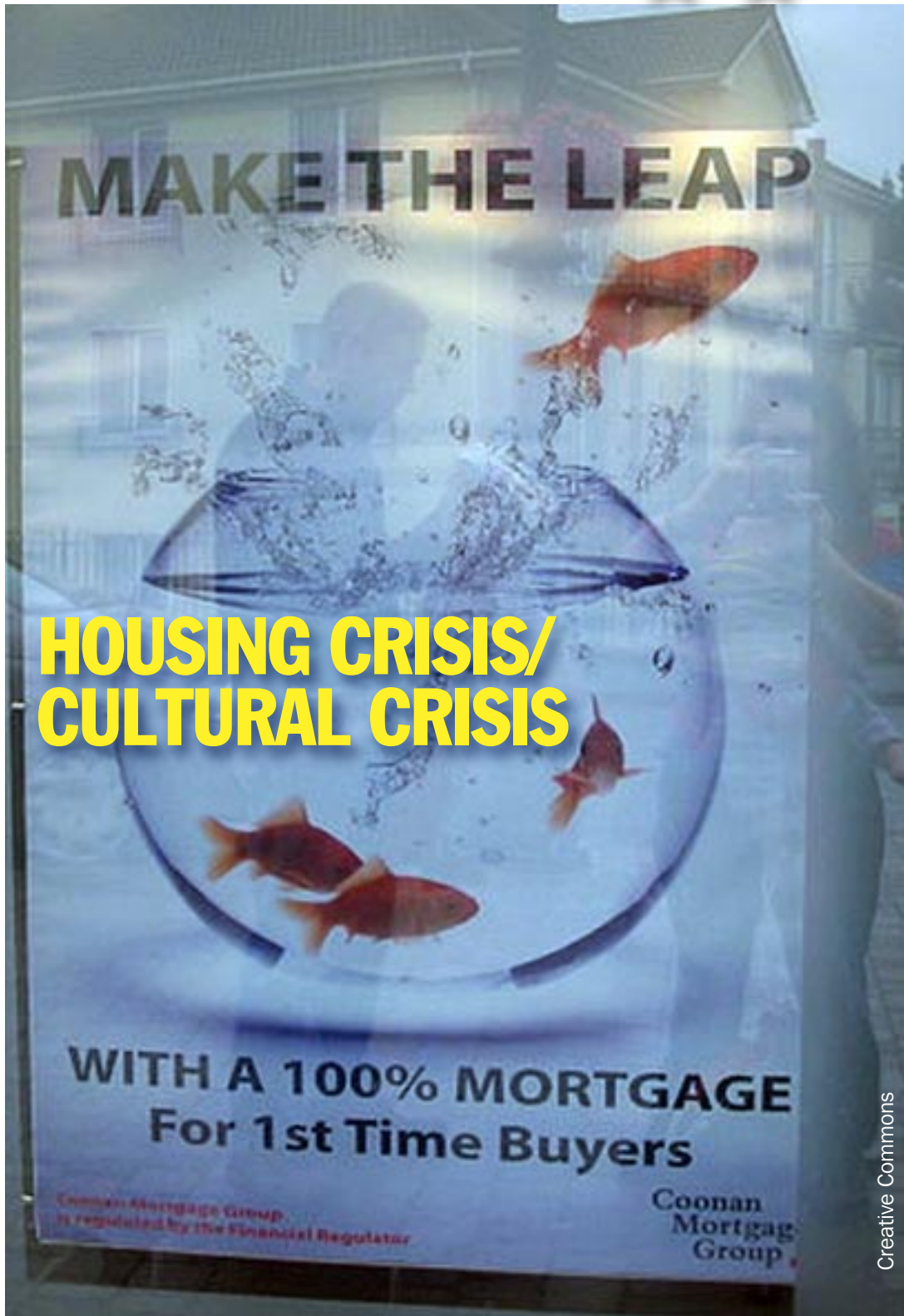


# Socialist Voice

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“Not to repeal the Union, then, but to repeal the Conquest—not to disturb or dismantle the empire, but to abolish it for ever . . .”  
**James Fintan Lalor**, *Irish Felon*,  
24 June 1848

## SV

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# POLITICS

## 2023 NEW YEAR, SAME PROBLEMS



**Eugene McCartan** sets out the common demands that form a working class action plan for 2023

**EUGENE MCCARTAN**  
2023

**A**S WE ENTER 2023, working people are still affected by long-standing problems: shortage of housing, crumbling health service, low wages, precarious work, spiralling rents, and growing inequality.

Many of these conditions plague people in the Six Counties, with the added complication caused by British-imposed partition: sectarianism, a built-in unstable political system, overlaid with colonial rule from London, resulting in all major economic and social policies being directed from there.

The political institutions in Belfast continue to be mothballed and, since the re-establishment of “local” administration, have staggered and stumbled from one crisis to the next. The institutions established in Stormont were designed to manage expectations, to control any potential change to the needs and the strategy of the British state—regardless of which particular political party is in government in London.

At the end of 2022 a number of important actions were taken by workers in the Six Counties, which are to be welcomed. It’s important that workers stand up for their rights and assert their demands independently.

But they are caught in a difficult position. Their opinions will not carry much weight with the bean-counters in London. There are no real political vehicles functioning in Belfast. The impact of partition has been to make the working class vulnerable to the divide-and-rule tactic of both the capitalist class in the Six Counties and the British state when it suits their needs.

It fractured the northern section of our class and broke it away from the rest of the working class nationally, thereby making them powerless to effect any real change.

We cannot separate social or economic struggles from the real material context in which these struggles take place. We cannot ignore where real economic and political power resides: that is, in London.

At the end of 2022 the coalition government played its musical chairs,

## THE STRUGGLE AGAINST CAPITALISM IS A



**JIMMY CORCORAN**  
2023

**T**HE NEW YEAR begins with no let-up in the assault on the working class. The cost of food, clothes, heat, rent and mortgages continues to rise. Homelessness is increasing.

The election of Leo Varadkar as taoiseach will probably result in an intensification of this assault, in the interests of native capitalism and foreign imperialism. The opposition in the Dáil would have us believe that an election is the answer to all the problems besetting Irish society, whereas the majority of them would leave intact the main cause of all our ills: the capitalist system, and Ireland’s position within the imperialist system.

Under capitalism, the only way of ensuring that Irish workers can protect and indeed improve their living standards is through pay increases. The only way to ensure pay increases is by

utilising their collective industrial muscle through the trade union movement.

Many Irish workers do not see the relevance of trade unions in today’s economy. Many have succumbed to a sense of fatalism, believing they are lucky to have a job and that they have no choice but to accept what the bosses offer. Others have bought in to the spin that we are all one big team, united in a common endeavour.

Capitalists, despite the propaganda spewing from their influencers in the media, do not employ people out of a sense of philanthropy: they employ workers merely in order to enrich themselves by appropriating the surplus value produced by workers. The recent job losses in the tech sector show that no worker, no matter how hard they work, is guaranteed a job under capitalism. The only way to resist job losses is through trade union organisation.

Even if trade union action cannot



with Leo Varadkar replacing Micheál Martin as taoiseach, and Martin becoming both tánaiste and minister for foreign affairs. But while we had a rearrangement of the chairs around the Government table, the current strategy and its economic and social policies will remain firmly in place.

As in previous decades, each new minister will set up a review of ministerial priorities and come forward with a new plan or strategy for overcoming existing problems. Working people experience government by review committees, while the problems they face daily go unaddressed.

Establishment politicians act in the main as salesmen and women for the system. They are selling us capitalism, or a “better form” of capitalism. They offer the prospect of change, that a change in the existing order is possible if we just “stick with them.” They are selling us the illusion of change when in fact all remains the same. They are similar to the “snake-oil salesmen” in old films: their policies cure everyone’s problems, from the worker to the boss class; but in reality they are aimed at maintaining the system—a system built upon inequality and exploitation.

The Irish state has given priority to private health services over that of the public health service. They see the

health service as a vehicle for pumping billions in public funds, through the HSE, into the private health businesses, thereby enriching a few individuals and shareholders.

They have likewise given priority to the private provision of shelter over the state’s responsibility to provide public housing at affordable rents. Housing waiting-lists grow daily, and the numbers of homeless reach new levels. It has been the policy of this state for many decades to promote private home ownership, to force people to take out massive loans from banks and other financial institutions, sowing the illusion that this is best for society and leads to stronger communities, which have a stake in society. This strategy includes demonising public housing and those who live in it.

It is the state’s primary function to provide the best conditions for the creation and re-creation of capital (money). Workers have been denied rights in their work-place, the right to have their trade union recognised or to represent them collectively. Capital has all the rights, while labour is tied up in legal controls.

In foreign policy the Irish state will still be subservient to the interests of the United States and the European Union. It will continue to be a

**The impact of partition has been to make the working class vulnerable to the divide-and-rule tactic of both the capitalist class in the Six Counties and the British state when it suits their needs.**

cheerleader for the NATO proxy war in Ukraine. It will continue to pursue a strategy of ever-closer alignment with the war strategies and military needs and spending of NATO and the EU.

We can be certain that 2023 will bring no real change unless working people organise themselves. But the power of real change lies in our hands. Our strength comes from our unity of purpose on common demands—demands that are transformative and have the potential to shift the balance of forces, to strengthen the hand of labour and weaken the power of capital.

These demands include:

- universal public housing at affordable rents
- a universal free public health service, from Derry to Kerry
- an all-Ireland Bill of Rights for workers
- enshrining in the Constitution of Ireland the people’s right to own our water
- an amendment to the Constitution enshrining military neutrality
- an independent, progressive foreign policy of pursuing global economic and social justice
- arguing for and pursuing the demand for nuclear disarmament and demilitarisation.

## POLITICAL STRUGGLE

prevent job losses, it can force companies to pay increased redundancy settlements. The nature of modern capitalism also means that these jobs can be moved abroad, irrespective of union action.

We are experiencing an intensification of the class war, with the capitalist class in the ascendant. However, the capitalist class is not omnipotent, and it has weaknesses. The covid pandemic and the resultant lockdowns showed that workers in specific areas of the economy have far more leverage because of their strategic position in the production process. Transport workers (railways, buses, and freight), power workers and retail workers were essential in ensuring that the capitalist economy functioned.

Strike action by any or all of these groups of workers would cause more problems for the greatest number of capitalists. (As a former bus worker and former teacher, I know that a transport strike focuses the minds of the

capitalist class and their political representatives far more than a teachers’ strike!) Improved wages for these workers would spread to other unionised areas of the economy and put greater pressure on the Government to increase social welfare payments.

Already the capitalist media are getting worried that the assault on the working class will result in increased militancy. In the *Business Post* on 4 December, John Walsh, in an alarmist article, claimed that unions did a lot of damage to the economy in the 1970s and 80s.\* The reality was, of course, different. The damage to the Irish economy was a result of EEC membership, which destroyed many Irish-owned industries, and also a result of developments in international capitalism.

It takes more than wishful thinking to effect change: it takes work and organisation. It is the task of all of us on the left to campaign and encourage

**We are experiencing an intensification of the class war, with the capitalist class in the ascendant. However, the capitalist class is not omnipotent, and it has weaknesses.**

non-unionised workers, particularly those in key sectors of the economy, to join their relevant union.

Because of the weakness of the political left, there is a danger that some may slip into syndicalism and see trade union action as the vehicle for overthrowing capitalism and building socialism. Trade union struggles can lead to improvements in pay and conditions; they also expose the nature of capitalism and the capitalist state to those involved. However, the struggle against capitalism is a political struggle, and as Marxist-Leninists our task is to campaign for class politics within the trade union movement, and within all organisations of the people that come into conflict with capitalism.

Our task in the coming year is to build a stronger Communist Party which is more firmly embedded within the working class.

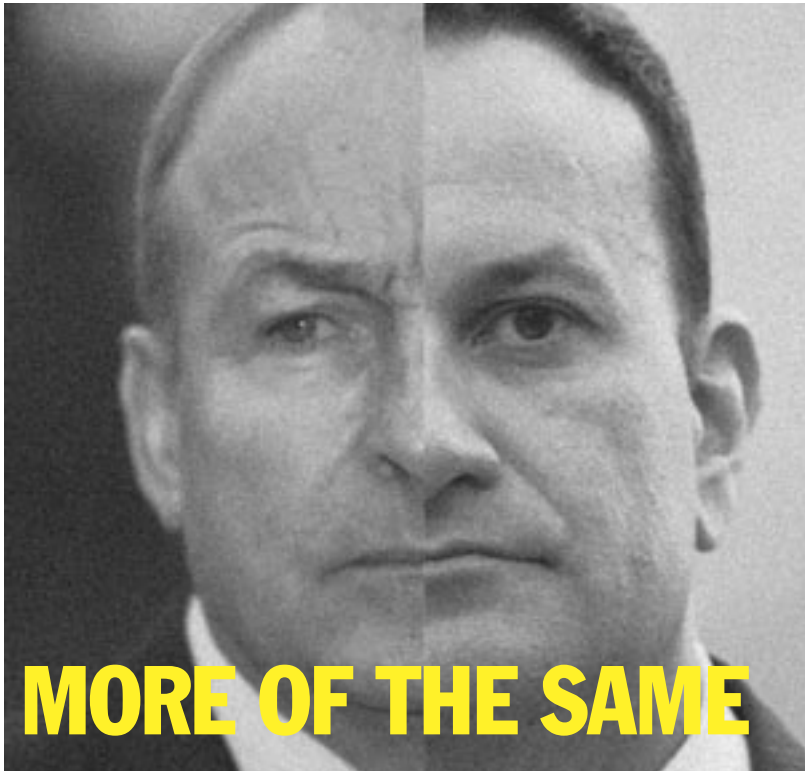
\**Business Post*, 4 December 2022, p. 28





# IRELAND

**Housing will remain in the profit-driven private sector. Health will remain dominated by private institutions. Energy provision will continue to be determined primarily by the needs of privately owned high-tech companies. Care for the elderly will stay in the hands of private enterprise.**



**TOMMY MCKEARNEY**  
**CRISIS**

**T**HE DISPARAGING term “Buggins’s turn” means appointment to positions by rotation rather than by merit. No Brownie points for identifying Leo “the-classified-file-sharer” Varadkar as the Dáil’s current Mr Buggins.

Even the chronically right-wing Fine Gael-supporting *Sunday Independent*

was unable to get excited about him swapping chairs with Micheál Martin. Little surprise there, because, according to the same Sindo, the new taoiseach is “betting on delivering more of the same.”

“More of the same” means hardship for the many. Housing will remain in the profit-driven private sector. Health will remain dominated by private institutions. Energy provision will continue to be

determined primarily by the needs of privately owned high-tech companies. Care for the elderly will stay in the hands of private enterprise.

Hardly a surprise, therefore, that so many hard-pressed working people are desperately seeking change.

The crucial question, though, is what type of change. Will it be like the desk-swapping between Fianna Fáil and the Blueshirts? Or will it be the badly needed transformation of a state system that is failing society?

The fundamental reason that the 26-County political entity is unable to care for all its citizens is not simply external issues, such as the cost of oil and gas, or domestic issues, such as an alleged shortage of building workers. While these factors certainly affect us detrimentally, it is capitalism, in all its manifestations, that is the root cause of our plight.

Giving priority to profit over social need ensures that human necessity takes a poor second place to greed and the accumulation of wealth. If confirmation were needed, we only have to look at our dysfunctional housing sector, with the plethora of vulture funds and landlords growing wealthy at the expense of working people.

The remedy lies not in ameliorating the symptoms of capitalism but replacing it with socialism. Raising the demand for socialism will hardly cause any surprise with our readership; the point, however, is not trite but a call to reflect on likely

## ARE UNIONS READY TO TAKE A CHANCE?

**NICOLA LAWLOR**  
**LABOUR MOVEMENT**

**I**N NOVEMBER’S *Socialist Voice* I wrote on the High-Level Report on Collective Bargaining, entitled “An opportunity, not a panacea.” In it I suggested: “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.”

There are three areas in particular that Irish unions need to focus on if this potential legislation is going to have a positive effect on union density and power. Progress has been made in all three of these areas over the last two decades, but a renewed emphasis and vigour is required. So this is not starting from a standing position but from one of a positive trend.

### **Invest in specialist organisers**

Organisers—those in unions specifically dealing with building union membership and structure—are still numerically too small a cohort. For a movement that says it’s about growing and rebuilding, it is incredible how few are actually dedicated to this challenge.

And even those who are in place are often spending time doing work that should be done by shop stewards or elected officers, many of whom have facility time, in employments with union recognition and collective bargaining. This work often involves very basic membership lists, increasing the union’s visibility, and recruitment at inductions. By taking this work into paid staff we hollow out our movement and waste workers’ resources.

We need many more organisers, and we need them to concentrate on building new union structures in unorganised work-places, training shop stewards to take action, build membership, build participation, and negotiate with employers. We also need to elevate our best organisers into positions of influence and power in the movement, so that these ideas and tactics become mainstreamed.

### **Change the focus of union officials**

The most numerous role in unions remains that of the full-time official, largely dedicated to the act of negotiating with an employer and to representing individual union members, mostly on a very professional and diligent basis.

Full-time officials occupy the crucial position in the movement engaging with workers, employers, and the union’s



developments and to take measures to deal with them.

The coalition government is clearly committed to pursuing its decidedly neoliberal agenda. It is now endeavouring to mask the nastiness of its core agenda. We are affronted daily by a self-serving advertising campaign mentioning the state's contribution to offsetting rising heating costs.

However, for reasons mentioned at the outset, it is unlikely that this type of gimmick will be enough to appease the entire electorate come the next election. Nevertheless, the current governing parties will have little option but to stand in support of their record over the past decade.

Their disingenuous dissembling will be challenged by the largest opposition party, Sinn Féin. Unfortunately, this challenge will be made from a frankly social-democratic standpoint. Any doubts about the party's commitment to this policy will be dispelled by reading the party leader's recent interview with the Journal web site.\* McDonald said that her party "accept that business needs to have a sense of the direction of travel," and that "she has had very interesting conversations with Irish businesses, multinationals, and the big corporations . . ."

Going on these pronouncements, we can expect that the party will offer a left-leaning yet reformist programme. Promises will be made to build more affordable houses while tolerating developers and, at best, regulating vulture funds. Extra finance will be made available for health, but Laya Healthcare

**In reality, a social-democratic programme does no more than temporarily moderate capitalism.**

and the VHI will not be closed. Bankers' bonuses may be capped, but financial institutions will remain in private hands. The European Union will be commended for maintaining a single market in Ireland, but its insistence on maintaining a neoliberal free market will be observed. IBEC will complain but will live with it.

On the surface, this package will understandably appear attractive to many living in difficult circumstances. Without question it will offer some relief that is at present unavailable. Nevertheless it provides only a temporary expedient that fails to get to the root of the problem. In other words, it offers a policy of moderating the impact of capitalism rather than abolishing it.

In reality, a social-democratic programme does no more than temporarily moderate capitalism. Worse than that, it serves as an essential safety valve, protecting capitalism from its opponents—and, as a consequence, guarantees the maintenance of the existing iniquitous class system.

In the first instance, it is axiomatic that the next general election will return either a variant of the current regime or a social-democratic-leaning coalition. Whichever is the case, capitalism will remain intact, and the underlying problems faced by the working class will remain unresolved. Therein lies the challenge for serious socialists: how to change the agenda away from tinkering with the system and move towards transforming it.

It is important, therefore, not to fall into the trap of believing in the invulnerability or the permanence of the

status quo. Capitalism is crisis-prone, and rarely more so than at present, and this on a global scale. The war in Ukraine is disrupting EU economies and leading Washington to divert resources towards Kiev that might otherwise be used to contain domestic unrest. Meanwhile the United States has resorted to the destabilising strategy of economic protectionism in an attempt to counter the growing power and influence of China.

It is inevitable that sooner or later this will cause an economic meltdown, leading to a deep recession, or worse. And, just as in 2010, Ireland, with its open free-market economy, will not be able to escape the contagion. At that stage working people will be raising questions and demanding answers that cannot and will not be provided by either neoliberals or social democrats.

It is imperative, therefore, not only that a clear alternative exists (as it does) but that it has been seen, explained, and promoted. Any such programme will require serious application, but that is nothing to fear and must be engaged with.

It is well past time for enduring the hardship resulting from alternating between a neoliberal Buggins and a social-democratic Buggins, time to rally around the venerable slogan, Break the connection with capitalism and forward to a workers' republic.

\*"All sectors will get 'fair hearing' on taxation if SF gets into power, McDonald insists," *The Journal*, 24 December 2022

leadership. But the role is largely one of advocacy, arguing for or against a particular issue, whether it is individual or collective. It is not one of organising and unleashing workers' power in a strategically and tactically sound way.

Full-time officials are well entrenched in the movement, and many have occupied their position for a long time. They understand well how to resist change, and were often hired on their ability to do so. This does not make for an innovating cadre of leaders willing to evolve and adapt with new tactics and ideas.

But this role must change to concentrate primarily on the construction of support for workers' power in employments and sectors.

**Empower and train members**

To do this we need to train and educate activists, and members more generally, in a trade unionism that emphasises their agency and their power. The results they want are dependent on them as workers, not

**We need many more organisers, and we need them to concentrate on building new union structures in unorganised work-places, training shop stewards to take action, build membership, build participation, and negotiate with employers**

on a full-time official or an industrial relations process.

If they are many, and disciplined, they'll win what it is they want, in simplistic terms. Too much union training still deals with taking the issue off workers and then acting. Whether that's individual representation, collective negotiations, or political lobbying, we often train to actually disempower rather than train to involve workers in the resolution of their own issue through their own activity.

The movement needs to push activity down through the layers of the structure, back to members and into the work-place. We need to train our layers of activists in much of the work now done by organisers and by full-time officials, both to improve the quality of union structure in the work-place and also to provide the resources for unions to organise the unorganised and take advantage of this potential opportunity.

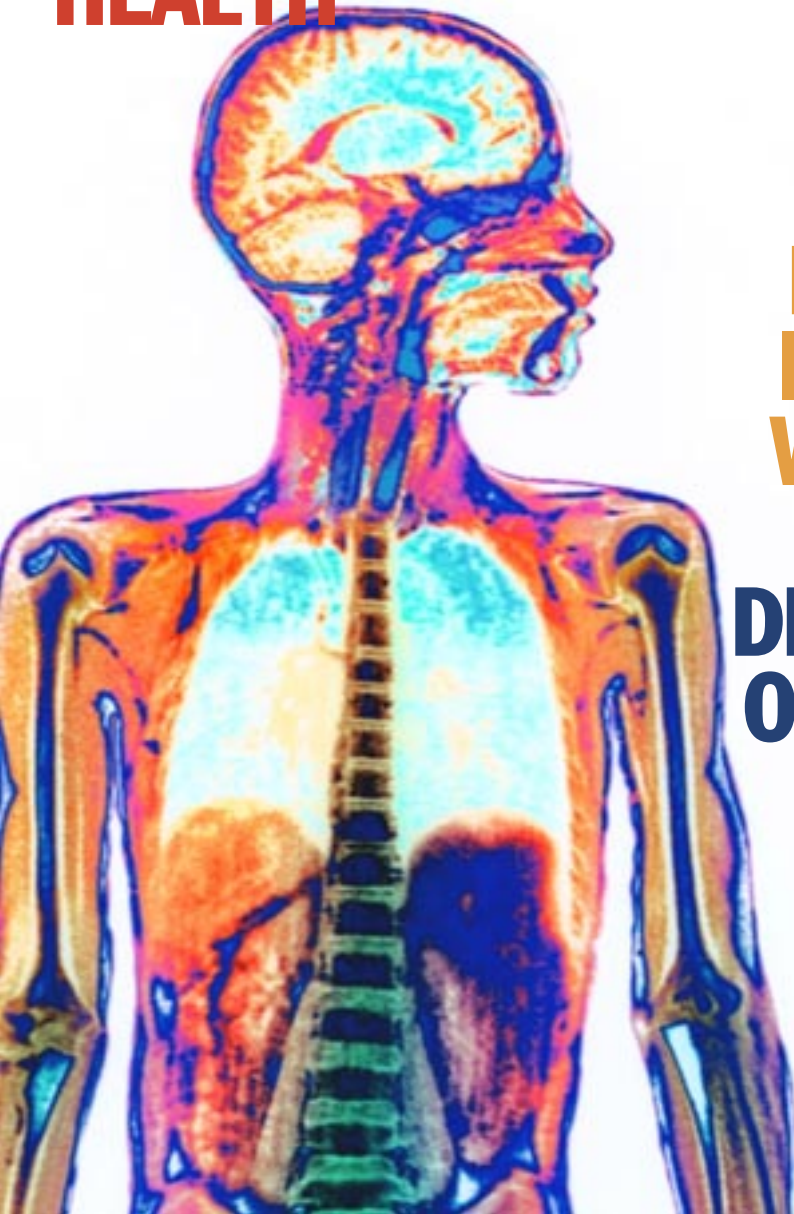
In the July issue I wrote an article entitled "What is the trade union movement fighting for?" in response to

a debate on "partnership," essentially asking the question, What are we organising for? In this I argued against national wage-setting mechanisms and for keeping pay in the realm of the work-place, because, as I see it, the trade union movement,

"right now at this historical juncture in this balance of class power, must focus its energy and resources on rebuilding unions structurally at the work-place level and organising new sectors and workers into the movement. That is the immediate task that confronts us. Removing pay bargaining from this site of struggle and mobilisation will hinder, not assist, strengthening and building unions back up . . ."

Communists in the trade union movement must be to the fore in fighting for this change of movement. This will pit us against entrenched views, both staff and elected, happy to see out their time "servicing" a declining pool of members who they see as paying their union for a service.





## YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR WEALTH BUT IT DEPENDS ON YOUR CLASS

The health of any nation can be measured in many ways. Life expectancy, infant mortality and mental health statistics are just some of the main measures.

**Barry Murray** on health and wealth

**A**LL THOSE STATISTICS are in turn linked to the levels of inequality and exploitation in any society. The level of poverty, as a consequence, is linked to the quality of and access to adequate food, clothing, housing, and education. Your class governs the amount of leisure time, time for regular exercise, and quality of worry-free sleep—something the poor and working poor seldom experience.

These areas of human need are important ones in the “preventive care” areas of human wellbeing and health, physical and mental.

After the preventive stage of human health should come the treatment area. This normally begins with a visit to a GP. And now the problems begin.

Increasingly in the North of Ireland this first stage of diagnosis and treatment is practically non-existent. Even to be answered on the phone to make an appointment can take days to get through to a receptionist.

Then the inquisition begins to establish whether you are ill enough to even get an appointment. And these are

lay people being forced (or find themselves replaced) to screen people to reduce the number of patients coming to see their doctors.

The horror stories are legion. People have died, and will continue to die, under this deliberately underfunded system.

When it comes to having to resort to going to A&E, very often after failed attempts to get a GP appointment—or even as a result of a successful GP visit—the nightmare really begins. Twelve or fourteen-hour waits, even days waiting just to be triaged, are not uncommon. A&E departments throughout the North are collapsing under the pressure of *tactical* and *deliberate* underfunding, resulting, ultimately, in the shortage of qualified staff, and medical staff leaving in their thousands.

Access to proper health services in the North really is as bad as in the poorest countries in the world. It needs to be said too that the health service in the South is equally bad. Certainly if you are wealthy and have the highest levels of health insurance you have few worries about your access to proper medical care. But why is it that what should be a first-class health system, in the shape of the National Health Service, is on its knees? What happened to the ideal of a health service free to all at the point of access?

Firstly, there is no doubt that the “committees of the rich” in the governments of Stormont and Westminster are a big part of the problem. There is no doubt at all in the minds of activists here that there are well-advanced neoliberal plans to destroy the NHS and hand it over to transnational “health companies” (if you could call them that), and without doubt local ones too. Well over a hundred GP surgeries in Britain have been bought by at least one transnational health company.

We have what passes for a health centre in the village of Lisnaskea in Co. Fermanagh, with 15,000 patients, which has recently handed back its contract to the hospital trust and is now looking for new owners, that is, to buy the business.

And we have to be clear here: it’s a business; and a business has one purpose: profit. They are spinning the yarn that the care of patients is paramount. No, it is not: profit is what is paramount; “health” or “care” are not synonymous with profit.

We also have the most up-to-date



**Access to proper health services in the North really is as bad as in the poorest countries in the world. It needs to be said too that the health service in the South is as bad. Certainly if you are wealthy and have the highest levels of health insurance you have few worries about your access to proper medical**

hospital building in Enniskillen. It cost £250 million to build under a PFI scheme. Its cost is now £750 million, and rising. And the interest now stands at £20 million per annum, which comes out of the hospital budget allocated for the health service. Needless to say, the hospital is owned by a private consortium; so again it's profit, not health.

Over the years there have been attempts by the Western Health Trust to close down important specialist departments in this hospital. An attempt to close the stroke unit a number of years ago was successfully resisted by local people power. Not happy with that, the health mandarins in the trust have now "temporarily" closed the Emergency Surgery Department, which they want to set up in Altnagelvin Hospital in Derry, two hours away. This will close other vital departments in the Enniskillen hospital. Ultimately the hospital will be downgraded to the level of an upmarket health centre; but worse, it is very likely to be turned into a private hospital.

The signs are not good. It is privately understood that the NHS, as we have known it, is finished. Campaigning must begin for an all-Ireland health service, free at the point of need, from the cradle to the grave. For certain, the transnational health vultures are circling the NHS and will shortly go for the kill.

The main excuse from the trusts (five of them) and the Stormont Department of Health is that they cannot recruit doctors, especially for the Enniskillen hospital. They also say that doctors don't want to work or live in Enniskillen or Co. Fermanagh.

And the other continuous refrain is: We have no money. If we spend on that we will have to cut this or that service. And on and on the circular arguments go, aided and abetted by cute-hoor politicians.

All these points are a nonsense, and the trust has been found out telling porkies, quite a few times, with more to come.

But a central reason for lack of medical staff in general is that the government and the rest are not training enough people. Why? There are plenty of staff available through private agencies, which hire staff in the medical world at twice the price of the ordinary NHS staff. And an obvious question is, Where will the private companies find doctors, consultants and general medical staff?

This is clear evidence of neoliberalism at work and the preparing

of conditions for the aforementioned health vultures to swoop in for the rich pickings of the NHS carcass.

Then we have the example of a supposedly Third World country having the best health service in the world, even acknowledged by their arch-enemies, the United States. That country is, of course, Cuba.

Cuba's life expectancy is as high as or higher than that of the United States. Infant mortality is much better than the American rate. There is a doctor for every 1,000 or so people there. Doctors travel regularly to see their patients in their homes, whether they are needed or not; prevention is their biggest and best strategy. Then GPs and hospitals have a clearer patient cohort to deal with.

On top of all this, the Cubans actually send doctors all over the world to help other countries in need. There is no question about it, the thirty-two counties of Ireland need to be on their itinerary.

So why can an embargoed country, such as Cuba, population 11½ million, have a world-class health service and not even the six counties of the North of Ireland, population 1.9 million, can care for its citizens? When "copying the Cuban health-care model" was raised by me in the Belfast HQ of the full Health Board meeting a number of years ago there was stunned, even horrified silence, followed by nervous tittering, topped off with condescending smiles and mutterings. But no answers.

There is clearly no political or ideological will to introduce an all-Ireland health service modelled on anything even close to the Cuban system. That cannot happen: too close to socialism or, worse, communism.

In the meantime the working class, the poor and the working poor will continue to die younger than their rich neighbours across town. This bottom tier of society will continue to be treated by a cannibalised NHS. The rest of society will buy various levels of health insurance according as they can afford it or not. Inevitably, this will create a further tactical schism within the 99 per cent, the working class, and between those who can afford to pay at various levels and those who cannot—a status thing; sure we're all right, Jack.

All the "health companies," local and international, will rake in massive profits. The health of the nation or its people will not be their concern. But their profits will. And those who become really ill can either pay or die. You will have the choice.

## Solidarity with PCV and workers of Venezuela

**28/12/2022**

The Communist Party of Ireland wishes to add its name to the demand for the release of imprisoned workers in Venezuela and to express our solidarity with our fraternal comrades in the Partido Comunista de Venezuela.

We have always stood in firm support of the people of Venezuela and the principles of the Bolivarian revolution against the aggression of yankee imperialism – being one of the few political forces in Ireland to consistently defend Venezuela – which is why we declare that the rights of workers to organise must be protected in order for the forces of imperialism and capitalism to be defeated. We also recognise the history of political imprisonment in our own country and its use as a means of repression.

The imprisonment of workers for organising only plays into the hands of imperialism and its proxy forces in Venezuela, which have managed to infiltrate sections of the current government and are using anti-communism to suppress the most radical, militant and committed revolutionaries in Venezuela.

For the defence of socialism and proletarian internationalism we call for the release of:

Johana González, Aryenis Torrealba, Alfredo Chirinos, Marcos Sabariego, Gil Mujica, Francia Mata, Roger González, Luis Rivas, Eugenio Montes, Miguel Álvarez, Luis Cárdenas and Eudis Giro

## CPI & CCP

**29 December 2022**

A bilateral meeting between the Communist Party of Ireland and the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China took place online.

The CPI wishes to thank our comrades in the IDCPC for taking part in this dialogue and we look forward to developing stronger links between our



# IRELAND

# HOUSING CRISIS/CULTURAL CRISIS



## MAX DE WILDE CRISIS

GETTING OFF the bus in O’Connell Street, considered the main street in Dublin, can be a shock for tourists and people new to the city alike. In between the new hotels and shopping centres, the decay in the older buildings is clearly visible, which is sad for such an otherwise vibrant city.

This is not only the case on the surface level, which the passer-by and tourists would notice: it is also true for the inner-city culture. Old pubs and local shops, as well as public spaces such as football grounds and playgrounds, are being bought and demolished in the name of modernisation and progress of the local economy, eradicating with it local history and so-called “third spaces” for the local community, a place away from the home and work.

**The few efforts that exist to nudge landlords towards improving the sustainability of their properties present their case as an investment opportunity, to be able to demand ever-higher rents. One way or another, the tenant will always pay the price.**

# HOUSING FOR THE FUTURE

## ROSE VOLKER HOUSING CRISIS

THE WEEKEND before Christmas the European Union reached a deal on their “fit for 55” plans, a policy that aims to reduce the emission of carbon dioxide in the EU by at least 55 per cent in 2030 relative to 2005.

To accomplish this, the EU has set up a scheme of permits, taxes and subsidies for corporations; this will be extended to households in 2027. In essence it means that people will start paying a CO<sub>2</sub> tax on fuel, energy, and heating. The general assumption behind this plan is simple: Make

unsustainability uneconomical and people will opt for greener alternatives. To help vulnerable households that are otherwise unable to pay for such a transition, €65 billion will be set aside in a “social climate fund.” This fund can be used to improve insulation, green personal vehicles in case public transport is not available, or to install efficient heating systems.<sup>1</sup>

This liberal approach, of encouraging and discouraging behaviour through financial stimuli, may work for home-owners; tenants, however, do not have the luxury of improving their home or even choosing an energy supplier and so are left to the whims of their landlord.

In their analysis of the Irish housing market the Dutch consultancy KPMG identified landlordism as a significant obstacle in developing sustainability. Landlords, after all, are not inclined to spend money for insulating homes and installing more efficient heating, as they are not the ones paying the bills.<sup>2</sup>

As a result, more than 55 per cent of rented properties have an energy rating of D or lower, with 20 per cent not reaching above F.<sup>3</sup> A home with an energy rating of F will spend eight times as much on heating as an A3 home, the current building standard, set in 2012.

It should come as no surprise that

# RULING BY FOOLING

## AISLING JOYCE TREACHERY

LAST MONTH the *Irish News* in Belfast published a front-page report that a senior Irish government official was actively spying for the British government.

The report was based on an interview with a former member of the British army’s “Force Research Unit,” which operated both side of the British border in Ireland.

The former British agent, using the name “Mr Rosenfeld,” spoke about his activities in Ireland over the course of nearly thirty years. He stated that he had met this now very senior figure in the Irish government on many occasions, and was even a guest of his when he visited Dáil Éireann.

The Government claims that it has a relationship with the British government based on mutual respect, shared goals, etc.—the





The spaces above and around pubs and shops used to be living spaces; now they often sit empty or are used as storage. Besides being a factor in the present-day housing crisis, this is a loss again for social cohesion as well.

To add to that, workers have to commute between work, home, and other spaces, making it hard to socialise often. In 2016 the national average time spent on travelling to work came to almost an hour.<sup>1</sup>

Health status, mental illness, tiredness, age and disability all play a role in how much time people can spend on travelling outside work and grocery shopping.

Free social spaces are rare to find in any city, let alone in Dublin. Spaces in which to meet others and to learn from them are necessary for us, as we've seen in history: workers gathering in third spaces to teach each other not only skills by hand but also history, language, and socialist theory.

By limiting these third spaces, a place to get to know people around you in the community, the local social cohesion diminishes.<sup>2</sup> The chance to build solidarity is then taken away, along with the social capital these relationships provide.

in the 2022 tenants survey by Threshold it was recorded that only 14 per cent are renting by choice. More than half of all tenants expect to be still renting their home in 2027, when the carbon tax for households will come into effect. The proportion of involuntary renters will, without a doubt, have increased over the past couple of months.

The few efforts that exist to nudge landlords towards improving the sustainability of their properties present their case as an investment opportunity, to be able to demand ever-higher rents. One way or another, the tenant will always pay the price.

For our survival and prosperity it is of paramount importance to actively pursue lowering emissions of greenhouse gases. Doing so we reduce the ever-growing impact that

usual blather we hear from the establishment. If we have a partnership of "equals" and respect for each other, why has the British government got at least one significant spy at the heart of the Irish government?

We have to ask why this story failed to gain any traction in the Dublin media, or RTE; nor was it raised in the Dáil. Why has the British ambassador not been called in to explain this major breach of

This obviously plays into the hands of employers, especially in tech, so that the workers cannot build meaningful relationships with the country. It is easy to move those around.

Everything in the life of young workers in particular is precarious: housing, work, even friendships. It all depends on work.

These circumstances also influence the way people deal with local issues and play into the hands of neoliberal individualism, which we are told is part of "Western culture," where your "problems"—poverty, addiction, exclusion, etc.—are your own fault and yours to solve.

Scenes like those at East Wall, where people show their most ugly side towards those in need, could have been prevented if we would try to build back the lost confidence in the Other. Immigrants, refugees and other minorities are not a threat to Irish culture. If anything, they enrich the existing culture and will be able to embody it and bring it back to their own country once they are able to return, if this is the wanted outcome.

If people would be more involved with the Other, building that social capital, they would feel more sure about

the reckless alteration of our atmosphere has on our planet as well as limiting our vulnerable dependence on foreign suppliers of fossil fuels. The EU's "fit for 55" scheme, however, will fall short on this purpose and will only increase the cost of living for tenants who are already struggling under the ever-rising rents and energy bills.

To truly achieve affordable sustainability we cannot allow the present-day landlordism to persist. We cannot leave housing in the hands of vulture funds, designed to siphon as much value as they can to its shareholders. Only an immediate scheme of building social housing and renovating derelict buildings can spare both the tenant and the environment.

It is here that non-profit housing associations can play an important role, by giving tenants a voice in the

Irish sovereignty? Why no clamour from the establishment about this "breach of trust"? Why no investigation into who this spy is?

If it was a supposed Russian agent at the heart of the Irish government there would be one hullabaloo, and loud demands for the closing of embassies, etc. Yet all remains quiet.

The political and cultural legacy of British rule in Ireland runs deep. British imperialism set down deep

themselves and less afraid of immigrants and refugees.

Of course the mainstream media and their hateful language towards those seen as the Other do not help with building social cohesion, and the wheel keeps turning in favour of neoliberalism and all its issues.

At the heart of this is, ultimately, the housing crisis, which has held a grip on Ireland for decades. Not because of too few builders and trade workers, not because of too little interest or demand, but because of the mismanagement and neglect by the government in supplying adequate social housing.

With 166,000 vacant properties, 11,000 people homeless, and 71,858 applicants on the social housing waiting-list, action needs to be taken now. As we have agreed on the national level, universal social housing is the goal.

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## Everything in the life of young workers in particular is precarious: housing, work, even friendships. It all depends on work.

management of their complex. By democratising their home, tenants can work together towards sustainability and lowering costs, as opposed to being dictated to by the greed-driven whim of a landlord.

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roots, creating the basis for a small minority to hanker after the "empire" and all that it stood for. While they may have a number of paid collaborators within the state, from senior civil servants to the Garda Síochána, their political and cultural influence extends far beyond a few individuals.

As James Connolly put it over a century ago, "Yes, ruling by fooling is a great British art—with great Irish fools to practise on."



# IMPERIALISM

## ALAA ABDEL FATAH SHOULD BE FREE



**Freddy Anubis**  
EGYPT

**A**LAA ABDEL FATAH is a revolutionary hero and a symbol of the struggle against oppression and injustice in Egypt. He played a crucial role in the revolution of 25 January, which led to the removal of the capitalistic government and the establishment of a more democratic and egalitarian society.

Born and raised in a working-class district of Cairo, Alaa grew up with a deep sense of social justice and a commitment to fighting for the rights of the marginalised and oppressed. He was an active member of the youth movement that organised and led the protests in Tahrir Square in 2011 that

ultimately forced the dictator Hosni Mubarak to step down and brought about significant political and social changes in the country.

However, despite the promise of the revolution, the new government that came to power was not able to implement its promises of freedom and democracy. Instead it turned out to be even more repressive and authoritarian than the previous regime, cracking down on dissent and imprisoning political activists and human rights defenders like Alaa.

In 2013 Alaa was arrested and faced with trumped-up charges of “inciting violence” and “spreading false news,” in a kangaroo trial that was widely criticised for its lack of due process and fairness. One of the

## PALESTINE AND IRELAND 105 YEARS OF THE

**With the British mandate of Palestine (1918–1948) as spoils of the First World War, together with Balfour’s Declaration, the stage was set for what was to become the modern apartheid state of Israel.**

**FARRAH KOUTTEINEH/PAT TORLEY**  
BRITAIN’S ROLE

**D**ESPITE BRITAIN’S current state of political turmoil, with three very different Conservative prime ministers in the same year, there seems to be one constant: they all give unwavering support to Israel in its attempts to crush the Palestinian people.

But that should be no surprise, given that it has been the position taken by the British state for over a century—a position driven by British imperialism’s strategic interests, just as has been the case in Ireland, as made clear at a meeting organised by the Palestinian Return Centre and Key 48 in the Cultúrlann, Belfast, last November (see <http://bit.ly/3Td7L4f>).

In 1917 the then Conservative foreign secretary, Arthur Balfour, made his infamous “Declaration,” a commitment that ignited the barbarous Zionist colonisation and ethnic cleansing of Palestine still continuing today. The Balfour Declaration called for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people,” with no legitimate right, authority or consent for doing so.

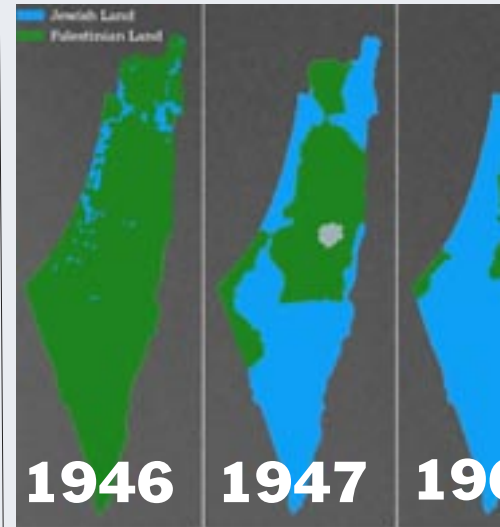
Balfour sent the declaration, with the approval of the prime minister, David Lloyd George, to the prominent British Zionist Walter Rothschild. Both Balfour and Lloyd George were sympathetic to the

Zionist cause; but, more important, it was British imperialism’s need for control in the region to ensure its access to Egypt and India.

The declaration was actually one of three conflicting promises made by Britain. It promised the French that the majority of Palestine would be under international administration, with the rest of the region split between the two colonial powers after the war. It also promised Arab nationalists a united country covering most of the Middle East. What actually happened after the war was that Palestine remained under British occupation.

Thirty years earlier, Balfour, when chief secretary for Ireland (1887–1891), earned the epithet “Bloody” because of the Mitchelstown Massacre in September 1887. Balfour ordered the RIC to break up a perfectly legal rally of rent-striking tenants, resulting in two protesters being shot, one bayoneted to death, and many others injured. Balfour enforced control in Ireland vigorously as one prong of his strategy of carrot (“Kill home rule with kindness”) and stick (draconian legislation), a strategy he clearly set out in 1913 in *Nationality and Home Rule*.

Balfour described the Irish system as “essentially and radically rotten.” He condemned greedy landowners, being particularly critical of absentee landlords, and his Land Act (1891) was the first step in curtailing their enormous power



and influence. When prime minister of Britain (1902–1906) Balfour had a further Land Act passed (1903), which in effect abolished the existing landlord system in Ireland.

With the British mandate of Palestine (1918–1948) as spoils of the First World War, together with Balfour’s Declaration, the stage was set for what was to become the modern apartheid state of Israel. In recent years an abundance of historical evidence has come to light exposing the inhumanity that the British inflicted upon Palestinians, from arbitrary killings to torture, their use as human shields, as well as bombings. This then turned into the British government, under both Conservative and Labour



**A man like Alaa Abdelfatah should be free, because he represents the best of what humanity has to offer. He is a courageous and compassionate individual who has dedicated his life to the cause of social justice and equality.**

pieces of “evidence” against him was a tweet he had posted on his personal Twitter account, in which he had expressed his support for the protests and called for an end to the violence.

However, a tweet is not enough to become evidence in a trial. It is just a short, informal message that can easily be taken out of context or misunderstood. It does not provide a full and accurate picture of what a person thinks or believes, and it cannot be used as a reliable basis for a criminal charge.

The use of Alaa’s tweet as evidence is just one example of the sham judicial system in Egypt, which is more interested in protecting the interests of the ruling elite than in upholding justice and the rule of law. It is a system that is deeply corrupt and biased and that is unable to give fair and impartial verdicts.

The British state, which is supposed to be a beacon of democracy and human rights, has also failed to protect its citizens in Egypt. Despite its claims to be a defender of justice and

the rule of law, it has turned a blind eye to the abuses and injustices committed by the Egyptian government, and has done little to support the efforts of Alaa’s family and supporters to secure his release.

Since his incarceration, Alaa’s family and supporters have been working tirelessly to have him released and to bring attention to his case and the broader issue of human rights abuses in Egypt. They have organised protests, launched social media campaigns, and raised funds to support his legal defence and the efforts to secure his release.

But, despite their efforts, Alaa remains behind bars, a victim of the injustice and repression that continues to plague the country.

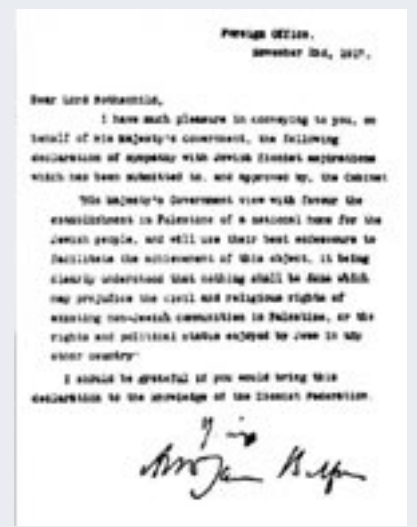
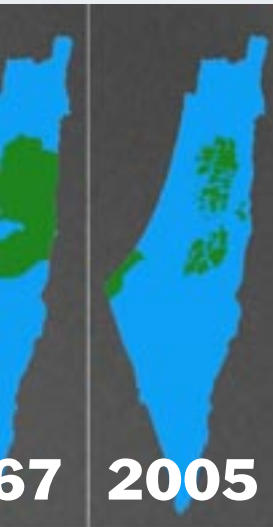
The case of Alaa Abdelfatah is a tragic example of the continuing struggle for justice and democracy in Egypt. It is also a testament to the resilience and determination of those who continue to fight for a better world, even in the face of overwhelming odds.

A man like Alaa Abdelfatah should be free, because he represents the best of what humanity has to offer. He is a courageous and compassionate individual who has dedicated his life to the cause of social justice and equality. He has risked everything to stand up for what he believes in, and he deserves to be recognised and honoured for his contributions to the struggle for a more just and humane world.

In a Marxist-Leninist communist society men like Alaa Abdelfatah would be hailed as heroes and role models, and their contributions to the cause of social justice and equality would be recognised and celebrated. They would be free to continue their work, unencumbered by the constraints of capitalist oppression and exploitation, and their efforts would be supported and encouraged by the community.

Unfortunately, in our present world men like Alaa are too often silenced and marginalised, their contributions ignored, and their sacrifices forgotten. But we must not let their struggles and sacrifices go in vain.

# THE BALFOUR DECLARATION



ABOVE LEFT: Zionist land grab

ABOVE RIGHT 1887 Michelstown Massacre

FAR RIGHT The Balfour Declaration

leaderships, giving unconditional support to Israel, turning a blind eye to atrocities Israel routinely commits against Palestinians, facilitating arms deals with Israel, and encroaching on British citizens’ civil liberties and human rights in defence of Israel.

The British government claims to be supporting peace between Palestine and Israel yet simultaneously has licensed more than £400 million worth of arms to Israeli forces, including aircraft, bombs, armoured vehicles, and ammunition, while witnessing Israeli forces using all such arms on unarmed Palestinian civilians.

The British government spends millions of pounds every year on buying

“battle-tested” arms from Israeli companies. In 2016 the Israeli arms company Elbit Systems signed an £800 million arms contract with Thales UK, facilitated by the British government. Britain is the only country in the world that has consistently armed Israel through its 74-year-long existence.

The British government’s outright support for Israel also comes at a price to ordinary British citizens who wish to exercise their right to support the Palestinian people. From the moment the former prime minister Boris Johnson was elected in 2019 one of his first actions was working on passing legislation to undermine the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign. The bill,

although not passed yet, would act to stop public bodies from imposing their own boycotts of foreign countries. It would mean that public bodies are banned from being able to support the peaceful BDS movement, which aims to pressure Israel to comply with international law and end its illegal occupation of the West Bank.

Despite indisputable responsibility, no British government will ever accept and rectify its role in Palestinian oppression; this can only be achieved through solidarity in the face of imperialism from the British and Irish peoples and from all those around the globe who wish to see an end to the longest military occupation in history, the 55-year-long Israeli military occupation of Palestine.





## 'TOTALITARIANISM' IS AN ANTI-COMMUNIST



■ From *Manifest*, monthly paper of the New Communist Party of the Netherlands,<sup>1</sup> translated and edited by Miranda Lynch.

### Images

George Orwell, tout for imperialism, German Social Democrat poster refusing anti-fascist unity finds an echo in Nazi propaganda

### TIÃO MARIGHELLA IDEOLOGY

**A**NTI-COMMUNISM is an essential part of the prevailing ideology under capitalism. It is of great importance to the bourgeoisie that the oppressed class does not see communism as an alternative. This anti-communism changes with time. First the communists were considered authoritarian by the liberals and anarchists; then communism was accused by fascists of spreading “Judaean-Bolshevism.”

Today there is a very popular term for attacking communism: “totalitarianism.” This article looks at how totalitarianism has been popularised, and how this theory is being used in practice.

### Use of the term in academia and in politics

“Totalitarianism” as a term is used to equate communism with fascism. The ruling class propagates the anti-communist theory of totalitarianism in various ways. Let’s take a look at three examples of “totalitarianism” being used to attack communism.

**1** Civilian governments (often formed by far-right parties) use the theory of totalitarianism to ban communist parties and communist symbols. Romania and Poland banned the Communist Party in 2014 and 2019, respectively, on the grounds of “propagating a totalitarian system.” In Ukraine, “decommunisation” laws have banned not only the Communist Party but also all communist symbols.

The irony is that in Poland, Ukraine and Romania the governments often collaborate with far-right parties and groups that are openly fascist. These organisations are not allowed to exist on their own but often sit in government bodies, while communists are deprived of their freedom of organisation.

**2** Totalitarianism is used by the European Union to demonise communism. In 2019 a resolution was passed by the European Union accusing the Soviet Union of starting the Second World War with Nazi Germany. Part of the resolution goes like this:

“... that the Second World War, the most devastating war in Europe’s history, was started as an immediate result of the notorious Nazi-Soviet Treaty on Non-Aggression of 23 August 1939, also

known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and its secret protocols, whereby two totalitarian regimes that shared the goal of world conquest divided Europe into two zones of influence.”<sup>2</sup>

This resolution uses “totalitarianism” to directly compare Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Reference is made to an alleged “collaboration” in which the Soviet Union and the Nazis would divide the world. It claims that Western European countries were the only “good” countries in the Second World War, while the communists entered into an alliance with the Nazis.

In reality it was the Western European countries that first signed non-aggression pacts with Germany. In fact the Soviet Union tried several times in the 1930s to form an alliance with the United Kingdom and France to deter the Nazis. These requests were all denied. Only after the Munich Agreement, whereby France and England allowed Hitler to annex parts of Czechoslovakia, did the Soviet Union conclude a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany. This treaty was a necessity: the French and English clearly showed their hope that Hitler would attack the Soviet Union first.

3. In universities and schools,



# MUNIST THEORY

**Totalitarianism is used by the European Union to demonise communism. In 2019 a resolution was passed by the European Union accusing the Soviet Union of starting the Second World War with Nazi Germany.**

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totalitarianism is used to attack communism. In the Netherlands, the secondary school curriculum for history contains the line "Putting into practice the totalitarian ideologies of communism and fascism / national socialism." History teachers are expected to be able to explain to pupils how communism and (Nazi) fascism are related in the context of totalitarianism. And pupils are expected to be able to apply this theory during their final exam.

## **Totalitarianism: meaning and origin of the term**

The idea of "totalitarianism" was popularised by Hannah Arendt in her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Arendt tries to find different characteristics that make up a "totalitarian regime" by giving aspects and characteristics with which she tries to compare Nazism and "Stalinism." She mentions, among other things, the following: a one-party system, led by one person, with an ideology, violent police, the presence of concentration camps, a monopoly over the media, and a centrally planned economy.

A comparison is made between Hitler and Stalin, without looking at the actual power the two leaders had. Arendt makes the argument that in both countries the individual is pushed aside in favour of a "mass," without taking into account the differences between the Russian Revolution and capitalist society in Germany.

The book also compares the centrally planned economy of the Soviet Union with German macro-economic policies. The actual functioning of the economy, its relations of production and the mode of production are all ignored. In this way Arendt manages to equate a socialist economy with a capitalist one! That in one economy industrial magnates enriched themselves by appropriating all profits while the other economy planned to improve the conditions of the working class was apparently not interesting to Arendt.

The book also looks at the one-party system without looking at the related material circumstances that led to such a system. That the Nazis seized power in the bourgeois Weimar Republic, while the Soviets had to build their state on the ruins of Tsarism, after a devastating civil war and famine, is something Arendt ignores.

These comparisons are essentially

very vague and meaningless. Despite this, they are seen by Arendt as the decisive factors that make up a totalitarian state. At the same time Nazi Germany's eugenic and racial policies are ignored and not compared to the policies of the Soviet Union. This is because the Soviet Union ensured the self-determination of all kinds of oppressed nationalities, who were oppressed by Tsarism.

The October Revolution also brought enormous progress for oppressed minorities, and women. If Arendt had stated these facts in her book it would immediately become clear to most readers how nonsensical her comparison is.

## **Can the theory of totalitarianism be useful?**

"Totalitarianism" is used by fascists to attack communism. Because the National Socialist Party no longer exists, groups that are ideologically very close to the Nazis can distance themselves from it by comparing them to the Soviet Union as "totalitarian regimes." This allows these groups to legitimise themselves as an alternative for the population.

In many cases the term is also used by so-called "socialists" who use this term to distance themselves from actually existing socialism. Equating "Stalinism" and Nazi-fascism allows them to present themselves as the only possible option for the working class. The goal is to weaken the position of communists so that they can sell their reformist policies to the workers. This is

great for the capitalists, because they know that if these opportunists come to power their own position as the ruling class will remain untouched.

There are many countries that have similarities with the Nazis, in that they occupy and plunder countries, destroy entire populations, oppress minorities, oppress women, terrorise workers with police brutality, and have capitalist monopolies in the media. It is the capitalist countries that do this, not the socialist countries. They do this not because they are "totalitarian" but because capitalism is based on exploitation and oppression. Only by making a materialist and dialectical analysis of a society, taking into account the class struggle, can you study and understand concrete social relations.

It is the task of the communist movement to study actually existing socialism and to draw lessons from these experiences. For us communists it is also a historic task to defend the struggle of all our comrades from anti-communist lies. A "theory" equating the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany is just as useful to society as the bourgeoisie that embraces this "theory" and belongs in the dustbin of history.

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**2** European Parliament, "Importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe" ([tinyurl.com/46bcuznd](http://tinyurl.com/46bcuznd)).

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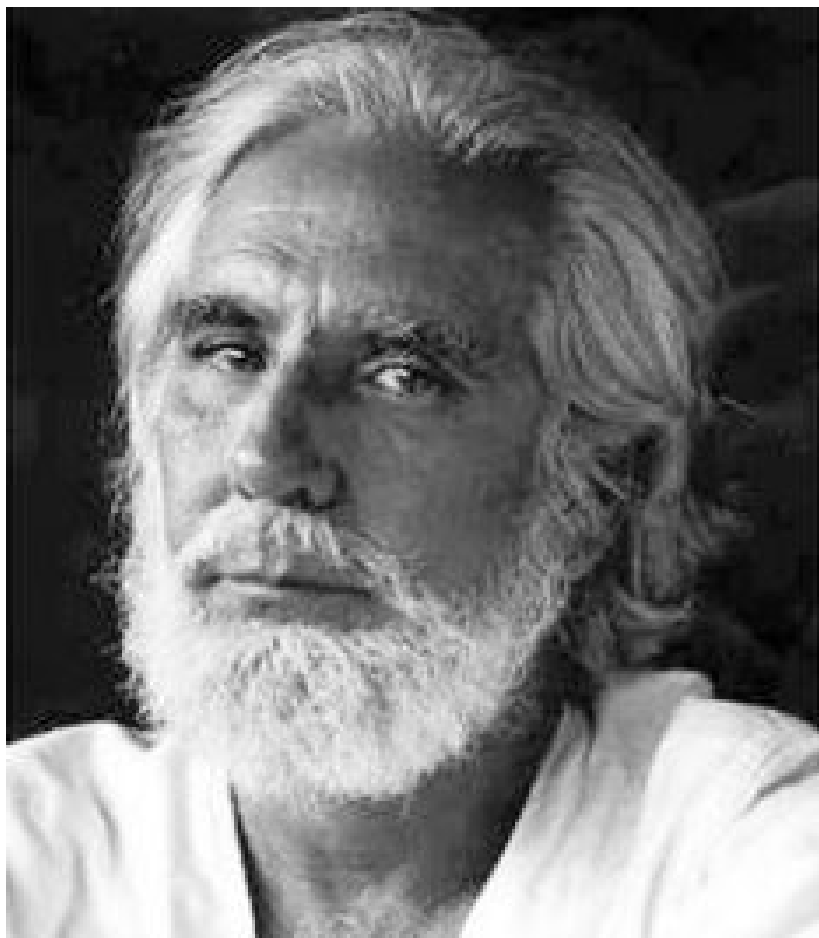
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## ‘I’M A MARXIST WHO BELIEVES IN GOD’



JENNY FARRELL

SINCE THE RISE of early capitalism, the working people’s quest for liberation and equality for all—including the right to a life in peace—not only for the evolving bourgeois class, has been on the agenda and frequently been framed in religious terms.

Translations of the Bible from Latin into the vernacular languages certainly played a role in the understanding that the Earth was made a common treasury for all, as Gerrard Winstanley (1609–1676) of the “Diggers” proclaimed following the early bourgeois revolution in England.

This thinking had been well prepared by the English clergyman and leader of the Peasant Revolt John Ball (1338–1381), or Jan Hus in Bohemia (c. 1369–1414), or the fearless leadership of Thomas Müntzer (c. 1489–1525) of the peasant war in Germany, to name just three of the early theologians.

In England, the Ranters and Seekers articulated their revolutionary objectives in religious terms—as did the poet and engraver William Blake a century and a half later. And of course this hasn’t stopped.

The churches have often been the defenders of the rich against the poor; they have taken sides even for war; they have interpreted the Bible to serve their interests. But there have also often been the courageous exceptions, sometimes indeed movements, for a complete democratisation of the Christian Churches and an understanding of the Bible that emphasises the equality of all humankind, a desire to create a Jerusalem



Sajeev Kumar

“Avatar” in Hindu mythology means reincarnation. A sequel to the film of that name was released internationally on 15 December. The earlier part had mountains as the battlefield between “sky people” and the natives; this time it is the ocean.

It is an interesting film at a time when Elon Musk is trying to be the saviour of the human species by transplanting them to another place in the universe where life is possible, after making life miserable here.

The irony is that the same people who destroy the ecosystem of the only planet that we know so far that supports life, and who are unwilling to invest in renewable energy to reduce carbon emissions, are seeking justification for the billions to be spent on migration to colonise other parts of the universe.

There can be questions about the film *Avatar*, regarding whether evolution will produce species that are similar to humans, if there is life at all anywhere else. Even if life begins again on Earth from scratch, we cannot say that humans will be an inevitable result of the evolutionary process. Nor will the family structure and family bonding be the same elsewhere in the universe, because the family as we know it now is a creation of a historical process, having origins in private property, which came into existence at a particular epoch in history.

But let us not miss the wood for the trees.

Apart from the computer graphics, 3D animations, and visual effects, this film is an excellent criticism of the capitalist system—a system that destroys everything that



for all on Earth and not merely as a promise in Heaven.

The twentieth century too brought forth such theologians, especially liberation theology in Latin America, with its emphasising of “sinful” capitalist exploitation, which they actively engaged in trying to bring down, frequently setting up communities not unlike those of the Diggers.

Famous among these revolutionary priests is Ernesto Cardenal (1925–2020), Nicaraguan Catholic priest and poet, lifelong left-wing activist, Marxist, and active supporter of the Sandinista revolution. He was suspended by Pope John Paul II in 1984 for breaking canon law on taking a public office as minister of culture the day the Sandinistas triumphed, 19 July 1979, an office he held until 1987.

Pope Francis restored priestly faculties to him in 2019, shortly before Cardenal’s death.

Ernesto Cardenal made his close relationship with Marxism clear on many occasions throughout his life. In 1984, for example, he stated: “Christ led me to Karl Marx. I don’t think the Pope [John Paul II] understands Marxism. For me, the four Gospels are all equally communist. I’m a Marxist who believes in God, follows Christ, and is a revolutionary for the sake of his kingdom.”

And in 2015, aged ninety, nothing had changed as far as he was concerned. In an interview with the *New York Times* he declared: “I am a revolutionary. Revolutionary means that I want to change the world.” He continued: “The Bible is full of revolutions. The prophets are people with a message of revolution. Jesus of Nazareth takes the revolutionary message of the prophets. And we also will continue trying to change the world and make revolution. Those revolutions failed, but others will come.”

At the beginning of 2023 we honour Ernesto Cardenal and the revolutionary movement he stood for, his pledge for peace, by reading his “Psalm 5.”

stops it from making profits, a reckless destruction of life forms that took millions of years to evolve and on which our own existence depends, for immediate gratification.

The battles in “Pandora” depicted in the film are happening right here on Earth in our time. “Operation Artemis” is the name given to driving away millions of indigenous people in Congo who are evacuated for extracting coltan (a main ingredient of laptop computers and mobile phones), deforestation of the Amazon in Colombia by mining companies from Canada, such as Auxico Resources, violating all human rights, and in India the Vedanta group, which labels the tribal people “terrorists” and hunts them down.

These people have nowhere to go and are driven away to allow the mining companies to extract the resources and make profits. In the process they destroy the ecosystem and pollute the water, exploiting Nature, of which they too are a part.

After all the destruction to the planet Earth they are seeking a place somewhere else in the universe for humans to colonise.

If the audience sympathise with the people of Pandora, then the indigenous people of Earth also deserve their support, because it’s their story. And if you dislike the cruelty of the “sky people” in the film, then you should be against capitalism. The people of Pandora in the film and the indigenous people in the real world are not just fighting for themselves: they are also fighting to preserve the planet on which they live from people who are willing to destroy it for the sake of profit.

The fight of the people of the real world has resulted

**But there have also often been the courageous exceptions, sometimes indeed movements, for a complete democratisation of the Christian Churches and an understanding of the Bible that emphasises the equality of all humankind, a desire to create a Jerusalem for all on Earth and not merely as a promise in Heaven.**

Give ear to my words, O Lord  
Hearken unto my moaning  
Pay heed to my protest  
For you are not a God friendly to dictators  
neither are you a partisan of their politics  
Nor are you influenced by their propaganda  
Neither are you in league with the gangster

There is no sincerity in their speeches  
nor in their press releases

They speak of peace in their speeches  
while they increase their war production  
They speak of peace at Peace Conferences  
and secretly prepare for war  
Their lying radios roar into the night  
Their desks are strewn with criminal intentions and  
sinister reports  
But you will deliver me from their plans  
They speak through the mouth of the submachine gun  
Their flashing tongues are bayonets . . .

Punish them, O Lord,  
thwart them in their policies  
confuse their memorandums  
obstruct their programmes

At the hour of Alarm  
you shall be with me  
you shall be my refuge on the day of the Bomb  
To them who believe not in the lies of their commercial  
messages  
nor in their publicity campaigns nor in their political  
campaigns  
you will give your blessing  
With love do you encompass them  
As with armour-plated tanks.

(Translated by Robert Marquez)

**‘... this film is an excellent criticism of the capitalist system—a system that destroys everything that stops it from making profits, a reckless destruction of life forms that took millions of years to evolve and on which our own existence depends, for immediate gratification.’**

in left-wing governments being elected in many Latin American countries. But, as has always been the case, imperialism, led by the US, won’t allow the democratically elected governments to function.

Peru is the latest casualty, with the elected president arrested. Governments that don’t allow the plunder of resources by transnationals are called “undemocratic,” and actions against them are justified. There is a list of coups sponsored by imperialism and of assassinations, from Patrice Lumumba of Congo to Salvador Allende of Chile—the list is endless.

If we indulge ourselves in the visual effects of the film we miss the larger point and the politics behind it.

*The Jungle* (1906) is a novel by Upton Sinclair that tells the story of a meat factory. The author tried to portray the inhuman working conditions and unsanitary work practices in a capitalist quest for profit; in fact it was not just the animals that were slaughtered in the factory but humans too. But readers missed the point of the capitalist exploitation that the author emphasised, being more concerned about the hygiene in the meat industry. The effect of the novel was that the government brought in laws for inspecting and maintaining hygiene in the meat industry. The author disappointedly said, “I aimed at the public’s heart and by accident I hit it in the stomach.”

We don’t know where James Cameron aimed while making *Avatar*; we can only hope it will hit the public’s heart. Will the public limit themselves to enjoying the technical excellence of the film, or progress to think about eco-socialism?



# OPINION

# MILITANT WE MUST BE FOR 2023

**The most striking aspect of Sinn Féin's march to the centre is their about-turn on the European Union. They have gone from being the largest party that opposed both Lisbon referendums to one that is silent on the undermining of the state's neutrality (which is, of course, a consequence of the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty). They are no longer bothered by the undemocratic nature of the European Union, which only serves the interests of the member-states' ruling classes.**

**PAUL DORAN**  
**CLASS STRUGGLE**

THESE IS NO Doubt that apathy has been a major problem among the working class for decades. Trade unions are far less active than they used to be, and the number of working days lost to strike action has collapsed since the early 1990s. The Industrial Relations Act (1990) in this state placed big restrictions on the right to strike, but it was nevertheless accepted by the trade union leadership, who sought a less adversarial relationship with employers and the capitalist state.

Unions became more compliant, and workers' voice at the negotiation table was ignored. This new status quo was given the misleading name of "social partnership."

Thousands of workers in unionised sectors have become infected with a petty-bourgeois outlook, one that views trade union membership as an insurance policy or a last resort, not as organs of solidarity and struggle.

Increasing numbers of voters (particularly from working-class areas) are pinning their hopes on Sinn Féin and the party's promise of fixing all our ills once it gets into government, a prospect that is likely after the next general election, though it is not a foregone conclusion.

Communists need to point out the deep flaws in Sinn Féin's utopian promises. It is time for the "pouring of vinegar and bile into the sweet water of revolutionary-democratic phraseology" (in the words of an early Bolshevik). The last number of years have shown that as Sinn Féin prepare for government they are keen to present themselves as a respectable outfit that can placate transnationals and foreign capital, a

"safe pair of hands." They talk incessantly about fixing the housing crisis, but even a cursory inspection of their policies makes it clear that watery concepts like "affordable housing" and a "path to home ownership" take precedence over universal public housing and ending the financialisation of the basic human right to shelter.

The most striking aspect of Sinn Féin's march to the centre is their about-turn on the European Union. They have gone from being the largest party that opposed both Lisbon referendums to one that is silent on the undermining of the state's neutrality (which is, of course, a consequence of the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty). They are no longer bothered by the undemocratic nature of the European Union, which only serves the interests of the member-states' ruling classes.

Marx and Engels, writing in the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, referred to their adversaries who warned of a spectre haunting Europe: the spectre of communism. One hundred and twenty years later, in her seminal work *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson suggested that a much grimmer spectre was haunting modern industrial society, that of the "gods of profit and production," along with the so-called right of capitalism to make a profit, regardless of the costs.

Lockdown rules during covid banned large gatherings, and this sat uneasily with the constitutional right to freedom of assembly (and, hence, to protest). We should learn from the experience of lockdown and should be more suspicious of wide-ranging limitations on democratic rights in the future. We are a revolutionary party and should recognise that it suits the state not to have protesters expressing opposition to the agenda of the Government of the day.

We have let the advent of covid get in our way with the ban on protests, and maybe we went along too easily with that "Social Contract"; but to the future.

Humanity is facing catastrophic challenges as our Earth system is dying and ordinary people are forced into destitution to pay for basic utilities as a result of capitalism's latest crisis. Workers cannot find homes to live in, thanks to political decisions made by a political class beholden to the whims of the construction industry and landlords.

Faced with these huge challenges, the Communist Party of Ireland must fulfil its role as the vanguard party of the working class. We need to be more militant and make our presence known in popular struggles, backed up by the strategy contained in the political resolution of our most recent national congress in September of last year. The hammer and sickle should be a recognisable symbol at protests up and down the country. We have been too comfortable for too long at making excuses for not promoting our party's message, for fear of annoying other political forces engaged in similar campaigns or being compared to ultra-leftists, a misguided notion. We are a revolutionary party and we must show leadership. No excuse should be acceptable for being inactive. There is little point in being a member of the CPI if one is sitting on one's hands.

We owe it to our forebears, past members of our party, and the next generation to ensure that we leave behind something better than that which we inherited.

Let's make 2023 the year when the CPI becomes militant in pursuit of its goal, guided by the theory we have developed. Arise, comrades!

**FIGHT FOR  
SOCIALISM  
JOIN THE  
COMMUNIST  
PARTY**



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