

# Socialist Voice

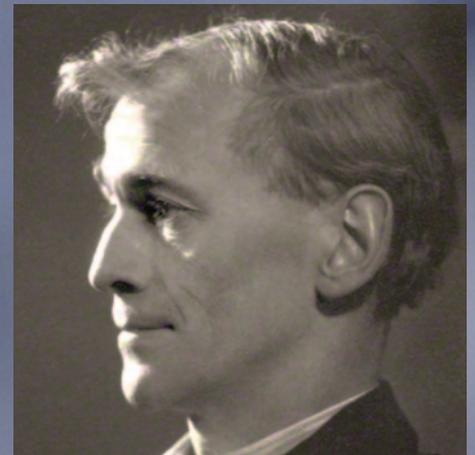
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## Crisis in colonialism



“To blame Ulster is sheer dishonesty. It is not Ulster but the British backers of Ulster who must bear the responsibility for all that has occurred within the last four or five years in Ireland.”—Robert Lynd (writer and editor), 1916



## Crisis in colonialism



**JIMMY DORAN**

**T**HE IRISH GOVERNMENT, aided and abetted by its British counterpart, has been trying to assist and solve the “crisis in unionism” since the DUP began to self-destruct last month.

This is missing the reality of what is happening and ignoring the elephant in the room. The crisis is not in unionism but in the colonial construct of “Northern Ireland” and the unravelling and self-destruction of this abomination.

The partition of Ireland a hundred

years ago was a brutal act of British imperialism to protect its colonial interests. The world has moved on and has accepted long ago that colonialism was wrong, it should never have happened, and has no place in the world today and must be abolished, in the same way that

## Time for Britain to leave! Let the people of Ireland decide their own future Communist Party of Ireland statement

**18 June 2021**

The resignation of Edwin Poots as leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, and the implosion of the DUP, should not come as a surprise to anyone with a modicum of understanding of the entrenched anti-democratic nature of unionism and the historical manoeuvrings of the British colonial power.

It is time to end the charade, so

carefully nurtured by Britain, that it is neutral, an honest broker, with no selfish or strategic interests in continuing to control the North of Ireland, directly or indirectly (devolution), when clearly it is a central part of the problem. It has used and manipulated unionism for its own strategic imperialist ends for more than a century, and continues to do so.

This latest crisis is just one in a long line of attempts at finding an

“internal” solution within the anti-democratic sectarian statelet that is “Northern Ireland.” The very nature of the six-county statelet was created on a sectarian head count imposed by the British state to thwart the long demand and struggle of the people of Ireland for an independent national democracy, for sovereignty and control by the people of Ireland.

What is obvious is that partition has failed all the people of Ireland, and



The partition of Ireland and the subjugation of the Irish people by Britain has long passed being acceptable—no more acceptable than apartheid was in South Africa.

slavery was. Unfortunately, the unionists in the North have not faced up to the reality of life in the twenty-first century.

Unionism, as a remnant of this brutal past, can no longer stand in the way of, or veto, the self-determination of the Irish people. The partition of Ireland and the subjugation of the Irish people by Britain has long passed being acceptable—no more acceptable than apartheid was in South Africa. The partition of Ireland was a component of the British Empire; that empire no longer exists. The last remaining vestiges of it must be confined to history also.

**Neither veto, excuse nor delusion will stop the course of history nor deny the legitimacy of the self-determination of the Irish people.**

To think that the unionist ruling class can be cajoled, persuaded or convinced into joining a united Ireland is deluded in the extreme. We only need to look at the reality of unionist majority rule in the North for a hundred years, which amounted to subjugation and discrimination in a two-tier society, of privilege for one and discrimination for the other, kept in place by force: by the RUC, the B Specials, the British army, and loyalist death squads.

After a thirty-year war and eighty years of misrule, the majority of people in Ireland voted for the Belfast Agreement. The agreement—weak

has left a deep scar and a bitter legacy of hatred, division, institutionalised sectarian discrimination, violence, and repression, resulting in countless deaths. This bitter harvest has been borne most heavily by the working class and working people.

This legacy cannot be wished away but rather needs to be challenged, with an all-Ireland strategy for healing those divisions, partition being the central one.

Now is the time for the British government to declare its intention to withdraw in an orderly fashion from Ireland and to finally end its colonial relationship with Ireland. It is also clear that it is in the best interests of British democracy itself to end its anti-democratic interference in the affairs

and all as it is—has proved to be a step too far for unionism. The agreement sets out a route to British withdrawal and the reunification of Ireland.

Honest brokers may have naïvely believed that it was only a matter of time before unionism would accept the reality of a changing world and fully engage with the spirit of the agreement and concede equality to their republican neighbours. This was never going to happen, such is their supremacist, “no surrender” mentality, evident in their refusal to introduce an Irish Language Act.

When campaigning for abortion rights and marriage equality, the people confronted many powerful opponents, in church, state, and beyond. This did not stop the struggle and eventual victory for what was right.

The same goes for Irish unity. Self-determination is the legitimate goal of the Irish people and will not be stopped by colonialists or by those who wish to continue to walk over the rights of their neighbours.

Unionism’s divide-and-conquer rule has done nothing for their followers and has inevitably failed the unionist section of the working class, leading them into a cul de sac of reaction. The unionists have used and manipulated their followers as a weapon with which to stoke division any time they felt the need, only to abandon those followers to prison cells when they didn’t.

Unlike the North, in post-colonial

of our people as well as of other nations.

Britain needs to declare that it is disengaging and to set in motion the necessary negotiations to ensure an orderly departure and to meet its long-term economic and financial commitments to the people of the Six Counties.

The Irish establishment must also be forced to engage and to pursue a British disengagement, for they have also for nearly a century hidden behind the language of neutrality and “honest brokers” to mask their complicity with continued British rule and interference, as it is in their own parasitic economic and political interests, and not those of the people of all Ireland. It’s time to end the

Ireland unionists fared much better in the South. Despite the Catholic ethos of the state, there was little or no discrimination against citizens based on religion. Despite this, it is understandable why many who identify as unionist (and republican, for that matter) would want no truck with the Southern regime as it stands. It is far from a workers’ paradise.

The working class have been kept apart for a hundred years by their common if unrealised enemy: imperialism.

A socialist republic has always been at the heart of the struggle for self-determination. Socialism will unite the working class naturally on their own programme, instead of being cajoled or bought off into an unnatural alliance with manufactured enemies and so continue to be exploited by the same ruling class. A consensus will not mean a unionist veto in a socialist republic: it will be a united working class, Catholic, Protestant, and Dissenters.

As James Connolly said, “To effect its emancipation Labour must reorganise society on the basis of labour; this cannot be done while the forces of government are in the hands of the rich, therefore the governing power must be wrested from the hands of the rich.”

When Ireland joins the nations of the world as an independent sovereign country, socialism is the glue that will join all the people of Ireland together.

doublespeak.

There can never be a stable internal political settlement, as the Six Counties cannot be stable or democratic. It is too contested a space in which to find a democratic settlement. That can only be achieved in a new, all-Ireland democratic state.

It is time for working people to organise and put forward their own demands and what type of united Ireland is in their best interests. The cobbling together of two failed economic and political entities is not a solution to the many problems that working people face, only a unitary national democratic state built upon absolute equality, on unity of our class, and on economic and political democracy and social justice.

## Preparing the ground for joining NATO



**JIMMY CORCORAN**

IT HAS LONG BEEN held that states do not have friends, they have interests.<sup>1</sup> With that in mind I read the *Defence*

*Forces Review, 2020*,<sup>2</sup> to see how an important part of the Irish state bureaucracy, the officer corps of the Defence Forces and the civil servants within the Department of Defence, view

the interests of the state.

*The Review* is published by the Chief of Staff's Public Relations Section and has the usual proviso that the views expressed are those of the contributors

## Are the major EU powers preparing for conflict?

**FRANK KEOGHAN**

*Reprinted from People's News, 27 June 2021*

LAST MONTH, German Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer and her French counterpart, Florence Parly, met to discuss the Future Combat Air System (FCAS) programme. This came amid reports that German Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative government is anxious to have the FCAS programme's financing fully decided before the Bundestag (parliament) elections in September.

The FCAS, expected to be operational by 2040, is a massive programme to build fighters, drones, combat technologies involving "cloud" computing, and secure communication systems. It got the green light in a 2017 meeting of the Franco-German Council of Defence Ministries, with spending to be shared equally between Paris and Berlin. Estimates of its overall cost range from €100 billion to a recent report in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*

placing it at €500 billion.

From its inception, this programme was based on massive military spending increases financed by EU austerity attacks and sweeping cuts to social spending. After the NATO-backed regime change operation in Ukraine in 2014, the NATO military alliance called on European states to spend 2 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on defence.

Germany reported record high military spending of €53 billion this year. For its part, amid the collapse in GDP due to the pandemic, France is allocating 2.1 per cent of its GDP, or €49.7 billion, to its defence budget. France's 2019-25 military budgeting law gave the armed forces €18 billion more in 2019 than they received in 2017. Last year, Parly reported that the French military's investment budget between 2019 and 2023 would total €110 billion.

'When the majority of working people realise . . . that wars are barbaric, deeply immoral, reactionary, and anti-people, then wars will have become impossible.'

**Rosa Luxemburg** (speech from the dock, Berlin, 1913)

and are not necessarily those of the Defence Forces or the Department of Defence. Nevertheless we can assume that they reflect the thinking within both.

The tenor of the *Review* identifies Irish state interests as being an integral part of the "Atlantic order," described as the concept that global prosperity and stability are intricately related to the US-European relationship.<sup>3</sup> There is no articulation of any Irish state interests independent of what the CPI describes as the triple lock of US, British and EU Imperialism. The *Review* was written during Trump's presidency and reflects the view that the EU might have to increase its military capacity in the light of Trump's increased unilateralism.<sup>4</sup>

The *Review* argues that Ireland receives a "free ride" and benefits from the "security umbrella" of NATO, and it calls for increased military spending and enhanced involvement by the Defence Forces in EU military campaigns.

The concept of Irish neutrality doesn't really feature in the *Review*. In an attempted rebuttal of Ray Kinsella's correct assertion that further integration in EU military structures will further undermine neutrality, Eoin Micheál McNamara claims that

*Under the conventional Clausewitzian "politics by other means" expression, "war" is an exercise that*

*aims to "decisively defeat" an enemy or make a relative gain at the expense of a strategic competitor. The European Union's record as a military actor does not synchronise with Clausewitzian logic. Alexander Astrov argues that most of today's Western military operations have instead become a form of "policing" in support of international order.*<sup>5</sup>

In plain language, this means that any EU action in suppressing anti-imperialist agitation is legitimate and does not undermine Irish neutrality. This is a reactionary charter supporting military intervention wherever the European Union believes the interests of imperialism are under threat.

That this reflects the long-held ideology of the Irish state is no surprise. It has long been the ideology of the dominant sections of the Irish bourgeoisie that its interests are bound up with those of the dominant imperialist powers. Before the First World War the Redmondite party did not want to leave the Empire, they merely wanted a bigger slice of the benefits of Empire for their own class. The first campaign of the Free State army was the military overthrow of the Republic, to allow for a new arrangement between the Irish bourgeoisie and British imperialism.

If the next government is led by Sinn Féin and seeks to govern from the left, the issue of Irish involvement in EU military campaigns must be faced. There must be an information campaign in support of neutrality, leading to a referendum to enshrine it in the Constitution. The links between the Defence Forces and those of NATO must be terminated.

A look at the list of contributors to this *Review* reveals the fact that many Irish officers undergo advanced study in institutions associated with NATO and European "defence" establishments. One contributor was a "policy analyst and adviser to government and civil society actors in Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic states and other countries regarding the development of security and defence policy."<sup>6</sup>

If Ireland is to develop an independent foreign policy, the dominant ideology within the military and the Department of Defence must be challenged, as a priority.

1 Generally credited to Henry Temple (Lord Palmerston).

2 *Defence Forces Review*, 2020 (www.military.ie).

3 *Defence Forces Review*, 2020, p. 164.

4 *Defence Forces Review*, 2020, p. 164.

5 *Defence Forces Review*, 2020, p. 126.

6 *Defence Forces Review*, 2020, p. 265.

This spending has gone hand in hand with a growing campaign by politicians and media to develop the EU as an aggressive military alliance. In 2018, amid mass "yellow vest" protests against social inequality, French President Emmanuel Macron insisted that Europe had to be prepared for war against Russia, China and the United States. Such arguments were retailed in countless articles by German and French media.

In 2019, German public broadcaster Deutsche Welle warned that if the EU "does not act as one, it will find itself at the whim of other world powers." It added, "our military and industrial sectors are at risk of becoming technologically dependent. That makes co-operation not just an option, but a requirement."

Indeed, French military chief of staff General Thierry Burkhard recently told Britain's *Economist* that France needs

a "hardening" of its land army, currently fighting a bloody war in Mali: "We absolutely have to prepare for a more dangerous world." The type of conflict being considered is exemplified by the French military's Operation Orion, war games slated for 2023 to train for high-intensity warfare against other major powers. Currently, reports indicate French forces up to the strength of a division, or around 25,000 soldiers, could be involved in the exercise in northern France, along with UK, Belgian and US troops.

*Le Nouvel Economiste* recently devoted an article to Operation Orion, noting that it is part of a "generational transformation" of the French and European military.

The magazine reported, "The spectre of high-intensity warfare is now so widely spread in French military thought that this scenario has its own acronym: HEM, or Hypothesis of a

Major Engagement. Possible adversaries are not named but include not only Russia, but also Turkey or a North African country. French generals believe they have a decade to prepare. Study groups cover all potential issues, from arms shortages to social resilience, to the question of whether citizens are 'ready to accept a level of losses we have never seen since World War II,' says one participant."

These reports underscore the critical necessity of a mobilisation of those in Ireland who favour and realise the value of peace in our lives. It is time to revitalise the concept of active neutrality in the face of rapid EU militarisation and real preparations for conflict within the militaries of the major EU powers. Readers will be already aware of the chorus of demands for increased military expenditure here in Ireland. It will be too late when the first shots are fired. ★

## Why do we work?

**BARRY MURRAY**

**Why do we work?** seems like an odd question. Sure everyone works, do they not? Or the majority of people do, one way or another.

And if you can't, don't or won't work there is every chance you are seen as lazy, a sponger, or worse. But there has to be more to life than work.

The reality for the average worker is that they are forced to work to live. They work to earn money to pay bills. A tiny minority of people can work for no pay or for pleasure only. Work can hardly be described as therapy either. Certainly, the working class cannot

afford that.

But what is work, or a job? It is more likely to be called "work" or "a job" at the working-class level; but when you go up to the higher classes it is normally referred to as a "career." Work, or a career, is a means of survival. Some people cannot work, or choose not to, and live off state benefits and, potentially, odd jobs for cash.

The wealthy, on the other hand, generally employ others to work for them and reap the reward of the labours of those whom they employ. Those who inherit wealth seldom need to work and instead choose to invest and financially exploit to accumulate,

to gain even more wealth. The ordinary wage worker will never be in a position to do that.

As children we learn about work very early on: "Daddy has to go to work, Mammy has to go to work" . . . "What will you work at when you grow up?"

So the conditioning of the mind begins early. Even in the home environment, especially in farming families and family businesses, children are given "wee jobs" or chores. Do parents subconsciously feel they have to begin early to discipline children for the vagaries of the world of work ahead?—as they themselves were.

### What, then, constitutes the alienation of labour?

First, the fact that labour is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his intrinsic nature; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He feels at home when he is not working, and when he is working he does not feel at home. His labour is therefore not voluntary,

but coerced; it is forced labour. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it. Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labour is shunned like the plague. External labour, labour in which man alienates himself, is a labour of self-sacrifice, of mortification. Lastly, the external character of labour for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own, but someone else's, that it does not belong to him, that in it he belongs, not to himself, but to another. Just as in religion the spontaneous activity of the human

Everything about education is expense on the one hand and profit for others who make education a business. All these conditions train and normalise children for what is to come, when they finish education and get their first “real” job.

When you go to school as a young child you are told that a good education will land you a good job, and you will be rich and famous—“like Alan Sugar, or Bill Gates, or Jeff Bezos.”

The brainwashing about “meritocracy” and “competing” begins early. Everything you do, even in primary school, is geared to being prepared for work. It’s not about learning, it’s about being trained to be part of a bigger machine. A child’s natural inquisitive nature and dreaming are suppressed by the system’s curriculum-driven “learning” process: being trained by the system, for the system.

A little over a hundred years ago Patrick Pearse called the state education system the “murder machine,” because he felt it killed any natural learning abilities that children had. Education, he felt, consisted of a state curriculum that poured knowledge into pupils’ heads to make them “good citizens” and be geared for the world of work. Paulo Freire also wrote at great length about the politics of that learning process.

Once children reach secondary or grammar school and university, the rate of “grooming for the system” increases dramatically. The process of weeding out the “less capable” takes on a more ruthless form. Selections begin before secondary school or grammar school, then Junior Cert (or GCSE or A-Levels)—all of which is just about retaining and regurgitating information.

Whoever fails these hurdles is resigned to work, apprenticeships,

imagination, of the human brain and the human heart, operates on the individual independently of him – that is, operates as an alien, divine or diabolical activity – so is the worker’s activity not his spontaneous activity. It belongs to another; it is the loss of his self.

As a result, therefore, man (the worker) only feels himself freely active in his animal functions – eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal. What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal.

emigration, or starting their own business. Escape and become an “entrepreneur” and you really become part of the system. Generally, the lower your educational achievements the lower-paid the work is.

The hierarchy of education, private schools v. public schools, further creates a division in education and ultimately the type of work pupils find themselves in.

The class division is perpetuated even at the educational level. And this is no accident. The children of the ruling economic and political elite (1 per cent) are educated to perpetuate, manage and control the economic system we know as capitalism. The worker’s children (99 per cent) act as the wage slaves for this system. Less than a hundred years ago children actually worked in industry as ordinary workers, with no rights or even an education. And this still happens today around the world.

It is the norm nowadays for children to work while they are still in education. It is again necessary to “pay their way” while they are at school; and it is the first lived experience of debt, through student loans, that children have.

This is particularly prevalent and onerous in working-class families. And if these children manage to jump all the hurdles to get to a college or university they will definitely need to work part-time.

Everything about education is expense on the one hand and profit for others who make education a

Certainly eating, drinking, procreating, etc., are also genuinely human functions. But taken abstractly, separated from the sphere of all other human activity and turned into sole and ultimate ends, they are animal functions.

We have considered the act of estranging practical human activity, labour, in two of its aspects. (1) The relation of the worker to the product of labour as an alien object exercising power over him. This relation is at the same time the relation to the sensuous external world, to the objects of nature, as an alien world inimically opposed to him. (2) The relation of labour to the act

business. All these conditions train and normalise children for what is to come, when they finish education and get their first “real” job.

Part-time “student workers” are thoroughly exploited. Their pay in these temporary jobs is derisory: a minimum wage of £4.62 per hour for those aged under 18, and £6.56 per hour aged 18 to 20. Aged 21 to 22 it is £8.36, and aged 23 and over it is £8.91 (Source: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).)

All of this is precarious work, with what are aptly called “as and when” or zero-hour contracts.

In these jobs they are treated not as children trying to make ends meet and be educated but as fully fledged company employees. That means strict rules and time management. They learn early that “time is money”—though not for the worker but the employer.

So at a very early age children internalise the employee to employers’ rules and regulations. As we know, their meagre wages and the rules and regulations favour the employers and increase their profits. Through this process, most learn to be subservient to employers and are not radical or even unionised. It’s an early lesson in the dichotomy of “needing the money and being obedient.” What they are is an expendable source of cheap labour. This is their entry into the “world of work.”

So who does the “world of work” really benefit? And is there another way for humans to live? Let’s look at those questions next month. ★

of production within the labour process. This relation is the relation of the worker to his own activity as an alien activity not belonging to him; it is activity as suffering, strength as weakness, begetting as emasculating, the worker’s own physical and mental energy, his personal life – for what is life but activity? – as an activity which is turned against him, independent of him and not belonging to him. Here we have self-estrangement, as previously we had the estrangement of the thing. ★

**Marx** *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*

## The centenary of Stormont Its legacy, and how we move forward



**This is the text of a paper given by the general secretary of the CPI that formed part of an exchange of views in June 2021, a conversation between left republican activists and Protestant religious leaders to discuss the future of the North of Ireland.**

**EUGENE McCARTAN**

FIRST OF ALL I would like to thank the organisers for the opportunity to engage in this important conversation on the centenary of the establishment of the Stormont parliament on 22 June 1921, which marked the partitioning of Ireland.

As James Connolly predicted, the partitioning of Ireland unleashed a “carnival of reaction” upon the people of Ireland. A century later, no-one could argue against that.

Our conversation is taking place against the backdrop of nearly three decades of armed resistance by republicans and two decades of a

political process, with many stops and starts, stumbling from one crisis to another.

The partitioning of Ireland was for solving the crisis that British imperialism faced in Ireland and was imposed to secure its interests. Partition was not for solving any of our people’s problems, nor did it do so. In particular, for the working class it simply institutionalised division and secured the interests of a minority wealthy elite, north and south.

A century later, the world that this statelet was born into has changed utterly in a place that no-one can even agree what it should be called.

A century ago this part of Ireland was the most industrialised, with shipbuilding, engineering works and textile mills dominating the landscape, and was plugged in to the needs and interests of the British empire. The southern part of the country was economically underdeveloped, thanks to the policies and trading structures imposed by Britain, which were to supply cheap food, cattle and cheap labour to the

metropolitan British market.

Today this Ireland—north and south—is unrecognisable. In particular, this place called “the Six Counties,” “the North of Ireland,” “Northern Ireland,” “Ulster” or “the Province” is no longer the economic power house it once was. The industrial base of unionism is gone.

Unionism has little to offer in economic terms or its political base except sterile neoliberalism, low wages, declining health services, creaking public services. None of the five parties in the Executive have any alternative economic strategy, while the British government remains in overall control.

People in this part of the country are marginalised from the power centres that can and do make the decisions that affect their lives.

The capacity of unionism to dispense privileges to one section of the community has severely diminished. Unionism no longer has a monopoly on governance, and no longer has a monopoly on the repressive apparatus of the state. Its influence within the British

Britain never really paid any attention to the internal workings of the Six Counties, as long as the region was stable and under its control, as exercised through unionism, and its strategic interests were secured.

establishment has shrunk. Its control and its capacity to gerrymander local government has been greatly curtailed.

The mass mobilisation of tens of thousands of working people under the banner of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association broke the back of unionism with its democratic demands.

The British empire has long since faded but still retains a significant place in global finance capital. Unionism's capacity to secure its political base with exclusive access to and the distribution of jobs and services, at the expense of the nationalist community, is nowhere near the scale it was a hundred years ago. It is no longer the monolithic block it once was, as the material conditions have changed, and people's own lived experiences have also changed. And the needs of imperialism have also changed. Its relationships change and shift depending on its strategic needs at a given time.

How we evaluate the last hundred years of the existence of Stormont depends upon our political position and understanding and to a large degree our lived experience. If you approach it from a unionist viewpoint then it has delivered what it set out to do, and that was to ensure that this part of the country remained under direct British control, with a small level of autonomy. Its establishment secured the unionist economic relationship to Britain.

Britain never really paid any attention to the internal workings of the Six Counties, as long as the region was stable and under its control, as exercised through unionism, and its strategic interests were secured. But in order to do this unionism first of all had to secure its hegemony by means of a number of linked methods: buying political loyalty, economic discrimination, repression, violence, and subservience.

If you were of a nationalist persuasion, then unionism had to define you as the enemy within. Unionism needed to construct a siege approach: nationalists were characterised as being loyal to a "foreign country" and disloyal to the empire, thereby a threat to the very existence of the state.

This allowed unionism to wield a whole series of measures against the enemy within, including the mass burning of homes at the foundation of the statelet, which continued at regular

intervals throughout the history of its existence, so ensuring ghettoisation and no cross-contamination, giving unionism greater effective control.

This ensured that its central ideological position of "them and us" was maintained. It allowed no room for disloyalty from within the unionist community—this also included trade unionists and left-wing activists from that community—in order to keep dissent and opposition within tight limits.

Nationalists and republicans were subject to draconian repressive laws—envied by the apartheid state of South Africa. All forms of discriminatory practices could be used against people, in housing, jobs, regional and local economic development and investment, as well as in education. Even the opportunity to vote and have your voting preference reflected in how or who could run local government was gerrymandered. Great harm was inflicted on the nationalist and republican community. This resulted in the creation of a huge pent-up frustration by their lived experience, which exploded in 1968 and '69.

But just as important was the damage done to working-class communities where unionism was the dominant influence and controlling force. The unionist boss class and Big House unionism, even before the establishment of Stormont, had fostered and nurtured a siege mentality and discriminatory approach. It created a dependence culture and enforced conformity, a culture of unquestioning loyalty. It built and enforced a vertical structure within unionist communities, an all-class alliance, to bolster the state and British control and loyalty to empire.

Sectarian organisations and institutions were developed and given special status. They became institutionalised, built in to the fabric of the state, thereby ensuring control within unionist communities through the employers, big landowners, the Orange Order, churches, the RUC and B Specials.

No space was allowed, or would be tolerated, for the development of alternative ideas. It was a hermetically sealed set of values that you had to accept and be loyal to, otherwise many avenues for you or your family would be closed off. Unionism institutionalised a

dependence chain of control, resulting in this all-unionist class alliance.

Jobs were secured by being a member of one of the various sections of the Orange Order. Policing and the apparatus of repression came from one community, and an attack on or a rejection of this apparatus of repression was perceived as an attack on Protestantism, on unionism, and all that it stood for and defended.

This allowed for the development of an apparatus of repression, aimed at the nationalist community but also serving as a warning to others, most importantly to those within unionist communities, that "this can happen to you if you break from the enforced loyalty," a loyalty bought by the dispensing of marginal privileges and by the threat of ostracising and repression.

So you could live in a slum on the Shankill Road or Sandy Row, be paid poor wages and suffer poor working conditions in the shipyard, in an engineering factory or mill but still feel yourself in a better place than the worker living in a slum on the Falls Road or the Ardoyne.

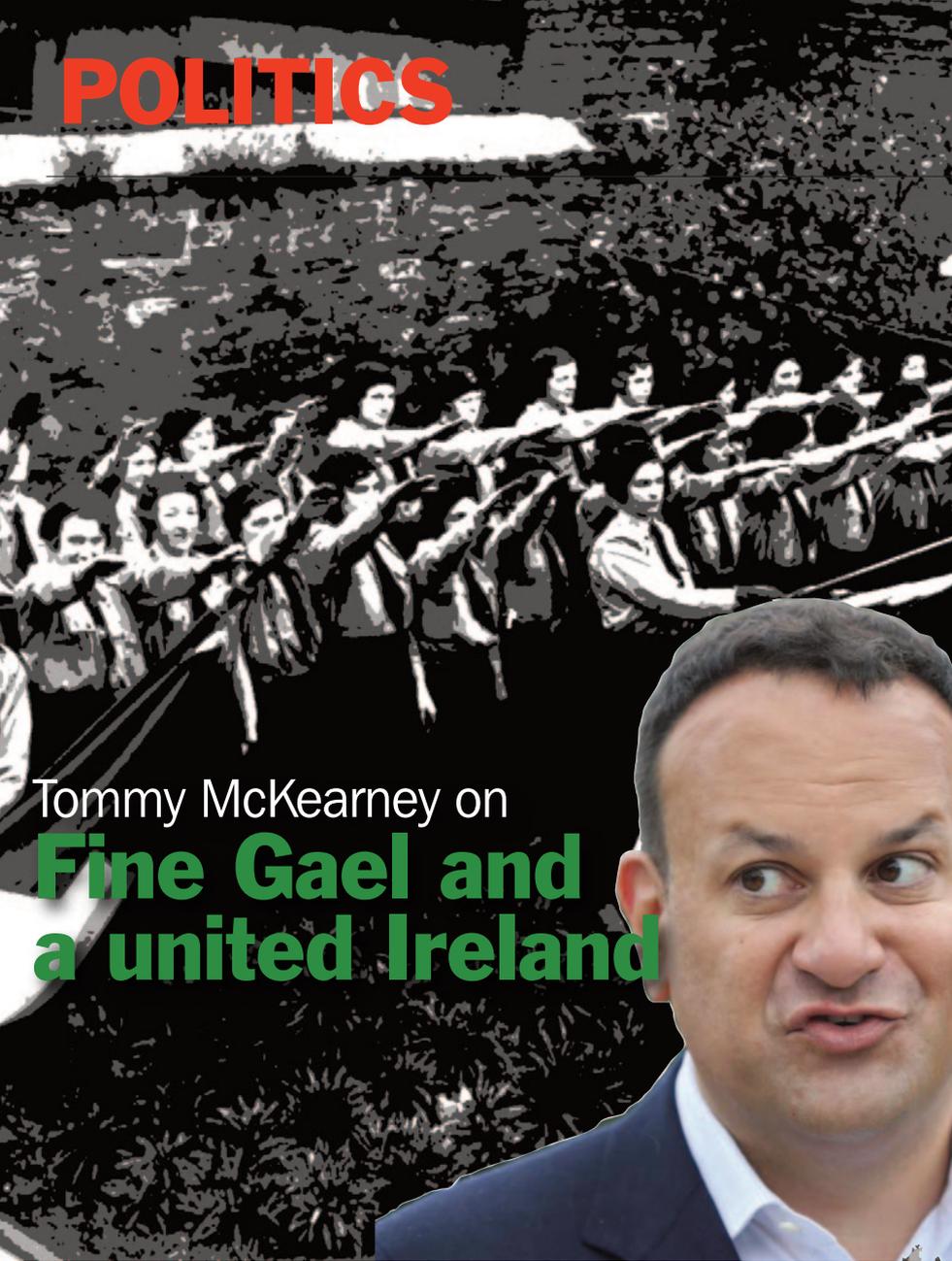
This created the material basis for institutionalised discrimination and repression. A strategy of creating a myth about the "other side" meant that many unionists viewed nationalists as a threat to themselves, to their self-interest, and to the very existence of Stormont itself, which was the perceived guarantor of those interests.

Unionism needs to be defeated and overcome, because

- it is a divisive ideology,
- it has used and does use religion as a weapon of division,
- it can only exist if division is a necessary factor in all aspects of political, economic, social and cultural life, and
- it promotes and fosters an innate sense of entitlement by the unionist community

—just as the Catholic Church and the counter-revolutionary Redmondite nationalists usurped the values of the struggle for national independence for their own selfish class reasons and ensured that their class and material interests were secured, that their views and values became institutionalised after the founding of the Free State.

**Continued overleaf**



## Tommy McKearney on **Fine Gael and a united Ireland**

### Continued from page 9

The Catholic Church paid little or no attention to the plight of those members of its flock trapped within the Six Counties.

Unionism also used its economic interests and religion as political weapons with which to consolidate its economic power, securing its self-interest and control, to ensure the reproduction of its economic material base and its economic dependence on its subservient relationship to the empire.

What Brexit has exposed is that, under the conditions of capitalism and the capital accumulation process, partition is now an anachronism. If Ireland and Britain were no longer to trade freely with each other, the Six Counties would have to remain in one Irish market.

Brexit has also thrown up many contradictions and exposed new fault

lines within the Six Counties. The central one for unionism is that the government of the imperial state to which they proclaim a strident loyalty now regards its connections with this statelet as a tradable asset and the border that partition carefully crafted a century ago as being as “impermanent as the morning dew.”

For the British ruling class as a whole, securing a harmonious trading and political settlement with the European Union, in line with its greater global ambitions, means that the North of Ireland can be more easily seen as a problem to be disposed of rather than an “asset to be treasured”—a lesson that unionism has yet to learn or fully understand, wishing to ignore that British imperialism, like all imperialist formations, has no friends but only interests to pursue.

Partition has prevented the working class in Ireland from becoming a determining political force in Ireland.

**F**ULL MARKS to Leo Varadkar for creativity. When it comes to offering the public something imaginative, he is hard to beat. He has provided us with many servings. Remember his claim during a period of neoliberal austerity that welfare recipients were damaging the economy? Then there was his insistence that leaking a confidential document to his pal would improve the health service. Or what about his assertion that the private sector can and will address the housing crisis?

Now we have this intriguing proposal to establish a branch of his party in the Six Counties. So, eighty-five years after a large body of party supporters under the leadership of its first chairperson went to spread their hateful message to the people of Spain, the Blueshirts are coming north. North of Monaghan, that is, the birthplace of their infamous founder.

All right, we may scoff at the incongruity of these patently disingenuous utterances; but beware. Varadkar is not only a right-wing ideologue committed to stringent neoliberalism, as evidenced most recently by his avid support for CETA: he is also a hard-headed realist with a view to the long term. No matter how discordant his utterances appear on the face of it, there is always an underlying and well-thought-out message.

Unionism has sown deep division within the working class and daily attempts to reinforce the belief in the self-entitlement of one section of the population over another.

What is clear to those who wish to see is that unionists have little influence on the British state. It only reinforces the marginalisation of the people. They have no influence over those institutions that have a daily effect on the lives of the working people of the Six Counties. They cannot change what the EU does, nor the British government, and have little influence in Dublin, or even in the United States, which also interferes in the affairs of our people. Their lives and material conditions are determined by forces that they have no say in or control over.

By its very construction and nature, the Six Counties is hopelessly locked in to a cycle of instability.

The region has traversed a very



Confronted with the confusing spectacle of Fine Gael's support for a united Ireland and Sinn Féin's about-turn on the draconian Offences Against the State Act, it is important that socialist republicans promote a clear left-wing vision for post-partition Ireland.

This was the case, for example, when some weeks back, in order to coax the trade union movement into social partnership talks, he disingenuously implied support for increasing wages.

It is in this light that we should consider his address to the Fine Gael ard-fheis when he highlighted the North and his position on the national question. Unlike the Augustinian republicans of Fianna Fáil (God grant us unity, but not just yet), the Blueshirts feel no need to be seen to aspire to end partition. By a strange paradox, this leaves them free to carry out a clinical analysis of the situation in Northern Ireland, and they are now acting in the light of their findings.

After the British general election of 2019 resulted in three nationalist MPs being returned for four Belfast seats, Varadkar spoke accurately of changing political tectonic plates. At that time he argued against pursuing a united-Ireland agenda. However, he has since changed his mind, telling his ard-fheis last month that reunification should be the party's "mission," and that this can happen in his lifetime.

It hardly needs a learned political scientist to explain the reasoning behind the latest Fine Gael assessment. The chaotic and very public infighting within

the DUP has revealed not just the perilous state of that party but also the terminally damaged condition of Irish unionism in general, details of which we have covered several times in this paper over the past months.

Consequently, the pragmatic Blueshirts are acting accordingly. In contrast to the rudderless Fianna Fáil, the folk in Upper Mount Street have accepted reality and are laying out the groundwork for the type of post-partitioned Ireland they are planning to inflict upon us. Their intentions emerged in Varadkar's ard-fheis address.

Inspired, perhaps, by the rousing endorsement received by Jeffrey Donaldson, the new leader of the DUP, at the 2019 Fine Gael ard-fheis when he proposed that "Éire" rejoin the Commonwealth, Varadkar suggested that his party establish a branch in the Six Counties, saying: "Not with a view to contesting elections but with a view to recruiting members and building networks with like-minded people, including those in other parties."

He continued by defining the type of post-partitioned Ireland that he did not want to see. Taking a swipe at Sinn Féin, he insisted that he did not envisage a "cold form of republicanism, socialist, protectionist, anti-British, euro-critical, 50% plus one and nobody else is

needed."

While throwing in a few items supported by no credible political current in Ireland today (nor, in fairness, by Sinn Féin), such as narrow nationalism and "ourselves alone," he made his intention clear. In his view, the new Ireland must not be republican, socialist, or EU-critical.

Fearful, perhaps, that Fine Gael might steal a march with its lurch towards reunification, Sinn Féin appears to have softened its position in relation to civil liberties. Seemingly determined to avoid causing offence to the state, Mary Lou McDonald has ordered her party not to oppose renewal of the Special Criminal Court.

Confronted with the confusing spectacle of Fine Gael's support for a united Ireland and Sinn Féin's about-turn on the draconian Offences Against the State Act, it is important that socialist republicans promote a clear left-wing vision for post-partition Ireland. A useful step would be to convene a series of meetings using "A Democratic Programme for a New Century" (2009)\* as the basis for discussion. ★

*\*Peadar O'Donnell Socialist Republican Forum, "A Democratic Programme for a New Century" (<https://bit.ly/3xW1fvk>).*

rough terrain, from an Orange sectarian statelet, with political and economic discrimination embedded in the institutions of the state that benefited one community, to an armed insurrection that lasted nearly three decades, and to an almost but not quite fully fledged bizonal entity, divided along sectarian lines.

### The way forward

Partition has prevented the working class from becoming a determining political force in Ireland. That is what it was imposed to achieve.

We are not arguing for or campaigning for some reheated united Ireland run along the same lines as either Dublin, London, or Brussels. Our vision and understanding of what a united Ireland should be and whose interests it should serve is not the same as those of Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael. Partition did not solve any of our people's problems. In particular, for the

working class it simply institutionalised division and secured the interests of a minority wealthy elite.

### National-democratic state

A national-democratic state is central to the ending of division in our country. It is the means of binding the deep wounds created by partition. An all-Ireland national-democratic state is the best and, I would say, the only means to achieve that.

It is a vision of an entirely new democracy—a democracy that extends into every corner of our lived experience, democracy and equality at all levels: economic, political, social, cultural, and human relations.

Some of the building-blocks required for advancing to that are the national campaigns around which we can build the unity of our class, such as:

- an all-Ireland public health service,

- an all-Ireland housing strategy for the building and supplying of public housing,
- an all-Ireland education service, stripped of its imperial content,
- an all-Ireland strategy for universal free public services, and
- an all-Ireland Bill of Rights for workers.

The struggle for and the securing of such demands would go some way towards allaying the fears of sections of the working class at present influenced by unionism.

Our strategy is to bring into being an entirely new democracy—a democracy that extends into every corner of working people's lived experience, with democracy and equality at all levels.

To paraphrase Wolfe Tone, a national-democratic state must have at its heart, and central to all economic and political decisions, the interests of the people of no property. ★

# IMPERIALISM

Voting Result:  
IN FAVOUR 184

AGAINST 2

ABSTENTION 3

Voting Result:

IN FAVOUR 184

AGAINST 2

ABSTENTION 3

## Anti-imperialism in the Americas

AARON KELLY

THE AMERICAS are very much the front line in the struggle against US imperialism's drive for unipolar, planetary dominance. The United States first tested its Monroe Doctrine there—the brazen assumption that the entire continent is America's "back yard"—and has since sought to export this sense of colonial proprietorship throughout the world.

In the prologue to his *Versos Sencillos*, the great Cuban revolutionary and writer José Martí prophetically imagined the imperial eagle clutching the flags of all the nations of the world in its blood-stained talons. But, just as surely, Martí also laid the basis for the anti-imperialist tradition and unity of revolutionary purpose that will deny that

nightmare dominion over reality by resisting the efforts of the United States to destroy and simultaneously create the world in its own self-image.

The vote (above) on 23 June at the United Nations against the illegal blockade of Cuba has once again shown that the concept of Yankee exceptionalism retains merit solely as a descriptor of US hypocrisy. 184 states voted to end the criminal blockade, the sixty-year campaign of economic warfare, which does not qualify as "sanctions," precisely because there are no international laws providing legal sanction to these unilateral coercive measures that collectively punish the Cuban people for having the fortitude to overthrow imperialism and assert their sovereignty.

The blockade violates the UN Charter,

to which all member-states must sign up; and so, if the United States were truly the purveyor of a "rules-based system" it would eject itself from the United Nations and submit itself to international law for all its crimes.

There are only two possible options when it comes to explaining how and why the US urge to dominate the entire world is doomed to fail. Firstly, if the US is allowed to, its sociopathic capitalism will brainlessly destroy all human life (and many other species besides). So there will be no world left to subjugate, and no-one left to exploit, only the forlorn fluctuations of algorithms on hedge fund and stock market computers programmed to pursue relentlessly the logic of profit to its illogical conclusion by their deceased capitalist masters.

## 1979 and the modern Middle East

GRAHAM HARRINGTON

THREE IMPORTANT events happened in 1979 that continue to explain the modern struggles in the Middle East: the Islamic revolution (i.e. counter-revolution) in Iran, the siege of Mecca, and the sponsoring of anti-communists in Afghanistan.

After the Second World War the Middle East experienced the growth of anti-colonial movements, which ranged from the communist parties to the nationalist Ba'athists, who, notwithstanding their vicious anti-communism in Iraq and Egypt, presided over secular and relatively anti-imperialist regimes within the Soviet sphere of influence. In particular they were opponents of Israel. However, the anti-communism of the Ba'athists held back the national liberation movement from

reaching its full potential.

The power vacuum left by the decline of nationalist and secular movements after the "Six-Day War" in 1967 would be filled by a rising Saudi Arabia, a state monarchy created with British support and a crucial US ally. Despite the Saudis' embracing of Wahhabi fundamentalism, the 1970s meant that the royals were richer than ever, and weren't afraid to show it.

In nearby Iran the pro-Western Shah was squeezing out the mercantilist petit-bourgeoisie with his embrace of Western monopolies, the latter making a strategic alliance with the discontented Shi'a clergy. The Shah's brutal repression of the communists of the Tudeh Party meant that this alliance between the clergy and petit-bourgeoisie was positioned to take leadership of the 1978 uprising, leading it to a Shi'a

fundamentalist counter-revolution.

The Saudis faced a problem: the provinces in the east contained the rich oilfields, but they also contained a large Shi'a population, inspired by calls from Iran for Islamic revolution. To make their problems worse, the Grand Mosque at Mecca was besieged by a fundamentalist grouping who felt that the monarchy had betrayed Islam with their money from the West. The siege was put down—with French help—but at the cost of the Saudi monarchy making the even more fundamentalist doctrine of their radical critics state policy.

The Saudis had been no strangers to supporting imperialism. They were part of the infamous Safari Club, the name given to a cabal of intelligence agencies from France, Shah-era Iran, Egypt and Morocco that had as its goal the "rolling back" of communism in Africa, given the

## The imperialist overreach of a rogue state that thinks the whole planet is its “back yard” will find instead that the world is ultimately the graveyard of its plans

Secondly, and much more affirmatively, capitalist imperialism’s monomaniacal push for the abstract survival of its instrumental reason in a dead world will have been stopped in its tracks by revolutionary mass mobilisation and the overthrow of this murderous system of exploitation.

The requisite levels of organisation and revolutionary consciousness (most crucially anti-imperialism) in the Americas are already well grounded and world-leading, and these movements will spearhead the internationalist fight against capitalism. All anti-imperialists around the world can take lessons and inspiration from comrades in the Americas, as well as taking up their generous hospitality by joining them in struggle. Such solidarity is urgently required, both in defending revolutionary ground already held in the region and in pushing back against state violence and repression where US puppet regimes are in power.

The neoliberal model that the United States has sought to foist upon the Americas and the world is now propped up by outright violence and coercion. The myth (and it was of course always a myth) of the “end of history” and a benign, progressive capitalism, whose market-driven logic would secure

democracy and prosperity for all its “stake-holders,” has been utterly hollowed out.

Whatever traction the fantasy narrative of neoliberal progress had in some quarters (including the centrist and liberal versions of leftism), this myth has used up all its ideological credit. As the sickening terror against trade unionists and members of social movements inflicted by the US-NATO puppet state in Colombia illustrates daily, as shown by the fully militarised response to popular protests with relatively modest egalitarian aims in Chile or Ecuador, or as manifested by the current imperialist and oligarchic manoeuvres to overthrow the democratic election of Pedro Castillo as president in Peru, neoliberalism is the antithesis of freedom, not its guarantor.

Equally, where anti-imperialists have gained power—in Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Bolivia—it is imperative that we help defend these revolutionary successes, and learn from them. Bolivia is notable for how the people fought back against a US coup that brought vile fascists to power, helped, of course, by “liberal” imperialists, progressives and so-called eco-warriors, who all parroted verbatim CIA lies and convinced themselves they were saviours, when in

fact they offered ideological cover for an empire’s self-entitled desire to monopolise lithium reserves.

Continued vigilance and solidarity are required regarding Bolivia and most certainly needed in regard to Venezuela and Nicaragua, where, in the case of the latter, a full-blown coup is already under way and will seek to delegitimise the forthcoming re-election of the overwhelmingly popular Sandinista president, Daniel Ortega.

The imperialist overreach of a rogue state that thinks the whole planet is its “back yard” will find instead that the world is ultimately the graveyard of its plans. Internationalist solidarity offers the total horizon through which to realise the necessarily planetary scale of the struggle against US hegemony.

We must join our comrades in the Americas and around the world in playing our part in dismantling the circuitry of the imperialist system that makes the continuing violence of neoliberalism possible. Our comrades have heroically held the front line, and we can mutually replenish our strengths by intensifying our joint struggle to create that better world that awaits us when we finally negate the injustices and iniquities of capitalism and imperialism. ★

revolutions taking place in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau.

What united Saudi Arabia and Iran was the fundamentalist Islam, of the Sunni and Shi’a variety, that was answering people’s anger at the anti-people regimes. In other words, political Islam was a lesser evil than communism, something that President Carter privately admitted during the Iranian events.

In Afghanistan the Saur Revolution had brought to power a Marxist-Leninist government that had annoyed the reactionaries because of its policy of improving literacy, universal medical care, and education, challenging poverty, and introducing such horrible policies as allowing girls to attend school! But this was enough to earn the opposition of the mullahs, and they wasted no time in attacking the Afghan communists, particularly women.

The Saudis spotted a great opportunity to gain some credibility among the fundamentalists that their

state ideology was creating while also keeping close to their Western business partners. Along with the military dictatorship of Zia in Pakistan, they pumped billions into the Afghan Mujahideen, who were fighting the Afghan government forces. The Soviet army, after repeated requests to intervene, sent military forces to support the Afghan government.

The US was only too happy to support the new Jihadis, with public opinion in the West being manipulated against the Soviets, and even the respected journalist Robert Fisk writing of one Saudi fighter as “anti-Soviet warrior puts his army on the road to peace.” The Saudi fighter in question was Osama Bin Laden.

Along with the billions given to the Jihadis in Afghanistan, the Afghan situation was a means of consolidating both the Saudi and Pakistani dictatorships. Indeed the Pakistani military government became flush with

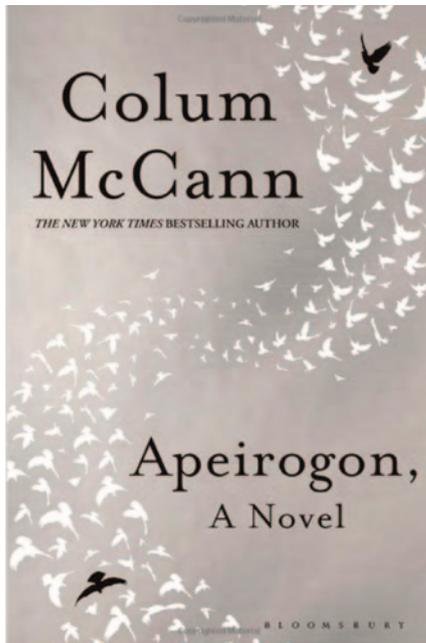
cash from drug-trafficking from their allies in Afghanistan. The Saudi monarchy also found a way to export religious dissent. Iran was kept busy by the war against Saddam’s Iraq, at this point still a US and Saudi ally.

In 2001 the United States invaded Afghanistan to oust its former allies, the Taliban, from power, because they were harbouring another former ally, Osama Bin Laden. In 2003 the United States invaded Iraq to topple another former ally, Saddam Hussein.

Whether it’s anti-communist nationalists or fundamentalist Jihadis, Shi’a or Sunni, Muslim or Jewish, the United States has done business with all who can act in its interests.

As the US empire begins to decline, its client states of Saudi Arabia and Israel continue to represent its interests in the Middle East. In particular, the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and how this affects Syria and Yemen in 2021, will be looked at in the next article. ★

## The innumerable facets of a true story



JENNY FARRELL

Colum McCann, *Apeirogon* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020)

IN THE CONTEXT of the recent escalation of violence in the Middle East, and Ireland's condemnation of the fact of Israel's annexation policy, this book by Colum McCann is worth reading more than ever.

Unlike a pentagon, an apeirogon has an infinite number of sides, or aspects. The title of the novel gives the reader an indication of the innumerable facets that form this novel; and yet at its core is the undisputed fact that the state of Israel is guilty of sustained human rights abuse against the people of Palestine.

McCann tells the true story of a Palestinian, Bassam Aramin, and an Israeli, Rami Elhanan, and their daughters: Abir Aramin, aged ten, killed by a rubber bullet in 2007, and Smadar Elhanan, aged thirteen, killed by suicide bombers in 1997. Bassam Aramin and Rami Elhanan met through the organisation Combatants for Peace.

The novel's structure resembles the workings of the mind. It "jumps" from one thought to the next, each idea prompted by an aspect of the previous one. This narrative style creates a network of connections spanning the globe. Human rights abuses form a

pattern that includes the Middle East.

Rubber bullets were first used by the British state in Northern Ireland, killing children there. And the use of deadly explosives is explored in many tangents, including the dropping by the United States of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Like the mind when it has to take in an enormity, it cannot constantly dwell on it. In order to take in a tragedy the mind keeps returning to the fact, with breaks, circling it, slowly grasping it over an expanse of time. In this way the narrative never loses sight of the killings of Abir Aramin and Smadar Elhanan. Each time we return to them new aspects are added, their stories and those of their families etched more and more clearly.

The novel is structured like the *Arabian Nights*, counting five hundred sections ascending in order and five hundred descending, with a section entitled 1001 in the middle. A great number of these fragmented sections are devoted to migratory birds, which seem to form part of the web that holds the global and yet local story together.

The personal is set in a larger political context. Neither strand of the novel loses sight of the other. To give a small example, McCann turns to his homeland, Ireland, and to the conflicted north of the country in particular, to draw parallels. Here the descendants of the Elizabethan settlers, the unionists, fly Israeli flags, while the community that might be forgiven for feeling occupied by a coloniser identifies with the Palestinians.

McCann never appeases the Israeli state.

*Mordechai Vanunu, a nuclear technician whose job it was to produce lithium-6 in the Dimona nuclear plant in the Negev, was sentenced to eighteen years in prison for divulging details of Israel's weapons program. Vanunu smuggled a 35 mm camera into Machon 2 and took fifty-nine photographs despite signing a secrecy agreement years earlier. He divulged the details first to a church group in Australia where he fled. Later, in London, where he went to publish the information, he was seduced in a honey-trap operation by a Mossad agent. He met the female agent again in Rome where he was overpowered, drugged,*

*kidnapped, bound to a stretcher, driven by motorboat out to a spy ship, bundled into a cabin. He was interrogated by Mossad agents, whisked back to Israel to a secret prison run by the Shin Bet. Nearly twelve of his years in prison were spent in solitary confinement.*

Which side the United States is on in the Middle East conflict is apparent in several episodes, for example when Bassam Aramin insists on an inquiry into the death of his daughter (having had to pay for an autopsy himself). The judge, who defied all efforts to prevent this, travels to the site of the attack and finds "the responsibility of the State of Israel. It has been determined."

Following this "landmark" judgement, "several newspaper articles were published in Israel and the United States deploring the judge's decision." And when Bassam Aramin visits the American senator John Kerry in his office there is a recognition—"The American rifle. The American jeep. The American training. The American tear gas. The American dollar"—as central to Israeli state violence.

McCann does not paint a black-and-white picture. The parents of Smadar Elhanan do not side with their state. Her father, Rami, has developed this position over time, while her mother, Nurit, openly supports Palestinians and frequently receives abuse and death threats.

Abir Aramin's father, Bassam, was incarcerated at the age of seventeen for seven years, for throwing stones. He comes from a tradition of struggle against the occupation. McCann never leaves any doubt about where his sympathies lie. Close to the end he writes in the descending section 94, returning to his title word once more:

From the Greek, apeiron: to be boundless, to be endless. Alongside the Indo-European root of per: to try, to risk.

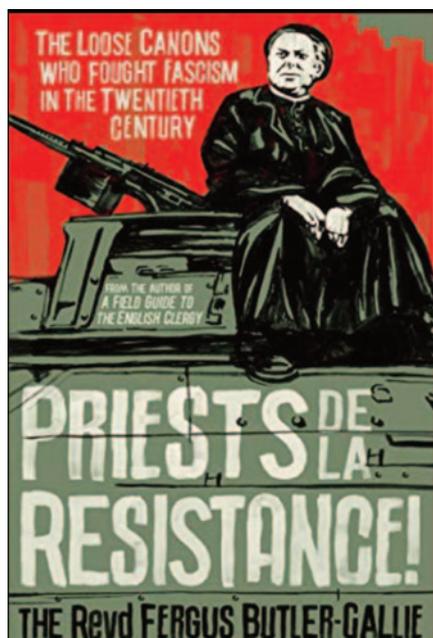
McCann takes risks. One of these is selling the film rights to Steven Spielberg, who has famously stated:

From my earliest youth, I have been an ardent defender of Israel . . . And because I am proud of being Jewish, I am worried by the growing anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism in the world . . . If it became necessary, I would be prepared to die for the USA and for Israel.

One wonders how many sides will be left of McCann's *Apeirogon*: five, or six?

“I still hate fighting but this time it has to be done, unless fascism is beaten in Spain & in the world it means war and hell for our kids.”

## Priests of the Resistance



### PAIDÍ Ó DUBHSHLAÍNE

Revd Fergus Butler-Gallie, *Priests de la Resistance!* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2019)

WITH A JOKEY title like that, an equally jokey subtitle (*The Loose Canons Who Fought Fascism in the Twentieth Century*), and a super-scrupulous attention to his own title (“the Revd Fergus Butler-Gallie”), I should have sensed something fishy, but the cover illustration of a resolute-looking French priest in beret and soutane sitting next to a machine gun led me astray.

Butler-Gallie, as the double-barrelled name implies, is a child of the British middle classes, Oxbridge-educated and following in the family business as a vicar in the Church of England. Also typical is his obsession with the Second World War, or rather his narrow obsession with the Second World War as seen through the rose-coloured glasses (made in England) that exaggerate the role of Britain and the United States and ignores completely the role of the Soviet Union.

Nonetheless, Butler-Gallie highlights a handful of clerical anti-fascists who fought the good fight while their institutional leaders sat on the fence or even actively supported the fascist

cause as a bulwark against “atheistic communism.” The wartime exploits of Abbé Pierre would be well known in France, where this mountaineering monk with a weak chest became a leader of the Resistance in south-eastern France. Forced to go on the run by the Gestapo, he escaped to the Free French in Algiers, pausing only long enough to exchange his cassock for khaki and rushing off to participate in the liberation of Paris.

The pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer also features in *Priests de la Resistance*. His anguished path from moral and religious opposition to the Nazi regime—to actual participation in the failed attempt to assassinate Hitler on 20 July 1944, to death by hanging on 9 April 1945, weeks before the unconditional surrender of Nazi forces in Berlin to General V. I. Chuikov and the victorious Red Army—is also well known, both in Germany and elsewhere.

Other figures mentioned by “the Revd” are priests and pastors who worked to save Jewish lives in the face of institutional Christian indifference to some of the workings of Nazi ideology. Not surprisingly, however, there appears to be no record of either institutional or individual clerical support for LGBT+ victims of fascism.

While humanitarian aid and the saving of lives is to be applauded, a book that claims to be about those who “fought fascism” that can only come up with two French priests who actually worked and fought against fascism might find itself facing charges of false advertising!

Admittedly, the story of the conservative Catholic Canon Kir of Dijon, a larger-than-life character who spied and sabotaged his way through the war only to befriend the first secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, in post-war years is well worth a read. Rumour has it that their friendship was in part based on a joint interest in town twinning—and a mutual admiration for one another’s capacity for drink! In any case, the French Communist Party refused to put up candidates against Canon Kir in post-war mayoral elections, so it was win-win for him.

What is missing from this lightweight book of close to 300 pages is any account of committed front-line anti-

fascists of a clerical persuasion. And they are not that hard to find. All Butler-Gallie had to do was to look to Ireland: Robert Hilliard was a Church of Ireland priest from Co. Kerry. While at Trinity he became an active republican, fed IRA men “on the run” while home on holiday, and is said to have voted “early and often” for the anti-Treaty side. He was also a champion bantamweight boxer and represented Ireland in the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris.

The Civil War may have prevented him completing his degree at Trinity. In any case, the newly married Hilliard moved to London in 1926 and took up a career in journalism. It was during this time that he came to his slightly idiosyncratic belief that “pure Marxism was Christianity in practice, only without Christ.” Perhaps to put the Christ back in, he decided to move back to Dublin, complete his degree, and seek ordination in the Church of Ireland.

As a curate in working-class Belfast he came into close contact with the campaign against the means test, which was leading to five hundred workers a week being turned down for outdoor relief (unemployment assistance). Communists were heavily involved in this non-sectarian and cross-community campaign.

Health problems and financial difficulties, as well as a growing estrangement from his local church authorities, finally led to Hilliard moving to London in 1932, where he joined the Communist Party. By December 1936 he had left for Spain to join the International Brigades. As Christy Moore sang in “Viva la Quinca Brigada,”

*Bob Hilliard was a Church of Ireland pastor;*

*From Killarney cross the Pyrenees he came.*

Robert Hilliard died on 11 February 1937, along with seven thousand other anti-fascists fighting for the Spanish Republic against Franco and his Nazi allies. In his last letter home, five days before he died, he wrote: “I still hate fighting but this time it has to be done, unless fascism is beaten in Spain & in the world it means war and hell for our kids.”

The anti-fascist priest Robert Hilliard didn’t find a place in Fergus Butler-Gallie’s book.

Completed overleaf

## A house is not just a building

SAJEEV KUMAR

A HOUSE is not just a building made of bricks and concrete: it's a nest made of dreams and memories.

When such a place crumbles in front of one's eyes it is heartbreaking.

Approximately five thousand families have faced the heartbreak because of the mica issue, which caused cracks in many people's dwelling. If more tests are conducted, that number will probably swell to ten thousand.

Those who were affected protested in Dublin on 15 June to seek justice, 100 per cent redress, and nothing less. More than five thousand men, women and children from Cos. Donegal, Mayo, Clare and elsewhere assembled in the capital. Even to avail of the redress scheme the people affected have to pay for the test (between €5,000 and 6,000) and inspection that prove the mica problem.

The scheme provides compensation of from €50,000 to €275,000, which is a cap for complete demolition and rebuilding. This does not include many other expenses incurred that the owners will have to pay from their pockets. The schemes are supposed to address people's concerns, and they are not to be squeezed into the schemes. Only

after a long struggle were they forced to come to Dublin for a protest.

Even after the protest the Taoiseach gave no assurance of redress. The Government, which never hesitates to spend billions to bail out banks when they collapse, is giving the cold shoulder to people affected by collapsing homes

When pyrite (iron disulphide) became an issue in Dublin, a 100 per cent redress was given. Why was the same treatment not given to taxpayers in other counties?

Mica is a natural element that is hydrophilic, i.e. has a tendency to absorb water. Instead of a permitted 1 per cent of mica, up to 17 per cent was found in the affected houses. When the mica has absorbed moisture it weakens the blocks, and the cracks appear about five years from the time the house is built; and the nightmare begins

The more we dig, the deeper the abyss. These mica blocks could have been used also in public buildings, such as hospitals. Now people are demanding—

- a thorough mandatory investigation of the scam where corruption could be involved;
- regulations on housing, with strict adherence to be made compulsory;
- 100 per cent redress and nothing less, which includes expenses for paying rent while a house is being rebuilt;
- health hazards caused by mica used in the blocks to be researched;
- the mental trauma it causes to the occupants also to be considered and dealt with through complete redress.

In the end, Butler-Gallie offers not much more than a few passable anecdotes and a complete lack of understanding of imperialism and class society. For the Fergus Butler-Gallies of this world, fascism is just "human nature," a "trope" that will continue to reappear because we are flawed and "fallen" by nature. For the rest of us, the working class shaking off our chains, fascism is, among other things, a characteristic symptom of the decay and dissolution of the capitalist system (Clara Zetkin), which it is our revolutionary duty to fight against and defeat and to replace with a system organised not for the private profit of the few but for the common needs of the many. ★

The fact is that the Irish housing system is designed on a flawed model.

In *Sins of the Father*, Conor McCabe writes:

*The housing needs were answered by diverting public funds to private builders (via grants and tax breaks), away from local authorities who represent the people.*

*The free market speculators and private builders cannot provide affordable housing. It is probably best not to leave such a fundamental social need in the hands of those who cannot provide it.*

Instead of houses built as shelter for people they are treated as an asset by big corporations for parking profits and locking people in a debt crisis, which makes them obsessed with the debt they have to pay, spending their whole life thereby alienating them from social and political involvement.

These scams are inevitable when the Government neglects its responsibility to provide housing and passes the buck to private speculators, whose primary objective is to accumulate profit, rather than to provide quality housing for citizens. The private companies make a profit, the Government doesn't agree to complete compensation, and the citizens are at the loss.

While we demand that a use value like the basic need of housing should not go through a system of exchange value, we have to stand by those who are fighting for their broken homes and tattered dreams. ★

>> Neither did more contemporary priests and people of faith fighting not only fascism but imperialism and the capitalist system itself. In fact Butler-Gallie's Eurocentric vision seems to have precluded the inclusion of modern anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist fighters, such as the revolutionary Colombian priest Camilo Torres, who was killed in 1966 while fighting with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army). Similar creative cross-fertilisation between Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries and religiously motivated anti-fascists and anti-imperialists in the contemporary United States, the Philippines and India also find no place in Butler-Gallie's blinkered look at anti-fascist religious.

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