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BUILDING THE UNITY OF OUR CLASS

A spectre is haunting sections of the Irish left: the spectre of Irish reunification. Ever since Britain voted for Brexit—a position supported by the CPI—the political tectonic plates upon which the partition of Ireland rests have become unstable.



“Whatever the pride of rank, of riches or of scholarship may have induced some men to believe, or to affect to believe, the real strengths and all the resources of a country, ever have sprung and ever must spring from the labour of its people . . .”

William Cobbett

(Register, 3 November 1816).

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IRELAND

Building the unity of our class

The emergence of Sinn Féin as the largest party in the Stormont Assembly, and the recently released census figures for the Six Counties, added further shocks to the political equilibrium.

Irish reunification, discussion of which has been beyond the pale in “respectable” political circles, has now become a legitimate topic in the media and within the ranks of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. Even some “liberal” unionists have begun to look again at reunification, albeit as a means of getting back into the European Union.

We can be certain that any movement towards reunification led by the bourgeoisie will not result in the anti-imperialist 32-county republic sought by communists and by republicans. The recent furore over the celebration of the Republic’s senior women’s soccer team shows that “official” Ireland is still uncomfortable with our history of struggle against British imperialism, while there is widespread popular identification with that struggle.

Unfortunately some sections of the “left,” even those who gave lip service

to the demand for Irish unity, have now put forward arguments against any movement towards reunification.

Three main arguments have been advanced. The first is that reunification is a distraction from class politics, the second that there should be no attempts at reunification until the majority of the Protestant/unionist/loyalist community supports it, and the third that any reunification will be at the behest of imperialism, so it must be opposed by the left.

The first argument purports to be radical and revolutionary and rejects the call for national reunification as reactionary and a distraction from the struggle for socialism. It rejects Connolly’s position that the struggle for national independence and the struggle for socialism are two sides of the same coin. It also ignores the history of China, Cuba, Vietnam and other countries whose struggle was

PARTITION GRINDING TO A CLOSE



EUGENE MCCARTAN
IRELAND UNITED

Once again the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly have failed to elect a first minister and deputy first minister and have now been mothballed pending the ability of the British secretary of state for “Northern Ireland” to pull a rabbit out of the hat regarding the Protocols, or to persuade the DUP to allow an Executive

to be formed. If not, another election will take place, possibly in December.

The institutions set up under the Belfast Agreement of 1998 have simply staggered from one crisis to another. The British state had hoped that these institutions would stabilise the situation and secure Britain’s continued interests and control.

As always in regard to an imperial power such as Britain, and all other imperial powers, such as the United

States, there is no such thing as a benign imperialism. Imperialism only has interests to protect or pursue: it is never a bystander nor a benign influence. History should teach us that.

Two main factors have contributed to current events. The Northern Ireland Protocol has made a big play in bringing down or getting significant changes to render them useless and ineffectual. Unionists understand well that the border down the Irish Sea has



anti-colonial as well as anti-capitalist. Far from being revolutionary, such a position would leave the make-up of a united Ireland to forces hostile to socialism and the working class.

Sectarianism was, and remains, the means by which British imperialism divided the Irish people, defeated the struggle for independence, and partitioned the country.

The second argument against unity—that it cannot be allowed to happen until the Protestant/unionist/loyalist community support it—is a sectarian position. It perpetuates the sectarian division within the Irish working class by giving one section a veto over progress. It is an objectively pro-imperialist position, which it shares with the most reactionary elements of the British capitalist class and its agents in Parliament and the media.

Those on the “left” who support this position, far from being the vanguard of the working class, believe that the working class should only advance at the pace allowed by the most reactionary, pro-imperialist ideology. It accepts and works within

the parameters allowed by imperialism. It is akin to telling the Palestinians that they can have their own state only when the majority of Israelis agree; or that the ANC should not have overthrown apartheid until the majority of white South Africans agreed.

The third argument against unity is that it will come about as a result of decisions made by imperialism, and therefore it must not be supported. Proponents of this position also argue that as long as the 26 Counties remain within the EU, unity would be a retrograde step for the working class in the North. Unless there is a vast change in the balance of forces nationally or internationally, any united Ireland that emerges would more than likely be capitalist and ensnared within the grasp of imperialism.

They gloss over the fact that partition was imposed and is maintained by imperialism. Are we really to accept that a partitioned Ireland, dominated by imperialism, is more acceptable than a united Ireland, still dominated by imperialism but with a united working class capable of confronting imperialism? It is a very

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pessimistic position to adopt. It believes that imperialism will be able to implement its plans without any opposition. It is a defeatist position, which doesn't believe in the revolutionary potential of the Irish working class.

Back in 1918 the bourgeois nationalists said that Labour must wait. In 1922 the infant CPI tried to get the republican forces to adopt a socialist programme to rally support for the Republic. They were rebuffed. Is the labour movement to leave the political and economic structure of a future united Ireland to those forces that are opposed to socialism?

We must organise all-Ireland campaigns on such issues as health, housing, the environment, sustainable economic development, and neutrality. We must not wait for a British government decision to hold a referendum, nor for the bourgeoisie, north and south, to broker a deal between themselves. We must build the unity of our class through joint struggles and lead the movement towards national unity, independence, and socialism. ★

weakened the east–west relationship. They have built their power base on “Not an inch.” It has created a psychosis that any concession that might weaken the “union” is a step towards a united Ireland. This has been a core ideological play since the founding of that gerrymandered entity.

This approach is their political comfort blanket. They simply don't have to do anything: they don't have to find any accommodation with their neighbours or with the rest of the people who live and work in this country.

The British state at this time wishes to establish as close a relationship as the framework of Brexit will allow regarding trade and movements of capital between the British state and the EU. The situation in the North is of little value to the London government. In particular, the Conservative Party—the long-term close ally of unionism—has used unionists and dropped them when it suited the domestic political agenda and the needs of imperialism.

The Protocols were simply a pawn on the chessboard of an inter-imperialist clash of interests and contradictions between two contending centres, the EU and Britain, flowing from Brexit. Unionists know that when it suits Britain they will be pushed aside.

The interests of unionism do not matter, nor the interests of the

nationalist/republican communities, nor the wider needs and interests of the whole of Ireland, when it comes to deciding what is in the best interests of big corporations and finance houses, what is in the interests of capital and imperial hegemony.

The recent and continuing crisis within the Conservative Party and the needs of finance capital are a reflection of this. To them the protocols did not feature in the debates. They were simply a lever for manoeuvring the complex ground as the future relationship with the EU gradually emerges.

Unionists know that they are relevant to London only in so far as they may be needed as voting fodder in the House of Commons.

The second factor shaping unionist thinking is the deep psychological blow dealt to unionism by the outcome of the last Assembly elections, which resulted in Sinn Féin narrowly becoming the largest party in the Assembly and thereby entitled to elect the first minister. Unionists' nightmare for a century has come to pass: the internal enemy has become the majority party.

With the possibility of new elections on the horizon, it remains to be seen if Sinn Féin can hold that position and further undermine the political base of their main rivals, the SDLP. The DUP will be seeking to stop any further growth in the TUV, and we may well see

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a further decline in support for the UUP and possible growth and consolidation for the Alliance Party.

But from a working-class viewpoint, going on past experience, nothing fundamentally will change. The political balance will remain roughly the same.

The British government, like unionism, has ruled out joint authority with the Irish government—not that the Irish government was champing at the bit in demanding joint authority. They are terrified of such a prospect, just as they are terrified of a united Irish democracy. The cosy cartel of revolving establishment parties forming governments could well collapse under the democratic renewal that would flow from a united democracy.

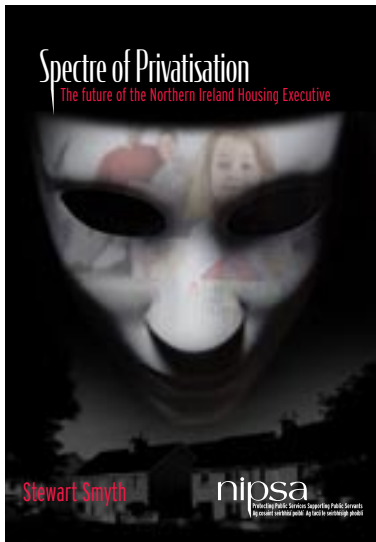
And in the Six Counties poverty will grow, the health service will get worse, the housing crisis will deepen. The economic material base of the Northern economy will further decline.

The hundred years of partition are grinding to their inevitable close. All attempts at bolstering it have failed and will fail. The fault line laid down a century ago continues to erupt and shatter the political landscape. Stability is impossible in such unstable and contested terrain.

Partition has failed. It's time to reassert the democratic demand for Britain to withdraw. Democracy is the only permanent and lasting solution—an all-Ireland national democratic state. ★



PRIVATISING THE NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING EXECUTIVE AGAINST EVIDENCE, AGAINST THE WORKING CLASS



HARRY HAWKINS PRIVATISATION

A MAJOR VICTORY for the civil rights struggle in Northern Ireland was the removal of public housing from sectarian control through the creation of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The NIHE built up a reputation for building some of the best public housing in western Europe, and developing progressive engagement with its tenants.

In 2009 the Chartered Institute of Housing reported in its “Independent Commission on the Future of Housing in NI” that “the presence of this highly significant player greatly enhances Northern Ireland’s capacity to tackle the housing issues faced here.” Even the management consultancy firm Price Waterhouse Cooper had to concede in

2011 that public housing is sustainable and of high quality.

However, like so many of the gains won by working people, public housing has been consistently undermined. Not content with decimating the public housing stock through selling off publicly financed housing in the 1980s, the NIHE has been further marginalised over the last decade as thousands of its properties have been transferred to housing associations. This hollowing out of the public sector is an ideological commitment to private-sector solutions, increasingly seen as the “only game in town.”

As was made clear at the recent 26th Congress of the CPI, “the drive to privatise, facilitated and promoted by national governments, and the outsourcing of public services are

AN OPPORTUNITY, NOT A PANACEA

NICOLA LAWLOR HOUSING

THE RECENT report by the High-Level Group on Collective Bargaining is an opportunity for the trade union movement, and for workers seeking to collectively organise and unionise. It will absolutely not solve the declining density and power of the movement, but if made use of it may present an additional route or mechanism for workers, and their unions, to negotiate and bargain with employers.

The group that produced this report, chaired by Prof. Michael Doherty, included both ICTU and IBEC. Doherty is a well-known industrial-relations and employment law academic who has been critical of social partnership on a number of occasions, including an excellent talk given for the Trade Union Left Forum, which readers may be interested in listening to on the Spark podcast (tinyurl.com/ypkajdkr).

This group was given the following

terms of reference by the Government:

- Examine the issue of trade union recognition and the implication of this for the collective bargaining processes.
- Examine the adequacy of the workplace relations framework supporting the conduct and determination of pay and conditions of employment, having regard to the legal, economic and social conditions in which it operates.
- Consider the legal and constitutional impediments that may exist in the reform of the current systems. In doing so, the group will need to be cognisant of the individual employment rights frameworks and the EU context. It may wish to consider other models of employee relations and pay determination established in other member-states.
- Review the current statutory wage-setting mechanisms and, where appropriate, make recommendations for reform.

Leo Varadkar has stated that the

Government intends bringing forward legislation to make this report law by the end of next year. This, of course, was also conducted against the backdrop of an EU directive on minimum wages and collective bargaining, approved in September, with states given two years to transpose, that mandates governments to encourage collective bargaining for wage-setting and requiring a plan to try to bring collective bargaining on wages up to an 80 per cent threshold.

In regard to work-place bargaining, the report states that it wanted to develop “a process to encourage and facilitate good faith engagement between trade unions and employers at enterprise level, where a trade union has organised members in the enterprise, but where the employer does not engage in collective bargaining . . .” This is positive commitment for workers seeking to unionise.

The report notes that there should be a process for compelling and

carried out in order to secure the dominance of private capital and to open up new avenues for speculative capital investment, resulting in the transfer of public resources to private or corporate interests” (CPI political resolution, paragraph 8).

In November 2020 the Sinn Féin minister Carál Ní Chuilín announced her plan to “change the classification of the Housing Executive landlord to a ‘mutual’ or co-operative,” meaning it would be considered a private-sector organisation for the sake of UK borrowing rules. But, as pointed out by the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance—a leading public-sector trade union—in a report earlier this year titled “Spectre of Privatisation: The Future of the NIHE,” this proposal amounts to “privatisation in a fancy wrapper.”

Experiences in England demonstrate the influence that private finance capital increasingly has over these housing mutuals. To pursue a high credit rating they seek to increase incomes by raising rents and to decrease expenses by making cuts to services.¹

In March 2021 a new minister for communities, Deirdre Hargey, made a commitment to revitalising the NIHE but stated that she “would like to do this while retaining the Housing Executive’s current classification.” Unfortunately, the revitalisation plan lacks depth and ambition. There is a reluctance to change any of the spending rules needed for investing properly in the

The logic of capitalism is to maximise profits; so the financialisation of the housing sector is no surprise. But beyond simple greed, the privatisation process has a strategic advantage to the capitalist class: the disempowerment of the working class.

NIHE, and that cannot entirely be blamed on the British Tory government, as the Prudential Borrowing Rules that were introduced to Northern Ireland in 2011 could be extended to the Housing Executive.²

There is plenty of opportunity for public housing that could be built by a rejuvenated, properly funded and democratically accountable NIHE—opportunities that could also create good-quality skilled jobs for local people and promote a holistic approach to ensuring the benefits of public housing, including implications for public health and social life.

For example, the Department for Communities plans to use the site of the old Mackies engineering works in west Belfast as a greenway, with parks and cycle lanes. However, as the local human rights organisation PPR (Participation and the Practice of Rights) has pointed out, what good is a cycle lane and a park greenway if no residential buildings are planned for the area as well?

Statistics show that west Belfast is the area of most severe housing need in the city. Thousands are on social housing waiting-lists, and that means thousands of people homeless or in housing stress. In fact the plot is so large that some have estimated that 900 homes could be built on it, with room still available to integrate the park greenway.

This leads one to ask, if the

evidence and history show that a well-funded public housing body is essential for tackling the housing crisis in the North, then why isn’t it happening?

The logic of capitalism is to maximise profits; so the financialisation of the housing sector is no surprise. But beyond simple greed, the privatisation process has a strategic advantage to the capitalist class: the disempowerment of the working class. By saddling mortgage-owners with debt and keeping renters in perpetual financial insecurity, the working class is discouraged from taking risks, such as organising and mobilising against worsening living conditions.

But it is only through focused and militant campaigning on crucial areas such as housing that an all-Ireland Unity Programme can be built. Such a programme will ensure housing as a right, providing the means to “enhance democratic rights and promote economic and social planning. Making the case and mobilising support for reunification on this basis is not only the path to unity but the path beyond it into a new Ireland” (CPI political resolution, paragraph 210). ★

Notes

1 NIPSA report (2022), “Spectre of Privatisation: The Future of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.”

2 NIPSA report (2020), “21st Century Housing for Northern Ireland.”

imposing an obligation on employers to engage with unions but not necessarily to reach an agreement. This again seems a significant step forward in creating a better legislative environment for workers seeking to unionise.

The report, as described by Prof. Doherty at the recent IRN Conference, sets out its main findings on company-level bargaining as this. Where an employer does not engage in collective bargaining and the union, with a threshold (10 per cent) of membership, requests engagement on pay or terms and conditions of employment, the employer must engage in good faith. This engagement is defined in the report as meaning

- attending, and participating in, any meeting within a reasonable time;
- giving genuine consideration to representations made by the other party;
- providing any relevant information (other than confidential or commercially sensitive information) in a timely manner;
- giving a clear, considered and reasoned written response to representations made by the other

On the face of it, this for the first time gives workers in a union, and their union official, a mandatory mechanism for meeting the employer and attempting to negotiate improved conditions at work.

party following a good-faith meeting within an agreed time;

- the parties should be responsive, and must not do anything likely to mislead or deceive each other;
- the size, composition and representative nature of the union and employer representatives should be reasonable and balanced between the parties;
- refraining from capricious or unfair conduct (this could include, for example, refusing to meet, or discuss with, properly nominated representatives of the other party, penalising an employee because of trade union activity, interfering with the process of the parties’ nomination of their independent representatives, unduly hurrying the engagement to prevent proper consideration, or taking extreme positions with the intention of shutting down the engagement).
- Each party should be responsible for making its own record of discussions held.

To kick-start this process the union must write to the employer. Should the employer ignore or refuse this, or not

engage in good faith, the union can make a complaint to the Labour Court, which, after hearing this complaint, will issue a recommendation with a course of action that must be taken. If the recommendation is ignored, the Labour Court will issue a determination, and this will be enforceable through the Circuit Court, with accompanying pecuniary penalties.

On the face of it, this for the first time gives workers in a union, and their union official, a mandatory mechanism for meeting the employer and attempting to negotiate improved conditions at work.

That is progress. It is an opportunity. It certainly does not absolve the trade union movement of its responsibility to organise—far from it, in fact: it now places the responsibility for the future of the movement firmly on the shoulders of the movement itself. For this opportunity will only be of value if the movement invests significant time, resources and energy in the organisation, structurally, of workers in their work-place so that they are strong, willing, and able to invoke this mechanism. ★



IMPERIALISM

REFUGEES, NEUTRALITY, AND GROWING MILITARISM



EUGENE McCARTAN
WAR

AT THE OUTBREAK of the US-NATO proxy war with Russia fought out in the streets, towns and villages of Ukraine after the Russian invasion of that country, the Government gave a fulsome commitment to taking in up to 100,000 refugees—despite the fact that for decades they have been saying that there was a limit to the number of political refugees the country could take in (particularly if black or brown).

It has been clear from the very start of this conflict that the Irish state was committed to doing whatever was necessary in support of the US-NATO-EU strategy. The minister for foreign affairs, Simon Coveney, has been the most pro-NATO pro-militarisation of any foreign minister for decades. This and previous Irish governments have shown little real energy in solving the dire shortage of housing, in contrast to the energy being expended in backing the US-NATO-EU proxy war. Apart from the political elements of the refugee crisis, it shows a continuous fault of governance in the state: no planning. Decisions are announced before any consideration of their feasibility.

This state has almost reached the limits of the number of Ukrainian refugees it can accommodate. So far

IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE AND PARTY EDUCATION



SAJEEV KUMAR
CONSCIOUSNESS

PARTY EDUCATION is a continuous process. It is like riding a bicycle: we have to keep pedalling to maintain balance; if we don't, the momentum will only take us a certain distance, after which we will fall.

As the capitalist crisis becomes deeper there will be greater ideological attack on communist parties and Marxism; therefore party education is essential to withstand that attack. That is the reason the recently concluded CPI congress gave importance to intensification of party education. Lack of ideological clarity and party discipline creates weaknesses such as factions, economism, subjectivism, and other kinds of reformist tendencies, which can only be tackled by party education.

Communists never stop learning. Just before his death Bhagath Singh, the greatest Indian revolutionary, who was hanged by the British imperialists, was reading Lenin's *State and Revolution*. When the police came to take him to the gallows he said, without taking his eyes off the book: "Give me time. Two revolutionaries are in conversation." He finished the last few pages and then went to die for his nation. Mao never stopped party education even during the Long March. We have seen pictures of Che Guevara with a book in his hand and a gun over his shoulders, which means books are potent weapons too.

We are living in a predominantly capitalist world. The capitalist mode of production, which is based on exploitation and the extraction of surplus, needs propaganda to justify its exploitation, which it achieves by using education (which creates individuals who subdue themselves to wage slavery), mass media, religion (the opiate that makes people accept the status quo), and bourgeois family structures.



To end the plight of the tens of thousands of people leaving their homes in Ukraine this state needs to adopt a different strategy: one of supporting and promoting an anti-war and de-escalation strategy regarding NATO's proxy war.

more than 60,000 have arrived. The Government's refugee strategy has also exposed the deep racism within the state and the refugee policies regarding political refugees from other countries.

Refugees coming from the Middle East, Afghanistan and the African continent have spent years in direct-provision centres, subjected to poor and exploitative accommodation, and living on poverty-level supports. All refugees—and all applicants for refugee status—should be treated equally, regardless of their origin.

Contrast this with the way that Ukrainian refugees have been treated, receiving far greater monetary supports, priority accommodation, medical cards, transport support, access to third-level education—services and supports denied those who have arrived from other countries seeking political asylum, entitlements that Irish workers have limited access to, fuelling anger and frustration within communities. The liberal and trendy lefties, whether they like it or not, are falling in behind the Government's—i.e. NATO's—strategy in relation to Ukraine, a form of humanitarian imperialism.

The Government's support for the proxy war is exacerbating the housing and accommodation difficulties being experienced by tens of thousands of Irish working people. A spin-off for the establishment flowing from the influx is that these refugees are filling vacancies in low-paid service jobs, such as hotels.

It is estimated that the state will spend up to €600 million this year, rising to more than €1 billion in 2023, to support its strategy of backing the proxy war in Ukraine. This is a huge honey pot for the owners of hotels and other providers of accommodation—all coming from the public purse and adding to the national debt, which workers know from experience will be paid for in cuts in their wages, terms and conditions and in public services. This is indirectly financing this proxy war.

Not alone has the state made its commitment to the NATO war effort by bringing in large number of Ukrainians, it is also providing medical services to Ukrainian fighters. The Government has agreed to take part in the EU military strategy and has agreed to send training personnel to Ukraine on mine-clearing duties. The deployment of Irish military personnel numbering more than twelve must be subjected to the "triple lock." This is a clear military intervention on the side of NATO and a clear breach of neutrality.

The state has denied resources to communities around the country for decades. Now there appears to be no end to the resources to be made available to encourage communities if they row in behind the Government's Ukraine strategy. This is a strategy that will foster racism within sections of society as people scramble, in competition with each other, for such scarce resources as housing,

education, and health services.

To those who believe the Government is allowing too many Ukrainian refugees into the country: we should not focus on the individuals who have arrived here looking for political asylum but rather give them every support.

To end the plight of the tens of thousands of people leaving their homes in Ukraine this state needs to adopt a different strategy: one of supporting and promoting an anti-war and de-escalation strategy regarding NATO's proxy war.

The only solution for all problems arising from the conflict in Ukraine is to demand a ceasefire. This also applies to other conflict zones, mostly fostered by Western interference.

Positive neutrality does not mean standing aside and doing nothing but rather actively promoting peaceful solutions to conflicts; where conflict has broken out to actively bring the opposing sides together to engage in peace talks, and to campaign for disarmament both in conventional weapons of mass destruction and in chemical and nuclear weapons.

A positive foreign policy would also include ending unequal and unfair trading relations, strengthening the United Nations, and giving more power to the General Assembly, reducing the power of the Security Council. A progressive foreign policy would also involve efforts to revive and build the Non-Aligned Movement. ★

Capitalism bombards us with a constant bourgeois ideological cacophony, with which it domesticates our minds.

Capitalism bombards us with a constant bourgeois ideological cacophony, with which it domesticates our minds. Noam Chomsky, in *Manufacturing Consent*, writes that the common character of the world media has become anti-left and anti-trade-union since the 1980s. In today's world, the ones who control information will control the people's minds.

This is where party education is essential for winning the battle of ideas; and there cannot be a more potent weapon than Marxism for winning that battle. During the recent cost-of-living crisis caused by inflation, the corporate media said that the workers demanding a wage increase will only make inflation bigger. It needs a Marxist understanding to know that price increases are not the result of wage increases but of capitalist greed to maintain the rate of profit that caused the price increase.

This is where party education has to be continuous and constant, because capitalism is a dynamic system, and to tackle it the ideological battle has to be relentless.

Marxists have a theory that is against exploitation, and it has to be studied and refreshed, otherwise we will drown in the flood of capitalist propaganda.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union many communist parties around the world changed to being "social democrats," influenced by the capitalist propaganda of the "end of history" and convinced that "there is no alternative" (TINA). Only a few parties, such as the CPI, did not yield to that propaganda and had the conviction to continue as communist parties, believing in the relevance of Marxist-Leninist principles.

In the post-modern world Marxism itself is misused to create confusion within the communist movement. For example, Gramsci, who enriched Marxism using the concept of "cultural hegemony," is projected as a deviation from Marxism. In fact Gramsci was elaborating the idea of Marx that "ruling ideas are the ideas of the ruling class" and that "an idea becomes a material force once it grips the masses." So we need the constant retreat to the study

of Marxism if we are to guard ourselves against this mischief.

Antonio Gramsci analysed how Germany, which was once the cradle of European philosophy, and Italy, which was the epicentre of the Renaissance, could develop regressive ideologies such as Nazism and fascism. Gramsci chronicled all the literature that influenced the people who created the cultural hegemony among them. He came to the conclusion that the working class should shape its own organic intellectuals through formal education, political training, and class struggles. These intellectuals have the task of organising the working class and creating class-consciousness to overcome "common sense."

The call by bourgeois intellectuals to drop the idea of class struggle is also a part of the attack. Social change by slow evolution rather than class revolution is being ingrained in the psyche of the working class. That is why we have to refresh ourselves constantly with party education.

Let us learn together. Let us learn from each other. ★



CAPITALISM RED IN TOOTH AND CLAW

TOMMY MCKEARNEY
POLITICS

THERE IS A German word, *schadenfreude*, meaning to take pleasure from another's misfortunes. Watching the convulsions wracking the British Conservative Party, this writer is surely not alone in experiencing a large degree of that same feeling. Not since the Suez crisis of 1956 has a British government found itself in such turmoil; never before has the Tory party been subjected to such self-inflicted ridicule.

It could hardly be otherwise. Daily U-turning, Cabinet ministers sacked within weeks of taking office, the spectacle of physical force, yes, physical-force Conservatism, employed to whip reluctant MPs through the parliamentary voting lobby—all this topped off with a prime-ministerial resignation after a mere forty-four days in Downing Street.

Yet, in spite of this uniquely English farce, what has happened in London is more than a political party drama. It is actually symptomatic of a global crisis in capitalism.

Setting aside for a moment the Westminster theatricals, the underlying cause of the Liz Truss premiership fiasco was not simply personality clashes: it was instead the consequence of a failed and indeed futile attempt by ultra-conservatives to find a British solution to the wider

problems of capitalism in its neoliberal phase.

What we now identify as neoliberalism is capitalism as shaped by Milton Friedman and the University of Chicago, working on behalf of the US State Department. Worked up originally to combat the Soviet Union's influence over the international working class and thereafter to break trade union power, it gained global recognition as the economic policy of Pinochet's Chile. Hardly surprising, therefore, that it appealed to and was enthusiastically adopted by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.

Capitalism by its very nature is "red in tooth and claw." Neoliberalism applies this with a vengeance as it uses state power to enforce ruthless free-market policies and practices. Heavy-handed action is deliberately taken to undermine and degrade trade union strength, public services are diminished through privatisation, and savage cuts to the social wage in general do damage to any existing welfare safety net. A central element of this strategy is huge tax cuts for the rich, specifically designed to reduce the budget for social infrastructure, such as public housing, health services, and care facilities for children and the elderly.

The objective is blunt and brutal: to enhance and ensure the privilege and power of the ruling class through a conscious policy of crushing all



Since at least the 1930s, pragmatic free-market economists have recognised the need to occasionally intervene to save capitalism from itself.

constraints on its accumulation of wealth. The mantra is to remove all restrictions on the free market, with the obvious corollary that no steps will be taken to protect indigenous industry or to hinder the free movement of capital.

So how has the system worked out for its proponents? Well, for a number of decades all seemed to be going according to plan. Its leading practitioners, Reagan and Thatcher, had emasculated organised labour, reduced state intervention throughout society, and minimised financial regulations. Meanwhile the financial sector alone was expanding, and to such an extent that in Britain, for example, it now accounts for a quarter of annual GDP.

Inevitably, though, this led to the offshoring or outsourcing of large chunks of the economy, particularly by American and British "entrepreneurs" greedy to take advantage of lower-wage economies. Along with coal mines and steel mills, manufacturing industries in both established engineering and emerging high-tech sectors were either closed down or moved abroad.

China, with its stable government and large, well-educated population, met many of the needs of the above. Moreover, before the collapse of the USSR, offering China a reciprocal trade agreement with the G7 appeared to offer a tool for

separating it from Moscow. However, as we now know, this has assisted China in developing its manufacturing and technological capacity to such a degree that its economy is on the verge of overtaking that of the United States. Ominously, from a Western ruling-class standpoint, this trajectory is disturbingly reminiscent of the economic rise of nineteenth-century Britain and twentieth-century North America.

For the hard-headed and pragmatic elements among capitalism's ruling class, this has presented two major threats to their system's global hegemony.

In the first instance, a reduction in living standards for so many in working-class communities as a result of deliberate neoliberal policies has caused widespread resentment against those in power. So far this discontent has largely manifested itself as an almost aimless populism, albeit often with reactionary leanings. However, more recently there is evidence that progressive organised labour is re-emerging and asserting itself. And while populism threatens stability, workers acting in concert raise an altogether different potential scenario.

Secondly, for capitalism's strategists a huge threat is posed in the long term by the loss of manufacturing capacity, especially that involving advanced technological production. While some elements of neoliberalism believe that financial services are an adequate substitute for manufacturing, the evidence proves otherwise. China's growing economic power and global influence testify to this fact and, incidentally, explain the real reason for Washington and its allies' hostility towards China.

The response by Western capitalism has largely been dictated and led by the leading imperial power, the United States. This has taken the form of an economic onslaught against China, under the pretext that the People's Republic is an authoritarian state bent on war with Taiwan and global domination thereafter. By denying China's exports access to overseas markets, the plan is (a) to stymie its development and (b) to use its absence to encourage indigenous manufacturing in the West.

In tandem with economic sanctions is a policy of geopolitical and military encirclement of China and its allies. Hence the enormous military and material support for the war in Ukraine.

While the policy of undermining China and its allies gained widespread support within the capitalist West (including with the servile Dublin

government), there was less unanimity about modifying a crucial tenet of neoliberalism, namely state intervention in the economy.

Since at least the 1930s, pragmatic free-market economists have recognised the need to occasionally intervene to save capitalism from itself. Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and in Britain the Keynesian approach were based on this understanding. For some there is no questioning the need for this strategy. The French government recently intervened to nationalise the electricity company *Électricité de France*, while Germany nationalised its biggest gas importer, Uniper.*

However, there is no similar acceptance among the ruling class in the United States and Britain. Joe Biden's attempt to repeat the Roosevelt strategy with his "Build Back Better" plan was sabotaged from within his own party by Senators Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema.

Which brings us back to the political crisis in Britain, the origin of which lay in the country's floundering economy and lack of growth. Fixated on Thatcherite ideology, debate within the governing party was not about limited state intervention but rather on the speed at which to introduce a continuation of its neoliberal agenda. Liz Truss and her supporters ignored the advice of some within the Conservative Party. Throwing caution to the winds, they went for broke and, ironically, were broken by the very market forces they advocated.

Riven as the Tory party is between its bitterly divided factions, there seems little possibility now that a viable economic programme can emerge from within the current British government. This poses a threat to the British economy as sought by British capital.

Ironically, rescue may arrive for them from a different quarter. The *Financial Times* has taken to advocating an immediate general election. With opinion polls clearly indicating only one outcome, this means the newspaper of stockbrokers and bankers is looking to Keir Starmer to save them and their economic system.

Maybe on reflection *schadenfreude* was the wrong word: perhaps it's more a case of who or what can spare us from such a prospect. ★

*Julia Kollwe, "Germany nationalises biggest gas importer to avert supply crisis," *Guardian* (London), 21 September 2022 (<https://bit.ly/3VQczz6>).

Donie Corcoran (1959–2022)



Riven as the Tory party is between its bitterly divided factions, there seems little possibility now that a viable economic programme can emerge from within the current British government. This poses a threat to the British economy as sought by British capital.

IT IS WITH great sadness that the Communist Party of Ireland learnt of the death of Comrade Donie Corcoran, late of Gurranaברה on Cork city's north side. We offer our deepest sympathy to his family and friends.

Donie had been a member of the party since 1983 and was treasurer of the Cork Branch. Prior to that he had been a member of the Connolly Youth Movement. Among the earliest political campaigns in which Donie took part was the nationwide support for the demands of the hunger-strikers in 1981. He also took part in the Dáil campaign for Mairéad Farrell, then a political prisoner, in Cork North-Central.

Every September Donie worked on the CPI stall at the Fête de l'Humanité in Paris, where he loved to buy communist paraphernalia from fraternal parties. He was a tireless campaigner for all left and progressive causes in his native Cork. Over the past few years Donie could be seen with his party comrades on the streets of Cork distributing party leaflets and engaging in political discussion with passers-by.

Donie studied Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Connolly, and he had been a student at the Lenin School in the USSR in the 1980s. He was among those comrades who were shocked by the collapse of the Soviet Union but who continued to fight for socialism and a better world for all.

Donie's last political involvement was as a delegate to the 26th Congress of the CPI in Dublin, where he took part in the political debate and enjoyed being able to meet and socialise with comrades old and new in person once again.

Donie was proud of his class and of his local area in Cork. We salute his memory as one of those comrades who kept the Red Flag flying during the dark days following the counter-revolutionary overthrow of European socialism.

Farewell, comrade! ★



NORTHERN CENSUS IGNORES CLASS, IMPERIALISM, AND THE 99%

BARRY MURRAY
DEMOGRAPHICS

THERE'S GREAT talk these days and crunching of numbers in relation to the new census results in the north of Ireland. Mostly it is being portrayed as the beginning of the end of the control of the North by and for Protestants—and a forlorn

hope for the “united Ireland at any cost” brigade. And to some extent that may be true. But it is an extremely shallow analysis.

It's interesting to note that the census does not include a section on class. If it did, would it inform better and expose the real make-up of society, which is carefully hidden?

The issue, therefore, needs to be

properly put into context. Why was Ireland colonised and Protestants planted in the country in the first place? For British imperialist interests, based on the capitalist and class system. And further, why was Ireland partitioned in the 1920s? And what was the 1922 counter-revolution about? All for the very same imperialist reasons. And that very reason is the

NATO AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS

MIRANDA LYNCH
WAR

ON 29 OCTOBER 1983, 550,000 people gathered in the middle of the Hague to protest against nuclear weapons being placed in the Netherlands. This is still the biggest protest the country has ever seen, and was a clear mandate against nuclear weapons. As a result of this and other mass protests, no nuclear-armed cruise missiles would be stationed in the Netherlands.

This sounds like a success story: a country successfully resisting their NATO overlords when it comes to nuclear weapons. However, the government had already secretly agreed in the 1960s to the placement of a different kind of

nuclear weapons. While this was an open secret, it would not be confirmed until Wikileaks released a confidential cable in 2009, which also confirmed the placement of nuclear weapons in Belgium and Germany.

It is now believed that twenty-two nuclear weapons of type B61-12 are stationed in the Volkel air base in the southern part of the country. These are smaller nuclear weapons with “only” a 50-kiloton TNT yield, or three times the power of the American bomb that destroyed Hiroshima in 1945. A nuclear weapons expert, Hans Kristensen, expects that 9,000 people would die if something goes wrong with the weapons. And, because they are owned by the United States, it is the Americans who decide whether or not they will be

used.

Declassified maps from the USSR showed Volkel as a target, confirming that nuclear weapons don't protect but rather make anyone storing them a potential victim of their destructive power.

This situation is relevant to the present time, with Finland and Sweden on the verge of joining NATO. Both countries have seen popular opposition to nuclear weapons. While the leaders of both countries have put out statements declaring that they oppose the stationing of nuclear weapons on their territory, the history of the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany shows that public opposition counts for nothing when it comes to the Americans placing nuclear weapons on their land.

LEFT UNITY

CLOVER CARROLL
PROTEST

THE COST Of Living Coalition had many people taking to the streets during the protest march on the 24th of September. The coalition was a broad range of left-wing organisations, such as People Before Profit, the CPI, the Connolly Youth Movement and other grass-roots movements, such as activists from mica houses.

This huge display of left unity can show what true mass action is capable of organising: thousands of protesters in the streets, which crushed the water charges with the Right to Water

Campaign. However, bringing an end to the cost-of-living crisis—more accurately described as a cost of living under capitalism—needs a clear strategy and a clear goal.

Broadly speaking, the Irish left has another chance to work with the masses to bring change in Ireland again. But what should this change be? The cost of living covers rent, food, electricity, fuel, and anything that capitalism can raise the price of. Fighting the cost of living is a long battle, and without achieving milestones the coalition could fall apart before any of these issues are solved.

A clear goal, for example bringing

about social housing that is paid for by a differential rent, bringing down rent costs, must have a focus until it is gained or there is a risk of losing momentum for the ultimate goal of fighting the cost of living, abolishing capitalism, and setting up a 32-county socialist Ireland.

While the final goal of abolishing capitalism may be fought for differently by different leftists, the fighting against capitalism, and more individual issues, can bring different leftists together in an organised way. How we organise, and the actions we carry out with an organised force, are what make up our tactics and strategy. The ways in which



Many republicans, nationalists and united-Irelanders will mistakenly see the Catholic majority reported in the census as progress towards a 32-county Ireland and the ending of unionist dominance.

only way to measure the potential consequences and outcome of the recent census results—that is, from an imperialist and class viewpoint.

Protestants, who were made to feel a “special people” in the British plans, were used too. Many middle-class and wealthy Catholics felt part of the British plans as well. It is interesting, however, that many members of the loyalist paramilitary forces have admitted in recent years that they have been used by the British, and continue to be used. It is clear also that the 26-County pro-capitalist establishment benefited from the Northern sectarian statelet, which was assisted by their deceitful bourgeois politics since the 1920s.

Many republicans, nationalists and united-Irelanders will mistakenly see the Catholic majority reported in the

census as progress towards a 32-county Ireland and the ending of unionist dominance. That’s a very narrow view, and a pyrrhic victory.

What adds to the charade is that many right-wing commentators and similar media, particularly in the South, are speculating on the possibilities of a “united Ireland.” The likes of the Irish Times commenting on a border poll, or Norman Tebbit forecasting a “united Ireland,” would certainly not inspire confidence about what type of Ireland they are surely talking about. Neither would the latest political circus by “Ireland’s Future” in the 3Arena, or the next one in the Ulster Hall in Belfast.

In the first instance, if and when change happens it will be decided mainly by the British, the EU, the Americans, the Dublin government, and their NATO allies. The majority in

Ireland, the Protestant or Catholic working class, will have no say. Protestant and Catholic businessmen and women in the North may well have some input, as will the business class in the South.

The real question, therefore, is what kind of Ireland will they want. Will a Catholic or Protestant majority in the North make any difference to that outcome? I doubt it very much. Once again the plan will be to secure a 32-county pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist and pro-NATO Ireland, an Ireland for the haves and to hell with the have-nots.

Republicans, but socialist republicans in particular, would do well to ignore the propaganda about what is another sectarian head count, in the form of a census, and build now for a 32-county socialist republic in the vision of Connolly. ★

Nuclear weapons are the most dangerous technology that humanity has ever created.

This is especially concerning for Finland, which shares a 1,300-kilometre border with nuclear-armed Russia.

The media have also reported recently that Poland is in talks with the United States about joining the nuclear-sharing programme, officially putting American nuclear weapons on Polish soil. At the beginning of October, president Zelenskyi of Ukraine even seemed to call for a pre-emptive nuclear strike against Russia. While his office has clarified his remarks since, it shows how tense the present situation is, and how easily the situation can escalate.

Nuclear weapons are the most dangerous technology that humanity has ever created. Their only use in the theatre of war—the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki—resulted in approximately 250,000 deaths, the vast majority of whom were civilians. In

1962 the United States threatened a full-scale escalation because nuclear weapons were positioned in Cuba, close to their borders. Yet in 2022 they don’t seem to mind doing the exact same to Russia. Sweden, Finland, and Poland might feel protected, yet NATO nukes make them not just potentially complicit in widespread nuclear destruction but also the first target should things go wrong.

In 1983 the message of the Dutch protesters was: “We have made weapons that caused us to stand on the edge of a cliff. We can’t afford another mistake, or the whole world will be destroyed.” Now that nuclear war is looming again, every communist, socialist and anyone with an ounce of peace and self-preservation in their body should resolutely oppose every development that brings us closer to nuclear armageddon. ★

Notes

Huib Modderkolk, “Diep weggestopt explosief materiaal: ‘De kernwapens liggen in Nederland. Voor de rest is het een Amerikaans feestje,’” *de Volksrant*, 16 January 2021 (tinyurl.com/58nyeh25).

Rebecca Seunis, “Als het misgaat in Volkel, vallen er vanwege de kernwapens die daar liggen 9000 doden,” *Omroep Brabant*, 14 November 2019 (tinyurl.com/26x9tasw).

“Finnish prime minister says joining NATO doesn’t mean hosting nuclear weapons on Russia’s doorstep,” *Business Insider* (tinyurl.com/8d9h9d26).

“Partistyreliens beslut om Socialdemokraternas säkerhetspolitiska linje,” *Socialdemokraterna*, 15 May 2022 (tinyurl.com/5bswspd2).

While leftist unity can be used to tackle specific issues and organise mass action, a revolutionary Marxist approach must be struggled for ideologically.

our tactics and strategy come out in a unified way must be decided upon and acted out by all participants in the agreed way, otherwise the coalition falls apart.

Left unity can be used to bring about radical change under the current Cost of Living Coalition, and has before with the Right to Water movement. We must keep on a revolutionary track. We must not get trapped in reformism to simply make life a little bit better under capitalism. The movement against the rising cost of living requires as much input as possible from the working class as well as revolutionary leadership to guide the movement.

We must learn from the past. Working-class communities have the power to bring change when they work together. The job of a communist party,

or some form of a united front, is to guide those communities ideologically while learning from their experiences, changing tactics to fit the needs of the communities. This builds the strength of the movement and teaches adaptability to revolutionaries.

The experiences of working-class people in movements such as the coalition are invaluable, as they enhance the theory that we put into practice. The theory that we use also cannot be put to one side for the purpose of fighting every issue at once; as Engels said in 1874, “The indifference towards all theory is one of the main reasons the English working-class movement crawls along slowly in spite of splendid organisation.”

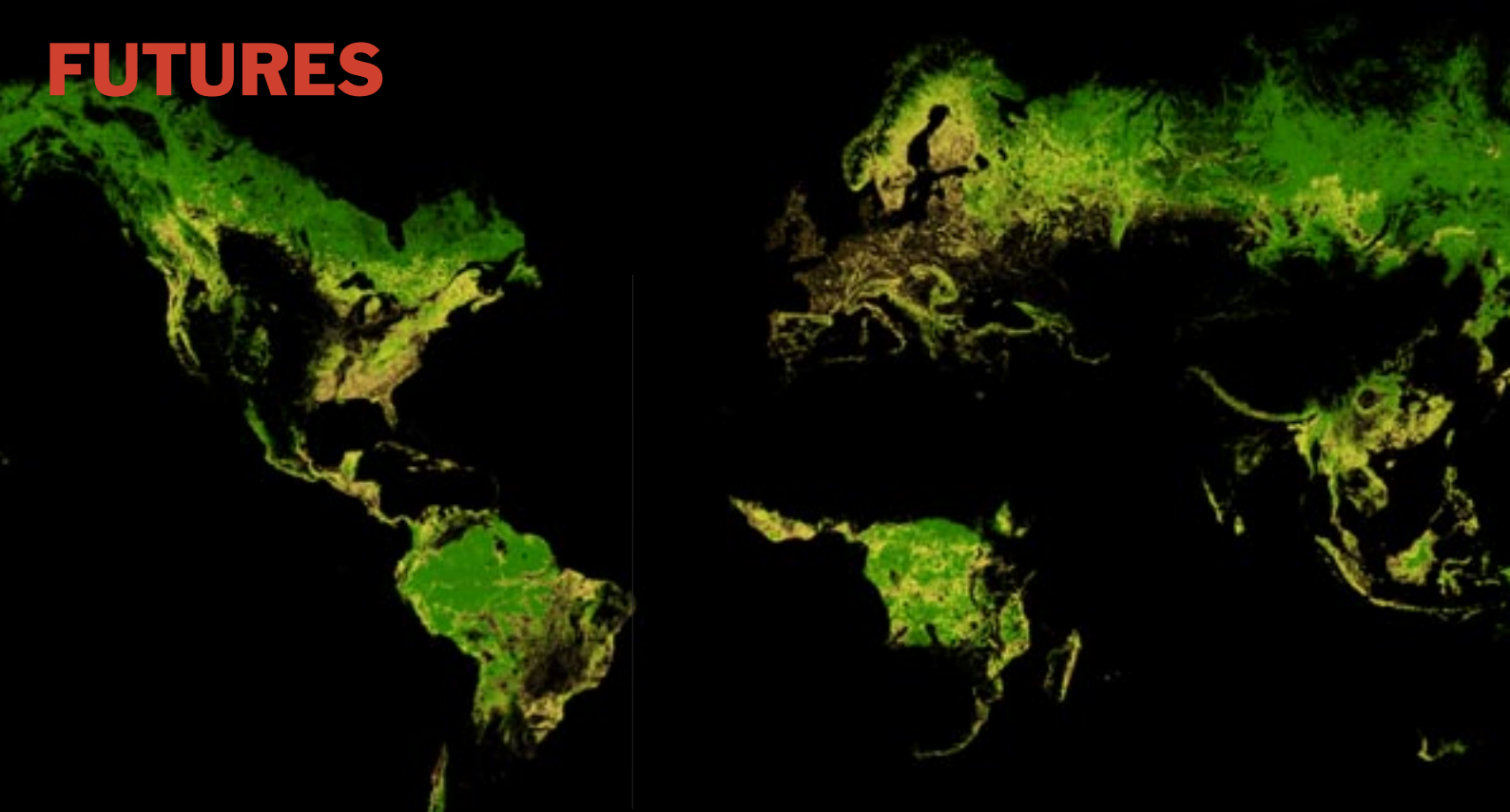
While leftist unity can be used to tackle specific issues and organise mass action, a revolutionary Marxist approach

must be struggled for ideologically. This approach must be fought for, not blindly but through analysis and debate to come to a correct approach. Through democratic centralism we must come to a decision on how to put theory into practice and act on it, not simply debate or work alongside each other.

While left unity can be a great force for achieving goals, our tactics and strategies will differ on how to abolish capitalism. For this reason, even in a case of left unity active revolutionaries cannot stop at political and economic struggle but must wage an ideological struggle as well.

“Unity is a great thing and a great slogan. But what the workers’ cause needs is the unity of Marxists, not unity between Marxists and opponents and distorters of Marxism.”—Lenin ★





GASLIGHTING THE ANTHROPOCENE

ROSE VOLKER

GLOBAL WARMING

IN GEOLOGY, the periods and smaller epochs of Earth's past are named by the region in which they were first

determined as such, or by their characteristics. Well-known periods are the Carboniferous, for its ample coal deposits, and the Jurassic, for the Jura Mountains, where it was first identified. The beginnings and ends of these times

are often marked by global, sometimes catastrophic changes, leaving visible traces on the Earth.

We are now in the Quaternary Epoch, defined by the cyclical growth and retreat of the polar ice caps known as Ice Ages.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN CUBA: A CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT

BERNARDO GUANCHE HERNÁNDEZ

LIBERTY

INNUMERABLE RELIGIOUS Organisations, institutions and fraternal associations exist and function in the Republic of Cuba, which have structures at the national, provincial and local levels. For their work they group their members, both in an evangelising function as well as a social and ethical one, in defence of peace, solidarity towards the most needy, humanism, citizen responsibility and family, institutional and national unity.

In 2021 there were 1,850 religious organisations and institutions and fraternal associations in Cuba, whose membership reached a million and a half people.

The Cuban government recognises, guarantees and respects religious freedom. The guarantees of freedom of

worship include constitutional and criminal protection.

The 2019 Constitution of the Republic sets forth the principles in relations with religions and believers and states:

Article 15. The State recognises, respects and guarantees religious freedom. The Cuban state is secular. In the Republic of Cuba, religious institutions and fraternal associations are separate from the State and all have the same rights and duties. Different beliefs and religions enjoy equal consideration.

Article 57. Every person has the right to profess religious beliefs or not, to change them and to practise the religion of their choice, with due respect for others and in accordance with the law.

For its part, the new Cuban Penal Code, Law No. 151, published in the *Official Gazette of the Republic* on 1 September, defines:

Chapter VII

Crime against religious freedom

Article 387.1. Whoever prevents or disturbs the acts or ceremonies of registered or recognised religious institutions, which are held in observance of legal provisions, is punished with imprisonment from six months to one year or a fine of one hundred to three hundred quotas, or both.

2. If the crime is committed by a public official or public authority, with abuse of his position, the sanction is imprisonment from six months to two years or a fine of two hundred to five hundred quotas, or both.

The religious affiliation of the people, or the absence of it, are not limitations to access positions and jobs of the State, the Public Administration and the provision of services.





More specifically, within this period we live in what is formally known as the Holocene Epoch, which is the current warm period after the end of the last Ice Age. Although humankind has wandered the Earth for over a million years, it is during this stable period that human civilisation developed into what it is today.

In the last couple of decades geologists have proposed a new epoch: the Anthropocene, or age of humans. There is no real consensus on when this epoch begins, however. Some propose the advent of farming, which has resulted in widespread deforestation; others choose the detonation of the first nuclear bomb, stamping its signature isotope mark on the world.

No matter what criteria you choose, one thing remains clear: human activity is reshaping this planet on such a scale that it will remain visible hundreds of millions of years into the future. As we are today, the world is facing environmental disaster, with a loss of biodiversity that is rivalled only by the greatest mass extinctions from the ancient past and a climate that is changing faster than this planet has ever seen in the past 55 million years.

In the face of this crisis we are told that the blame lies with us humans as a whole, and that we as a global society must rectify the damage. Humankind, however, is not a homogeneous group, with a common value and behaviour. Therefore the Anthropocene is not the

result of humanity as a collective—on the contrary, it is the result of the actions of a particular group of people from particular parts of the world.

The “we are all to blame” attitude that is forced upon us is therefore mere gaslighting—a way for both capitalism and imperialism to externalise the costs of their reckless exploitation of the planet.

While the relationship of the working class with the capitalist class with regard to exploitation cannot be directly translated to nature, there are definite parallels. Capitalism will always seek ways to increase profit or else will face elimination by itself. There are two ways to realise this: increase income and reduce costs. Therefore the capitalist class is inherently motivated to do as little as it can get away with to protect workers from the harm its methods cause.

Simultaneously it actively withholds knowledge of health risks. This way it keeps the internal costs of protection and wages down. Once workers eventually fall ill it will seek ways to get rid of them, thus to externalise the costs to society of their recovery.

This applies to nature as well. Exxon-Mobil and Shell knew since the 1980s about the dangers of altering the make-up of our atmosphere with the unrestrained burning of fossil fuels. Instead of taking responsibility and limiting the harm already done, the knowledge was buried and actively

fought, in a similar way we have seen with leaded petrol, tobacco, and the damage to the ozone layer.

Now, forty years later, we have arrived at a point where the costs are becoming a reality and nearly impossible to ignore or deny.

Here is where capitalism is attempting to externalise the costs to a world that had no part in their reckless exploitation, with its message that we are all to blame. After all, we are in the Anthropocene: the age of humans.

This applies more so to the global south, where developing nations, after being robbed of their natural resources, are told to limit or halt their development for the sake of the environment. In an attempt to not take responsibility and divert attention, fingers are pointed at countries such as India, which, despite having a population twenty times higher than Britain, has in total contributed only half of Britain’s cumulative carbon emissions.

We are told that we are all in the same boat, that we must all contribute, no matter our part in the cause of the staggering problems that are facing us. Perhaps one could indeed regard Planet Earth as a ship, one where the elite travel first class, with priority access to the lifeboats, while the lower decks are left on their own.

No matter how “green” we may make our personal lifestyle, capitalism will always remain unsustainable. ★

The Catholic Church has seminaries and novitiates for the training of its diocesan personnel or male and female religious orders and congregations

The religious and fraternal sector in Cuba. The blockade as an impediment to its full development.

All religious institutions and organisations and fraternal associations develop, with total independence and autonomy in relation to the State, their social activities, the training of their personnel, the appointment of their leaders and their movements within and outside the country and are not subsidised by the Cuban state.

Cuban religious institutions train and prepare their personnel, including obtaining scientific degrees such as master’s degrees and/or doctorates in theology, which they do with full freedom and without limitations for the selection and incorporation of their personnel to the studies in their seminaries or abroad. The Catholic Church has seminaries and novitiates for the training of its diocesan personnel or male and female religious orders and congregations. Tens of young Cubans complete their studies in seminaries and universities in different countries.

All religious institutions carry out

activities of a social nature with different profiles, including the administration of nursing-homes and grandparents’ homes, for which they have the support of the Cuban State. They carry out joint projects with Health and Education entities for the benefit of people with disabilities, and several of them have obtained land for food production, in accordance with current agricultural legislation.

The prison population in Cuba receives individual and collective spiritual care. In addition, masses and services are held in prisons across the country.

Religious organisations broadcast radio programmes and speeches by the bishops of the Catholic Church, as well as other programmes of the Cuban Council of Churches. Even during the pandemic the transmissions of these programmes and speeches were maintained.

Cuban religious institutions maintain relationships with counterparts and other personalities abroad, receive delegations and guests of that nature, and organise events. Several religious institutions are part of homologous international structures.

Numerous publications of various denominations, religious organisations and fraternal associations circulate in the country. More than thirty are registered in the Registry of Publications of the Cuban Book Institute. Through the Biblical Commission of Cuba, every year tens of thousands of copies of biblical material are received in the country.

The economic, commercial and financial blockade by the United States has caused considerable deprivation and human damage to the people of Cuba that seriously harms the country’s economy and hinders development. The Cuban Churches have also been victims of the blockade, as Pope John Paul II pointed out during his unforgettable visit to Cuba in 1998. There are several statements denouncing it sent by North American churches to the President of the United States.

Religious freedom in Cuba is a right of every Cuban, for whom without the limitations imposed by the blockade it would be easier for them to fully develop. ★

BERNARDO GUANCHE HERNÁNDEZ IS
AMBASSADOR OF CUBA TO IRELAND



SHAW SIDES WITH WORKING-CLASS WOMEN



IMAGE from the 2011 staging of *Pygmalion* at the Abbey Theatre Dublin

JENNY FARRELL
THEATRE

THE IMMEDIATE social background to George Bernard Shaw's most famous comedy, *Pygmalion* (1912), is the growing British women's suffrage movement at the time. The play is as much about class relations as it is about women's rights. For Shaw, the two are inseparable.

Pygmalion is about practical, intelligent women from different social classes. In addition to Liza Doolittle, two other women are significant: Mrs Pearce, Henry Higgins's Scottish housekeeper, and his mother, Mrs Higgins.

Quite unimpressed by her employer, Mrs Pearce speaks in very practical terms about economic and social aspects concerning the young woman's position in the household, as well as her income, and realistically foresees difficulties after the wager is won or lost. Undaunted, Mrs Pearce also watches over Liza's dignity. She corrects Higgins's behaviour and his crude expression (the man who plans to teach Liza "refined" manners and speech), demanding some control over these in Liza's presence.

In this respect, Mrs Pearce, who comes from the same class as Liza, assumes the role of her defender almost from the beginning.

Interestingly, Mrs Higgins expresses a similar insight. So, within the bourgeoisie too there is a practical woman who sees the situation and the dangers clearly. Like Mrs Pearce, she recognises that switching Liza to the bourgeoisie's way of life would result in her no longer being able to support herself.

Liza herself confidently insists from the beginning on her human equality. She insists on her right not to be watched by any police, and wants to pay for Higgins's language lessons. Despite Higgins's sarcasm and his indifference towards her further career, Liza asserts her dignity and ultimately emerges as the strongest person in the play. There is no bourgeois male figure of comparable stature. The gentlemen are not aware of this, of course.

Shaw does not make it easy for his mainly middle-class audience to grasp his intention either. We are presented with highly educated men, erudite linguists, as well as a representative of the working class, Liza's father, Alfred Doolittle, who is in no way inferior to the academics in intellect.

Higgins is misanthropic and views women as mindless beings who expect from life chocolate, clothes and taxis as well as a "good" marriage. A woman's self-realisation through her own work does not occur to him. In this regard it is all the more understandable that his greatest crisis arises when Liza tells him that from now on she will make her living by teaching. That this will involve phonetics is his greatest threat, for Liza has a more musical ear than he and can go far.

Despite better manners, Higgins's colleague Pickering, like Higgins, thinks the wager is won when Liza performs the great miracle and is able to pass herself off as a duchess. Together with Higgins, he enjoys the moment of this triumph without admitting that it is actually Liza's achievement. Nor does he ever ask what is to become of Liza now.

Alfred Doolittle comes across to a bourgeois



audience as uneducated and unsophisticated, almost comical, yet he has enormous self-confidence and belongs unmistakably to the working class. Like Liza, he demonstrates class-consciousness and the potential of this class: *“I’m one of the undeserving poor . . . I don’t need less than a deserving man: I need more. I don’t eat less hearty than him; and I drink a lot more. I want a bit of amusement, ’cause I’m a thinking man. I want cheerfulness and a song and a band when I feel low . . . I’m undeserving; and I mean to go on being undeserving.”*

Shaw’s insistence on the human superiority of the working class is also reflected on a linguistic level. For months, Higgins drills Liza in bourgeois “small talk.” She learns completely meaningless phrases by heart; but her need for meaningful conversation overwhelms her, and she falls back into her own speech at the tea party, and everything threatens to get out of hand.

The evening after Liza’s “success,” Higgins treats her like his servant. When she asks, “What’s to become of me?” Higgins suggests she could marry, and she responds with great insight: *“We were above that at the corner of Tottenham Court Road . . . I didn’t sell myself. Now you’ve made a lady of me I’m not fit to sell anything else. I wish you’d left me where you found me.”*

When Higgins asks her about her suitor, Freddy, “Can he make anything of you?” Liza counters this insult with an answer that Higgins couldn’t even conceive of: *“Perhaps I could make something of him. But I never thought of us making anything of one another; and you never think of anything else.”* Liza has a far greater degree of humanity and insight than any middle-class character in the play. Added to this is her sense of equality.

For Shaw, the false happy ending of conventional comedy—a marriage between Higgins and Liza—is out of the question. It is precisely because of his understanding of class and the class conflict that such an ending is impossible. Shaw holds up a mirror to the primarily bourgeois English audience to raise doubt over, if not to shake, their complacent sense of superiority. The play ends with Liza’s departure and Higgins’s unreformability.

Shaw identifies with the class to which his heroines belong, and he does so as a socialist, yet as an outsider. At the same time his fellow-Irishman, the painter and decorator Robert Tressell (Robert Noonan), also born in Dublin, wrote the first working-class novel in English-language literature. ★

The return of Anderson



MICK HEALY
MUSIC

BADHANDS, the musical project from Dublin, were the backing group at the Workman’s Club Cellar on Saturday 10 September for Anderson’s first live show in over four years.

It was standing room only for a show with no set breaks as they cranked out tune after tune. You could have heard a pin drop as the audience intently enjoyed the music. Among the songs performed were “The Twilight Is Folding,” “History,” and “Cecilia’s Sister” from the album *Patterns*. Anderson also included exciting new material, which takes him to another musical level. The night ended with an amazing cover of the Beatles song

“Get Back.

After working as a tradesperson, Anderson, otherwise Daniel Anderson, decided to alter course and pursue a career in music, fronting the indie rock band Rags, which released a remarkable album, *A National Light*.

As the solo artist, Anderson sold out shows, received good radio and media coverage, and appeared on the “Late Late Show.” In 2015 his debut album, *Patterns*, reached number 9 in the Irish albums charts.

Anderson’s distinctive style of singing enables him to give convincing renditions of songs from different genres, and there’s no doubt that with his return to live performances the public will hear a lot more from him. ★



War and Peace

GABRIEL ROSENSTOCK

cad atá ar siúl
is deacair é a thuiscint
cuir in iúl dom é
cén cuspóir atá againn
ní thuigim a thuilleadh é

what are we doing
it is hard to understand
remind me again
what are we trying to do
I thought I knew (but I don’t)

A bilingual 31-syllable tanka (5-7-5-7-7 syllables) in Irish and English, in response to a work of street art.

■ A recent title by Gabriel Rosenstock is *Daybreak: Poem-Prayers for Prisoners* (tinyurl.com/yfaefhcd).

LEFT: *Street Poster, Liverpool*, by Guy Denning





The Great Money Trick
from Robert Tressell's *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*.
Cartoon by Andy Vine,
Essay by Jenny Farrell
€3.50 from Connolly Books
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LETTERS

DECOLONISATION

I was just wondering if someone could pass my compliments on to Graham Harrington for his latest article (“Irish decolonisation,” 4 October 2022). It was a great exploration of the all too commonplace “colonised” Irish mindset/psyche through the lens of Marxism, with especially welcome emphasis on the Irish language.

Graham’s article lines up very strongly with my own trains of thought on that matter lately, and if he has not been influenced by Máirtín Ó Cadhain then he is definitely following very closely in that great man’s footsteps. I hope to see more from Graham. Ar aghaidh linn!

Le gach dea-ghuí,
Blaine McCartney

VACCINATION

“Covid vaccination: A more radical solution needed,” written by Raymond Ó Dubhghaill on 3 October 2021.

I applaud Raymond for this article. I used to describe myself as left/anarchist/animal liberationist/punk. As a vegan I have been interested in the connection of medicine and animal based research for 30 years. As a result I and my family have decided not to partake in any vaccines for various reasons. Over the last two years I have experienced online abuse from those identifying themselves as anti-fascist or far left or LGBTQI supporters. I have never seen abuse from the conservatives or moderate right! This is despite the fact that in my youth I campaigned for anti-fascist, LGBT, workers’ rights, anti-privatisation, anti war and of course animal rights causes. Often putting myself in harm’s way.

How disappointing and disgusted and frightening it was to see people from the far left trying to deny my family the same freedoms I’d campaigned for others.

Well done to Raymond on trying to bring this to light—and no, I’ll not be convinced I need covid or any other vaccine.

Best regards
Sean

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