

# Socialist Voice



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## IRELAND'S HOUSING CRISIS

"It's a great market. We've never seen rental increases like this in any jurisdiction that we're aware of."—  
**David Ehrlich**, chief executive of the Canadian vulture fund Irish Residential Properties REIT, the country's biggest landlord, which now owns 2,678 houses and apartments.



### Time for protest and community organisation

**Conor McCabe**  
on the next steps

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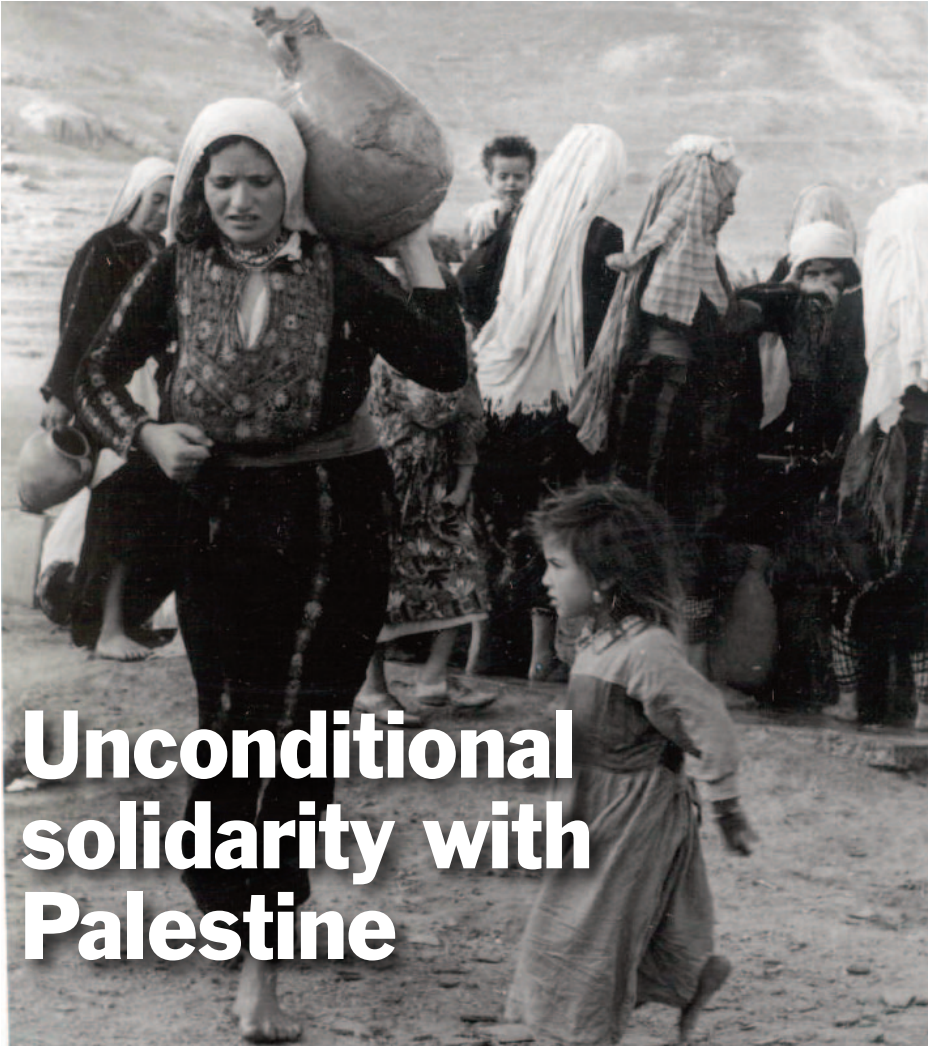
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## Unconditional solidarity with Palestine

RAYMOND Ó DUBHGHAILL

The mass demonstrations of solidarity with the Palestinian people in Dublin, Belfast, Cork and all around the globe show that the craven operation by elements of the bourgeoisie to frame all opposition to Zionism as anti-Semitism has completely failed to hoodwink the working class.

As workers, and simply as human beings, we are naturally outraged by the sight of suffering, and the abuse of others by those with power. The events in Palestine and in particular the Gaza Strip over the past month are sickening, and a stark reminder of the brutality of the Zionist settler-colonial project, which inflicts so much cruelty and suffering on Palestinians daily.

Unable to form a coherent justification for the atrocities perpetrated by the Zionist state, or to defend the indefensible in the battle of ideas, its lackeys instead choose to obfuscate the matter by

## Time for protest and community organisation

CONOR McCABE

THE CRISIS in housing is official Government policy. It is not an unintended consequence. The profit margins of the various corporate property funds that have entered the Irish housing market since 2013 require a crisis, in the supply of both public housing and affordable housing for purchase, leading to a high demand for the rental housing units that are controlled by the funds.

This is precisely what is happening at the moment, and it is fully supported by the three government parties, as well as the Labour Party, despite their various protestations.

However, the Government was forced to act recently when stories surfaced regarding the bulk purchase of entire

housing estates by private funds. In the resulting media storm the minister for housing introduced legislation that was hailed as a turning-point by the Government parties, no doubt hoping that the lack of future headlines will ease the political pressure.

The legislation passed by the Dáil in May 2021 imposes 10 per cent stamp duty on bulk purchases of ten or more houses. (This rate does not apply to the bulk purchase of apartments, which remain unaffected.) It also brought in new rules to allow local authorities to state that up to half of all new houses in a development must be sold to households.

The Government's plan, the way it is structured between who will benefit and who will not, reveals the economic class dynamics underpinning the policy.

It is in the interest of these funds that the housing crisis continues. In its first annual report in 2016, Irish Residential Properties REIT stated that "strengthening fundamentals in the residential rental

business" was predicated on two things: the first was extremely weak levels of new residential housing; the second was a cheap supply of apartments from NAMA.

The company told its shareholders that Ireland's "significant supply and demand imbalance helps support the rental market." In other words, its business model *demand*s a housing crisis, not its resolution.

The message was broadly the same in its annual report for 2020. The supply of cheap apartments from NAMA had dried up, but its bulk purchase of apartments from the private sector helped to compensate for this change in circumstance.

The company is not just buying up apartments as rental assets: it is also taking them out of the supply chain for households to purchase themselves. In 2019, investment funds bought up 95 per cent of all apartments completed that year. Of the 3,644 that were built, only 182 were for sale on the open market.

To identify the cause of Zionism and its settler-colonial atrocities as somehow the product of the religion of Judaism is absolutely false, offensive, and, frankly, anti-Semitic.

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**1** falsely describing Zionist aggression as retaliatory in nature;  
**2** falsely depicting “both sides” as being as bad as each other and of equal means and military strength; and, perhaps, most perniciously,  
**3** falsely attributing opposition to the Zionist settler-colonial project to anti-Semitism.

The cynicism of the ruling class knows no bounds. Those in power, along with their willing clerks in the media, will use any trick in the book to defend their position, and to justify the oppression and exploitation of others. We see how bourgeois political figures regularly attempt to appropriate the language of feminism, anti-racism, mental health and other noble causes to promote themselves when it suits them and abandon them when it becomes convenient. With the cause of Zionism, sadly, it is no different.

It is a grotesque lie to equate Judaism with Zionism. The crimes of the Zionist state have nothing to do with Judaism, nor with the average member of the Jewish faith, and it is obscene to suggest as much. To identify the cause of Zionism and its settler-colonial atrocities as somehow the product of the religion of Judaism is absolutely false,

offensive, and, frankly, anti-Semitic. And yet this is precisely what the supporters of Zionism, in occupied Palestine and in the West, do under the laughable pretext of opposing anti-Semitism.

It is a sad reality that throughout human history all manner of outrages and obscenities have been carried out under the banner or justification of religion. The Irish people need no reminders of this fact. The truth is that the actions of the Zionist state, carried out in the name of religion, constitute some of the most violent displays of racism and hatred in the world today. To be anti-racist is to oppose this barbarity, not the other way round.

We must remember too that Zionism in its present form is a direct result of the “foreign policy” of the United States, one of if not the most racist and savage countries that has ever existed, with the Zionist state acting as a bulwark for the interests of the western bourgeoisie in the Middle East. The cause of Zionism is the cause of the United States, united in a world view of white supremacy and “full-spectrum dominance.” We are talking about a powerful enemy, and one that has a variety of sophisticated (and some not so sophisticated)

techniques for waging war, not all of which are physically violent in nature.

Therefore, now more than ever, we must place no conditions or equivocations on our solidarity with the Palestinian people. We must remain focused and unbowed and not allow ourselves to be distracted or derailed by bogus charges of anti-Semitism. Support for the Palestinian people, and opposition to Zionist crimes, will never be anti-Semitic. We must recognise these cynical gestures for what they are: transparent attempts to sow disunity and break the bonds of solidarity that exist between workers and all oppressed peoples of the world.

In Ireland, this solidarity must take concrete form. We call for an immediate boycott of all goods produced by Zionist companies and on Zionist lands, for the cutting of diplomatic ties with the Zionist state, and for the immediate cessation of the use of Shannon Airport by the US military, who ferry arms to and from Zionist forces via Irish soil.

The resistance is global, but it takes shape in the domestic, and the local. The resistance will never be broken. And Palestine will be free, from the river to the sea. ★

The property funds are not just making money from private renters. The German investor Realis recently bought 90 apartments in Dundrum for €55 million. It is now leasing those apartments to Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council for social housing at prices up to €3,000 a month.

The fact that the property fund business model for apartments remains entirely unaffected by the new legislation is a clear sign that the Government is involved in window-dressing.

The stamp duty of 10 per cent is another ruse. The bulk purchase of houses (as opposed to apartments) up to now has been only a small element of the overall business plan of property funds. This is growing, of course, with the new stamp duty rate simply an “added cost” rather than something that will lead to structural change in the housing market. The 10 per cent duty, where bulk purchases occur, will

be added on to the total rent charged.

It is still in the interests of the property funds to bulk-purchase houses, as by doing so they will affect total supply for residential buyers and become, in a not insignificant way, “price-setters” when it comes to rents.

Finally, the allocation of up to half of all new houses for individual purchase leaves a lot of room for abuse. The legislation allows for zero allocation as well. It will be up to each local authority to set the rate—and, going by past performance, it is unlikely that households will be the winners here.

The greatest threat to the property funds would be an increase in the amount of public housing built by the state that is then offered to households for rent or even long-term purchase at differential rates—that is, monthly rents or mortgage repayments set at a proportion of net income, usually 15 per cent.

Failing this, a universal social charge type of tax on the income of the

property funds (not profit or purchases) would virtually kill off their presence in Ireland. The funds are set up as tax-avoidance structures for their shareholders. A tax that affects the income stream is one that cannot be avoided and if set at a sufficiently high rate would dampen or dispense altogether with the attractiveness of the funds in the first place.

Finally, the Government could introduce a flat ban on the bulk purchase of housing units.

**It is incredible that in the midst of a housing crisis anyone—either as an individual or as a shareholder in a property fund—can purchase more than one house at a time.**

The fact that the recent legislation will continue to facilitate property funds and their socially destructive business model of killing supply to increase rents is evidence enough that no solutions will come from the Dáil at this time.

If ever there was a time for protest and community organisation, this is it. ★

## Class politics — not 21st-century Walkerism

**JIMMY DORAN**

ONE HUNDRED and ten years ago James Connolly opened up what became known as the Connolly-Walker controversy with the following sentence: “All thoughtful men and women who observe the political situations of their countries must realise that Ireland is on the verge of one of the most momentous constitutional changes in her history.”

The changes predicted at the time did not happen quite as anticipated, or as quickly as expected. Now, more than a century later, a similar situation prevails. Expectations, demands and discussions abound on the reunification of Ireland.

The effects of Brexit and changing demographics have led to growing calls

for a border poll, so that Ireland may once again be “on the verge of the most momentous constitutional changes” in its history. Just as in 1911, it may not happen as quickly as some would wish, but happen it will, and possibly a lot faster than others would hope. And once again the Walkerites hide behind reforms and lack of working-class unity instead of tackling the class issues.

Connolly identified the dividing issue as the question of recognising that Ireland is entitled to self-government, and argued that “every class-conscious worker should work for the freedom of the country in which they live, if they desire to hasten the political power of their class in that country.” Unless the working class dictate the outcome this time, history will be repeated.

Some on the left are using the

National Health Service as a blocking mechanism to slow down the push for Irish unity, hiding behind calls for repairing and protecting the NHS in the North and building one in the South as some sort of precondition and a panacea for class unity.

You won’t build class unity by merging a subjugated people in the political system of their conquerors. The class issue that is being ignored is that the NHS in the British colony of “Northern Ireland” has been disproportionately underfunded, run down and privatised bit by bit for decades as part of British rule.

There is no comparison between the NHS provided in the North and that in England, Scotland, or Wales. It has more in common with the HSE in the South; the only difference is that it is free at the point of entry, while waiting-

## Belfast Communist Party of Ireland Statement

The Communist Party of Ireland wants to announce, and welcomes, the establishment of a new branch in the Belfast region. The new branch will be called the Greater Belfast Branch. Its officers and branch members have the full support of the NEC and the membership of the CPI.

This follows a period of sustained disruption of our work, which included the active, deliberate disruption and filibustering at NEC meetings by a small number of individuals who have acted outside the party structure and rules.

This is a very welcome step in stabilising our organisation in the Six Counties. Along with the Betty Sinclair branch, we are once again carrying out a wide range of work, political meetings and involvement in people’s struggles in the North of Ireland.

The establishment of this new branch follows a period of difficulties which resulted in the expulsion of five members from the Belfast region. Their activities, which placed them outside our party structures and constitutional requirements, meant that the NEC had

The British partitioned Ireland and created the artificial construct of sectarian differences to keep us apart, not to bring us together. This division is the traditional route of imperialism, used to stop working-class unity in Ireland.

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lists and services are as bad as, if not worse than, in the South as capitalism wreaks havoc on the working people on both sides of the border.

Partition and capitalism are the common class enemy in both jurisdictions. Neither has worked for ordinary working people and never will work for ordinary working people.

The left, instead of trying to patch up British rule, should be exposing its failure, not misleading the people into thinking that Britain is a benign influence rather than the imperialist master it is.

Some trade unionists, and even some who claim to be communists, are expressing more than a hint of Walkerism by using membership of the EU south of the border as a roadblock to Irish unity, ignoring the fact that a majority of people both north and south voted to be members of the European Union, misguided as this may have been. This was repeated in the recent Brexit referendum, where more than 55 per cent of people in the North voted to remain.

To suggest that the people in the Six Counties would be better off under the rule of British imperialism but independent from the EU than reuniting Ireland quite simply beggars belief. From penal laws to internment, pitch cap to plastic bullet, Burntolllet to Dunlavin Green, famine to eviction, mass murder, rape, pillage, death, and destruction—this is the reality of British rule in Ireland.

The damage done to Ireland by fifty years of European imperialism is in the halfpenny place when compared with the damage British colonialism and imperialism have done this country for

850 years. Yes, Ireland was forced by the EU to pay off European banking debt; but a united Ireland, with a united working class, won't be slow about ditching the EU. This can be done by a simple referendum (similar to Brexit). Unfortunately, the British have never given the Irish people a referendum on the occupation of Ireland.

Some trade unionists, in opposition to growing calls from Trade Unionists for a New and United Ireland, like to cower behind the so-called “realities of existing concrete conditions,” implying that the lack of working-class unity in the North will stop revolutionary change in our lifetime and the self-determination of the Irish people.

They preach that the route to working-class unity is to lead the class into separate campaigns, north and south, on social and economic issues, suggesting that this will draw working people from both sections of the community into struggle, so creating “opportunities” to change perceptions, make connections between campaigns, and win people to the economic benefits of an all-Ireland economy.

So the way to build working-class unity in Ireland is separate campaigns, behind peace walls and borders. The suggestion that any of these campaigns could be on an all-Ireland basis is totally absent, of course.

The British partitioned Ireland and created the artificial construct of sectarian differences to keep us apart, not to bring us together. This division is the traditional route of imperialism, used to stop working-class unity in Ireland.

An alternative to the existing governments in both jurisdictions is the way to unite our class. That alternative is socialism—not a nicer form of British rule or a cobbling together of the two failed political solutions contrived to serve British interests one hundred years ago.

Socialism is the route to uniting the working class of Ireland, from Larne to Limerick, from Derry to Wexford.

**Without national freedom, socialism is impossible; without socialism, national freedom is worthless.**

Trade unionists who urge caution and restraint, citing the shortness of one lifetime as not being long enough for revolutionary change to come about, are ignoring the fact that if you hide behind excuses and divisions to slow down the political programme into aspirations or separate campaigns they will most certainly never happen in their lifetime. Sometimes the tree has to be shaken for the apple to fall.

A socialist programme for a united independent Ireland is the solid goal of the CPI. It is not an “aspiration,” to be kept quiet just in case you might offend somebody: it must be campaigned and rigorously struggled for. It cannot happen, and will not happen, without the determination and the unity of the Irish working class.

Socialism is the unifying factor that benefits the entire working class, and it is the undefeatable route to building that working-class unity—not separately but together, all working and struggling for each other to build a Workers' Republic where nobody is left behind for peace, independence, and socialism. ★

no other option but to take decisive action in expelling these members. Those loyal to this tiny minority refused to re-register with the party, yet they have refused and failed to relinquish the social media platforms and continue to write under the CPI banner within /Unity,/ which includes a postal address and email address for membership.

The CPI want to be clear: a rogue branch which continues to call itself the CPI, Belfast Branch, and its affiliate social media platforms, do not

in any way represent the views or opinions of the Communist Party of Ireland. The former Northern Area Committee also does not represent the views or opinions of our party, nor is the newspaper *Unity* any longer published by our party or members of our party.

Membership of the CPI will only be accepted through the official party channels, via our web site, <https://communistparty.ie/en/membership/> or by contacting [natoffice@communistparty.ie](mailto:natoffice@communistparty.ie).

If you are living in the Belfast region and are interested in joining, you will become a member of a new and flourishing Greater Belfast Branch, which will direct the political activities of our membership in the region, helping to develop and strengthen the national character of the Communist Party of Ireland and its revolutionary working-class anti-imperialist character, and strengthen our all-Ireland strategy adopted at our last 25th National Congress, working towards our 26th Congress in 2022. ★

# ZIONISM AT WORK



## A crucial ally of imperialism

The origins of Israel and its role in the Middle East

**GRAHAM HARRINGTON**

**P**ALESTINE WAS first occupied by the Ottoman Empire, but after the break-up of that entity in the First World War it was transferred to the British Empire under the Sykes-Picot agreement, which divided up the Middle East between Britain and France.

Theodor Herzl's vision was for a Jewish state in this region. The only problem was it was already inhabited by

an Arab population.

Following Herzl's ideology, a wave of settlers flooded into the region after the war, with support by the British Mandate authorities. The British were fresh from uprisings in Iraq, Egypt and Ireland and faced discontent in India. They mistrusted the Arab populations and felt that Zionist settlers could prove a useful buffer.

Palestinian anger at their mistreatment led to the Great Arab

Revolt of 1936–39, which began with a six-month general strike, brutally put down by the British.

This was the preparation for the future Israeli state as an important ally of imperialism. As Herzl put it, a Zionist state in Palestine would “form a part of a wall of defence for Europe in Asia, an outpost of civilisation against barbarism.” The Balfour Declaration of 1917 committed Britain to creating this state. It made no mention of the Arab

## Aliens in their own land

**SAJEEV KUMAR**

**M**EPHISTOPHELES, A demon of German legend, says: “Hell is where I am. Wherever I go I'm still in it.” These words are relevant to imperialism as well.

Recently the world's attention converged on two issues: Ivan Duque's oppression of the Colombian people's strike and the Israeli bombing of Palestine. In both cases the root of the issue was the expulsion of indigenous peoples, and the reason behind the issue is imperialism.

The claim of Israel when the state was formed in 1948 was “people without land occupying a land without people.” If the first part of the claim can

be accepted, the latter part is false. Palestinians have been living there for thousands of years.

Israel is the only country with ever-changing borders, and the latest attack on Palestine is to modify it further, on the pretext of the “right to self-defence.” It's not a fight among equals: it's a classic case of a powerful state, this one with nuclear capabilities, looking for an excuse to carry out an attack many times more brutal on a defenceless nation.

Zionism, which created the state of Israel, is a political project of colonisation based on the annihilation of the indigenous people. It is pro-imperialist and depends on military power for its survival.

As Hindutva is different from Hinduism in India, Zionism is different from Judaism, and criticism of Zionism is not anti-Semitism. The subsidising of Israel by the United States is to maintain imperialist hegemony in the oil-rich region; and the genesis of Zionism is anti-socialism.

When myriads of poor Jews joined the socialist front in Tsarist Russia before the Bolshevik revolution, the Zionist leader Theodor Herzl asked the tsar for help to set up a Jewish state, which would solve the problem of socialism in Russia. Winston Churchill supported Zionism so as to defeat the left-wing “international Jews.” When the Suez Canal was nationalised by Egypt under Nasser, the United States adopted the “Eisenhower doctrine” and began using Israel as a force for fighting communism in the Middle East.

By 1949, 720,000 Palestinians, out of a population of 1.3 million, were made refugees. They were given no right to return to their homes, many of which were demolished by the new Israelis

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inhabitants, who made up 95 per cent of the then population.

As we have often said, imperialism does not have friends, only interests. The British ruling class had no sympathy with the persecution of the Jewish people; for instance there was the Aliens Act (1905), which aimed to get Jewish people who were fleeing Tsarist persecution out of Britain. As Jewish people fled the tyranny of Nazi Germany from the 1930s, racist immigration laws in the United States and Britain meant that many were forced to flee to Palestine, despite many of them not supporting Zionism. For the racist imperialist states it was a way to kill two birds with the one stone.

In fact Jewish workers were among the most consistently left-wing in Britain and the United States. Exporting them to Palestine meant they were forced to become a reactionary buffer by imperialism.

Britain armed Zionist settlers to help them fend off the 1936 Revolt. In the 1940s, groups such as the Stern Gang, Haganah and Irgun launched a terrorist campaign, simultaneously with the start of ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians. A typical massacre was that of Dayr Yasin, where a hundred men, women and children were murdered by Zionist terrorists. Give one thing to the Israeli state: it has always been consistent.

By 1949, 720,000 Palestinians, out

of a population of 1.3 million, were made refugees. They were given no right to return to their homes, many of which were demolished by the new Israeli state, created after the 1947 partition. The newly independent Arab states suffered a major defeat to the Israeli military, while the Israelis, with British and French support, had secured military superiority.

Jordan, a British ally, gave automatic citizenship to refugees from Palestine while it annexed the West Bank. This was less out of sympathy for Palestinians and more out of a need to gain legitimacy for the monarchy, with the new Palestinians becoming the majority of the population. The later betrayal by the monarchy of the Palestinians erupted in violence after Black September, 1970.

Because of the monarchy's open dealings with the new Israeli state, the king was assassinated after visiting the al-Aqsa mosque in East Jerusalem. This forced the monarchy to take a more anti-Israel stance. After the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel took over East Jerusalem and the West Bank. In Jerusalem, armed Zionist settlers forcibly took over Palestinian lands and most recently in Sheikh Jarrah, which started the most recent rounds of Israeli aggression.

In Gulf countries, Palestinians had a right to stay only if they were employed,

in effect becoming a source of cheap labour. In Lebanon, which came under the French mandate, the sectarian system that was devised gave prominence to the Maronite Christians. The Palestinians were relegated to refugee camps—which also allowed them to become among the most educated in the Middle East, despite not having their own state. Their alliance with Lebanese leftists would mean that Lebanon would become a victim of Israeli intervention, where fascist groups, such as the Phalange, enjoyed Israeli support in their massacres of Palestinian refugees.

What is clear is that since its inception Israel has been an important ally of imperialism. Contrary to its propaganda of being encircled on all sides, the reality is that the surrounding Arab states are unable to tackle Israel, not to mention unwilling, because of their own client relationship with, first, British and then US imperialism. ★

### **This is the first in a short series of articles dealing with the Middle East**

**Picture:** Nakba, literally means “catastrophe”. It refers to the mass expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes and land following the establishment of

Palestine was not the only choice as the site of a Jewish state: Argentina, Uganda, Cyprus and the American Mid-West were all considered; but the Zionist leaders thought that the choice of Palestine would be an emotional factor that would gather support for the inhuman occupation. The Palestinians had to pay the price for the Zionist and imperialist greed for land and resources.

Herzl tried for a deal with the Ottoman Empire: for the exchange of Palestine the Zionist movement would support Turkey's genocide of Armenians. So every move to form and sustain Israel was based on injustice, which continues to this day.

There won't be peace until there is justice, until the Israeli policy of “maximum land, minimum Arabs” ends.

In Colombia the indigenous peoples

are evacuated from their lands, on which they have been living for generations, for environmental protection and to control drug-trafficking. Scientists say that the Amazon forests, which cover 42 per cent of Colombia (6 per cent of total Amazon forest lies within its borders) are anthropogenic, i.e. human-made. Those people whose ancestors created the Amazon forest are driven from their land, to be exploited by transnational mining companies, including Cosigo Resources, Auxico Resources, and Amerisur Resources, denying the constitutional guarantee provided to the tribal people of Colombia.

The president of Colombia, Ivan Duque, has the backing of imperialism for opening the national boundaries for the exploitation of natural resources. The last straw that broke the camel's

back was the tax “reforms” that squeezed the poor to feed the rich.

Both these struggles involve indigenous people putting up a daring fight against a very powerful enemy, and they need the support and solidarity of the working class all over the world. There is an Israeli working class who are against the genocide of Palestinian people. That working-class unity has to be built up to defeat imperialism.

Fidel Castro once said, “The US spends 5 per cent of its military budget on education while Cuba spends only 5 per cent of its budget for education on military spending.” People in every country have to stand up against spending obscene amounts on military budgets and for investing more in public health, green energy, housing, and education. The fight against imperialism is a fight for justice. ★



## Climate change and farming

**JOE HURLEY**

**C**LIMATE CHANGE is the most important challenge faced by Irish agriculture today. From next year onwards the basic payment scheme grant will be changed, so that 35 per cent of the payment will be based on full adherence to environmental measures on the farm. In other words, farmers will have to be involved in an environmental scheme, such as the green, low-carbon agri-environment scheme (GLAS), to get full payment.

This new scheme, at the moment known as the rural environmental protection scheme (REPS), which is not to be implemented until 2022, essentially ensures that farmers work with the implementation of full climate measures in mind.

Farmers have always farmed in an environmental way. In the early 1990s the original REPS was introduced. This

scheme was a single payment of about £5,000 (Irish pounds) every year for these measures to be implemented:

- (1) protection of natural areas such as owned forests, quarries, and sanctuaries, areas not used for agricultural production;
- (2) planting hedgerows around the farm;
- (3) reduction of nitrogen;
- (4) putting boundary fences 3 metres from drains, rivers, and watercourses.

And so on. You had land bind boxes, set up sand for bees, and a whole range of environmental measures that ensured that farmers and the rural areas were at the cutting edge of the environmental issue.

Over the years other schemes came and went, such as the agri-environmental options scheme (AEOS) and GLAS. They were mostly unpopular, because of their poor payments. For example, a standard REPS payment was

about £5,000, while the AEOS and GLAS payments were at best €4,000, which defies inflation, which usually rises over thirty years—not the other way round!

The Green Party has scapegoated rural areas for its current policy on the climate crisis, but we farmers have little or no time for the Greens. The reason is that they will not sit down and discuss and exchange ideas with the farmers. They are working constantly with theories that they consider viable and view the work done by environmentally responsible farmers who have been a part of every environmental scheme since the 1990s as irrelevant to the whole climate debate.

But there cannot be realistic advancement in anything unless both sides get together and put their views across. Only then can an all-round strategy be implemented, combining theory and practical application on the

## Capitalism is killing the planet

**PAUL DORAN**

**B**EFORE THE Industrial Revolution, human activity did not create new, global environmental conditions that could translate into a fundamentally different stratigraphic signal. Since then, however, the exploration of coal, oil and gas, in particular, has enabled worldwide industrialisation, construction, and mass transport,

producing a wide range of changes that leave trace strata around the world.

It was found that increased erosion now exceeds the production of sediment by an order of magnitude. Carbon dioxide and methane levels are significantly higher than at any time in nearly a million years and are rising much faster than in any previous period. Mass extinctions, the migration of species and the

replacement of natural vegetation with agricultural monoculture are changing the nature of the biosphere.

Increases in sea level may reach 10 to 30 metres for each 1°C increase in temperature, while the acidification of ocean water will have severe effects on coral reefs and plankton. Air pollutants from fossil fuels are responsible for chronic and acute illnesses, leading to a major increase globally in premature deaths.



The forthcoming CAP talks should recognise the need to take care of small farmers with an increase in their annual basic payment scheme. Large-scale co-operative factory farmers' grants should be cut to accommodate this plan.

ground for a positive solution that suits all. So, instead of recrimination and accusations we have debate and discussion to bring two important cogs together.

For years we farmed in a socialist way around my area, and I will discuss this now. I will also discuss "show farmers" or capitalist farmers and armchair farmers. For thirty years the farmers in my area got together as a group and bought all types of machinery: harvesters, silage-makers, harrows, shakers, trailers of all types, and so on. Once these were bought these items were used for the general needs of the area, and no money was exchanged, only labour.

For instance, you got your silage cut, but instead of payment you helped with the silage-cutting in the area. The same with the harvest and all the jobs of the area, as the machines were available to all within the area. This enabled farmers to concentrate on production, and their only cost was fertiliser, meal, and the bringing in of the animals.

Back then, Ireland was on a par with the Mercosur countries, with high production rates. Its grants back then were 10 and 22-month grants; cattle of that age were submitted and paid for. This gave an incentive to produce more.

In the 1990s the grants changed from amount of cattle to number of hectares. This, with the "Celtic tiger," changed farming for the worse. So instead of being treated as a business farming was treated as a way of life. Instead of concentrating on production they bought tractors and all types of

machinery that they did not need. They also bought very dear cattle that had little chance of making a profit—all this to give the impression of wealth, to keep up with the Joneses; but this meant increased indebtedness, with hire-purchase payments and extra borrowings to buy cattle and agri-products.

Essentially, all their profits were sucked into an ever-spiralling debt that became catastrophic and wiped out many farms, leaving them prey to predatory banks and vulture funds.

This was a capitalist system at its worst. It was the reason why production fell so badly and left us at a disadvantage with Mercosur countries. Comparing socialist farming with capitalist farming, it is easy to see what's best for everyone involved.

As for the armchair farmers, they are just people who inherit a farm or who have no interest in farming and lease it out. Such a farm doesn't produce as much as it should, but at least it is producing, though costly to the person leasing it, and that affects his production. With the new EU basic payment it's armchair farmers who will be targeted, with reduced grant payments, eventually getting nothing at all.

As stated earlier, the coming farm payment will be largely based on involvement in environmental schemes. Non-involvement means a drastic cut in income. It's a time of great change, and if rural areas are not ready they will be caught out.

A conference on the climate change

debate, the current Climate Bill, the closing down of peat plants, wind farms and other pertinent rural issues would be a welcome event. If it could be organised, debate and discussion is the only way forward.

The forthcoming CAP talks should recognise the need to take care of small farmers with an increase in their annual basic payment scheme. Large-scale co-operative factory farmers' grants should be cut to accommodate this plan. Large-scale farmers are getting €100,000 to €300,000 a year while farmers under a certain acreage are getting about €5,000 to €6,000. The CAP talks are a chance for left groups in the EU to get a fair deal for small and medium farmers who have implemented environmental measures all their lives.

Mick Wallace and Clare Daly, alongside their allies, did a great job with the new Aarhus agreement recently. This is a very important agreement for the rights of the public and the protection of the environment. Lots of luck to their efforts during the CAP talks. Mainstream agricultural lobbying groups such as the IFA could learn from this and actually fight for all farmers' interests, not for the big farmers and corporations.

I hope the reader will find this article and earlier articles informative. It is important to get the rural point of view across. The coming CAP talks are, in my view, the most important in Irish agricultural history. A lot of livelihoods in the rural area are on the line. It is not an exaggeration to say we are at a crossroads. ★

Which of us can deny the obvious facts in front of our very eyes? Grass-cutting at Christmas time. Extreme cold weather in late May. Daffodils ready at New Year. These are what I see as I wake up in my local village in Dublin daily.

Why should one company in Co. Kildare use vast amounts of our public water resources and yet pay very little tax? Or, even more important, should it be allowed to operate in this country?

Yet this state blithely talks the talk, setting out targets, and everything is named "sustainability"—that new catchword, with the constant

appropriating of the radical language of people's movements for a revolution, and not reform, as those in the social-democratic political mainstream will advocate. The Paris Agreement of 2015 was typical window-dressing to make something look different when in fact it was a sop to us all.

Our state's infrastructure needs to be reinforced with a new paradigm, with the first thought of, How will this enforce a lesser damage to our earth system? The massive building of public housing, built with the climate in mind, linked in to public transport and the proper use of public water; the introduction of solar

panelling into the heating of public housing; using technology to serve the public interests in the building of the state's infrastructure—these are just simple methodologies.

There is the constant media spin of consumerism and that we all have a part to play in how our earth system manages; yet the elephant in the room is increased global production, the constant build up of the military-industrial complex globally as if it exists on thin air by all countries.

Capitalism is killing the planet slowly; and the only way out of the catastrophe is socialism, based on human needs. ★

## On the need for a “focal point”

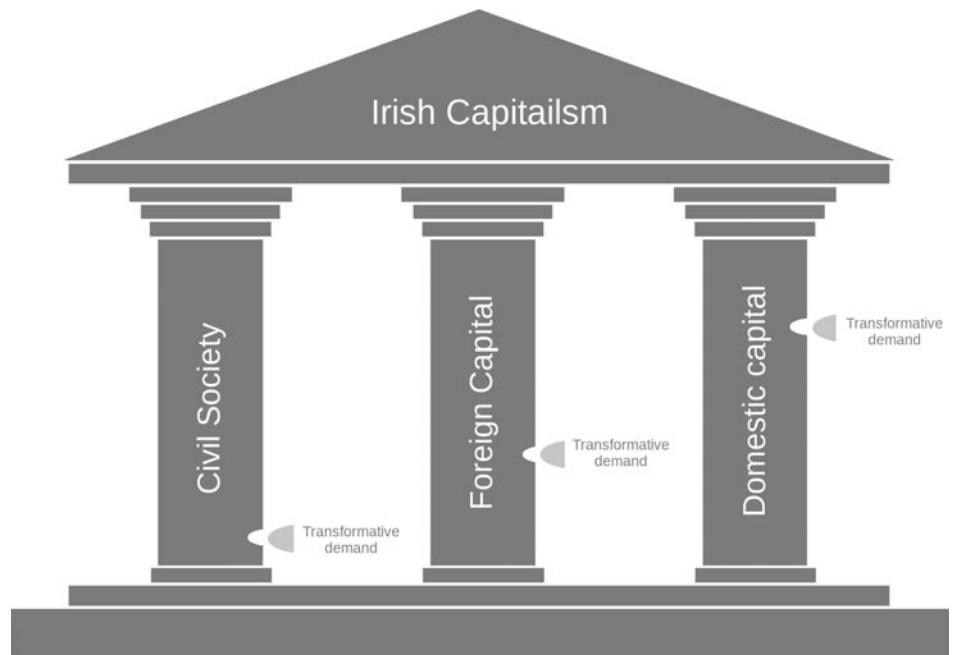
EOGHAN O’NEILL AND  
EOIN MACDERMOTT

IN IRELAND, just like elsewhere, our movement stands in front of a seemingly impenetrable wall: the great wall of capital. The unfortunate reality is that we are even further from tearing it down than we were a hundred years ago, when the last revolutionary high point of Irish history was unfolding.

A century later, after partition and the formation of the first Communist Party, we as a movement and a party continue to strike blows against this wall, which upholds a system of exploitation and increasing levels of deprivation.

Since the last global recession of 2008 the CPI has been sharpening its analysis of the contradictions within capitalism, developing the concept of the “triple lock of imperialism” and putting forward a model of a transformative strategy to help guide both our movement and working-class forces towards the progressive, democratic and ultimately revolutionary demands required to build socialism.

We have developed our understanding of the structure of the wall; but nevertheless it stands. Those with experience know that the only way to break down a solid wall using a sledgehammer is to focus all the blows on one area, at one single point, constantly and repeatedly, until



### ▲ The structure of Irish capitalism

sooner or later cracks appear. With repeated effort, these cracks penetrate further, to create a small hole. This point, where the weight of our effort is placed, we call the focal point.

Once a small hole emerges it releases other weak points in the wall, which can be exploited, expanding the small hole little by little as new, weaker areas along the edges become a point of focus for the hammer. Eventually everything that bonded the bricks together, the cement and the plaster, is weakened under the weight

of its construction; soon big chunks of the wall fall, with every blow doing more damage than the last. Eventually the remnants of the wall collapse under their own weight, leaving only rubble, to be swept away to make room for the future.

Spontaneous and erratic blows against a wall will cause cosmetic damage without damaging the structural integrity of the wall.

So it is with capitalism. A centre-left government, a handful of Marxist TDs or even strong concessions in the spheres of housing or health amount

## EU membership is the crucial test

JIMMY CORCORAN

ON 18 MAY the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications issued a policy statement on the importing of fracked gas, in which it was noted that the Programme for Government contained a commitment to banning it. The press release stated that because of EU membership, in particular EU Directive 2009/73/EC, the Government is unable

to legislate for a ban on importing fracked gas, cannot ban the importing of fracked gas, and cannot prevent the processing of fracked gas.

However, the statement assured us that the Government would work to change EU policy—and it didn’t really matter, as the state got its gas from Scotland, and it’s not fracked.

Leaving aside the difficulties in changing policy at the EU level, this decision by the Government reveals once

again the level of threat the EU poses to Irish democracy.

Where do the Green Party stand on all this? How can the Government implement a sustainable energy policy if it runs contrary to EU rules? How can they square their support for the EU with such an assault on the ability of the Irish state to determine its own energy policies? Surely they would have investigated the legal position before they agreed to put it in the agreement for

# Civil society constitutes the particular institutions beyond the state that enable the capitalist mode of production to be produced and reproduced.

to striking welcome chunks of plaster off the wall; yet the integrity and stability of the structure remains as long as the blows are not focused.

To collapse the entire capitalist structure we must start with specific targets, conscious of where we strike, and in doing so focus our effort on the weakest point. We must apply our resources, energy, time and effort to focusing our blows on those points that have the greatest chance of weakening the overall structural integrity of the capitalist system, thereby creating further fractures and weak points that can be targeted over time.

When we think of the task of dismantling the capitalist system in Ireland it seems daunting, undoable, even demoralising. It is like standing in front of a seemingly impenetrable wall. For decades, many strong blows have been struck, sometimes consciously and sometimes spontaneously but not consciously and consistently by an organisation and a popular movement of the working class. These blows must be both consciously and consistently delivered if there is any hope for the future.

Fortunately, the ground on which capitalism rests is inherently unstable. On the one hand it is prone to tremors, as the very system is built on tectonic plates of contradictory and antagonistic class forces, while on the other hand the global environmental crisis threatens to erode the very soil on which the whole capitalist system is built. Both these forces continue to present us with new cracks.

government?

The comments of the then attorney-general that the proposals of the Control of Economic Activity (Occupied Territories) Bill (2018) violated EU trade regulation had been made only days before the Programme for Government had been agreed. Did no alarm bells ring when they heard those comments? Did the Green Party know that a ban on the importing of fracked gas would breach EU rules, though it still put the agreement to its members?

The decision also raises important questions for Sinn Féin and the small

The existing structure of capitalism in Ireland is dependent on a number of concrete historical formations, the three most important of which are civil society, foreign capital, and domestic capital. Instead of a monolithic wall we can think of Irish capitalism as a structure that stands on these as three distinct pillars, as seen in the acropolistic fig. 1.

Civil society constitutes the particular institutions beyond the state that enable the capitalist mode of production to be produced and reproduced. The second pillar, the structure of international capital, refers to the role of foreign capital, which penetrates the economic and social fabric of society. This is largely determined by the triple lock of imperialism, identified by the CPI as binding the people of Ireland to the often contradictory interests of the EU, British and US imperialist blocs.

The third and final pillar is the structure of domestic capital, with the hallmark of dependence, servitude and parasitism that has contributed to the stunted and uneven development of a large-scale indigenous industrial base.

If we think of capitalism as it exists in Ireland as a structure that rests on these three pillars we begin to realise the enormity of the task; but conversely we also find that we have defined the tangible points of focus. The question that arises is, Where do we focus the blows of our hammer? The answer to that question depends on a strategic assessment of the CPI's capabilities as well as the structural integrity of each pillar. Existing and

left-wing parties in the Dáil. If they want to govern from the left after the next election they will run into trouble with the EU. They will then have a choice: confront the EU and implement a progressive programme, or capitulate to the EU. There is no middle road.

The lesson of SYRIZA in Greece should be learnt. SYRIZA borrowed the symbolism of the Greek left and much of its language; but when they realised that they would have to confront the EU they buckled and betrayed those who voted for their left-wing oratory.

The question for Sinn Féin is, Are

emerging cracks in the pillars will determine the types of steel wedges we should forge, and these in turn will determine where we should focus our blows.

Some pillars may have substantial cracks, for which we could craft large wedges in the form of transformative demands; but without the requisite force to drive those wedges this amounts in effect to sloganeering. Other pillars may have small, marginal and isolated fractures, which may be easier to forge and drive wedges into, but these in turn have little hope of causing damage to the structural integrity of the pillar or expanding to meet other small cracks.

To answer this question, "Which is strategic rather than political?" we must evaluate the position of class forces in society, our own areas of weakness and strength, and make a decision on how we can best plan our campaigns in the months and years of struggle that lie ahead. The worst thing that we, and the rest of the Irish left, can continue to do is disperse our blows along different pillars at different points—expending much energy but achieving little.

In short, we need a focal point towards which to direct the weight of our effort. As the CPI prepares for its 26th National Congress it will be setting those strategic objectives. ★

**Next month we will discuss some fissures in these pillars, as well as some wedges or transformative demands that we believe are important to consider.**

they pro or anti-EU? Their history and tradition is anti-EU, but their position on Brexit suggests otherwise. They cannot put forward a progressive programme and not deal with the issue of EU membership. They will not be able to claim that they did not know that they could not implement their policies because of EU rules.

Before the next election Sinn Féin should state whether or not they support continued EU membership. If they do then they will be unable to implement progressive policies, and their move to the centre will be complete. ★

## Change is inevitable



**TOMMY MCKEARNEY**

**I**N THIS CENTENARY year of the foundation of the northern six-county state, the crisis within unionism appears to increase almost weekly. Standing out above the rest was the messy defenestration of the DUP leader Arlene Foster, because, difficult as it may be to believe, she was considered too liberal.

The gloss was taken off Edwin Poots's victory, however, when his treatment of Mrs Foster was criticised by the former DUP leader Peter Robinson in a scathing article in the *Belfast Newsletter*, a setback compounded shortly thereafter by a Lucid Talks opinion poll for the *Belfast Telegraph* indicating that Poots did not enjoy the

support of a majority of the party's grass roots. Most notable in this regard was a motion passed by Fermanagh and Tyrone branch of the DUP expressing "disgust" at how Mrs Foster was treated.

Over in East Belfast at the Ulster Unionist Party offices there was an almost unnoticed change of leader when the former British navy submariner Steve Aiken was replaced by the former Royal Irish Ranger Doug Beattie. The UUP is struggling to square the circle posed by attempting to modernise its image without alienating its aged and essentially right-wing support base. Traditional supporters of the party were undoubtedly bewildered recently when Beattie introduced progressive pro-LGBT legislation in Stormont while simultaneously excoriating the chief

constable of the PSNI.

Not far away, the Loyalist Community Council was making a right shambles of a rare opportunity to impress when it was invited to address the House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee on Brexit and the Irish Sea border. When asked about the possibility of a return to violence if the Northern Ireland protocol remained, a youthful member of the council replied: "I am saying that I would not rule it off the table." His frankness was matched only by his political naïveté.

Moreover, although a minority, there is now a significant section of pro-union people prepared to take a more pragmatic view of relinquishing the connection with Britain while simultaneously holding little outright hostility towards the Republic. Often voting Alliance, this cohort is sometimes considered a greater threat to traditional unionism than is the presence of Sinn Féin.

There is a tendency in some quarters to interpret the continuing series of difficulties in the wider unionist family simply as a result of ineptitude and incompetence. This is the view that believes that a more media-savvy leadership possessed of a large dose of political "cuteness" would restore unionist fortunes. If only they could find an Orange version of Charlie Haughey all would be well again.

The problem for unionism, however, runs much deeper than anything that might be fixed by employing a firm of clever PR consultants. Unionism faces deep structural problems, which are

## Saving life at sea – neo-liberal style

**DÓNALL Ó BRIAIN**

**M**OST MARITIME states have a service responsible for coastal life-saving and air-sea rescue, while some are also responsible for preventing maritime crime within their jurisdiction. In some countries the service is part of the military.

Many Irish people are familiar to some degree with HM Coastguard in Britain and the US Coast Guard, if only

through the dramatic depictions of the cinema and television. But in this matter Ireland is entirely different, if not unique.

Despite its official-sounding name, the Irish Coast Guard is a commercial firm, a subsidiary of a Canadian corporation, CHC Helicopter. In 2000 the Government, in its fanatical pursuit of privatisation, took the responsibility for air-sea rescue from the Air Corps, which had operated it for decades, and put it out for tender. The Canadian

corporation was awarded the contract, together with the use of the title Irish Coast Guard.

This organisation has no statutory powers, and no ships. It operates four helicopters (with one in reserve) and calls on the Air Corps when fixed-wing aircraft are required as well as for other services.

In March 2017 a notorious disaster occurred when a Coast Guard helicopter, in poor weather and at night, crashed into Black Rock Island off Co.



A way must be found to convince unionists, and particularly working-class unionists, that change is becoming virtually inevitable and, thereafter, that it is in their self-interest to influence positively how this change takes place and where it leads.

reflected in, rather than caused by, the manoeuvrings of its political representatives.

Factors and circumstances are affecting Northern Ireland that are beyond the control of political unionism, a reality that many supporters of the union are either unable or unwilling to recognise. With Britain no longer a global superpower, the North is not now seen by London as of crucial military-strategic or economic importance. At a stroke, this removes an important unionist asset, the unconditional support of British imperialism. As a consequence, the British government is no longer as indulgent towards its difficult-to-manage supporters in the Six Counties as it once was.

Although sometimes taken for granted nowadays, several developments over recent decades have further eroded unionist confidence, such as the Anglo-Irish Agreement, stopping Orange marches along the Garvaghy Road, the Belfast Agreement involving mandatory power-sharing with Sinn Féin, and now the Northern Ireland protocol, all implemented by the British government in the face of unionist opposition. Against this disturbing background of diminishing unionist power and influence there is the alarming possibility of a referendum on partition and the seemingly inexorable change to the demographic make-up of the Six Counties.

For a political ideology long used to exercising authoritarian power over, rather than governing with the consent of, its critics and political opponents, this

situation has caused confusion and an anxious search for answers. The problem, however, is that there is no one answer that satisfies all sections of unionist society. There are those nevertheless who still believe it possible to return to the pre-1969 glory days of an all-powerful, monolithic Unionist Party along with absolute control over its own all-encompassing machinery of state.

This, in effect, is the vision proposed by Edwin Poots when, during his acceptance speech on being elected party leader, he vowed to unite unionism and end the bickering. At the same time he also promised to defeat the Northern Ireland protocol. Taken together, we can see not only his strategy but also its inherent weakness and indeed the desperation afflicting unionism.

As described above, unionism is no longer the monolithic entity it once was. Therefore, to whip the largest number into line it becomes necessary to generate a sense of panic. An alarm has to be raised. The enemy is at the gate, or, with apologies to Alice Milligan, we must all come together or the Fenians will get us. The bogeyman picked by Poots is the protocol, allegedly crafted by a ruthless Dublin government hell-bent on separating loyal Ulster from Britain.

The dilemma this strategy throws up is that on the one hand it creates anxiety and panic among the most reactionary elements of unionism. It then becomes extremely difficult if not impossible to persuade them to make strategic concessions to the nationalist/republican electorate. By thus

polarising the situation, the Poots option makes it highly unlikely that significant nationalist support can be won over for maintaining the status quo as and when demographics change.

On the other hand, by employing such aggressive tactics and raising the spectre of street violence Poots drives another section of potential pro-union voters into the arms of the constitutionally neutral Alliance Party. In a nutshell, there is no way to square this circle, and therefore, over the coming decades, unionism faces an existential crisis.

The question then arises of how socialist republicans might respond to this situation. For a start, it is important to rule out juvenile analyses and to avoid making crude economic attempts to find answers. As always and everywhere, the class composition of unionist society is important, but in the North it is complex. Furthermore, hard-line Northern unionism will not be easily tempted by promises of financial improvement or incentives.

A way must be found to convince unionists, and particularly working-class unionists, that change is becoming virtually inevitable and, thereafter, that it is in their self-interest to influence positively how this change takes place and where it leads.

How to open that debate requires serious reflection and consideration. At the risk of being found guilty of avoiding the issue, this is another day's work, or indeed many days' work. It is a huge challenge, but we're up for it. ★

Mayo, killing all four crew members, who were returning from evacuating an injured member of a trawler crew. The last recorded message from the helicopter was the voice of the co-pilot saying, "We're gone!"

Because of near-zero visibility, the highly qualified and experienced pilot was entirely dependent on her instruments and digital aids. After the disaster it was discovered that the "enhanced ground proximity warning system" provided by the company did not include this high rocky island, or the fifty-foot lighthouse on its summit. The company has promised that its digital maps would be corrected—

"updated" was the term they used, as if something in the landscape had changed, though the rock has been there for millions of years and the lighthouse since the middle of the nineteenth century.

A review commissioned by the minister for transport was carried out in August 2018. The recommendation by the Air Accident Investigation Unit is understood to say that there were "several sources of confusion and potential conflicts of interest" (which is putting it diplomatically) and to recommend that responsibility for the service be given to the Irish Aviation Authority.

In October 2020 the Representative Association of Commissioned Officers said they want the Air Corps to be the primary agency for providing the search-and-rescue service. As it pointed out, the state is paying €367 million to a civilian company, yet it still relies on the Defence Forces to maintain the capability to train and organise the service at a moment's notice.

The contract is due for renewal this year, when it is reckoned it will be worth about €500 million—a nice little crock of gold for profiteers. And what are a few lives compared with that? ★

## A broad sweep of the story of the Irish

**MICHEÁL MAC AONGHUSA**

Jerry Shanahan, *Ireland: A Social History* (Dublin, 2021)

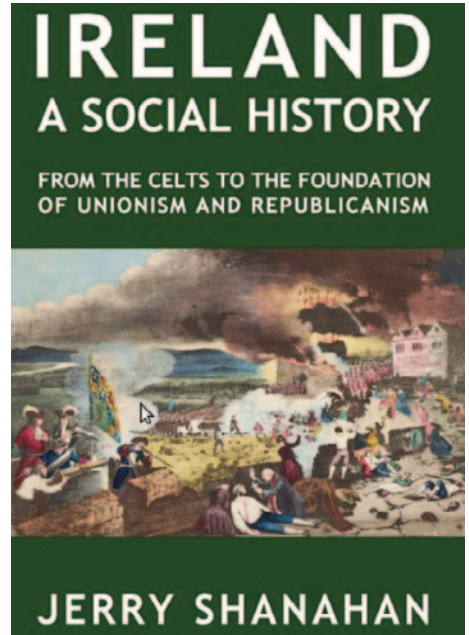
MUCH LEFT-WING literature in the twenty-first century seems to suggest that history began in 1848 or, at the earliest, in 1789. This unmarxist view tends towards a blinkered understanding of the roots of modern society and the development of capitalism and imperialism. Therefore, this work by Jerry Shanahan, subtitled *From the Celts to the Foundation of Unionism and Republicanism*, is to be welcomed.

He challenges the dominant approach of Irish professional historians in the twentieth century who followed the pre-eminent English history institutes in pursuing a “value-free” interpretation of history. These bodies held a view that the Empire was something benign, a

view we still get in television programmes and in Ireland from their Irish trainees and disciples: the notion that colonisation and occupation wasn’t all that bad.

Shanahan also challenges the mindset that fails to recognise the struggle for national independence as part of the democratic process. He draws from the work of Connolly and Tommy Jackson but adds to them and does not follow them mechanically.

One of the characteristics of this work is that the author finds it necessary to take into account events and processes elsewhere in Europe and particularly in Scotland, Wales, and England. This is especially enlightening in the traumas of the seventeenth century. The plantations, especially that of six counties of Ulster (not that Six!) were designed to drive out the native Irish and were not entirely successful but formed a template for future genocidal



projects in the burgeoning empire. The aim was to deprive the indigenous population of the means of sustenance and reduce them to becoming a marginal under-class, and then to “civilise” whatever of them were left.

It was in that period that religion was introduced into the colonial project as a political identifier. The counter-revolutionary Cromwell was able to call upon God in his campaign of genocide in

## Political activist and radical photographer



Tom Barry and Séamus Ó Riain

**MICK HEALY**

SÉAMUS Ó RIAIN was born into poverty on 2 September 1937 to Katherine Ryan in Dublin. When

Katherine married Tom Ryan, Séamus was fostered out to a family called Corbally; unfortunately, he was to end up in Daingean children’s detention centre in Co. Offaly.

Daingean treated the children more like slaves than children, according to a commission in 2009 that inquired into child abuse at the detention centre. He remained there for about three years before he was reunited with Katherine and his stepfather at 51 Viking Road, Arbour Hill, Dublin.

Ó Riain became an accomplished photographer. His employment for a number of years was at Jerome Photography Studio, 4 Henry Street, Dublin. He created hundreds of remarkable images, which are a vital history of Republican and left-wing activity. Moreover, the photographs with his Phoenix Company in London featured Brendan Behan, the Dubliners, and Tom Barry, former commander of the Third West Cork Flying Column during the War of Independence. Tom Barry praised him in a letter dated 24 August 1977: “A hundred note of thanks for your splendid set of photos. They are the finest I have ever seen and I have unfortunately, have had hundreds taken.”

Like others of his generation, Ó Riain

The plantations, especially that of six counties of Ulster (not that Six!) were designed to drive out the native Irish and were not entirely successful but formed a template for future genocidal projects in the burgeoning empire

Ireland. A mass cohort of new colonists were “granted” most of the land of Ireland and formed the new controlling ascendancy.

What was left of “Old English” and the few remaining Gaelic landholders lost their estates after the Williamite War, part of a European conflict between Louis XIV of France and his allies on one side and a coalition including William of Orange and Pope Innocent XI on the other. William’s victory at the Battle of the Boyne was celebrated by high masses in Rome, Vienna, Madrid, and Brussels.

The eighteenth century saw a minority of cosseted landowners estranged from and lording over the vast majority living in terrible poverty. It also saw the growth of a native middle class, which grew to become a major economic and political force. This was the class that produced O’Connellism and Redmondism and eventually led the counter-revolution of 1922—but that is beyond the scope of the current work.

Shanahan gives a good concise account of the emergence of republicanism in Ireland in the 1790s and the inevitable reaction to it in the form of Orangeism, cultivated and

promoted by Dublin Castle. The early 1790s saw a virtual civil war in the Armagh area, where loyalist gangs were carrying out ethnic cleansing of large parts. The so-called Battle of the Diamond was followed by the establishment of the Orange Order.

The author aptly quotes Jemmy Hope, who at the time pointed out that land greed was “the real basis for the persecution in the County Armagh, religious profession being only a pretext, to banish a Roman Catholic from his snug little cottage or spot of land and get possessed of it.” Dublin Castle provided huge sums of money to the new Orange Order and promoted it on a national level, and it had the enthusiastic support of the hideous Lord Castlereagh. Thus was implanted one of the causes of partition.

The scope of Jerry Shanahan’s work will, no doubt, leave him open to nit-picking by historians, amateur and professional. Its purpose is to illuminate the major processes in Irish history from the Middle Ages to the beginning of the nineteenth century, with appropriate recognition of the social aspect. On the whole he has succeeded and deserves a wide readership. ★

emigrated to London to find employment, and it was there he converted politically to Marxism when he became involved with the Irish Workers’ Group. In the late 1960s he forged links with Saor Éire, which was set up by former members of the IRA and the Irish political left.

Importantly, there’s a copy of correspondence between Ó Riain and General Georgios Grivas, the EOKA leader, in March 1964. This was five months before the outbreak of fighting, when Grivas commanded the Cypriot national guard and Greek forces in Cyprus. As the leader of EOKA, Grivas led the struggle for *énosis* (the union of Cyprus with Greece) against the British.

Séamus’s daughter, Hazel, said: “My father was a very secret man and would travel abroad a lot on his own when I was young, so God only knows what he was up to politically.”

He was arrested in September 1967 at Northchurch Road, Dalston, London, the charge against him that he had twenty-four rifles, two Bren machine

guns, four Bren gun barrels, ammunition, and a case containing twelve magazines, expropriated from an RAF training camp in Islington. Justice R. L. Seaton, when passing sentence, said: “You had in your possession an absolute armoury of weapons which, no doubt, a little expert attention would have put into good working order.”

Little is known about the later years of his life, though while in prison his affable manner instantly put the Soviet espionage prisoners, possibly some of the Portland spy ring who were sentenced in March 1961, at ease, where they became comrades. After his release from prison he began a relationship with Mary, an O’Donovan Rossa from Castletownroche, Co. Cork. They had two children, Séamus and Hazel.

Séamus died in London after a long illness, and his funeral took place in Mount Jerome cemetery, Dublin. Family and friends escorted the coffin, led to the graveside by a piper playing a lament, to where he was laid to rest in a quiet corner of the cemetery. ★

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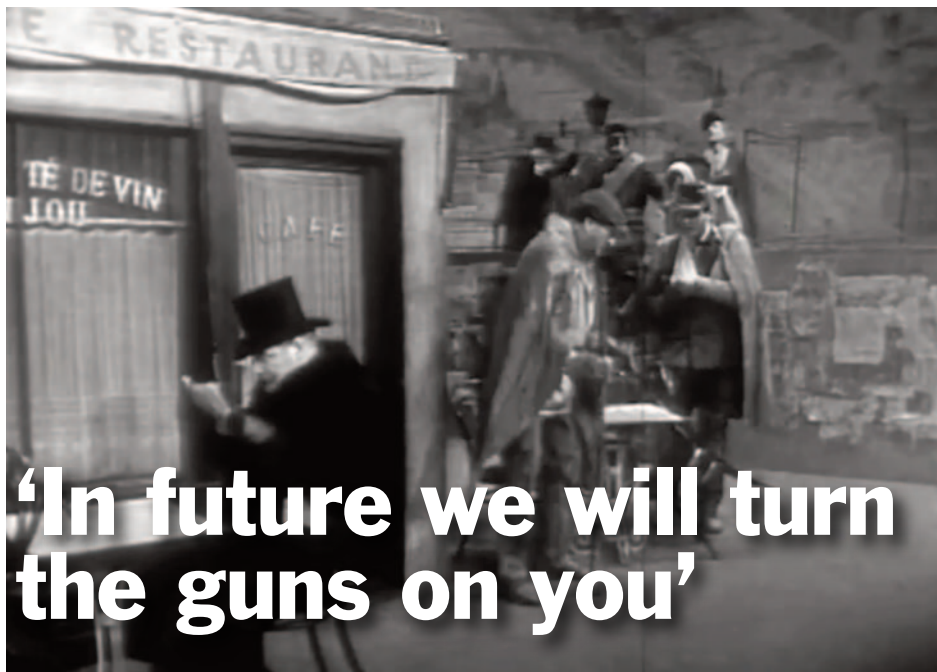
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## ‘In future we will turn the guns on you’

Jenny Farrell

AS WE MARK the 150th anniversary of the French proletariat’s heroic first attempt to set up La Commune in Paris, let us examine Bertolt Brecht’s interpretation of this great event in his play *The Days of the Commune*.

The Commune broke out spontaneously on 18 March 1871. War with Germany, hardship, unemployment, and anger against the upper classes, among other things, drove the population of Paris to revolution and placed power in the hands of the working class, and the petty-bourgeoisie which had joined it.

However, only the French proletariat stood by their government; deserted by their allies, the Commune was doomed. The French bourgeoisie came together in a coalition supported by Bismarck. On 21 May the army stormed Paris and killed thousands. On 28 May 1871 the army had defeated the Commune.

In 1948–49 Brecht adapted a play, *The Defeat*, dealing with the same subject and written by the Norwegian poet Nordahl Grieg on his return from the Spanish Civil War. The political situation having significantly changed after the surrender of Nazi Germany, Brecht wanted to focus on the lessons from the defeat of the Paris Commune.

Brecht tells the story of the community around the seamstress Madame Cabet, who becomes involved in the revolution simply to survive. The people within the commune briefly

experience a new form of social existence. The plot reveals both the achievements and the mistakes of the revolution. The people around Madame Cabet perish with the commune. The new way of life is destroyed by the bourgeoisie’s use of merciless terror, which the commune hesitated to use against its enemy.

Brecht’s play opens with the situation before the rising, on 22 January 1871. The bricklayer Papa, the watchmaker Coco and the seminarian François realise that the bourgeoisie are profiting from rising prices, while the National Guardsmen are dying in defending Paris from the Prussians. The social conflict requiring the proletariat to take over the state becomes obvious.

The plot shows the steps the Communards take to begin a new life. A cannon acquired from army stocks to defend the working-class districts becomes a symbol of the armed working class. Madame Cabet in the Rue Pigalle takes charge of it. The community guard it against attempts to remove it from them.

After the election of the Commune, Papa and others are persuaded that the people have triumphed. At its first meeting the Commune proclaims the principles of its future work: replacing the standing army with the armed people, the separation of church from state, no night work in bakeries, all factories that had been abandoned by their owners to be handed over to workers, the salaries of civil servants not to exceed the average working wage.

But the Commune lacks the resolution to march on Versailles or to occupy the Bank of France, the symbolic strongholds of power and capital; they do not fully understand the necessity of doing so. And so Versailles unleashes a civil war on the communards

In the Rue Pigalle the people build a barricade to defend their lives and the Commune. Scenes involving the community of the Rue Pigalle are at the heart of the plot. They show the old order replaced with new human relations yet stressing: “Never expect more of the Commune than you expect of yourselves.” Work and enjoyment are no longer divorced. The people as legislators see themselves as both working and enjoying life; they have adopted a new attitude to life. Bread and roses too.

The communards, who have known nothing but violence and exploitation, wish for peace. They spare their enemy, because the new era seems incompatible with terror. Yet history necessitates unequivocal assumption of political power, under penalty of defeat. The communards are faced with this contradiction, and Brecht shows how they grapple with it, and how they are destroyed.

This play could hardly be more topical now than it was when the socialist world was forming in the aftermath of the Second World War. It was immensely significant in 1970 in Tanzania, where my father, Jack Mitchell, studied and performed the drama with his students, less than ten years after independence. And today we witness the full and frequently military attack of the military-industrial complex on the peaceful working people of the world. As Brecht said, “The womb is fertile yet from which that crept.” ★

### Resolution of the Communards

*Realising that the roar of cannon  
Are the only words that speak to you,  
We must prove to you that we have  
learned our lesson,  
In future we will turn the guns on you.*

Extracts are from the translation of Clive Barker and Arno Reinfrank, *The Days of the Commune* (Methuen, London, 1978).

Image: Still from *Der Tag der Commune* (DDR 1966)