries and strong working-class organisations at home forced many Western countries to adopt better welfare policies. However, the ideological battle against existing socialism continued and resulted in reformist elements increasingly dominating social democratic parties. Outright bourgeois leaderships hijacked many of the parties, crushing the emancipatory goals of the rank and file.

We must understand and utilise this history of social democratic parties and their divided membership. One cannot simply identify the entire movement with the pro-imperialist, reformist and opportunist position taken by their leaderships. We must recognise that within social democratic parties there is a left wing with an instinctive working-class consciousness. The manifesto of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party, for example, undermines the very cornerstone of neo-liberalism. Corbyn and his supporters face serious battles against the bourgeois reformist lobby that has usurped the parliamentary faction of their party.

The Irish Labour Party continues to be led by a reactionary parliamentary leadership. Nevertheless, it is crucial to work in broad movements with left-leaning Labour members who are resisting the rampant dismantling of existing achievements, to foster class understanding within these movements, and to move them in the direction of socialist change. Such alliances are essential to our ideological and practical political struggle if we want to resist the onslaught of the bourgeoisie on the very existence of the planet.

As Georgi Dimitrov, the Bulgarian communist and future leader of the Communist International, said in 1923, "the united front and class collaboration . . . are . . . two tactics profoundly opposed, quite incompatible and mutually exclusive.

"The united front of labour aims at pooling the efforts of the proletariat and of all the working people, groups and elements in present-day capitalist society in defence of their vital interests and rights, which happen to coincide at a given moment, against the capitalist bourgeoisie and its reaction, while class collaboration disorganises the working people, undermines their parties and organisations, facilitates the bourgeoisie in its plans for exploitation and oppression, and buttresses its class rule over the great majority of the working people." ★

WOLFE TONE COMMEMORATION 2017

Speech by John Douglas, general secretary, Mandate, at the United Wolfe Tone Commemoration, Bodenstown, 20 September

Comrades, brothers and sisters,

Our national freedoms were defined by the United Irishmen in terms of citizenship, the responsibility of the state to its citizens and the responsibility of all citizens to the welfare of each other. Those freedoms were not narrow: they were based on the principles of the French Revolution: liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen fought for liberty not only for Catholics but also for "Dissenters," such as Presbyterians, Quakers, and other oppressed religious minorities.

The United Ireland of Wolfe Tone, Napper Tandy, McCracken and later Connolly was egalitarian: it made no tilt towards religion; they had no interest in a united Ireland subjugated by religion, monarchy, class, privilege, or capital.

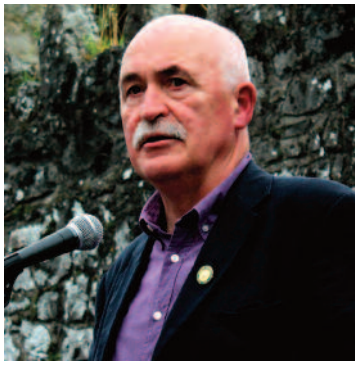
The unification of the island of Ireland was not a geographical project of narrow nationalism, rather a unification of the disenfranchised and the impoverished against the tyranny of colonialism, British imperialism, and capital.

Clearly the vision of Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen has not yet been fulfilled, as has not yet the vision of Connolly. The island of Ireland is divided by sectarianism, inequality, and exploitation. This did not happen by economic accident but through economic design.

Ireland has been subjugated by neo-liberalism and global capitalism; our domestic sovereignty has been sacrificed on the altar of capital. Our recent experience in the Republic of Ireland of EU-imposed austerity and the plunder of our national wealth, the stripping bare of our social provisions, should be a lesson to all, and a rallying call to all—to unite and mobilise.

Our housing crisis, our health crisis and the level of poverty and deprivation in Ireland are a direct result of the interests of global financial capital being allowed and facilitated by our government to trump the needs, well-being and rights of its own citizens.

Our weak and subservient national parliament, the Dáil, was no match for a neo-liberal federal EU, which was able to dictate



AS PART of its continuing efforts to build unity among left and progressive forces, between socialists and republicans, the Peadar O'Donnell Socialist Republican Forum called for a united commemoration to honour Theobald Wolfe Tone (1763–1798), the founder of Irish republicanism.

Tone developed his political strategy in the belief that Irish democracy and the sovereignty of the people could be achieved only by mobilising the "people of no property" and winning the unity of people of all the religious traditions in Ireland and replacing division with unity brought about by the struggle for national democracy, sovereignty, and freedom.

The call made by the Forum was answered by people from a cross-section of radical organisations as well as individuals. Despite the inclement weather, people came from Cos. Donegal, Antrim, Derry, Tyrone, Fermanagh, Armagh, Cavan, Monaghan, Meath, Dublin, Wicklow, Down, Kildare, Cork, and Galway. The CPI had a strong turn-out for the event.

The march from Sallins to Bodenstown, to the graveyard where Tone is buried, was led by a colour party, followed by the Forum banner bearing the slogan *Break the connection with imperialism.* The Thomas Clarke Memorial Band played a selection from

▲ *Top left* John Douglas *Top right* Trade unionist Laura Duggan reading poem by Thomas Davis in honour of Wolfe Tone
Middle left Frankie Quinn, 1916 Societies reading 1916 Proclamation
Middle right Eugene McCartan Communist Party of Ireland
Bottom left Mel Corry singing The International
Bottom right Tommy McKearney *Below* CPI contingent

that all banks were too big to fail and that Irish citizens would shoulder the burden of 40 per cent of all European bank debt, the result of which can be seen every night in the doorways of shops and the back lanes of Dublin, where thousands huddle for shelter and food, and in the cheap hotels and B&Bs where the growing numbers of homeless families are exiled to exist—out of sight and out of mind.

The phoney Brexit debate, whether in Belfast or Dublin, London or Brussels, takes no account of these homeless families or of those living in poverty; a hard border or a soft border is of little consequence to the oppressed or the marginalised. The Brexit debate will be decided within the capitalist, neo-liberal framework, which has no moral compass, as its only driving force is to protect capital and those who benefit from it.

But during the Brexit debate in the UK the narrative was often blatantly racist, fascist, and based on the notion of one race or religion being superior to another. The post-Brexit debate on this island has also often taken on a sectarian nature or indeed one of narrow nationalism. There is little or no consideration for those that the current political and economic construct has failed miserably. Too many are seeking to use the opportunity to further nationalist or sectarian interests, both here and in the UK.

In the absence of a socialist narrative and debate, the void is filled by rhetoric and division, by manoeuvring and cheap political tricks—all of which progress nothing, just deepen divisions.

Courting sectarianism, naked nationalism or supremacy of any kind is playing with the devil. As we have seen in the United States, Trump's pandering to the far right and fascists has given them oxygen and the confidence to emerge from the bowels of humanity. What happened in Charlottesville is a direct consequence of this appeasement of racism and white supremacists. We on this island also have had our fair share of Charlottesvilles, also fuelled by hatred and prejudice.

We must fight fascism wherever we find it; we must fight supremacy and sectarianism wherever we find them—be that in Ireland, the UK, Palestine, or the US.

A new Ireland is possible, an Ireland of equals, of opportunities for all, of fraternity—a United Socialist Republic—that of Tone and Connolly. In the words of Connolly, "We are Republicans because we are Socialists."

The Left and other progressive forces in Ireland need to unite around a clear Socialist Republican vision. We need to set out clearly what we are in favour of—just as much as what we are against. We do not have the luxury to dance on the pin heads of ideological differences.

In the UK, Corbyn was able to set out clearly the policy platform for a decent future, for a better society for all UK citizens. It was by no means radical: it spoke about a universal National Health Service, about nationalising public services, the right to a decent job, a decent home, dignity and respect.

We in Ireland on the left have not been good at this—rather we tend to divide, splinter, and attack each other rather than uniting to convince citizens of what is possible.

The mass mobilisation in the Republic of communities against water charges and the privatisation of water resources is an example of what is possible. Yes, it was about more than water charges—but water is a symbol of all life. The protests were about life, about hope, about a vision, about citizens collectively taking control and proclaiming that another Ireland is possible.

The Right2Change movement, which emerged from the water movement, attempted to bring left progressives to unite around agreed policy platforms. Over a hundred candidates in the last general election in the Republic supported the Right2Change policy platform, of which thirty-three were elected. There is an untapped hunger for change and justice in Ireland that we need to give expression to, and we can only do this through the unity of progressive forces.

The gross and pervasive inequalities that have so profoundly scarred our society are as much a result of our inability on the left to unite and to set out a clear alternative as with the political hegemony of the right, which ensures that nothing really changes and that the elite and capital are always protected.

Socialist dialogue and socialist struggle have been weak in Ireland. It was snuffed out in favour of a bourgeois nationalism.

Our task now is to build from the ground up, to educate, to agitate, not to do for those what they can do for themselves. We need to build a movement that is capable and confident and which grows with every victory—that's why it is vital that we complete the victory in the water campaign.

I believe this is possible. I believe there is a real thirst for change and justice. As capitalism sinks further into crisis it must be the revolutionary principles of liberty, equality and fraternity which emerge triumphant.

Finally, in the words of Wolfe Tone, "we will free ourselves by the aid of that large and respectable class of the community—the men of no property." ★

traditional airs and songs from the national independence struggle.

The commemoration was opened with greetings from Tommy McKearney on behalf of the Peadar O'Donnell Socialist Republican Forum, followed by a reading of the 1916 Proclamation by Frankie Quinn of the 1916 Societies. The poem "Tone's Grave," written by Thomas Davis in 1843, was read by Laura Duggan.

"The International" was then sung—possibly a first for Bodenstown—to show that internationalism was a central feature of what the United Irishmen stood for and what shaped their thinking.

A call was made for building support for the boycott of Israel and for greater solidarity with the working people of Venezuela, struggling to defend their social and economic gains from the counter-revolutionary forces sponsored by the United States, and for building solidarity with revolutionary and anti-imperialist Cuba. All these struggles are seen as part of the historical political legacy of Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen.

The chairperson of the proceedings, Eugene McCartan, introduced the guest speaker, John Douglas, general secretary of the trade union Mandate. In a wide-ranging oration he condemned the appalling housing and homelessness crisis now affecting every city and town in the Republic, and the continuing attacks on workers' rights, as well as the narrow nationalist approach taken by some in relation to Brexit, rather than a pro-worker and internationalist position.

The chairperson described one of the central positions of the Forum, that the political institutions imposed by the British state when it partitioned the country had clearly failed and especially had failed workers, north and south. Partition had led to a carnival of reaction, as James Connolly predicted, which blighted the lives of working people, north and south.

The United Wolfe Tone Commemoration is yet another important step in the efforts of the Peadar O'Donnell Socialist Republican Forum to draw progressive forces together. Local forums are being established that draw people together to discuss and debate the nature of imperialist domination and struggle, to find the way forward that can challenge and defeat the triple lock of imperialism on the Irish people—the lock of Britain, the United States, and the European Union.

The next event to be organised by the Forum is a political school to be held in Belfast in late September, bringing together socialists, republicans and communists in a weekend of political lectures and talks. ★

Forgotten anniversaries

Shane Quinn

SOME ANNIVERSARIES are widely observed in the West, including Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, Holocaust Memorial Day, and the atrocities in New York in September 2001. Yet there are other undesirable anniversaries that have largely been allowed to disappear.

1954: CIA terminates the ten-year Guatemalan Revolution

Guatemala, a small central American country, remains a ghastly nightmare to this day. The causes of its suffering can be traced to President Dwight Eisenhower implementing a CIA-run coup that installed successive military dictatorships.

Guatemala had been enjoying a ten-year revolution (1944–1954), firstly under Juan José Arévalo, who introduced a minimum wage and increased funds for education. Arévalo's democratically elected successor in 1951, Jacobo Árbenz, instituted land reforms to grant property to landless peasants.

Such inclusive measures were deemed an unacceptable threat to US hegemony over the western hemisphere. Árbenz's policies threatened the United Fruit Company, a powerful corporation that exploited Guatemalan workers, which had direct ties to Eisenhower's government through John Foster Dulles (secretary of state) and his brother Allen Dulles (director of the CIA). The company aggressively lobbied Eisenhower, who authorised the CIA to aid a force led by the impending right-wing dictator, Carlos Castillo Armas.

With the further threat of invasion by American forces, the Guatemalan army eventually refused to fight on—an error of historic proportions. Almost four decades of civil war followed, as successive US-backed dictators committed atrocities such as genocide against the Maya people.

1963: Juan Bosch toppled in the Dominican Republic

Interference by the United States in the Dominican Republic goes back to the governments of William Howard Taft and Woodrow Wilson in the early twentieth century. Wilson, for example, ordered the invasion of the country by US marines in 1916, who remained for more than six years—an occupation reviled by the Dominican population.

The democratic election of a socialist reformer, Juan Bosch, in February 1963, replacing a military junta, caused great concern in elite American circles. Their fears were quickly realised as Bosch undertook progressive steps that the Dominican population had never known before (or since), including plans to reduce poverty, declaring labour rights, strengthening unions, rights for farmers, and so on. Bosch was declared "a communist" by pro-US business magnates and members of the army. On 25 September 1963 a group of military commanders, led by Elías Wessin y Wessin, with crucial US support, expelled Bosch from the country.

1964: US-backed forces overthrow the government of Brazil

A left-wing nationalist, João Goulart, became the democratically elected president of Brazil in September 1961, setting alarm bells clattering within the liberal Kennedy government. Goulart began implementing structural reforms in the massive resource-rich South American country that would help integrate the general population in society. The United States was loath to sit helplessly by, as this movement came within "our hemisphere," as President Kennedy described it.

Goulart was hostile towards US capitalist democracy, which seeks to primarily serve elite powers. Shortly before his death Kennedy had been preparing the groundwork for ousting Goulart; the coup (31 March to 1 April) took place less than five months later under the reign of his successor, Lyndon Johnson. "We just can't take this one [social movement]," warned Johnson.

Goulart's toppling received crucial CIA funds and arms, while Brazil was placed under a neo-Nazi dictatorship that tortured its people for more than twenty years.

1976: Argentine government overthrown by US-backed forces

The Argentine coup of 1976 was the sixth, and final, forced government change in the country during the twentieth century. The US-backed Argentine armed forces installed the most vicious Latin American military dictatorship of all, responsible for tens of thousands of murdered and "disappeared," under convicted war criminals such as Jorge Rafael Videla and Reynaldo Bignone. Revealingly, the Nazi-style regime was a favourite of President Ronald Reagan.

The coup toppled Isabel Perón, the first female president in world history, wife and successor of the deceased president Juan Perón.

Henry Kissinger, the US secretary of state, met several Argentine military commanders, suggesting that they crush their enemies before human-rights issues became known to the American public. "We read about human rights problems, but not the context. The quicker you succeed the better," he said. So, not for the first time, Kissinger (winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace), was implicated in war crimes.

1983: US invasion of Grenada

The American invasion of the tiny Caribbean island of Grenada (under President Ronald Reagan) drew a scathing international response from the UN General Assembly. It "deeply deplores" the intervention, it said, which "constitutes a flagrant violation of international law." It further condemned "the deaths of innocent civilians . . . [and] the killing of the Prime Minister [Maurice Bishop]."

The intervention was even opposed by most NATO countries and US allies, including France, Portugal, Australia, Spain, and the Netherlands—all irrelevant criticism for elite Western figures that believe the United States should be a law unto itself.

The usual pretexts for the invasion of Grenada were put forward by the US government, and obediently relayed by the free press: Grenada was a "Marxist dictatorship," and the US army was on a "rescue mission" to defeat a Cuban military presence defending "this outpost of Soviet imperialism." The true reason for the attack? To expel a government not amenable to American hegemonic demands and that might act as a further example of defiance (after Cuba). The abysmal after-effects for Grenadians was quickly airbrushed from history. ★

Google censors the internet

Dónall Ó Briain

AMID ALL The hysteria about "fake news," as reported by the corporate and state media (i.e. the actual purveyors of fake news for the last century or more), a significant piece of news about Google, the giant near-monopoly internet corporation, slipped by unreported or, if reported, unexamined.

In September 2016 a consortium of news media and internet "social media," including the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post,* AFP (the French news agency), CNN, Google, Facebook, and Twitter, announced that they were launching a project to combat "fake news." The so-called social media immediately began suppressing access to news and commentary from left-wing and other radical sources.

On 25 April this year Google announced that it had revised its search algorithms—the complex formulas it uses to rank the results of web searches. It would also block access to offensive sites and at the same time promote those that have more "authoritative content."

Over the following three months a number of investigators tested the result. They found that a wide range of left-wing and radical web sites that actually have authoritative content were being visited significantly less often; for example:

- The Intercept (www.theintercept.com) dropped by 19 per cent
- Counterpunch (www.counterpunch.org) dropped by 21 per cent
- Wikileaks (www.wikileaks.org) dropped by 30 per cent
- Global Research (www.globalresearch.ca) dropped by 62 per cent

These are not random changes, nor can they possibly be accounted for by a genuine falling off of interest in those sites, but are the result of being offered less often by Google search results.

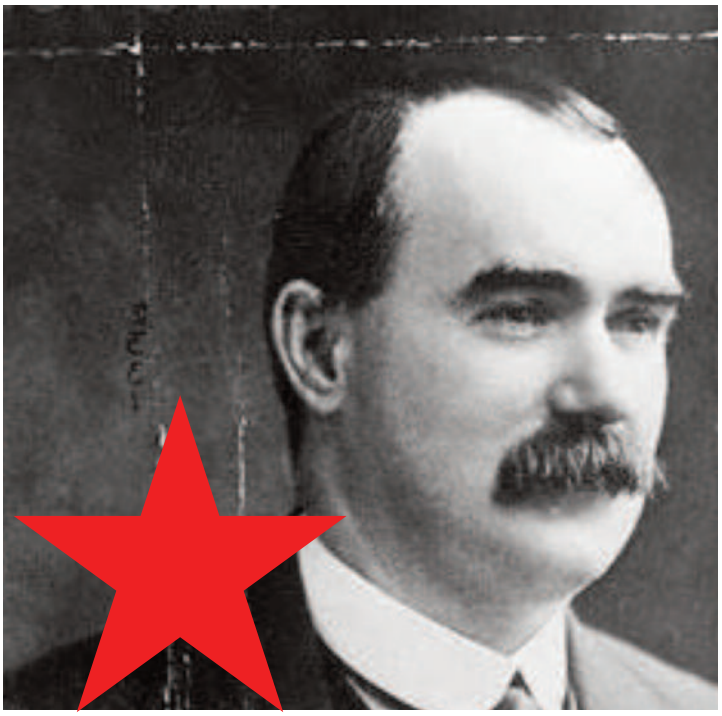
What can you do?

1 Make a direct link to reputable radical news sources and portals, rather than through the mediation of search engines, such as:

- *Morning Star* (www.morningstaronline.co.uk)
- The Intercept (www.theintercept.com)
- Counterpunch (www.counterpunch.org)
- Global Research (www.globalresearch.ca)
- Axis of Logic (www.axisoflogic.com)
- Corporate Watch (www.corporatewatch.org)
- Information Clearing House (www.informationclearinghouse.info)
- International Action Centre (www.iacenter.org)
- Climate and Capitalism (www.climateandcapitalism.com)

2 Use a different search engine, especially one of those that don't track your activity, such as Startpage or Ixquick, rather than Google.

3 Resist addiction to so-called social media; and be aware that everything you write and read on the internet is being tracked. ★



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A Catalan republic: fact or

Tomás Mac Síomóin

TO BE AN independent republic—or not? That choice will face voters if the referendum planned by the Catalan regional government for the 1st of October is allowed to take place by the Spanish government.

Most Irish republicans would probably support a Catalan break with Spain. "A free, independent republic" has a comfortably familiar ring to it. Closer inspection of the choice, however, may lead to another conclusion . . .

Protagonists of this confrontation are the Spanish State, ruled by the People's Party (PP)—associates of Fine Gael in the EU Parliament's Conservative Group—and the regional government of Catalunya. The latter is ruled by the neo-liberal Democratic Party of Catalunya (DPC), in coalition with the nominally socialist ERC (Republican Left of Catalunya).

The backdrop to this referendum is the present recession, which has fomented agitation throughout Spain. The PP responds with increased repression and restrictions on citizens' participation in the democratic process. In cahoots with Spain's "deep state," the country's major economic and financial powers, it controls Spain.

Their control over major communications media diverts a public with bullshit yarns about a fantasy Spain—such bunkum as the idea that Spain's economy led the economic recuperation of the euro zone!

Spain's industrial profits outstrip the EU average, but labour's share reaches the inequality levels of the worst years of the Franco dictatorship, establishing a record for the euro zone. Last year, 1 per cent of Spanish top earners owned a quarter of the wealth of Spain; 20 per cent of the poorest owned 0.1 per cent of it.

The diversion most touted by the Spanish media now is the conflict between the PP-ruled Spanish State and a Catalan majority that wants to modify—not break—its link with Spain. Both main protagonists, the PP and the DPC, are doctrinaire neo-liberal nationalist parties. Though separated by opposed loyalties, Spanish and Catalan, they co-operate in the Spanish parliament to support "labour reforms" that weaken trade unions, thus facilitating falling wages, decreasing full-time employment, and fiscal reforms that lead to the accumulation of megaprofits.

Major cuts in social expenditure (health, education, etc.) are grist to their mill. Both parties are immersed in major corruption cases that show these soul brothers to be two sides of the same coin.

Both use the national question to mobilise their supporters. Support for the PP is rooted in identification with "defence of the (always threatened) unity of Spain." Francoist political culture, touchstone of conservative Spaniards, denies the multinational nature of Spanish society. Thus Catalunya's "independista" government has replaced a defunct ETA as Spain's "necessary" bogeyman, national unity being best assured by some internal threat.

Mutatis mutandis, DPC ideologues identify Spain as the source of all Catalunya's ills. PP Spain was never popular in Catalunya; left-led forces there always espoused a plurinational vision of a socialist Spain, where nations decide their relations with Madrid—a vision at odds with the Spanish State's rigid centralist ideology.

Among the rights guaranteed by sovereignty is the right to secede from the centre. This guarantees a fraternal unity, unlike that imposed by the order that has historically dominated Spain.

"Sovereignty"—the right to decide—must not be confused with"secession" or "independence," two terms often conflated in Irish republican discourse. Sovereignty, not secessionism, is in the DNA of the Catalan left that has mainly governed Catalunya since Franco's death and fights continuing efforts of Spanish centralists to erode their country's sovereignty.

Most recently, the Catalan Autonomic Statute was

formulated by a tripartite left Catalan government, modified by the Catalan parliament but stripped by the Spanish Constitutional Court in 2006 of elements deemed essential by Catalans to express their sovereignty and identity. The ensuing anger sparked huge independence demonstrations, involving millions of citizens.

Scenting an electoral opportunity, the bourgeois CDC nationalists mutated overnight into full-blown independistas. These ideological forerunners of the present ruling DPC were thus enabled to form a coalition government with the also independista ERC in a government dedicated to the establishment of an independent Catalan republic.

Leopards can't hide their spots, however. DPC deputies in the Spanish parliament still support the present corrupt PP regime; they refused last June to vote for censure of the latter, so contributing to its permanence.

Such opportunist manoeuvring enables the DPC to hide its enormous corruption, ignored by complicit Catalan media. Like the Spanish PP, the DPC steals vast sums of public money for personal and organisational benefit. Protesters against this scandal are lambasted by the Catalan political and media establishment as traitors, anti-Catalans, turncoats etc. and denied the levels of media access of their accusers.

Credible referendums engage a plurality of media that give access to all options to be decided. Access to the Catalan media, however, is controlled by a DPC-controlled Generalitat (autonomous government) that only permits expression of its own secessionist stance. The voice of left "soberanistas," a major political force in Catalunya, is silenced; and demands for the democratic right to decide are presented by hostile Spanish media and politicians simply as demands for secession.

The DPC presents independence as the only solution to the province's enormous social problem. Catalunya "boasts" the highest infantile poverty rate of any EU-15 country, and the highest levels of job precariousness and social spending cuts, all results of implementing DPC policies. Similar cuts are supported in the Spanish parliament by DPC deputies, who simultaneously call for an independent Catalunya.

Cuts in social expenditure in Catalunya, exceeding those of most of Spain's other autonomous regions, warn working people of the danger posed to their interests by the present "independista" rulers of Catalunya.

The ERC—the DPC's partners in the present Catalan government—must no longer allow the independence issue to put its social agenda on the back burner. Collaboration with emerging Catalan and Spanish progressive forces that demand a redefinition of Spain and full acceptance of plurinationalism is the left way forward. Alliance with such forces accords more with the ERC's socialist ideals than playing second fiddle to a DPC whose goal is a neo-liberal Catalan republic underpinned by a subservient Catalan working class.

Such a leftist coalition offers the only realistic option: a sovereign socialist Catalunya. ★

Cuba educates medical students from around the world

From Cuban News Agency

UNDER FIDEL Castro's direction, Cuba has become a "medical superpower," setting new standards for global solidarity in the interests of human health.

The Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) in Havana, founded in 1999, has trained more than 28,500 doctors from 103 countries, free of charge, including medical students from the United States since 1999. So far, 170 doctors from the United States have graduated through the project.

Dr David Floyd, a graduate of the class of 2016/17 who studied in Cuba for seven years, thanked the Cuban leadership, the Cuban people, the teachers and workers of this noble project, an example of integration between peoples for a more humane world. "For me it has been a wonderful experience. I am impressed by the link between study and work, unlike training in the United States and other countries."

Dr Floyd finished his curriculum at the Salvador Allende Faculty of the University of Medical Sciences of Havana, an institution from which 52 foreign doctors have graduated, 25 of them from the United States.

David Floyd, father of the recently graduated doctor, conveyed his eternal gratitude and said he was very impressed, pleased and honoured because his son is a doctor trained in Cuba under ethical and moral principles, with a humanist conception.

At present the ELAM project has an enrolment of 4,969 students from 112 countries in the twenty-one faculties of the country's medical science universities, of whom 83 are from the United States. ★

Human righ

Graham Harrington

LIU XIAOBO, a winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace for his opposition to the Chinese state, died on 17 July 2017.

Since his death, Western media have been publishing the usual laudatory obituaries given to those "human rights activists" who, coincidentally, have views aligning with imperialist foreign policy.

The *Irish Times* wrote on 19 July: "With Liu's death, a light goes out. But in the hearts of human rights defenders and those standing against oppression across the world, his spirit will live on." This is the typical waffle written about those who stand against anti-Western states.

Of course there is nothing concrete or political in such a statement. One would think that in an obituary for a political activist something related to their political positions would be at least mentioned. Perhaps this is intentional.

In his article "Lessons from the Cold War" in the *Guardian* (London), 15 December 2010, Liu wrote that "the free world led by the US fought almost all

A fitting account of a great communist

Eoin McDonnell

THE PLAY *Jimmy's Hall*, running at the Abbey Theatre, is said to be adapted from Paul Laverty's film script of the same name, directed by Ken Loach.

When the film was first mooted it sent a scurry of excitement around certain sections of the left, and in particular the CPI, as Jimmy was one of our own and his story was well known to our members, past and present. Indeed one of the main people keeping the name and story alive is Cllr Declan Bree of Sligo, a former member of the Connolly Youth Movement.

So when Ken Loach

hts advocate or anti-democratic agent?

regimes that trampled on human rights . . . The major wars that the US became involved in are all ethically defensible."

Evidently, for this human rights advocate, the destruction by the United States of Korea and Viet Nam were defensible. The bombs dropped on those countries, and the use of chemical weapons, massacres, extra-judicial murder and support for dictators such as Pinochet didn't violate human rights. Neither, according to Liu, did the invasion of Grenada, or the murder of almost a million members of the Communist Party and other leftists in Indonesia in 1965.

Liu also extended his support for the US-led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. And he placed blame on the Palestinian people, excusing Israel from its occupation of Palestinian land and its murder of Palestinian children in its neo-apartheid state.

Liu called for the Westernisation of China, and the privatisation of all enterprises and land. The human rights of the people of China—the right to housing, employment, collective bargaining, social security—must come second to the right to private property and profit. Of course this is the precise reason he is lauded in the West, and why he received payment from the National Endowment for Democracy, an agency of the US government. In this he is following in a long line of anti-communist activists who have held far-right and anti-democratic views.

One similar example, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, was lauded in the West for his opposition to the Soviet state—another "human rights activist" who supported the fascist dictator Franco in Spain, supported American wars abroad, disliked Jewish people, and defended European colonialism in Africa and elsewhere. He was also awarded a Nobel Prize.

Most people in Ireland and elsewhere would never have heard of Liu Xiaobo until his death. Most obituaries in the English-speaking world were completely uncritical. Compare the reception given to Liu and that of Fidel Castro when he died. Castro led a country through a revolution that overthrew a dictator, achieving the world's best health system, educating doctors from other Third World countries free of charge. Cuba could not do this without the mass participation of its people, organised in the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution and the local democratic assemblies.

Cuba has never invaded another country; no-one in Cuba starves, or is left waiting on a hospital waiting list, or is left without a home. This is true democracy—and all this in spite of the US blockade and decades of terrorists acting with impunity.

Fidel Castro did not receive the same treatment by journalists and "human rights organisations," such as Amnesty International. But there is a pattern to this. Similar non-critical treatment is given to the "White Helmets" in Syria—again recipients of the Nobel Prize for Peace—despite their links to terrorist groups such as Al-Nusra; or the Venezuelan opposition, who have burned pro-government people alive; or the Maidan protesters in Ukraine, whose ranks were filled with open Neo-Nazis; or the Contras in Nicaragua . . . The list goes on.

China is being vilified not because of any supposed democratic deficiencies but because of its role as a counter to US hegemony. China has the world's second-largest economy and the largest in the BRICS countries, which represent a challenge for a declining US empire. China is investing heavily in Africa, a major region for US imperialist interests, as well as France and Britain. One of the main US drone bases is in Djibouti in east Africa.

China is providing billions in credit for building up infrastructure and industry, as well as providing capital and loans at low interest. It is also worth noting that China's banking system is all state-owned.

These are the reasons for US imperialism setting its sights on China. The fêting of dissidents such as Liu Xiaobo is a tactic of "soft" imperialism, as compared with the "hard" imperialist tactics such as the deploying of US naval power in the South China Sea under the so-called "Pivot to Asia," as well as the militarisation of Japan.

To accomplish these goals, US imperialism—like all other imperialist powers—will seek to use the propaganda effort as much as possible. Up will become down, black become white; and people like Liu Xiaobo—right-wing agitators—will become peaceful, democratic activists. ★

produced his version we went along in anticipation that the real issues would not be dodged, and to a large extent we were not disappointed (though personally I was a little disappointed: the context was not fully explained; read on and it will become clear why).

So we now have a singing and dancing version. Alarm bells are ringing loudly in my head; worse, the previews and the Abbey's own description of the play are back to the old narrative of "he just wanted people to dance and sing and be free." Connolly wept!

After deciding I was not going to subject myself to this nonsense, a family member went and got me a ticket. So I had another look.

The cast were good: Bosco Hogan, Dónal O'Kelly, Lisa Lambe, Aindrias de Staic (of the "No Privatisation" song). At least the show will look and sound good. But I was still very sceptical about what the content would be.

Well, I have to say I was pleasantly surprised. Not only was the C word used but the context of it (it was early 1930s Ireland) and the events were exposed fully and in the right context.

Jimmy Gralton was a communist who had returned to his native Co. Leitrim after spending time in the United States. Not only did he bring back the latest jazz records and dance crazes but he also had a deep, burning passion for the new system being built in the Soviet Union, and was more than aware that fascism was on the rise in Europe. He taught the local youth and poor not only to dance and sing but to think for themselves, to identify their class needs and to act on them.

Needless to say, it didn't take long for the Church in particular to notice; and here is where the play differs—for the better—from the film. The control the Church had over the government and its policies is laid out precisely, especially over de Valera, shown in the pressure they put on Dev to act, and the fact that they could get a crowd of over two thousand to burn down Connolly House during the Eucharistic Congress, luckily without the loss of life.

The play pulled no punches in showing how the link between the Blueshirts and the Church had the final say in Jimmy's departure, and also in settling local land disputes (in favour of the landlords, of course). Altogether, the play described what was the expulsion of a very popular communist from Co. Leitrim and Ireland in a most unusual and unashamed way.

My fear that the producers would "dumb down" the facts of the case were unfounded—not that Loach's film did either, but I can't understand the clarity in one that is missing from the other, and with the same scriptwriter.

The play begins with some of the speech of Michael D at the unveiling of a marker on the site of the hall, and ends with an account of the laws passed after they got rid of Jimmy: no holding of dances in halls without a licence, and the fact that the Church then decided to set up parochial halls in every parish in Ireland and apply for the dancing licence. (So for all you old-timers out there who danced in a parochial hall, you have Jimmy Gralton to thank.)

I am not a regular theatregoer (as you may have guessed); but the acting, the dancing and above all the stage set were breathtaking and well worth the ticket price.★

POETRY

Bratacha éagsúla

GABRIEL ROSENSTOCK introduces and translates another poem from the Indian subcontinent. Attoor Ravivarma (or Attur Ravi Varma) writes in Malayalam, the language of Kerala, spoken by about 20 million people.

Among Indian states, Kerala had the first democratically elected communist government, and over the years Keralans vote either the Congress Party or the Communist Party into office. Ravivarma's poem was translated from Malayalam into English by K. Satchidanandan, poet, critic and activist of world renown.

Ginealach

Thaitin an Union Jack
go mór le daideo
na stríoca is na cearnóga:
oifigeach sráidbhaile ab ea é.
D'ardaigh daid an trídhathach.
Trodaí ar son na saoirse ab ea é.
Ardaímse bratach dhearg san aer.
I lámha mo gharmhic
tá bratach Yaincí
lena leathchéad réalta

The imperialist world order

Eoghan O'Neill

No sound, sight nor smell do we encounter
Away from the lands where they bring man's thunder
Propaganda, intervention, mercenary spies
Where indiscriminate carnage falls from above
Humanity despairs as the West spreads lies
Wrapped in white helmets and perfect white doves
All to uphold the imperialist world order,
They are the real terrorists
Those makers of guns

Raging inferno the tower's dark sparks
The numbers now not breathing kept under wraps
Value is exchanged and profit is extracted
Life had a price, not willing to be vacated
Crocodile tears hiding the deathly smiles,
of a political class whose policies brought coffins
All to uphold the imperialist world order,
They are the real terrorists
The billionaire allies

Deception, corruption, mistrust and confusion
Pulpits and printers, keyboards and anchors
Hymn sheets in order, the drumbeats sound first
Now news feeds and false reels like minions disperse
To quench the unquenchable bloodsuckers' thirst
And all to uphold the imperialist world order,
They are the real terrorists
The corporate media tycoons

But wait
Just wait
Something's a foul
The orchestra is playing, but I don't hear a sound
There's no wind in the brass
And no strings for the bows
Yet the orchestra is in motion, fooling people in droves
This is a real trick, a sinister ploy
Of the ruling elite and their lackey allies
All to uphold the imperialist world order,
They are the real terrorists
The billionaire guys

The man in the van

Paul Doran

The man in the van, or is it the men in the van?
They seek destruction, drive, drive, drive, kill, kill, kill.
It doesn't matter who you are, Christian, Catholic, Muslim, Jew, dissenter or non-believer, they just don't care,
Drive, drive, drive, kill, kill, kill
We enjoy our day walking along Las Ramblas,
Holding hands, kissing, loving
Drive, drive, drive, kill, kill, kill
The killers in the van.

But who talks about the killers in the drones?
anonymous, flying the skies, killing thousands.

Join the fight for socialism

Send me information on Communist Party membership

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