

# Socialist Voice



**Communist Party of Ireland**  
**Páirtí Cumannach na hÉireann**  
**Partisan Patriotic Internationalist**

Number 183 May 2020 €1.50  
www.commmunistpartyofireland.ie

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## Irish workers cannot afford this coalition

Tommy McKearney and Eugene McCartan  
on the dangers of a ruling class fit-up



“The government shouldn’t step in to bail [British Airways] out. They should let them go bust.”—**Richard Branson**, entrepreneur and apostle of private enterprise, 22 June 2009

“We will do everything we can to keep the airline going—but we will need government support to achieve that . . .”—**Richard Branson**, CEO of Virgin Atlantic, 20 April 2020

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**Socialist Voice**

43 East Essex Street Dublin  
D02 XH96 (01) 6708707

ISSN 0791-5217



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May Day greetings from the  
Communist Party of Ireland

## A 'Government of the willing' will hammer workers

EUGENE McCARTAN

THE EFFORTS to form a "government of the willing" following the general election earlier this year rumble on. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have had to pretend to dance and engage in a courting ritual to give the impression that there are significant ideological and political differences between them, thereby requiring such a long period to produce a draft programme for government. Fianna Fáil are desperate to get into government at any cost in order to re-establish a presence in urban areas. But what drives the state and these two main parties of the establishment is the need to thwart the desire of working people for real, meaningful change, as reflected in the outcome of the general election. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael are hoping to gather enough support and the necessary numbers from the deeply opportunist smaller parties and independents.

The backdrop to government formation has been the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and the almost total shut-down of the economy in order to control its spread. The government suddenly found tens of millions to boost the public health system after a decade of starving it of resources and the priority given to private health over public welfare by all the main parties, now dancing round the draft programme.

The programme presented by Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael now being hawked around Dáil Éireann by both parties and being "carefully" fine-combed by the Labour Party, Social Democrats, Green Party and a motley crew of independents is full of pious aspirations regarding public health and public housing, but the sting in the tail is the imposition of the "cost-rental model" of housing, a policy first promoted and campaigned for by opportunist forces on the left. The provision of homes for the people will still take second place to private builders and speculators and the banks. The landlords, both native and international, will still lord it over their tenants in overcrowded houses and apartments.

For a decade they have been telling

working people there is no money for public services or public housing; now they have found millions to prop up large and small businesses, to secure the interests of capital.

This "government of the willing" will have to have the necessary Dáil strength to impose future austerity and to make workers pay the coronavirus bill and pay for the growing global crisis of the system.

While the needs of the people for housing and health are cloaked in honeyed words, there is no ambiguity when they state categorically their firm loyalty and fealty to the EU, which includes a serious commitment to PESCO and the continued use of Shannon Airport by the US war forces. They are planning a lavish celebration to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Irish state joining the EEC, or the EU, as it is now called. They are cleverly exploiting the crass opportunism of leading figures within the Labour Party, Green Party, and Social Democrats.

No doubt in the murky corridors of Leinster House, in the Department of Finance and the board rooms of banks and big business they have already got

## Workers cannot afford this new coalition

TOMMY MCKEARNEY

SO FIANNA FÁIL and the Blueshirts are now an item. Having recognised their obvious compatibility, they have agreed to move in together.

Talk of an end to Civil War politics is simply guff. Whatever ideological differences there were ended decades ago. Existing rivalry was competition between similar organisations. More Tesco vying with Supervalu for market share than Free Staters battling dedicated republicans.

Now in coalition, their priorities will remain unchanged. They will fight fiercely to maintain capitalism, with all its essential features, regardless of the cost to a majority of citizens.

Having suffered a fright at the general election, they will want to be

seen addressing issues that alienated them from many voters. We recently had sight of the policy framework document agreed upon by the two parties' TDs. It provides us with a master class in weaseldom. Ostensibly designed to deal with society's difficulties, the draft is written in language affording the new coalition ample space for evasion, prevarication, and devious redirection.

What is meant, for example, by "acknowledging the importance of carers"—a round of applause in the Dáil, perhaps? How much creative ambiguity went into "working towards a consensus on a united island," or "progress towards a living wage"?

One promise they will keep is to support further EU enlargement and integration. This will be, as Varadkar told RTE, to retain the confidence of the financial markets so that we can pay our debts. Bear in mind that the FG-FF axis intends to deal with the economic crisis by borrowing abroad rather than changing systemic failings.



their plans laid out for who should pay the covid-19 bill and for the emerging economic crisis—which was emerging before the pandemic dealt a severe blow to a faltering global capitalist economy.

They will be making sure that Irish workers are going to pay the price for rescuing the system. The public debt can only grow, and there is little sign that our gallant allies in the EU, who control the euro zone, are going to bail them out and socialise national debts in all the member-states.

At the same time we have the leaders of SIPTU and Fórsa making public overtures to any potential government, particularly one in which Fianna Fáil has a significant say. They are making it clear that they are more than willing to enter into a new “social partnership” relationship with any government that is formed except one of the left.

The leading figures in both unions, writing in the *Irish Times* in mid-April, made it clear that they have no interest in any alternative economic strategy. Their dismissal of “untested alternatives” is a not-so-subtle attack not only on the left parties in the Dáil but on the tens of

Needless to say, the intention is that the country’s citizens will bear the cost of borrowing.

All this is entirely predictable. Equally predictable is the response—or, more accurately, the endorsement—of the mainstream media and the establishment. Expect a sickening deluge of fatuous talk about political responsibility and of high-minded politicians demonstrating leadership in the national interest.

The severity of the economic downturn resulting from covid-19 will be greater than anything since the 1930s. Predictions of 20 per cent unemployment in the midst of a global depression will demand extraordinary measures by any standard. Amid hand-wringing and Churchillian rhetoric, we’ll be told that the coalition will be forced “reluctantly” to take “difficult” economic decisions. In a nutshell, it will be Austerity, here we go again.

Unless something is done to force a change of course, workers are facing at least five years of extreme hardship.

thousands of working people who are demanding fundamental change.

The leadership of the ICTU see their role as showing to any future government that they can manage, control and reduce the expectations of workers—not to defend and advance their interests. They are willing to co-operate with any new government that will impose and implement policies that have already been an abysmal failure—policies that have caused great hardship to their own members and to the working class across the board.

Their strategy further exposes the complete bankruptcy of their thinking and their abysmal lack of ambition for and leadership to the working class. They are more than willing to have things return to “normal,” where those who have wealth and thereby political power will retain that wealth and power. They will be happy to have more “social partnership” austerity, willing to throw the interests of workers—particularly the hundreds of thousands of low-paid workers—under the bus to keep the system afloat, making workers pay for the spiralling government debt. They want austerity with a human face.

Cut-backs in public-service and welfare safety nets, more low-wage jobs and high unemployment, along with the inevitability of our young people emigrating, will result in an enfeebled working class.

Organised labour and the left has a choice. We can passively acquiesce in this process, or we can resist. If the latter—and it should be—the question is, How?

From the outset it is important to recognise the limitations of the parliamentary process. It is not pandering to anarchism to remind ourselves of the lesson taught by Lenin and Connolly. Bourgeois parliaments exist to maintain the rule of the bourgeoisie. Consequently there is the crucial task of effectively countering the tendentious, self-serving right-wing narrative being spun by the propagandists for the powerful and wealthy.

To effect these first steps and move on to building a popular mass movement capable of frustrating the

**But there can be no return to the establishment’s “normal.” Their normal is our hell.**

The future is built by our actions today. Our class can no longer accept third-best. We have had enough of standing in the queues that grow longer by the day, hoping for a proper health service, for a roof over our heads, safe and caring facilities for the elderly members of our community, a warm and educational experience in properly funded creches for our children, owned and run by the state.

If we want a decent society, a better life for our families and communities, then we have to move beyond believing and waiting for establishment politicians, and the parties and institutions they have created to control us, to solve our problems. Those institutions were designed and are structured to narrow our aspirations to what they believe we deserve.

Working people have to take ownership of their own future, organise to fight for a world controlled by them and not by the elite. We need to take the future into our own hands and not accept what they wish to give us. ★

coalition’s neo-liberal agenda requires more than worthy resolutions. It is important that everywhere there are viable grass-roots structures to facilitate analysis, discussion, education, and organisation.

The Peadar O’Donnell Socialist Republican Forum has issued a call to all progressives to co-operate in building local and regional assemblies, or *Dálaí na nDaoine*. Two such bodies already exist but should be replicated nationally. The Forum is not controlled by any party, and, rejecting political sectarianism, it welcomes other progressives and trade unionists to join in this initiative to promote a socialist alternative.

We must be active in this, because, in the words of an American comrade, “what is needed today is a radical solution to radical, unrivalled problems.” The FF-FG coalition will offer a radical solution, but it will be of the ultra-neoliberal variety, and that is something working people simply cannot afford. ★

# COVID-19 CRISIS

## Senior citizens abandoned



JIMMY DORAN

**C**COVID-19 did not cause the crisis in our two-tier, two-jurisdiction health service. It did, however, expose the utter failure of it.

In the South we have the longest hospital waiting times in the EU. The national health service in the North is the worst-performing region of the once-mighty NHS, having been run down, under-funded, outsourced and privatised little by little for over thirty years by both the Tories and the Labour Party and facilitated by the Northern Executive since its inception.

Despite some rumblings about the Cheltenham racing going ahead in Britain and the unhindered influx of thousands of tourists to Ireland for the cancelled St Patrick's Day parade and the Ireland v. Italy soccer match, criticism has been muted. A consensus has been arrived at by the media and trade unions that government strategy is now working, that we are all in this together.

This could not be further from the truth.

The priority in the fight against the pandemic is to flatten the curve in the community in order to delay the spread of infections. This would avoid a surge that could overwhelm the health service, leading to many unnecessary deaths.

This priority has ignored the fact that older people are those most at risk, and those living in nursing homes in close proximity to each other are at extreme risk.

It's not as if there were not ample warnings long beforehand. Willie Quigley of Unite has been screaming for proper PPE for his members in the health service for weeks.

To quote Prof. John Crown: "Did I just hear HIQA are now on April 18th sending teams into nursing homes to assess readiness for COVID? This would be 6 weeks after the nursing homes—recognising the potential for disaster—unilaterally and despite government opposition closed to visitors."

## Union leaders need to pick a side

BRENDAN PHELAN

**U**NION LEADERS should be socially and morally distancing their unions and the movement from any deluded notion of returning to social partnership in any of its bastardised forms. "Social partnership" should really be deadlier than a Star Trek extra beamed down with Captain Kirk.

Unfortunately, the mood music emanating from some union leaders over recent weeks reeks with the stink of social dialogue and partnership. A post-covid reincarnation of social partnership will certainly not be in the best interests of the working class, and, despite what some union leaders would have us believe, neither is it in any way comparable to the "bulldog fighting spirit" of the post-war era. The biggest and nastiest war being waged at this point in history is class war, and our union leaders need to pick a side to fight alongside.

Back in 2010 the then general president of SIPTU, Jack O'Connor, argued stoically, but wrongly, that the Labour Party needed to join forces in unholy coalition with Fine Gael in order

to help ameliorate the excesses of their future right-wing colleagues in government. Perhaps it could be argued that it was initially a reasonably laudable position that was subsequently blasted to smithereens when the Labour ministerial mudguard attacked their portfolios with all the gusto of an austerity junkie seeking that last sweet hit of austerity before the power dwindled away.

Labour Party ministers seemingly cared little for the damage their austerity was causing to the very people who elected them to protect their interests. Power within capitalism corrupts, and those Labour chihuahuas with rottweiler tendencies, in the paraphrased words of the inimitable Father Fintan Stack of *Father Ted* fame, "had their fun, and that's all that matters."

There is nothing new about union leaders courting power and chasing a seat at the big boys' table while cautioning members about the "tough times ahead" and the "need to be reasonable in our demands." It is no coincidence that the number of days lost to industrial action over the period of

There can be no going back to “normal,” as this political failure has been exposed for all to see. The ruling class must be held to account for all these unnecessary deaths of our senior citizens,

	Date	Number of deaths linked to covid-19	Deaths of care home residents linked to covid-19	Deaths of care-home residents as proportion of total
France	15 April 2020	17,167	8,479	
Belgium	16 April 2020	4,857	2,387	49%
Canada	14 April 2020	903	511	49%
Ireland*	13 April 2020	444	245	57%
Norway	16 April 2020	136	87	55%
Australia	16 April 2020	63	9	64%
Singapore	16 April 2020	10	2	14%
				20%

\*NB: The figures for “Ireland” are for the 26 Counties only.

As a result, 55 per cent of deaths from covid-19 are of residents of nursing homes, who make up only 0.5 per cent of the general population.

Why were nursing homes not a priority? Are old people a burden or an asset to the capitalist state? Was this an oversight, an accident, negligence, a lack of empathy—or a policy?

If the answer to this question is Yes, one could presume that these rates would be unique to Ireland. So let’s look at the data made available to the International Long-Term Care Policy Network. These figures, for the middle of April, are all that were made available; they have risen substantially since then (in Ireland’s case to 59 per cent).

On 22 April a 61 per cent increase in care-home infections in the previous two days was announced, with 1,944 residents now infected.

Fine Gael have always liked to class themselves as pro-business and pro-EU; it appears they are not so pro-senior citizen. “We will make Ireland the best little country in the world to do business in,” Enda Kenny gloated on becoming taoiseach.

What are the needs of business? Old people, or people to

social partnership declined dramatically, and with it the threat of last resort, a strike, which unions and workers always need in order to secure advances against the capitalist class.

The ten richest people in Ireland have continuously increased their wealth from 2010, from €21.6 billion to €53 billion. This is part of the reason why people want, and recently voted for, change. Even a mere €20 billion of that fortune would greatly help transform our devastated public services.

A cursory glance at the top 100 “rich list” printed recently in the *Irish Independent* promotes the common narrative that Ireland’s wealth is in property. However, 83 per cent of the richest people in Ireland have wealth built up in various other sectors. We are continually fed the falsehood that buying your own house means you are part of that wealthy elite, while only a mere 17 per cent of the richest people in our country are property moguls. The next-biggest group is in industry, followed by finance, technology, retail, and transport. In 2019, 95 per cent of new apartments were bought by investment funds.

Ireland is world-renowned as the mystical land of myths and legend, but nowhere is this more accurate than when it comes to class. We need unions to put the class interest of workers at

operate the machines, to create the profits?

Kenny, on his plan for the health service: “I will end the scandal of people waiting on trolleys in our hospitals.” The first week of January 2020, just before the outbreak of covid-19, was the worst on record, according to the Irish Nurses’ and Midwives’ Organisation, with 3,143 people waiting on a hospital bed.

Covid-19 did not cause the crisis in health: it did expose it, and the failure of Fine Gael, along with successive Fianna Fáil governments, to give priority to our people over business.

The failure of the partition of Ireland has also been exposed by the two health strategies. The British strategy of “herd immunity,” to preserve profits and protect business, was reckless to the point of criminal. As a direct result there is a higher rate of infection in the border counties when compared with similar counties further south.

At present in the North they only register covid-19 deaths that occur in hospital. As a result, we don’t know the total number of deaths in care homes for Ireland. Old people who die in care homes in the North don’t count, it seems.

There can be no going back to “normal,” as this political failure has been exposed for all to see. The ruling class must be held to account for all these unnecessary deaths of our senior citizens, who account for 450 out of the total of 769 covid-19 deaths in the South at the time of writing. This is not an isolated outbreak: this is affecting the majority of care homes. It is no accident. The figures speak for themselves.

The trade union movement, as the largest working-class organisation, must hold the line against austerity and cuts. It must lead the fight for a fully funded all-Ireland public health service, to cover all our people’s needs, from the cradle to the grave. ★

the epicentre of their very reason for existing. Engaging in social dialogue and partnership might seem important to some, but it meekly and subserviently helps to prop up the right-wing status quo and bury the need for radicalism and activism in the left-wing dustbin of history.

Ireland really is the best little country to do business in. However, what we must understand is that it’s not important which political party or parties implement the policies that have such an adverse impact on our class. There is really no point in insisting that another political party would do it differently. They might reallocate priorities and be less austerity-driven, but the reality is that the system we live our lives under cannot be tweaked.

Coronavirus is a warning, and we should pay heed to its stark message for all society: capitalism is unsustainable. We urgently need a new political and economic system that puts life above money and profit. System change that places human life and all other forms of life above the profit-seeking motives of billionaires and millionaires is much more important than government change and infinitely more progressive for our class than another go at the senseless merry-go-round called social partnership. ★

# REVOLUTION



## When's the revolution coming?

SEÁN Ó MAOLTUILE

**T**HIS QUESTION is often posed to those who even dare suggest the possibility of a socialist future.

In today's marketised business world we've been conditioned into nihilism, a belief in Man's inherent evil, and to expect nothing more than what we get; it's essentially Christianity without Heaven at the end. "Socialism" and "revolution" are merely idealistic dreams from the past. But the cynics do ask a fair question: When will the working class take ownership of the state and society?

As the Bolsheviks realised in 1917, we live in the era of imperialism and socialist revolution—these two phenomena being intimately intertwined. For over a century the question of a workers' revolution has not ceased to be of immediate, practical importance to all those oppressed and exploited around the globe.

The essential features of modern imperialism—or monopoly capitalism—have remained the same: the carving up of the global economy among great powers, each striving for greater influence in order to ensure maximum control of profitable assets, resources,

and markets. In open struggle or in wary alliance, the imperialist powers play upon our world like a chessboard.

But humans are far more erratic than mere pawns; and even as the preferred global order of one power is ever upset by the strivings of another, the class struggle from below throws it into further disarray. Within these contradictions of imperialism, revolution arises.

Three thunderous revolutions took place in the Russian Empire as it crumbled before two rising empires. The democratic revolution of 1905 erupted amid a failed war against imperial Japan, and the revolutions of 1917 blossomed from the misery and destruction inflicted on the empire and its peoples by the might of Germany. The German police even allowed Lenin to travel to Russia in 1917, believing his agitation would undermine the Russian war effort.

It certainly did. But, as Engels noted, "Each victory . . . in the first place brings about the results we expected, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects." Lenin would lead an international revolutionary wave that not only brought down the Russian Empire but would inspire the German working class to end the war

## The old world is dying

GRAHAM HARRINGTON

**W**HATEVER WAY one looks at it, the reality is that this crisis, and its four forms—environmental, health, economic, and political—will prove to be worse than 2008. The fact that China's economy has slowed down, for the first time in decades, only shows that this crisis will be a global affair, rather than a Western financial crisis, as happened in 2008. The 2020 crash will be a crisis of capitalism, of the system as a whole.

The Great Recession of 2008 was

not, of course, confined to the Western financial markets, and countries in the Global South were also hit by the financial crash, and suffered, thanks to a reduction in exports to the West; but they still saw growth. China, for example, spent billions on infrastructure, using its built-up cash reserves. The Chinese currency, the renminbi, wasn't an international trading currency, like the dollar or euro. The Chinese managed to keep their growth rate going during the same time that the euro zone was coming apart.

What makes this crisis different, though, is that it's more global, rather than being a crisis in the Western economies primarily. Modern imperialism has relied on production in countries such as Bangladesh, India, and China. The profits from this production overwhelmingly go back to the imperialist core, a process of super-exploitation of the workers in the Global South.

This has meant that the economy in the United States is 80 per cent focused on the services industry. This industry is reliant on the import of cheap commodities—such as coffee and T-shirts—from the Global South, essentially the super-exploited workers in these countries subsidising the higher wages of the exploited workers in the imperialist core, where labour costs are higher.

The services industry was already in trouble before the covid-19 pandemic. Small businesses in the United States and elsewhere were already in terminal decline, and the total level of debt in the West was increasing, in effect leading to the further concentration of capital, proving the wisdom of the saying that "one capitalist kills many."

The fact that China's economy has faced its first slow-down in decades does not bode well for the already struggling industries that are dependent on production in the Global

## Amid the covid-19 crisis, relations are fraying throughout the European Union, a core imperialist bloc. The alliance is unravelling, growing more militaristic and parasitic in its death throes.

themselves and overthrow their own monarch.

In attempting to assess the global fault-lines of imperialism we must reject conspiracy-theorising. The global capitalist class are not a monolith, and as they struggle among themselves the working class must rise. During the Second World War, Japanese imperialism overstretched itself, allowing, in the midst of its defeat, national liberation and socialism to take root in China, Korea, and Viet Nam. These revolutionaries paid close attention to the contradictions of global imperialism in order to understand their own national or local situation.

Some Vietnamese revolutionaries were too eager to launch a general uprising on hearing that the Red Army had taken Berlin. Ho Chi Minh, the communist party's leader, cautioned that if the revolution was to be successful not only must the people be ready and willing to seize power but "the enemy must be in an untenable position." This condition arose with the surrender of Japan a couple of months later.

In recent times an extended period of Western imperialist unity has greatly undermined the possibility of pushing

through a revolution of the oppressed. But, as Mao said, "the unity of opposites is conditional, temporary and transitory . . . whereas the struggle of opposites is absolute." With the rate of profit tending towards nil, monopoly capitalists are becoming less satisfied with their share of the pie and are growing restless. China, pulling itself out of poverty to become a global power, and investing its wealth in the global south, is severely undermining the material basis of Western imperialism. In response, the Western powers have renewed their propaganda campaign against China with greater vigour than ever.

Amid the covid-19 crisis, relations are fraying throughout the European Union, a core imperialist bloc. The alliance is unravelling, growing more militaristic and parasitic in its death throes.

The crisis of the United States is plain to see: it is an empire in decay, intensifying hostilities against Venezuela, Iran, China and North Korea in its desperation for monopoly control.

These days are looking less like the end of history and more like 1914 or 1939. This unprecedented global crisis will leave us in a world utterly changed.

All that once appeared solid will have melted, and that which rises anew will be ours to shape. Short of defeating their anti-imperialist enemies, there is nowhere for the capitalist powers to expand; they are consuming themselves in their fury.

As Irish capitalism is largely governed by the dictates of British, European and US imperialism, our own emancipation is intimately bound up with these considerations. Although the world is growing darker and more volatile, the opportunity to seize a brighter future shines brighter than ever—if we are ready and willing to seize it. ★

Further reading and sources (all available at [www.marxists.org](http://www.marxists.org))

**1** Frederick Engels, *The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man*.

**2** V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.

**3** V. I. Lenin, *The Third International and Its Place in History*.

**4** Mao Zedong, *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*.

**5** *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)*, chap. 3, 6, 7.

South, such as airlines, retail, and transport. The effect on global supply chains cannot be over-estimated.

The United States, in particular, solved the problems that arose in the 1929 crash in the short term through a redistribution of wealth to keep workers from becoming too radical in their demands and in the long term through a military Keynesianism, with a sharp increase in military production. This, along with the Marshall Plan, made the United States the dominant imperialist power after the Second World War.

It is still the dominant imperialist power, though showing signs of decline. Its military expenditure continues to exceed that of all other countries, it continues to engage in proxy wars, and it maintains military bases around the world, especially directed against China. It goes without saying that the purpose of military production is not to store weapons, ammunition, tanks and fighter jets in

warehouses to gather dust: the object is to use them.

After the 2008 crash imperialism intervened, or attempted to intervene, in Libya, Syria, Ukraine, and Venezuela, to name only a few. Notwithstanding the destruction of Libya and the attempted destruction of Syria through the use of jihadi proxies, and fascists in Ukraine, imperialism has not been able to keep a lid on things as it once was. The mass protests against the Iraqi war in 2003 may not have prevented the assault on that country but they arguably prevented the further use of military invasion again, forcing imperialism to rely on proxy groups.

The next targets for war will more than likely be Iran or Venezuela. Already sanctions have crippled their efforts at responding to covid-19, much as Iraq's health system was crippled with sanctions before the invasion. The efforts of all democratic forces should be towards supporting these countries'

right to independence and sovereignty, free from imperialist intervention.

Closer to home, the prospect of a new form of fascism gaining ground cannot be dismissed, in any country. This only makes it even more pressing for the left to take ownership of the claim to patriotic policies and not allow the far right to hijack these sentiments.

A realignment of global forces is likely, with China in particular growing in influence, especially in Asia and Africa. But the slowdown in China's growth serves to show not only the limits of its capitalist experiment but also its vulnerability, and its inability to exercise major hegemonic power on a global scale to match the United States. China is not the Soviet Union mark 2.

In reality, what will result from this crisis is not the replacing of one power with another but a multi-polar world. There can be no doubt that this will be opposed by the most reactionary and pro-imperialist forces. ★

# CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

## Cuba faces Covid-19

JAVIER DOMÍNGUEZ

ON 11 MARCH, Cuba had the first three cases of covid-19, detected in three Italian tourists. From that moment the country began to implement the contingency plan for dealing with this virus, which had been developed months earlier.

At the time of writing [24 April] the country has 1,285 people infected, has had 44 deaths and more than 2,000 people isolated because they are suspected of having the virus.

Regarding whatever measures are required to tackle the virus, President Miguel Díaz-Canel declared: “No-one will be left helpless.” The health facilities developed by the Revolution are well placed to respond effectively. The statistics are, by any standard, impressive: medical offices 10,869, doctors in communities 13,070, polyclinics 449, hospitals 150, doctors 95,487, nurses 85,732, plus a host of

medical technicians and support staff.

Cuba has an average of nine doctors per thousand inhabitants, unequalled anywhere in the world. It is with these resources and political will that Cuba faces this epidemic.

Ironically, we have to thank, to a large extent, the last twelve US governments. The more than sixty years of aggression and blockade by the United States have developed in the Cuban people a great sense of unity, discipline, and solidarity. Its powerful mass organisations are valuable means of educating and organising the whole people, and there is great communication between the people and the government. Every day the president and the Council of Ministers meet, analyse the situation in the country, and act accordingly. The government-people chain of information and actions works efficiently. We act like a country at war. That has been our historical experience.

There were no signs of relief from US

sanctions and this inhumane policy, despite the recent urgent pleas from senior United Nations officials. In the months leading up to the covid-19 pandemic Cubans were already experiencing shortages of oil and commodities, such as soap and food, thanks to the tightening of the US blockade. Cuba also suffered from a shortage of some of the materials needed for its biotechnology industry.

Despite the blockade, Cuban doctors work in 59 countries around the World, 37 of which have confirmed cases of covid-19, including countries in Latin America, Africa, and the Caribbean, as well as Italy and the Principality of Andorra.

In addition, the world can count on more than 29,000 doctors who graduated in Cuba and who, after their training at the Latin American School of Medicine and other Cuban facilities, contribute in their own countries to fighting the epidemic.



## Is this the beginning of the

A.C. O'CONNOR

AMONG OTHER brutal passings, going into May we pay tribute to Marx's one and only paramour: the Paris Commune. “Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class,” declared Marx, while Connolly, thirty years later, argued: “The Commune, if it had been successful, would have inaugurated the reign of real freedom the world over—it would have meant the emancipation of the working class.”

However, it wasn't successful, nor was Éirí Amach na Cásca in 1916, nor was the civil unrest and flowery revolts in the 1960s and 70s, nor the economic hardships of the 1980s or 2008; and we have to accept that the covid-19 pandemic (and resulting economic crash) may not result in a successful workers' revolt either.

It shocked me when I first heard of the “I told you so” hubris of many educated Marxists who believed the 2008 financial crisis would mark the beginning of the end of capitalism—a phrase now being echoed the world over: that during the lowest union density and class-consciousness in a century the keys to the castle would be handed over to the workers, while (primarily unknown and irrelevant) socialist groupings would be crowned the vanguards of the people.

I was too young to experience this ego trip at first hand. Millennials like myself were busy being soothed by teachers and parents, told that by the time we left third-level education “the crash would be over.” The reality was made all the more difficult to process as friends and family left for Australia or the Continent, or just outright left this world entirely. This teenage fool's paradise wasn't all that different from the celebratory well-read left.

Despite the blockade, Cuban doctors work in 59 countries around the World, 37 of which have confirmed cases of covid-19, including countries in Latin America, Africa, and the Caribbean, as well as Italy and the Principality of Andorra.

The Cuban health sector is highly developed—a priority of the triumphant Revolution in 1959. “Health is an issue of paramount importance for Cuba, which is why we defend the right of all human beings to receive quality medical care,” said the minister of foreign affairs. “Therefore, solidarity is a principle defended by Cuba and our people during more than sixty years of Revolution . . . The benefits are distributed globally; some 400,000 Cuban medical professionals have worked abroad in six decades, mainly in poor countries, providing free medical care at the point of delivery.”

In another example of Cuban solidarity, a British cruise ship was allowed to dock at the Cuban port of Mariel after being refused permission by several other Caribbean countries and by the United States. The ship had five positive cases and at least twenty additional passengers and crew members who were symptomatic isolated on board.

Britain’s secretary of state for foreign and Commonwealth affairs, Dominic Raab, thanked Cuba’s

government for its assistance, saying, “We are very grateful to the Cuban government for swiftly enabling this operation and for their close co-operation to make sure it could be successful.”

Cuba’s minister of foreign affairs, Bruno Rodríguez, said: “These are times of solidarity, of understanding health as a human right, of reinforcing international co-operation to face our common challenges, values that are inherent in the humanistic practice of the Revolution and of our people.”

In opposition to this human praxis, the United States continues its inhuman policy of blockading Cuba. A medical aid cargo from the Chinese businessman Jack Ma headed for Cuba was stopped by the US blockade legislation—despite the fact that medical aid is in theory exempted from US sanctions. The donation, consisting of test kits, face masks, ventilators, and gloves, was unable to proceed to Cuba because the airliner carrying the medical supplies was owned by Avianca Airlines, which has a major American shareholder and therefore is subject to

the US legislation.

A small Caribbean island, underdeveloped by centuries of colonialism and imperialism and subjected to punitive and extraterritorial sanctions by the United States for sixty years, Cuba has much to offer the world. Cuban television often shows a beautiful image: a photograph of the passengers on the British cruise ship raising a sign that says *Yo te quiero, Cuba* (I love you, Cuba).

A Cuban song, a hymn to love and human solidarity, says, “Who says that all is lost? I offer you my heart.” This is how we Cubans fight covid-19: organised, supportive, and offering our hearts and love, confident that a better world is possible. ★

Javier Domínguez, a former combatant with the Cuban internationalist mission to Angola, worked for the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), generating international solidarity. He visited Ireland twice in the mid-1990s, working with the Cuba Support Group. He lives in Havana.

## the end, or the end of the beginning?

From exhaustion to affecting sleep and leading to anxiety, lying or dramatising the facts has a variety of negative effects on the mental well-being and morale of anyone involved. There’s no doubt that burnout followed a lot of activists who bathed in the pipe dream of an “inevitable” revolution that never came in the 2010s. We saw directionless Occupy Movements come and go, a surge of Anonymous and cyber-activism; yet here we are, with little or nothing to show for it. The Irish Water movement made some strides in proving that the people had power when they demanded it; but unions and the working class remain largely unchanged. The covid-19 pandemic shouldn’t be treated with the same armchair optimism as 2008.

There’s no doubt that Connolly took great inspiration from workers in Paris. His studies on urban warfare resulted in barricades being erected in Talbot Street, O’Connell Street, North King

Street, and Mount Street Bridge, no doubt influenced by his direct communications with Commune veterans. Yet, just like the Paris Commune, his efforts in connecting socialism with relevant anti-imperialist trends, his education through the Irish Socialist Republican Party and his trade union work are often overshadowed in the hearts and minds of many of his followers.

The Commune’s manifesto stated: “The proletarians of Paris, amidst the defeats and treasons of the ruling classes, have understood that the hour has struck for them to save the country by taking into their own hands the direction of public affairs.” Has the recent crisis offered an “hour” of our own, or does our fetishisation of street fighting and martyrdom hold back a real understanding of Paris, 1871, Dublin, 1916, or the importance of a modern, educated and trusted movement?

The Paris Commune was sparked when landlords and bankers came looking for accrued rents and debt that had been frozen during an emergency—a situation we may find ourselves in yet again following the current quarantine period. It must not be forgotten, however, that just a few decades before, under the military rule of Emperor Napoleon III, the status quo seemed unshakable, like today; yet economic exhaustion and a revival of the labour movement changed everything. We may have the former, but are we ready with the latter?

“And as we are considering the material left in Ireland . . . it is incumbent upon us to consider what provision is now made for the physical and intellectual growth of the Irish workers—these workers who have to bear the burden of the present system, and whose children will have to build and shape the future.”—James Connolly. ★



## Why the West hates Sandinista Nicaragua

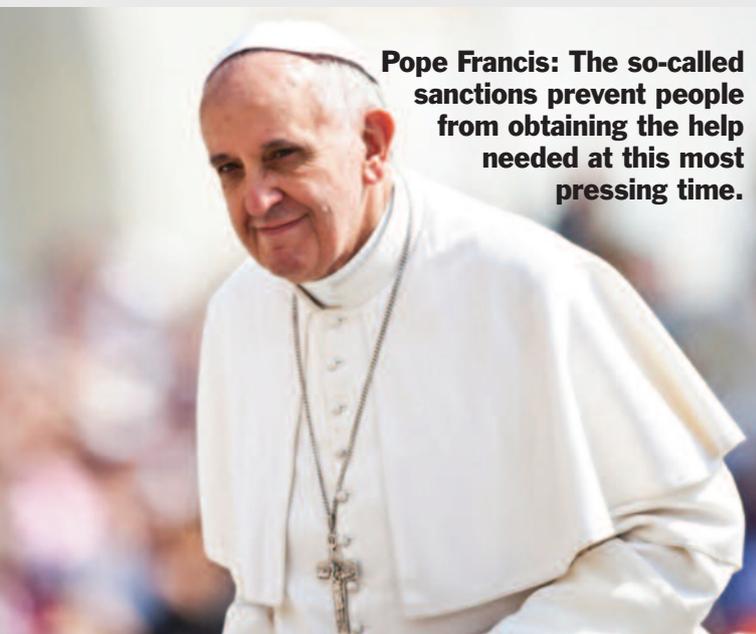
STEPHEN SEFTON

**N**ICARAGUA'S SUCCESS in containing the covid-19 virus makes the failure of the United States and its allies look pathetic. The country's low numbers of nine confirmed cases to date and just two fatalities categorically vindicate the policies of its Sandinista government, led by President Daniel Ortega and Vice-President Rosario Murillo.

The same is true of other revolutionary and socialist governments around the world. Cuba has given a shining example of global leadership and solidarity. Most notably elsewhere, Venezuela, Viet Nam and India's state of Kerala have also implemented diverse but successful policies containing the pandemic.

But in North America and Europe the success in addressing covid-19 of these impoverished socialist countries, even when under attack from the United States and the European Union—like Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela—has been suppressed. In Nicaragua's case, Western media and NGOs have comprehensively distorted and repeatedly lied about the country's Sandinista government's extraordinary achievement in comparison with

## Venezuela blockaded



**Pope Francis: The so-called sanctions prevent people from obtaining the help needed at this most pressing time.**

SEÁN EDWARDS

**J**UST AS the coronavirus is wreaking havoc in the United States, and has also begun to affect Venezuela, the Trump regime has decided to step up its aggression against Venezuela, which can only obstruct the country's efforts to safeguard the health of its population from the threat of the pandemic.

António Guterres, secretary-general of the United Nations, has appealed for an end to all economic sanctions on account of the pandemic. So has Pope Francis. But apparently President Trump has more important matters on his mind, such as restoring US neo-colonial control over Venezuela and all of Latin America.

"Regime change" in Venezuela has been a major plank in US foreign policy since Hugo Chávez took office in 1998. So far, all their efforts have been in vain, especially with the spectacular failure of the coup d'état in 2002, defeated by a popular uprising.

As their frustration mounted, US presidents imposed ever-increasing economic sanctions. Nice gentlemanly Barack Obama declared Venezuela "a clear and present danger" to the United States, a formula repeated by nasty vulgar Donald Trump. But Trump has openly declared the aim of overthrowing President Maduro and replacing him with his own appointee, the then chairman of the National Assembly (in suspension), Juan Guaidó of the ultra-right wing of the opposition.

# Western liberals and progressives find themselves suffocating in a miasma of thoughtless prejudice, moral cowardice, and cynical hypocritismaking an honest appraisal of their own moral and political contradictions impossible.

other countries in the region, let alone the damning contrast with the catastrophic situation in North America and Western Europe.

Many reasons contribute to that reality, both contemporary and historical. However, one reason is fundamental. The Western liberals and progressives who generally control information and communications in North America and Europe cannot acknowledge the success of Nicaragua's Sandinista government without conceding their own monstrous cynicism and hypocrisy.

In general, ever since the dissolution of the Soviet Union they have effectively colluded with corporate capitalism and its neo-liberal political sales team. At best, they have beseeched minor tweaks and adjustments to the worst capitalist excesses in their own countries so as to mitigate somewhat all the injustice and suffering at home.

But overseas they have colluded in coups, wars and genocidal sanctions targeting peoples with independent governments. They have effectively abandoned victims of their allies, like the Palestinians or vulnerable populations in the Congo. Western liberals and progressives in communications media and NGOs could hardly be more comfortable with the fascist union of corporate and state power currently controlling the US, Canada, and the European Union. So it has been perfectly natural for these Western liberals and progressives effectively to support, for example, Nazi-inspired extremists in Ukraine, fanatical pseudo-religious terrorists in Libya and Syria, and the extreme right-wing and allied forces in Venezuela and Nicaragua.

One of the effects of that support is that there's no

Over the past year this has been an abysmal failure. The United States and the European Union, along with their allies and client states—fifty states altogether—recognised Guaidó as president and proceeded to loot Venezuelan assets abroad, including Citco, the Venezuelan petrol marketing company in the United States, and £1 billion in gold lodged with the Bank of England. Meanwhile 120 states continue to recognise President Maduro, as does the United Nations.

Guaidó has three times tried to organise a coup, with no response from the army. The third time he claimed to be speaking from an army base when he was in fact standing on a motorway overpass just outside it. His staff in Colombia were caught embezzling money destined for army deserters.

Finally, the majority of the opposition disowned him, elected a new chairman of the National Assembly, and agreed with President Maduro to organise new elections, due this year.

Guaidó never amounted to much; now he is nothing at all. The leaders who reached this deal have been added to the list of sanctioned individuals. The only force now recognised by Trump is the extreme fascistic right.

Trump, far from recognising that Juan Guaidó is a beaten docket, has, in his frustration and desperation, intensified the conflict to a new and more dangerous level. With his typical disdain for truth, or even credibility, he has

going back. Nicaragua's success in addressing the covid-19 pandemic is irrefutable. But Western liberals and progressives cannot admit that, because doing so would contradict the lies and fabrications of the right-wing and allied forces they support. Finally admitting that their right-wing allies are lying frauds would mean radically questioning their version of the violent failed coup attempt of 2018 or the absurd claim ever since President Ortega took office in 2007 that Nicaragua is a dictatorship.

Nicaragua is just one example of how Western liberals and progressives find themselves suffocating in a miasma of thoughtless prejudice, moral cowardice, and cynical hypocrisy, making an honest appraisal of their own moral and political contradictions impossible.

That is largely why the next US president will be yet another demented bellicose tool of the US plutocracy, and why the European Union will survive ever more clearly as a similarly dysfunctional tool of US and European oligarchs. Hope that the current crisis will lead to a safer, more humane multi-polar world is almost certainly misplaced.

Daniel Ortega's recent call for better health care instead of more military spending, for a focus on human solidarity rather than capitalist greed, is unanswerable. His government's patient, practical, prudent but also brilliant example in this crisis is irrefutable. That is why the Western ruling elite and the politicians, media and NGOs they own have responded with yet more lies, falsehoods, evasions, and threats. They all hate Sandinista Nicaragua because they cannot stand so much Truth and Light.

blamed Venezuela for the epidemic of drug addiction that afflicts the United States (which the CIA had a major role in creating). President Maduro is planning to drown the United States in cocaine, would you believe.

America's own Drug Enforcement Agency has reported that the bulk of Colombian cocaine is transported along the Pacific coast to Central America—mainly Honduras and Guatemala—and smuggled through Mexico. Venezuela does not feature at all in its report. Nevertheless, with this transparently mendacious excuse, US warships have been deployed in the Caribbean, with the mission to stop Venezuelan ships carrying oil to Cuba—apparently they could be smuggling cocaine.

Britain and France have agreed to participate in this operation. This is a naval blockade, intended to stop Venezuela trading at all. Totally illegal, it amounts almost to a declaration of war. If pursued, it would make a major war inevitable.

As the Communist Party of Venezuela puts it, "a new threat is hanging over the peoples who resist and confront the oppression of capital, who defend their sovereignty and independence, against all of humanity, the threat of new wars of imperialist aggression . . . There is no other option to maintain the dictatorship of capital over the broad masses who are rebelling but to impose US supremacist fascism on a world scale. We say, with Rosa Luxemburg—socialism or barbarism." ★

# BOOKS

## The management of savagery



**NIALL FARRELL**

Max Blumenthal, *The Management of Savagery: How America's National Security State Fueled the Rise of al Qaeda, ISIS, and Donald Trump* (London and New York: Verso, 2019).

**T**HIS IS A valuable book, as it charts how the United States, since the late 1970s up until today, has deliberately funded and supported Islamist jihadists to obtain foreign-policy goals.

It began with “Operation Cyclone” in Afghanistan, the brainchild of President Carter’s national security adviser and Polish aristocrat Zbigniew Brzezinski. Under his instruction, the CIA funnelled up to \$1 billion to the rural and deeply

conservative Afghan tribal leaders, who opposed the continuing secularisation of Afghan life. Brzezinski’s aim was to “induce a Soviet intervention” and so embroil Moscow in its own Vietnam-type war.

Soon Saudi Arabia and tens of thousands of foreign fighters, “Afghan-Arabs,” were part of the Islamist-driven rebellion against the Soviet army. President Zia’s Pakistan co-ordinated the arming of the mujahideen. By 1989 these “liberators” were targeting minorities such as the Hazaras, having graduated from throwing acid in the faces of female students at Kabul University.

Fort Bragg in North Carolina was then the hub of the Afghan proxy war, and to this day it remains the heart of US black

operations. (In the first two months of 2020 five US military flights coming from or going to Fort Bragg travelled via Shannon Airport.)

The United States continues to manage similar jihadist monsters in the province of Idlib in Syria. In 2017 al-Qa’ida, a.k.a. al-Nusra Front, established a “liberated area.” The region was certainly free of Christians. Those who failed to flee had been wiped out.

Idlib’s town centre became the focus of public executions. In January 2017 a 21-year-old woman accused of adultery was shot through the head. Areas close to Idlib were occupied by thousands of Turkestani and Chinese Uighur jihadists.

Max Blumenthal, in his detailed examination of the Syrian conflict, notes

## Workers always bear the brunt

**O**VER THE course of the covid-19 pandemic it has become increasingly clear that workers have borne the brunt of employers’ sharp practices. As they always do, employers, both large and small, have attempted to take maximum advantage of the public.

With workers unable to have recourse to the usual methods of dealing with employers and to defend themselves, the giant Debenhams’ retail chain announced that it was closing down all eleven branches in Ireland, with the loss of nearly two

thousand jobs. The workers only heard their fate from news reports. The company went into liquidation without having to negotiate with its employees about redundancy payments.

Many other retail workers complained that they were being forced to work in unsafe conditions, with little protection against the deadly virus. Mandate carried out a survey among retail workers, which found that—

- 23 per cent said that shopping trolleys or baskets are not regularly sanitised



# Jihadist proxies were employed and armed by the United States, Qatar (the mentor-state of the Muslim Brotherhood), and United Arab Emirates. And there was a little help from Britain's MI6, including the anti-Gaddafi "Manchester Boys."

that 7 million Syrians fled "rebel-held" areas for the safety of the government-controlled areas—something the biased Western media refuse to acknowledge.

Throughout the Syrian conflict it has never ceased to amaze me how many Irish supporters of Palestine fail to grasp that this is a US proxy war, waged in the interests of Israel and imperialism.

Blumenthal reveals that in 1996, with Netanyahu's ascension as prime minister, he set up a think tank in Israel, the Institute for Advanced Strategy and Political Studies, with offices in Washington. It drafted a blueprint for remaking the Middle East in accordance with Netanyahu's vision.

Written by Richard Perle and Douglas Feith and entitled "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm," it aimed to replace violently any regional state that challenged Israel's expansionist agenda. Saddam's Iraq was first on the list, then Syria. Employing US allies, such as Jordan and Turkey, they proposed weaponising the heavily religious rural Sunni population as a proxy force in Syria, the very people who would later rally behind al-Qa'ida and ISIS.

A year after "A Clean Break" was published, these same neo-cons created the "Project for the New American Century." One of its manifestos read: "Further, the process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalysing event—like a new Pearl Harbor."

When that 9/11 event arrived the neo-cons, then well embedded in the Bush government, began to prepare for

a clean break by overthrowing "7 countries in 5 years," as retired General Wesley Clarke has recounted.

First Afghanistan: hypocritically presented as a civilisation mission. Then Iraq: Blumenthal recounts the creation of a sectarian conflict in Iraq, where one had never existed. Jordanian veterans of the Afghan war began the slaughter of Shias, and General David Petraeus created US-trained killer squads of Shias to retaliate. A bloody sectarian war swelled the ranks of the nascent Islamic State.

In 2004 Abu Bakr Naji, an al-Qa'ida ideologue, produced his influential *Management of Savagery*, a blueprint for destabilising the Middle East that "echoed the agenda of the neo-cons' 'A Clean Break'."

By 2011 the neo-cons were no longer at the helm of US foreign policy when it came to undermining the Libyan and Syrian states. However, Samantha Power, "the icon of military humanism" (and darling of RTE), and Hillary Clinton were nested in Obama's government. Not categorised as neo-cons, their actions and goals were the same. They turned Libya from a prosperous state into a failed one.

Jihadist proxies were employed and armed by the United States, Qatar (the mentor-state of the Muslim Brotherhood), and United Arab Emirates. And there was a little help from Britain's MI6, including the anti-Gaddafi "Manchester Boys."

The ruse used at the UN Security Council to sanction a "no-fly zone" was to prevent civilian casualties. Al-Jazeera's lies—echoed in the West—of

impending massacres and mass rapes by Viagra-crazed Gaddafi troops sealed that country's fate. Gaddafi had retaken most Libyan cities with about a thousand dead. The bloodbath happened only after NATO's intervention.

Blumenthal's book concludes where it began: Russia. Washington's antipathy towards President Putin stems from his steps to end the "disaster capitalism" under Yeltsin that had impoverished the Russian people. In 2004 a letter addressed to the EU and NATO signed by leading American neo-cons and liberal interventionists condemned Putin for going back on Yeltsin's "achievements," deploring in particular the restoration of the Kremlin's control over national affairs at the expense of US-friendly oligarchs.

No surprise that Joe Biden and Madeleine Albright are signatories, as was the then head of Human Rights Watch, Tom Malinowski, which speaks volumes about that group's origins.

From this time stems the West's aggressive policy of destabilisation in the East: from the Georgian failed invasion of East Ossetia to the many "coloured revolutions," the coup in Kiev, and the "Pussy Riot" hullabaloo, in support of US-backed oligarchs.

President Medvedev's failure to veto the Libyan invasion at the United Nations ultimately led to Vladimir Putin returning to the helm and Russia resolving to come to the aid of the Syrian people. This ended the unipolar world or what the neo-cons called the "benevolent global hegemony," which they sought to maintain by the management of savagery. ★

- 29 per cent said they have insufficient protective equipment
- 46 per cent said that social distancing and crowd-control measures are not being adhered to.

Employers were quick to jack up prices but slow to provide proper protection or to pay additional money to employees.

In Liffey Meats in Ballyjamesduff, Co. Cavan, workers and their union have complained that the company is not complying with covid-19 precautions and are demanding that health inspectors be called in. The

complaints relate to physical distancing, hand-washing and sanitising facilities as well as inadequate personal protection equipment in the factory.

How seriously does the trade union movement take workers' health and safety in these dangerous times? The Health and Safety Committee of the ICTU has not held one meeting since the outbreak.

When the restrictions are finally lifted, thousands of jobs will have gone, and workers will have no way of recovering what is owed to them. All

the plaudits from the talking heads for courageous workers carrying out essential work will quickly disappear. Workers must "temper their aspirations"; their demands should be curtailed in the "national interest."

The Government has borrowed billions, which they said they couldn't do, but to save the system, not to build houses for workers or provide a decent health service.

The money borrowed will be in the bosses' bank accounts—and the bill will be in the post for workers to pay. ★



## The wayfarer

JENNY FARRELL

THANKS TO the current pandemic, Ireland was unable to publicly remember the Easter Rising of 1916, its aspirations for an independent socialist republic, its heroic leaders. Many of these leaders were poets and writers. Patrick Pearse's poem "The Wayfarer" was written on the eve of his execution, in Kilmainham Gaol.

*The beauty of the world hath made me sad,  
This beauty that will pass;  
Sometimes my heart hath shaken with great joy  
To see a leaping squirrel in a tree,  
Or a red lady-bird upon a stalk,  
Or little rabbits in a field at evening,  
Lit by a slanting sun,  
Or some green hill where shadows drifted by  
Some quiet hill where mountainy man hath sown  
And soon would reap; near to the gate of Heaven;  
Or children with bare feet upon the sands  
Of some ebb'd sea, or playing on the streets  
Of little towns in Connacht,  
Things young and happy.  
And then my heart hath told me:  
These will pass,  
Will pass and change, will die and be no more,  
Things bright and green, things young and happy;  
And I have gone upon my way  
Sorrowful.*

## Who said that?

"Today's media are exponentially worse than they were in the 1980s and 1990s. They no longer provide news. What they provide are stories that are around 80 percent ideology and opinion, 10 percent lies and spin, and 10 percent fact." **Mitchell Feierstein**, investor, banker, and author.

"People can't criticise Maduro and not criticize the blockade. The blockade doesn't attack soldiers, it doesn't kill the guilty, the blockade kills innocents." **Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva**, former president of Brazil

"Also in Italy it has been understood that capitalism provides what is superfluous, while socialism provides what is necessary." – Message by **Italian communists** to Raúl Castro Ruz, first secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba, and Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, president of the Republic of Cuba

"Apologists for the US in Western media have their work cut out for them, but history shows that they will descend to the task."—**Joe Emersberger**, Canadian author, writing in *Venezuela Analysis*

"UN Ceasefire Defines War as a Non-Essential activity." Headline in *Counterpunch* referring to a call by the United Nations for an end to all acts of war

"It takes a virus to strip away the veneers, focus everyone's attention, and reveal capitalism in all its repulsiveness." – **Julie Wark** in *Counterpunch*

"Who is now willing to stand up for a system that would put our supermarket workers to the back of the queue so that wealthier patients can use their private health insurance to get diagnostic tests done faster, or get priority access to a private room?"— **Prof. John Browne**, director of the National Health Services Research Institute

". . . If we do not rise up, once and for all, in a worldwide struggle for the only effective alternative, which, whether it be called socialism or whatever younger generations may call it, must be decidedly anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist and anti-neoliberal. There is no possibility of capitalism with a human face." – **Carlos Luque**, writing in *Granma Internacional*  
"One cannot be helping someone with one hand and smothering them with the other."

**Russian mission at the United Nations**, after its proposal to end all economic sanctions was opposed by

The beauty Pearse recalls that has shaken his heart is that of the Irish countryside and people. He evokes this for readers in very vivid and varied images.

A wayfarer is a wanderer across the countryside, akin to a vagabond. It suggests that Pearse views his short life as a time spent wandering, perhaps restless, an observer of life. The fact that he knows he is facing the end of his life, that the world's beauty "will pass," has made him sad. Explaining this sadness, he states that this beauty has at times been so overwhelming that "my heart hath shaken with great joy." This physical image, combined with the emotion it describes, is very moving.

The beauty Pearse recalls that has shaken his heart is that of the Irish countryside and people. He evokes this for readers in very vivid and varied images. There is fantastic movement in the "leaping squirrel in a tree" in the mid-distance, to the close-up of "a red lady-bird upon a stalk," adding a beautiful red touch to the green vegetation. The view pans out further away as the day progresses to evening and evokes "little rabbits in a field," which is lit "by a slanting sun." The run-on line extends that gloaming.

Next the eye moves up to take in the solidity of a "green hill," which is not still but has clouds trailing over it: "shadows drifted by." In this image of a "quiet hill where mountainy man hath sown | And soon would reap," nature and humankind merge in the purposeful activity of "mountainy man," as present and future blend in "sown | And soon would reap". Again, movement and process are enacted in a run-on line. It is a ripening Pearse will not live to see.

Perhaps the anticipated reaping on the hilltop "near to the gate of Heaven" allowed for some consolation for Pearse. On a more metaphorical level, this sowing and reaping (in the future) also refers to the Rising and that in future there will be a reaping.

Next there is a movement from adult to children, again suggesting the future. The image is very vivid and tactile: readers can see the children but also feel the sand under their bare feet. The fact that the children are barefoot underlines their connectedness to nature. The highly visual "ebbed sea" contains both the present and the future, as the ripples on the wet sand speak of the tide having gone out and turning again. The ebb and tide suggest the everlasting renewal of life and beauty.

In the middle of the line the image changes away from the seascape to "the streets | Of little towns in Connacht." Both the sea and the town images expand by enjambment and suggest continuity, perpetuity. Pearse ends these images from the nature and people of Ireland with "Things young and happy."

The concluding six lines reflect on this evocation of Ireland as a happy and beautiful place and return to the emotion of the poem's first line, "sad." Pearse's heart has told him that all this beauty will "pass and change, will die and be no more." The images of the poem, however, tell the reader that while this is true of individual life there is continuity that outlives individuals.

However, Pearse will not be a part of this natural cycle: he will be "gone upon my way." Pearse poignantly speaks of himself in the past tense at this point, just before he ends the poem on its shortest line—ending his life prematurely on the solitary word "Sorrowful."

The movement we felt in the run-on lines describing vividly the beauty and people of Ireland is over; the line is cut short, as Pearse's life was.

He was executed the following day, aged thirty-six. ★

the United States, Britain, Canada, and South Korea "It's not the sight of Russian military experts 'charging around Italy' that is shameful, it's the fact that the EU's inaction created the need for it in the first place."

**Danielle Ryan**, Irish freelance writer in RT

Economic sanctions are "financial carpet-bombing" and "a new way of war." – *Financial Times* (London), adding to the growing wave of protests against economic sanctions



## Letter

### Time to wake up

They told me we couldn't have a "one-tier health system." Well we are nearly there.

When I was eleven I remember leaving my sister off at the nursing training centre in Belfast, and now at sixty-five she has become my hero, working with Covid-19 patients in the Downe Hospital, saving precious lives.

They told me that they couldn't spend our money because of this and that. Now they spend it like confetti at a wedding.

We told them that austerity was working and that we would suffer because of it, and now thousands are dying needlessly.

They said socialism doesn't work and now only for socialism we would be lost in a dark hole.

Will you wake up?

**Paul Doran**

Clondalkin  
Co. Dublin

# Workers of all countries, unite!

May Day message by the Communist Party of Ireland



working people. The United States has stepped up its sanctions and blockades against Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Iran, ignoring appeals to at least suspend them and all hostile actions and to allow these countries to mobilise their resources to combat the disease. Yet despite the blockade Cuba has continued to extend the hand of solidarity to those struggling against injustice, oppression, and the global pandemic.

We stand in solidarity with those peoples and nations that face a military threat and violence from the forces of imperialism and their allies. Those same destructive forces and other capitalist industries are ensuring that our planet is being ransacked and destroyed by the actions of transnational corporations in their drive to exploit the natural resources that belong to us all, for profit to enrich a few.

Today this slogan continues to resonate around the world as billions of workers, poor and oppressed experience quarantine in the face of the global pandemic.

The capitalist system is in crisis and is headed into a global depression, with hundreds of millions of workers sacked, leaving many without any means to support themselves and their families, while at the same time a handful of individuals own more wealth than half the world's population. This injustice can no longer be tolerated.

As never before, workers must organise to defend and advance our own interests. We cannot go on with "business as usual"; there must be no going back to "normal." The political establishment, their ideas and institutions are bankrupt. We also know from experience that the ruling classes here in Ireland and around the world will attempt to make us pay a heavy price for the growing and deepening structural crisis of this failing capitalist system. We need to resist them at every stage and at every opportunity.

The time has long past for patching up this inhuman and decaying system. It is time for real, radical change—time to end the destruction of our planet and the impoverishment of its people, time to end the capitalists' booms and busts, time to end global imperialist wars. It is now time for the interests of workers, peasants, the poor and oppressed to come first, a time for unity between women, men and youth, regardless of colour, religion, nationality, or sexual orientation. It is time for workers' interests to come first and foremost in economic and political decision-making and to end once and for all the exploitation of man by man.

***Workers of all countries, unite!  
We have nothing to lose but our  
chains, and a world to win!***

**“WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!”** has been the universal call of the workers' movement since it emerged more than a century and a half ago.

We take this opportunity to salute the courage and tenacity of all workers battling against the covid-19 pandemic.

We offer our solidarity to those nations struggling to build socialism and independence under blockade. The imperialist powers are using the pandemic as an opportunity to intensify the pressure imposed upon millions of

**Join the fight for socialism**

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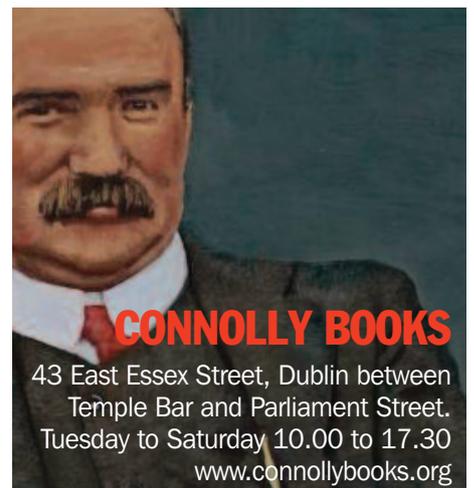
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