

Socialist Voice

Communist Party of Ireland
Páirtí Cumannach na hÉireann
Partisan Patriotic Internationalist
www.commmunistparty.ie
Number 218 April 2023 €1.50

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THE REAL FRAMING OF THE WINDSOR FRAMEWORK



There are clear and frightening indications that the Dublin government wants to finally end any semblance of neutrality, to suck up to Europe, no matter what the cost.

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"Right now there are changes happening, the likes of which we haven't seen for 100 years, and we are the ones driving these changes together" - Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, to President Vladimir Putin of Russia, at their summit in Moscow, 22nd March 2023

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ISSN 0791-5217



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IRELAND

ALL IRELAND PUBLIC HOUSING



CLOVER CARROLL HOUSING CRISIS

EARLY IN MARCH, Leo Varadkar said, “renters need landlords, and landlords need renters. We don’t have enough landlords.” As the leader of the largest landlord party in the Dáil, it is unsurprising that this is his proposed solution to the housing crisis. It is also unsurprising that in the same week that the ban on evictions was lifted, Varadkar registered as a landlord himself. The landlord party now has a landlord leader, and that party will fight for their class interests as we have seen in the history of their policies in Ireland.

The housing crisis is not a new development in Ireland. The workers in the cities in the 1920s and 30s crowded into small flats with poor ventilation, and the answer from Cumann na nGaedheal (now Fine Gael) was to build homes. But these were unaffordable to many workers and solved nothing. When Fianna Fáil took power they began building social housing, as essentially the state was forced to adopt socialist policies. However the church and the landlord class could not have socialist policies in Ireland. A socialist policy means that the state solves issues for the benefit of the people, ignoring profiteering. The issue of the housing crisis is not one of enough homes in the eyes of the

RIGHT TO REPAIR



MIRANDA LYNCH RENEWAL

SMALL BUSINESS owners, farmers, tech enthusiasts, workers, and environmentalists are forming an unlikely alliance, fighting for the right to repair our own stuff. How did it get this way, and what is the Marxist perspective? In this article I will dig deeper into the “right to repair” movement.

Planned obsolescence

While proponents of capitalism often claim that this system leads to better products through innovation and competition, capitalist manufacturers found out early that it doesn’t make a lot of sense to make a product that lasts very long. Lightbulbs were one of the first examples of this: it has always been possible to make a lightbulb that lasts years or even decades, but it wouldn’t be very good business if customers only bought only a few lightbulbs in their lives. Thus, planned obsolescence was born, and lightbulbs were made with thinner filaments that didn’t last as long.



landlord class but rather of enough profit and land ownership.

Land is a finite resource: more cannot be created through labour, unlike other commodities. With housing being in short supply and demand increasing, landlords can charge inflated rents. This means that those who own land that is zoned for residential use can charge monopoly rent for the houses they build there. We see this happening as rents are increased every year, with the minimum wage unable to keep up with the costs. This creates a contradiction between the landlords and the capitalist class; if the workers have to use up all of their wages on rent then they can't use those wages to spend on commodities for the profits of the capitalists.

The result of this contradiction comes about in two ways. The first is direct state assistance. From the 1930s to the 50s we saw this as the state building public housing across the country. However more recently we saw a ban on evictions, which gave some security to those in private rented accommodation. The second is pushing workers into extreme poverty and debt. We know the solution, it has been done before. State-built and -owned social housing not only worked in Ireland but also in Britain, before Thatcher began the privatisation of social housing. State-built housing also worked and works in socialist countries of the past and

A development following from this was manufacturers locking down repair information and parts for their products. Repairs and replacement parts can often be an important revenue stream for manufacturers for long after the initial product has already been sold. This is problematic for small independent business and repair shops, as they will be unable to help customers due to a lack of information. And if someone purchases a new product because their old one can't be repaired, it's even more profit for the manufacturer.

John Deere

It's important for farmers to be able to repair their own equipment, or at least have it fixed locally. They are often in remote locations, and require their equipment to work well at the right time to ensure a good harvest. Unfortunately John Deere has locked down repair of their tractors, requiring special software to authorise the new parts. As a result, farmers and small repair shops have turned to hacked firmware just to be able to repair their own tractors.

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present, so why don't we do this in Ireland?

The policies of the Irish government, past and present, have been in the interests of the landlord classes and investors. What is needed is an all-Ireland public housing plan, across the 32 counties, open to all citizens. A housing system such as this would be free from profit and private property. It would have the potential to not only ensure those facing eviction a sense of security but could house those in the direst need, the homeless. With 11,754 people in emergency accommodation, 3,431 of which are children,[1] the need for such a plan is urgent. The current landlord parties have shown they will not implement such a plan: property and profits are more important to them than those workers whom they exploit. Socialist policies, such as state-funded housing, have been proven to work and in the past have been stopped because they were working for those that need them.

"To say that socialism doesn't work is to overlook the fact that it did work and it worked for hundreds of millions of people" - Michael Parenti ★

Footnote:

1 Source: Homelessness in Ireland (website: <https://homelessnessinireland.ie/>)

Apple

In 2001, Apple released the portable music player, the iPod. Apart from having a hard drive capable of storing 1,000 songs, it also had a battery that could not be replaced. A couple years later brothers Van and Casey Neistat released the short film iPod's Dirty Secret, with the slogan "iPod's Unreplaceable Battery Lasts Only 18 Months". It shows a conversation they had with Apple's Customer Support about replacing the battery, which they asked 250\$ + shipping for, and the recommendation to just buy a new iPod.

Despite the backlash, Apple has made their products even less repairable than before. Where previously repair shops or savvy users were able to replace the storage drives and memory of Apple laptops relatively easily, these are now soldered to the motherboard or included in a system-on-a-chip module. Apple's "AirPods" headphones are not repairable at all: the parts are glued into a plastic shell that is impossible to open without

James Connolly Festival 2023

The annual James Connolly Festival returns for its ninth year, from the 8th - 14th of May 2023. The annual week-long festival sees events in radical arts, culture, and politics take place in The New Theatre, Dublin, and across the city. It is a community-based celebration of music, film, discussion and debate that brings together the ideas and thoughts of progressive and radical thinkers and organisations from around Ireland and beyond. This year's theme centres around imperialism, militarism and domination.

The festival will be announced and launched at a very special event in Connolly Books on Friday April 14th 2023 with American singer Carsie Blanton.

Stay up to date with announcements as they become available via the festival's social media platforms and website.

Twitter and Instagram: @ConnollyFest
www.jamesconnollyfestival.com

breaking the product. Perhaps as a result, Apple made \$12.1 billion USD in revenue on AirPods alone in 2021.

Capitalism

Currently, campaigns such as repair.eu as well as farmer and repair shop organisations are pushing to legally protect the right to repair. This is certainly helpful, as are individual efforts to repair our stuff instead of buying something new. But as long as companies are incentivised to do so, they will keep making their products difficult to repair and easy to break. This wastes resources and labour, is bad for the environment, and often results in objectively worse products. Products made in East Germany, which had a shortage of resources and no capitalist profit incentive, didn't have this issue and famously lasted incredibly long. Perhaps it's time to move to a new economic system that creates products for the good of the people instead of the profits of the ruling class. ★



FEBRUARY 15 2003: LESSONS FROM THE DAY THE WORLD TRIED TO STOP THE INVASION OF IRAQ

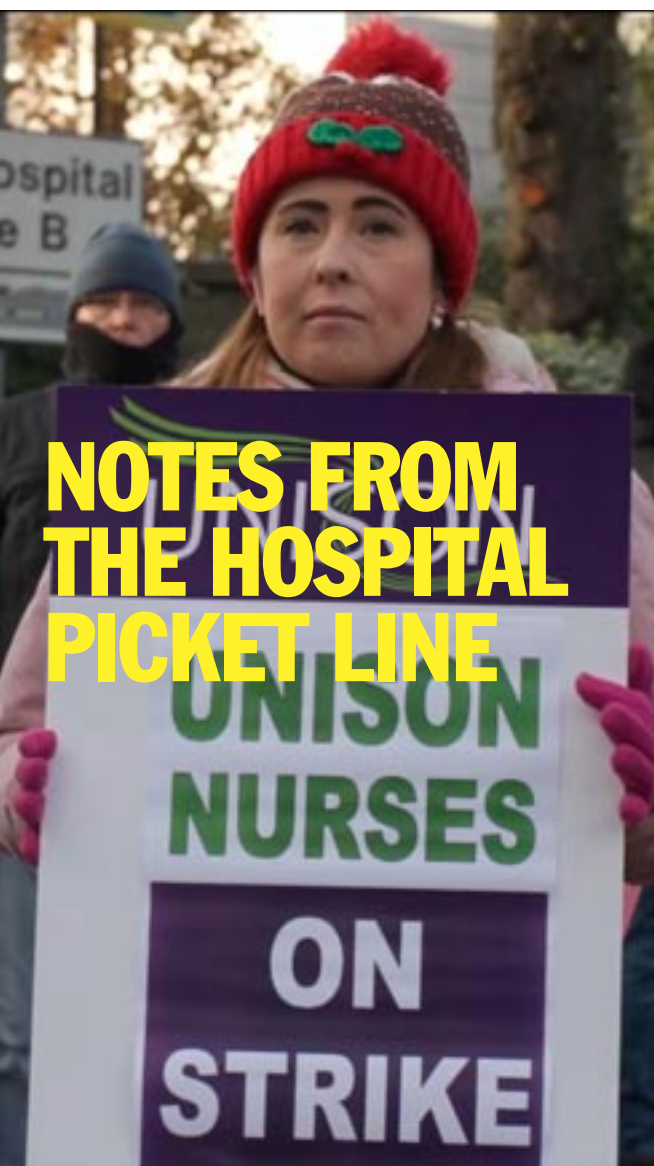


FARRAH KOUTTEINEH
IMPERIALISM

I WAS 16 YEARS old, sitting in an A-level politics class in a college in the middle of London when suddenly my teacher asked the class, “Why did we go to war with Iraq?” Her question filled me with fury and I abruptly answered, “It isn’t a war, it’s an invasion”.

Even at 16, too young to even vote, the intentions behind the UK and US invasion of Iraq were clear to me, as they were to the over 1.5 million British protesters that took to the streets of London on February 15th 2003. From trade unions to anti-war groups, religious communities of all faiths, students, hundreds of coaches filled with protestors driving down from cities like Glasgow and Manchester, people came to march on Westminster.

It is estimated that over 36 million people across the globe mobilised and protested against the invasion of Iraq in



DEEGALL MCKILLEN
STRUGGLE

STRIKING IS never an easy option – especially for health and social care workers. The longer management can draw out a strike, the harder it gets to maintain the unity of purpose and public support that has been such a feature of the on-going health and social care strikes in the North. Trade unionists must keep reminding both strikers and the wider community why we are on strike: for us and for them.

As far back as 2012, it was clear that active recruitment and better wages were essential for the future of the National Health Service/Health and Social Care Trusts (NHS/HSC). Despite

Northern Ireland Executive ministers holding the local purse-strings, the necessary funding was not allocated. Retirements were not being matched by new starts; knowledge and experience was being lost. The local economy was losing out from the positive ripple effect of spent wages that would come with filling vacancies. So when midwives went on a four hour strike in April 2015 to get pay parity with the rest of the NHS in Scotland, Wales and England, it came as no surprise.

Continuous under-investment, not only in staff wages and recruitment, but in actual hospital and community services, has put increasing pressure on staff and those needing services. In 2019 there were around 7,000 vacant posts. Staff were forced to go to the

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over 600 cities. From London, to Tokyo, to Havana, to Moscow, to Nairobi, to Antarctica, the world was united in the biggest ever co-ordinated demonstration in the history of humanity.

This protest will always be remembered not only for how many people participated, but also for how those in power deployed every strategy possible to quash the opposition. Governments, the press, secret services, and arms and oil companies were all colluding in pursuit of their vested interests in furthering the interests of imperialism in the Middle East.

In one of the most outrageous acts of perjury whilst in political office, Blair brazenly misled the British Parliament by presenting his “dodgy dossier”, claiming that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction and that these could be detonated within 45 minutes — all later shown to be baseless claims.

Blair also worked closely with MI5

Iraq has been left in ruins, political instability is constantly fuelling sectarian violence, and the US’s use of chemical weaponry has left cities like Fallujah with higher levels of radiation than Hiroshima.

and the CIA, ordering agents to “dig up dirt” on UN Security Council voting members, in order to blackmail them into voting in favour of invading Iraq at the controversial UN vote in 2002. Katherine Gun, an MI5 whistleblower, came forward with this information in 2003 and was subsequently arrested and faced trial under the “Official Secrets Act”.

Tony Blair reportedly had countless secret meetings and telephone calls with media mogul Rupert Murdoch, where the pair conspired to sway public opinion via newspapers and TV screens. The BBC even banned its own news presenters from not just reporting on, but even personally attending the protest, aligning itself and its entire staff in favour of the invasion.

Today, 20 years later, not a single person has faced justice over the illegal invasion of Iraq, the murder of over a million innocent Iraqis, over 2.5 million Iraqi children made orphans, over 4

million Iraqis internally displaced, forcing 3 million Iraqi refugees into exile, and the millions more dealing with the trauma of decades of brutal occupation, which included torture camps like Abu Ghraib.

Iraq has been left in ruins, political instability is constantly fuelling sectarian violence, and the US’s use of chemical weaponry has left cities like Fallujah with higher levels of radiation than Hiroshima. Over 11 million Iraqis live below the poverty line, in a country which for centuries was the economic and cultural epicentre of the region.

Two decades on, we need to reflect on why the biggest protest in the history of humanity did not succeed. We need to ask ourselves if the modern nature of “one-off” and “day out” protests needs to change. Despite a huge turnout on a single occasion, perhaps it is consistency and militancy of organisation and in action that is the key? ★

picket lines that winter looking for safe staffing and pay parity. With no functioning Executive, London refused to treat hospital porters, domestics and nurses the same as in Manchester, Cardiff or Glasgow. Partly under the pressure of the strikes, Sinn Féin and the DUP found a way back to the forced cooperation of the Executive. In January 2020, staff were awarded 3% to bring them in line with the rest of the NHS/ HSC in Britain.

By the end of that month, staff started to hear the word covid and within another month the pandemic was on us. A very under-staffed service faced this massive challenge. Staff had to fight for basic items of personal protection equipment (PPE) — gloves, aprons and masks — because

Continuous under-investment, not only in staff wages and recruitment, but in actual hospital and community services, has put increasing pressure on staff and those needing services.

management had not invested in this essential equipment. Meanwhile, British Tory politicians quickly cut deals with friends and relatives to take control of distribution of PPE, making huge profits.

Staff fighting wave after wave of covid were clapped by their communities every Thursday evening. Murals with a new message were painted on gable walls: “we support our NHS/HSC Heroes”. Whilst community support was hugely appreciated, neither murals nor clapping put a pint of milk or a loaf of bread on anyone’s table. Many staff burnt out and started to leave the NHS/HSC, putting on extra pressure. Some returned as private agency staff, as they could work hours that suited

and at higher rates of pay, further undermining public health and social care.

Demoralised staff put pressure on unions to take back control and get health and social care front and centre of politics. Once again, no sitting Executive meant that NHS/HSC staff were not included in a pay award that British staff got in April 2022. So with a new mandate from union members we are back out again on the picket lines and now doing a strict work-to-rule: no more working meal breaks and staying late to work unpaid shifts.

The demands remain the same: safe staffing levels; retention and recruitment; real pay increases; and defence of public health and social care, free at the point of delivery! ★

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THE REAL FRAMING OF THE WINDSOR FRAMEWORK

BARRY MURRAY
NEOCOLONIALISM

WHEN IT COMES to money and power, real power, like imperial power, not Micky Mouse or parish-pump “power”, there’s always a deal to be had.

Since the partition of Ireland the number of “agreements” that have been engineered and given important sounding names, would fill a thousand large skips with paper. For the amount of private deals, nods and winks, we have run out of numbers to count. But they all have one thing in common: they ensure that those in power remain in power. They also ensure that capitalism and imperial interests are protected and expanded.

Brexit kicked off a whole other paradigm here in the North, not to mention between Britain and Europe. Both sides using the shenanigans in the North as bargaining chips to ensure a better deal for themselves.

All the great catch-words and phrases were continually invoked. Hard border, no border, frictionless border and sea border. And of course, the GFA pacification process had to be protected at all costs. Or at least that’s the yarn those in power are spinning. Then there was the Protocol which was initially backed by everyone, including the DUP. They calculated, wrongly, that it would cement the 1922



‘THE LEFT’ IN GERMANY

DANIEL DUMILE
IDEOLOGY

THESE PAST few months, Germany’s Die Linke (“The Left”) party has been struggling with the issue of agreeing on a position regarding the Ukraine war. Die Linke - founded in 2007 after a merger of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) and Labour and Social Justice – through the PDS have a link to the Marxist-Leninist ruling party of the former East Germany. The trouble is only a handful of MPs and MEPs have any commitment to the kind of principled anti-imperialist politics that legacy should carry with it. The party leadership have done little to distinguish Die Linke policy on the war from that of the ruling coalition, while a handful of elected members are openly in favour of endless arms shipments to Ukraine as “we” fight Russia to the last Ukrainian.

On 10 February 2023, MP and leader of the Communist Platform (an association within Die Linke) Sahra Wagenknecht *left* and feminist publicist Alice Schwarzer published their Manifesto for Peace petition. It called on German Chancellor Scholz to “stop the

escalation of arms deliveries. Now!” and declared he should lead “a strong alliance for a ceasefire and peace negotiations at both the German and European levels.” The petition got over three quarters of a million signatures.¹ Wagenknecht and Schwarzer built on this momentum and held a peace rally in Berlin on February 25, and according to the organisers it attracted 50,000 demonstrators.

The Die Linke leadership refused to support Wagenknecht and the peace demonstration. To cover their tracks they used the fact that a handful of far-right politicians had signed the petition to argue that the protest was going to amount to a “cross-front” rally with the far-right. In reality the protest was a massive success. Wagenknecht told protesters in advance there was no place for far-right symbols at the rally, but anyone who wanted peace “with an honest heart” was welcome. The Council of the Communist Platform in Die Linke issued a statement in response to the “cross-front” charge stating “The rally was as unsuitable for a cross-front as a trade union demonstration would be suitable for

There are clear and frightening indications that the Dublin government wants to finally end any semblance of neutrality, to suck up to Europe, no matter what the cost.

British border in Ireland. The imperialists were smarter than that. They, including Washington and Dublin, knew well that that would result in new mayhem in the colony and could well have implications in the 26 counties and further afield. All that could upset the work that had already been secured around the pacification process. Those now tamed and 'doing the bidding' of the imperialists might, just might, rebel. Enter the Protocol.

This agreement again ensured that Europe still had a foot in the Brexiteers' camp. And even more importantly the Brexiteers had access to the 500 million people of the European market if they so desired, and they do. This was played down, but too many of the big economic hitters in the UK knew that Brexit was, economically, a major mistake. Even the loyal Ulster business class could see that. But that could never be admitted to those of the "Little Englander" mentality. And the DUP chose to ignore that and represent it as a diminution of the North's sovereignty. Once they were not in control of Stormont, the demographics were against them and the border (economic) was in the Irish Sea, there was rumblings in the loyalist working class heartlands that had to be defused. No Unionist political party wants to be labelled as "lundies". But they are in a corner.

The central negotiation to get their "business deal" over the line was

between Britain and Europe, with Dublin and the US holding a watching brief. The DUP and Unionists/Loyalists were not at the table, nor were they wanted.

So now we have yet another important sounding, if tactically named, agreement: "The Windsor Framework". This is the supposed compromise to soften the blow on Unionist sensibilities around being British and "Loyal". Rishi Sunak sold it as "the world's most exciting economic zone". Exciting for whom exactly? The business class of course. Sure he did his "Windsor sales dance" in front of an audience of compliant workers at the Coca-Cola plant in Lisburn, and no doubt a few captains of industry were there too. No doubt the real meeting happened with them elsewhere.

No mention from Rishi though of the loyal Ulster folk or what the working class would gain from this. But why would there be? Sure this agreement, like thousands of others, is not about the working class. The only thing that matters is what matters to the business class and their multinational business friends. The "drip-down" economics dressed up as more jobs will seal the deal. The poor and working poor are just collateral damage.

Have any politicians anywhere voiced the opinion that the Windsor Framework should be centred around the actual

material needs of the people of the North and indeed the South too? Doubt it. Will wages improve to 2 or 3% above inflation in Ireland, as a result of their Framework? No. Will there be an end to homelessness, inequality, exploitation or a noticeable improvement in people's health and well being? Certainly not.

And in the background and part of all of the imperialist manoeuvring is the Dublin ruling class. There are clear and frightening indications that the Dublin government wants to finally end any semblance of neutrality, to suck up to Europe, no matter what the cost. They want to be seen as ultra-European with their unquestioning sleeveless mentality. This despite the majority of the sensible people of Ireland wanting neutrality to be the rule.

They are now using the Ukrainian proxy war to speed up their race to join NATO to please their American masters. The ruling class in Dublin, subservient to imperialism to the end, do not care that Ireland would therefore become a target for attack; and care even less that working class sons, daughters and grandchildren will be sent to the slaughter in foreign wars. Wars fought by the working class who will kill the working class on each side, on behalf of the rich.

Once again the working class, the poor and working poor are in the frame for more of the same.

Can Wagenknecht and like-minded travellers on the German left manage to bring this project together in the near-term and provide a vehicle for the obviously significant German anti-war momentum as "The Left" veers to the right?

entrepreneurs if some entrepreneurs joined it. Everyone could see for themselves the humanist character of the rally on 25 February - provided they participated."²

The day before the rally the chairman of the scientific advisory board of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, philosopher Michael Brie, penned an opinion piece in the *Neues Deutschland* paper accusing the leadership of Die Linke of "recoiling and demobilising" in response to their membership taking to the streets against the policies of the federal government. He took the leadership to task on the cross-front accusations, pointing out that historical anti-NATO and anti-War movements were "not to be had in pure socialist form. They are great because they are both heterogeneous and united on a single issue. In doing so, they change policy – through breadth, clear direction and pinpoint accuracy. The 'Manifesto for Peace' has all of this."³ Importantly, Brie called on Die Linke to establish a special party congress to solidify the party position on the war.

On Sunday 5 March the Die Linke Federal Committee voted on a motion

calling on the Committee to establish a special congress to "substantiate the fundamental question of the peace policy position of the Left..." It was rejected by 24 votes to 22 with six abstentions.⁴

The party might not have survived the special congress, and is shedding members from both the left and right camps within the group. The Friday before the vote on the motion Sahra Wagenknecht stated publicly she would not run again for Die Linke. Since then Wagenknecht has been floating the idea of starting a new party, stating that she has no more dealings with the current party executive and that Die Linke is pursuing a course that "has hardly anything to do with my idea of sensible left-wing politics."⁵ In late March former co-chair of the party, Katja Kipping, even opined that Die Linke must "update" its traditional anti-NATO position.⁶

Can Wagenknecht and like-minded travellers on the German left manage to bring this project together in the near-term and provide a vehicle for the obviously significant German anti-war momentum as "The Left" veers to the right? ★

Footnotes:

- ¹ Petition <https://tinyurl.com/2pttp36m>
- ² (3rd March 2023) "Eine Querfront kennt ihre Führer", *Junge Welt* <https://www.jungewelt.de/artikel/446060.eine-querfront-kennt-ihre-f9%25C3%25BChrer.html>
- ³ Brie, Michael (24th February 2023) "Ukraine-Krieg: Linker Sonderparteitag nötig", ND: Journalism von Links, <https://www.nd-aktuell.de/artikel/1171202.linkspar-tei-ukraine-krieg-linker-sonderparteitag-noetig.html>
- ⁴ (6th March 2023) "Friedensfrage nicht dringlich", *Junge Welt* <https://www.jungewelt.de/artikel/446182.niedergang-der-linkspartei-friedensfrage-nicht-dringlich.html>
- ⁵ (21st March 2023) "Kein Platz mehr" *Junge Welt* <https://www.jungewelt.de/artikel/447227.niedergang-der-linkspartei-kein-platz-mehr.html>
- ⁶ (28th March 2023) "Gysi rechts überholt" *Junge Welt* <https://www.jungewelt.de/artikel/447723.niedergang-der-linkspartei-gysi-rechts-%25C3%25BCberholt.html>



A DEEPENING SYSTEMS CRISIS



SAJEEV KUMAR
SILICON VALLEY BANK

CAPITALISM EVOLVED from the development of trade: mercantile capitalism gave way to manufacturing capitalism which transformed into industrial capitalism after the industrial revolution, which was fueled by scientific inventions. The history of capitalism as a dominant mode of production begins in the 17th century, with Holland and England being the cradle for capitalism.

The growth of capitalism is tied to the growth of banks because capitalism cannot flourish without credit. The Bank of Amsterdam was formed in 1609. The first bank in England was formed in 1694. John Law founded the General Public Bank in France in 1716. In the city of London, there were 12 national banks in 1755, which increased to 150 in 1776 and became 400 in 1793. So the banks provided the capital and “enclosures” proletarianised rural people, providing the labour for capitalist expansion.

Industrial capital and banks combined to form finance capital, which has the mobility to reach any

corner of the globe. According to Marx's law of “the tendency of rate of profit to fall” in capitalist production, profit will eventually reduce over time, and therefore banks started making riskier investments for larger returns by speculative trading.

Inflation

Recently, inflation posed a threat to the world economy, and the monetary policy solution was to hike interest rates. Many economists warned that this monetary policy wouldn't reduce inflation but instead create “stagflation” (i.e. stagnant growth combined with inflation). As a manifestation of the crisis, Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) and Signature bank were in the news for the wrong reasons. Deposits in the banks were showing a decline due to recession. SVB had invested heavily in government bonds, but due to the government policy of hiking interest rates to control inflation, the value of bonds held by the banks depreciated drastically and the banks lost a lot of money. This set off a panic reaction amongst depositors who wanted to withdraw their money, which further put the banks under stress. Finally the US President Joe Biden, though

THE NEED FOR ENERGY SUSTAINABILITY A GERMAN CASE-STUDY

ROSE VOLKER
ENERGY POLITICS

WESTERN EUROPE has been the scene of climate activism for many years. Driven by the reality of our changing climate, activists take desperate action to demand their governments uphold their agreement to reduce their carbon footprint.

In few places was this more evident than in Germany. In the months leading up to January, the tiny municipality of Lützerath was the scene of a continued protest of climate activists fighting the expansion of the local open-pit lignite mine. This culminated in a large standoff with armed police where the protestors were eventually removed by force.

Lignite is a low-grade fossil fuel placing about halfway along in the development between peat and hard coal. Depending on how far along it is in this process when mined, using it as a power-source results in three to seven times more CO2 emissions compared to natural gas. And, just like coal, the burning of lignite results in dangerous air

pollution. Coal power is estimated to be responsible for nearly 25 deaths per terawatt-hour of electricity produced. Lignite is a step worse with 34 deaths per TW/h. To put this into perspective: natural gas causes 2.8 deaths per TW/h.

Globally, the burning of fossil fuels leads annually to 8 million preventable deaths. Because lignite contains two-thirds water and impurities, greater quantities are required which is the reason for the giant open-pit mines, destroying the landscape and devouring villages. Lignite is in all aspects as dirty as fuel gets. So how did Germany get to this point?

After watching the devastating effect of the 2011 tsunami on the nuclear reactors in Fukushima, Chancellor Merkel made it her mission to move Germany away from nuclear power. Once providing a third of Germany's energy, nuclear power has now been scaled down to 6%. This did not mean the end for Germany's drive towards sustainability. On sunny weekends, solar panels produce half of Germany's electricity demand. On other days, wind

unable to solve the crisis, had to make reassurances that public money was safe and some superficial reforms were to follow.

History shows that every crisis in capitalism is overcome by the further exploitation of workers. Twitter, Amazon and many major companies fired employees. One ramification of interest rate hikes to control inflation was that it reduced investments thereby increasing unemployment. Unemployment puts a downward pressure on wages because more people who lost work during the crisis then compete for fewer jobs. Workers are forced to work for lesser wages. The crisis at the end of 19th century was overcome by colonialism and the competition for more territories for exploiting which resulted in the First World War. The great depression of 1930 caused the rise of fascism which induced workers to further exploitation by violent attacks on trade unions and socialists.

It is against this background of the crisis of capitalism that we have to understand recent geopolitical events. The Ukraine war has given billions of public money to weapons manufacturers like Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, Boeing and Lockheed Martin. Seymour Hersh, the reputed journalist, said that the US, with the support of Norway, was behind the attacks on the Nordstream pipelines

History shows that every crisis in capitalism is overcome by the further exploitation of workers

which supplied gas from Russia to Europe. These two countries were the beneficiaries who would supply gas to Europe if Russia were sanctioned. The US will now be selling gas to Europe at an much higher price which will cause further inflation in Europe. Inter-imperialist rivalry is evidenced by French President Emmanuel Macron saying, "Among the countries that support Ukraine, there are two categories in the gas market: those who are paying dearly and those who are selling at higher prices". The war in Ukraine is aimed at bleeding Russia economically through prolonging the conflict by providing weapons to Ukraine, to strengthen the control over the European Union and provoke a cold war with China.

China

According to a recent report by ASPI (Australian Strategic Policy Institute), China is a leader in 37 out of 44 critical technologies. China has the labour power and power of technology to emerge as a global superpower and many countries are trying to move away from the US hegemony. China has also played a major role in the peace between Iran and Saudi Arabia which may end the terrible war in Yemen. China is also willing to negotiate between Ukraine and Russia, but the US and other imperial nations don't want the war

to end without achieving their ulterior motives. This is ample proof that imperialism needs war, because peace isn't profitable.

The crisis management will intensify austerity measures which will further reduce social expenditure and increase war expenditure. The resulting unemployment and depreciation in wages along with cuts in social expenditure will put huge pressure on the working class in the west. When people protest against harsh living conditions, the ruling class will unleash the far right and implement draconian laws to subvert democracy (as we saw with the Public Order Bill in England recently).

The hegemony of the dollar as a currency for trading has declined, especially after the sanctions on Russia, and the value of Russian rouble has appreciated. Many countries are gradually overcoming the compulsion to hold dollar reserves for their imports and are dealing in their own currencies. We are witnessing an empire in decline: this is a point where imperialism is at its most dangerous. Hence working people around the world should unite to stop wars, and express solidarity with struggles forcing governments to spend on health, education, housing and green energy instead of depleting valuable resources on frivolous war to profit a few. ★

turbines keep the country running. Germany is the first major nation in which renewables have essentially gone beyond just being a green add-on, but form a large and essential part of its grid.

To supplement the variable wind and solar energy and fill in the gaps, gas power was chosen as the base power source for two ideal properties. Namely, it is relatively efficient in regards to carbon produced per KW/h and, more importantly, gas plants can be flicked on and off in mere minutes which is crucial given the unpredictability of the weather.

There is however one complication: Germany has little in the way of natural gas resources, making it dependent on foreign imports, specifically from Russia. With the conflict in Ukraine starting in 2014 it was evident that relying on gas had become too risky, a situation that has only worsened and become impossible with recent sanctions. Thus Germany turned to cheap, locally available fuels and made the switch to lignite.

However, power plants fueled by

In the medium- to long-term, Germany needs to realise that renewables are the future.

lignite have a power-up time of 8 hours, making them very impractical for supplementing energy on demand. As a result, the plants are kept running continuously on at least 40% load. This has made Germany the largest lignite producer and consumer in the world. In contrast to its dirt cheap cost, the secondary costs borne by the people are tremendous. German coal and lignite plants were responsible for up to 4,350 premature deaths and 1,800 new cases of chronic bronchitis in 2016, figures that have without doubt have increased since. For the benefit of the people and the future of this world it goes without saying that we can no longer rely on fossil fuels for our power. While Germany's descent into unsustainability is very specific to its geographic and political situation, it is a task for all nations to avoid similar pitfalls.

In the medium- to long-term, Germany needs to realise that renewables are the future. Despite having on paper one of the lowest deaths per TW/h of all power sources, with the unresolved issue of nuclear

waste storage and the Fukushima and Chernobyl disasters fresh in memory, restarting and expanding nuclear power does not seem a suitable option for Germany. However, there are other ways to compensate for the intermittent nature of renewables. Germany can invest in systems of energy storage by using excess power for manufacturing and storing hydrogen, or by pumping water in high reservoirs for use in hydro-power at night. Over the entirety of western Europe, days without sun or wind are rare and occur at most twice a year.

By investing in cross border connections, production and consumption can be spread and evened out. In the shorter term it's important to realise that the EU's sanctions on Russia have brought nothing but misery and death to the people in Europe, and Germany's switch from gas to the climate destroying and lives ending lignite is but one part of that. We can only achieve sustainability by working together on a continental and global scale. ★



THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT

...the centre-piece of the GFA settlement, the Stormont Assembly, is in fact an institutionalisation of sectarianism, where nationalist is pitted against unionist in the futile pursuit of gaining dominance over each other within a set of institutions designed and incorporated to deny any real control of their respective lives.

GEARÓID Ó MACHAIL
COLM LAIGHNEAGH
JAMES CORCORAN
EUGENE MCCARTAN

THE BELFAST/ Good Friday Agreement (GFA), signed a quarter of a century ago in April 1998, was promoted then and is being celebrated now, as a peace agreement to end the 30-year armed conflict between Irish republicans and the British state assisted by its local militia allies within unionism. Prepare to hear the usual empty political rhetoric as an ageing generation of “international peacemakers” (Blair, Clinton, Ahern et al) return to the world stage in April, with a new generation of acolytes, for a glitzy showbiz encore focusing on the success of the imperialist alliance of the USA, Britain and the EU in “solving the Irish problem”.

The GFA is predicated on the fallacious denial of the role of British imperialism in Ireland, i.e., that it is an “honest broker” keeping the peace between Catholics and Protestants, while ignoring the fact that these divisions were fostered by British imperialism to safeguard its position in Ireland. For centuries, in pursuit of its exploitation of Ireland’s material resources and the extraction of surplus value from Irish labour, the English, then British, ruling class has followed the dictum that might is right as it sought to subjugate Ireland.

However, British rule in Ireland has not been uncontested. While the Irish elites have always put their own class interests first and compromised with imperialism, Irish democratic forces have never accepted that Britain has any right to be in Ireland. During our long national struggle, from the C18th United Irishmen to the present, a number of basic republican tenets have been developed. Foremost among these are demands for economic as well as national democracy; for equality, solidarity, internationalism and citizenship. These values are enshrined in the 1916 Proclamation and the 1919 Democratic Programme. They were summed up by James Connolly when he stated that, “The Reconquest of Ireland must mean the social as well as the political independence of every man, woman and child in Ireland.”

Just over one hundred years ago, facing armed revolt in Ireland, British imperialism was forced to compromise with the Irish bourgeoisie. The democratic demands of the majority of the Irish people for a united, independent republic were rejected and Ireland was partitioned into a neo-colonial state in the 26 counties while the other 6 counties remained as a British colony with an apartheid system of institutionalised sectarianism and discrimination. Maintaining this apartheid system in the north of Ireland demanded ever increasing levels of

repression and eventually led to thirty years of armed struggle by republicans and the increased use of state terror by Britain.

The Communist Party of Ireland opposed the armed campaign of the Provisional IRA which developed as a reaction to British State repression. As a party we are not opposed in principle to armed struggle, indeed our party took part in the War in Defence of the Republic in 1922. We opposed the armed campaign because it did not weaken British imperialism in Ireland, but it objectively helped it to increase its grip on Ireland as a whole and increased divisions among the class forces who were objectively anti-imperialist. This position in no way cast a slur on the sincerity, the commitment or the courage of those Republicans who engaged in armed political actions, and it did not belittle those who paid with their lives or were incarcerated in prison. The Communist Party of Ireland thus welcomed the unilateral ceasefire declared by the PIRA, maintaining that the ceasefire did not mean the abandonment of the anti-imperialist struggle, rather moving it to a new terrain, to the possibility of mass mobilisation around demands for democracy and sovereignty.

The “Peace Process” has allowed imperialism to renegotiate itself out of the defence of a failed state and its support of sectarian ascendancy into a

Sinn Féin has grown in strength in electoral terms north and south. However, its one time open and total opposition to the EU has been replaced with critical support. It has moved from an anti-imperialist position and is now administering the current British settlement which is geared to fostering sectarianism and institutionalising division

new accommodation with its class allies in Ireland, the US and EU, more in keeping with the 21st century. Sinn Féin did not use the new situation to develop mass mobilisation behind demands for national, economic and social advance, preferring instead to take part in "negotiations" with representatives of British, US and EU imperialism.

The Irish government's role was to reassure republicans that they had their backs and were honest brokers and a guarantor of nationalist interests in the 6 counties, while at the same time ensuring that both the balance of political and economic power and the class status quo in Ireland remained intact.

The institutions and processes established under the GFA represent a high point in British imperial achievement, in not only gaining national and international acceptance of its racial and sectarian narrative about Ireland, but in recruiting large sections of the republican movement to that acceptance. Meanwhile, the Irish state has jettisoned Articles 2 & 3 of the Republic's Constitution which provided a constitutional underpinning to the democratic right of the Irish people as a whole to sovereignty, unity and independence. The limited economic and political interests of the Irish ruling class had been satisfied with the 1921 political and constitutional settlement - they were only too happy to delete Articles 2 & 3.

The Communist Party of Ireland recognises that the centre-piece of the GFA settlement, the Stormont Assembly, is in fact an institutionalisation of sectarianism, where nationalist is pitted against unionist in the futile pursuit of gaining dominance over each other within a set of institutions designed and incorporated to deny any real control of their respective lives. The GFA's allocation of the entire population into separate sectarian camps and the institution of mechanisms for ensuring that decisions are weighed to ensure sectarian balance, make competition 'between the two communities' the main dynamic for politics in the north. It cements rather than weakens the sectarian division and makes the achievement of working-class unity more difficult. It is also the complete antithesis of the republican principle of unity of catholic, protestant and dissenter.

The 'peace dividend', promised by the GFA's proponents in 1998 as a result of British demilitarisation, failed to extend beyond a small section of the nationalist and unionist elites. A 2016 report on educational attainment in the

region found that the gap between the lowest and highest skilled was higher than any OECD country. 'Northern Ireland' entered the global pandemic with nearly one-in-five people living in poverty. This figure consists of 110,000 children, 190,000 working-age adults and 30,000 pensioners. Poverty is highest among children - around one in four children in the region are living in poverty (24%).

The Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, Les Allamby, said child poverty was a severe problem in 'Northern Ireland', where families are bigger on average, meaning the limit on universal credit to two children is acutely felt. The terms of the St Andrews Agreement in 2006 placed a legal duty on the Executive Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly "to adopt a strategy setting out how it proposed to tackle poverty, social exclusion and patterns of deprivation based on objective need". In 2016, the High Court of N. Ireland, in a Judicial Review, brought by the Committee on the Administration of Justice, ruled that the NI executive's failure to adopt an anti-poverty strategy was unlawful. In 2023, this has not been remedied. Thatcherite era anti-trade union legislation has also been retained by Stormont. The starkest evidence of socio-economic inequality, post-conflict angst and generational alienation is reflected in the shocking mental ill-health and suicide statistics since the signing of the GFA.

The role of Stormont is to provide a democratic facade to the continued denial of democracy in Ireland, while executive power such as trading agreements, the granting of border polls, the timing or cancellation of democratic elections and revenue raising and taxation in the six counties all remain firmly in the control of the British ruling class.

Sinn Féin has grown in strength in electoral terms north and south. However, its one time open and total opposition to the EU has been replaced with critical support. It has moved from an anti-imperialist position and is now administering the current British settlement which is geared to fostering sectarianism and institutionalising division. Acceptance of this British settlement means now accepting the bogus "consent" approach which endorses the British claim that it is an independent neutral force whose only role in Ireland has been to keep the warring tribes apart. The "consent" formula copper-fastens the unionist veto over national unity. Its acceptance means the abandonment of one of the

key tenets of republicanism.

All struggle has now been reduced to elections north and south. All political engagement and demands are contained within the economic and social framework imposed by imperialism. There is no longer any challenge to imperial hegemony either US, EU or British. The British and the EU have created a whole network of economic dependency structures across Ireland, north and south, thereby silencing groups and organisations whose funding is dependent on grants and financial scraps.

The GFA has locked SF into the straightjacket of imperial needs and interests. The negotiations leading up to GFA and subsequent additional agreements that underpin the current situation exposed the political and ideological weaknesses within Irish republicanism. It exposed its weak and underdeveloped understanding of the nature of imperialism as a development of capitalism and of how it controls and determines the lives of our people.

Securing national and economic democracy has always been central to the socialist republican tradition. These are not achievable within the confines of the GFA. Imperialism and the Irish establishment have cleverly manoeuvred the political and ideological discussion around the GFA so that all those who oppose or question it are defined as "dissidents" and who only want a return to a failed strategy of militarism. It is a strategy designed to silence all and every criticism. The last 25 years has seen the reshaping of republicanism to meet the needs and interests of imperialism in Ireland and globally.

The most recent Windsor Agreement further reinforces the marginalisation of Irish democracy. An agreement negotiated and signed by two imperial blocs to satisfy their own interests with no input from any of the forces who claim to represent Irish national democracy. The needs and interests of the Irish people were marginal in the whole process.

The twenty five years' experience of the GFA has been one of the consolidation of imperialist control and influence. It has reinforced inequality and submission. Partition is still entrenched, if not more so, within the political institutions that control our lives. The struggle for national unity, national independence, sovereignty and democracy continues. British imperialism and imperialism in general can distort and attempt to restrict the democratic aspirations of the people of Ireland, but they cannot stop them. ★



HOW THE IRISH MEDIA HAVE FAILED THEIR PUBLIC OVER THE FAR-RIGHT

Pádraig Mac Oscair is an author and activist based in Ireland. His writing can also be read in Mionlach, Rupture and Socialist Voice. He can be found on Twitter at @PMacOscair

PÁDRAIG MAC OSCAIR
FASCISM

IN RECENT MONTHS, the inner-city Dublin community of East Wall has seen a persistent series of protests against the potential housing of refugees in a disused office building in the area. The initial protestors claimed to have been objecting to the fact that the community were not consulted over the proposal, and to be acting from a place of concern for the safety of local residents. Additionally, a number of those protesting were angry at the prospect of refugees being housed ahead of those in emergency or homeless accommodation in the midst of the worst housing crisis in the state's history.

Similar protests against housing refugees in hotels and other vacant buildings erupted in other parts of Dublin and in some rural areas in the following weeks. The protestors claimed to have similar complaints to those in East Wall, over not having been consulted and concern at the disruption that moving refugees into the area en masse would create. A combination of long housing waiting lists alongside soaring private sector rents, a dysfunctional refugee accommodation system and a repeated failure to consult or include locals when housing the influx of refugees created by the Russian assault on Ukraine hadn't helped, and had been breeding resentment towards these policies for some time.

However, it didn't take long for it to become clear that there were darker forces aligned with this particular wave of protests. A protest broke out in the Dublin suburb of Drimnagh over the

unsubstantiated rumour that a local primary school was to be used to house refugees, and a building in Dublin's Sherrard Street was set ablaze following speculation it was to be used to house refugees. As individuals known to be members of far-right groups such as the Irish Freedom Party and the National Party became increasingly visible, it soon became clear that these protests fit within a long-term tendency in recent years for far-right activists to organise around sites proposed for direct accommodation centres, aping their British counterparts strategy of exploiting public concerns about asylum seekers being moved into an area. This was confirmed as prominent far-right activists such as Hermann Kelly of the Irish Freedom Party used the East Wall protests as occasion to talk about tampons in the mens toilets at the Dáil and another organiser, claiming to be a supporter of the National Party, threatened to burn down a hotel in Kildare housing asylum seekers. The arrival of veteran British racist organiser Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, cosplaying as "Tommy Robinson", provided further evidence that these protests were at least partially the result of British agitators exporting their tactics of scaremongering and disinformation into Ireland.

Despite this, sections of the Irish media have been slow to acknowledge that these protests are evidence Ireland has a far-right problem. Mick Clifford, in an article published in *The Irish Examiner* on 25 August 2022 following the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (GPAHE)'s report on Ireland, went so far as to dismiss the idea that Ireland had a far-right problem as alarmism. Clifford

stated that "Irish society is not immune to racism or bigotry, but compassion remains a bedrock value", as if Irish people have an innate decency rendering them immune to far-right organising despite the same material factors in housing, unemployment and the generational breakdown of mass party membership that led to the emergence of mass racist parties in France or Britain in recent decades. This has been demonstrably untrue for several years following the emergence of the likes of the National Party and a wave of far-right anti-lockdown organising in 2020.

Far right

Clifford evidently learned nothing from the involvement of far-right activists in the East Wall protests, and went so far as to describe the far-right's efforts to organise around refugee centres as a "damp squib", owing to low turnout, in an article published on 13 January 2023. Such an attitude is wishful thinking at best and disingenuous at worst given the far-right remains far more visible in Ireland than at any point in several decades. It's also actively dangerous given the importance of the media in legitimising the far-right.

The importance of the media to the normalisation and growth of the far-right in the United Kingdom and France was identified and scrutinised by Aurelien Mondon and Aaron Winter in their book *Reactionary Democracy*. The media in these countries, whilst also contributing to the visibility of the far-right by giving airtime to figures such as Jean-Marie Le Pen or Nick Griffin, also legitimised far-right ideas within mainstream conservatism by misrepresenting what

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the far-right actually were and creating distorted narratives which, owing to the media's capacity as opinion-formers, helped shape public opinion onto more favourable terrain for racist organisers.

Of course, no two countries can have the exact same political context or trajectory. Ireland may not have had an Enoch Powell moment in which an established politician decides to pursue a second career as an anti-immigration activist, emboldening the fascists to come out of hiding in the process and mainstream politicians to talk about their constituents feeling "swamped" by migrants in a moral panic that's gone on for over 50 years.

RTÉ

Ireland's state broadcaster RTÉ has refrained from inviting representatives from the National Party to speak on national television, yet there are still a number of figures in the Irish legacy media who're already repeating many of the errors which saw the FN in France and UKIP in Britain being normalised. This is due to failing to take the far-right seriously due to being more interested in using them to make broader political points against long-standing enemies on the left. The far-right and the left are presented as two sides of the same coin, as seen when a racist effort to intimidate people in their homes and an antiracist demonstration were presented as "rival protests".

Two particularly egregious examples of this tendency are the work of Eoin O'Malley, a lecturer in politics at Dublin City University and Éilis O'Hanlon, a journalist who's enthusiastically taken to importing many of the United Kingdom's most noxious talking points about the transgender community into a country whose 2015 Gender Recognition Act is widely regarded as one of the most progressive and inclusive of its kind in the world. Both of them write for the Irish Independent, Ireland's most widely-read broadsheet.

Demonising the left

In both cases (and the aforementioned Mick Clifford article), the authors are more interested in demonising movements on the political left than offering any serious analysis of the East Wall protests. Eoin O'Malley, in an article published on 12/02/2023, goes so far as to blame the water charges protests which gripped Ireland from 2014 to 2017 for the East Wall protests, on the grounds that the water charges protests "radicalised" many people in working-class communities, infecting them with what he perceives as a conspiratorial worldview amongst sections of the Irish left:

"Anti-globalism and anti-EU sentiment has been a part of the far left movement in Ireland. But if you ask your followers to believe that there is a global economic elite with Nato as its army and the EU as its lapdog, it's not long before some of them wander off the range and see other conspiracy theories everywhere."

For O'Malley, acknowledging the existence of the colonial process that sees sweatshop labour in China being used to give people in Europe cheap shoes means going down a conspiracist rabbit hole leading inevitably to acceptance of Great Replacement Theory. He proceeds to claim that the two protest movements, 8 years apart from one another, are ultimately much the same thing. "It is a good example of 'horseshoe theory' in action, where like a horseshoe as people travel along to the edges of the political spectrum, the far left and the far right become almost indistinguishable."

Setting aside the absurdity of this claim for now, what's far more worrying is how glibly O'Malley treats the far-right in 2023 in his zeal to demonise a movement that petered out several years ago. The far-right element of the protest movement have launched arson attacks on refugee accommodation and linked in with known extremists from other countries, but O'Malley has far more enthusiasm for using his podium to blame "the left" than in conducting any analysis of the background or positions of the movement.

This disingenuousness is even more pronounced in Éilis O'Hanlon's article "If the left can't represent people with gripes against the State, someone else will" of 19/02/2023, which claims that the emergence of the far-right is due to the overwhelming dominance of the left in Irish society and their exclusion of "the people", on the grounds that the left have fallen out of touch with the real priorities of the working-class. For O'Hanlon, it doesn't matter that there are major issues in Irish society creating favourable conditions for the far-right or an observed upsurge in racist organising regardless of what the left do:

"The left always lose the plot when presented with such democratic evidence that they do not share the values and concerns of genuine working-class communities like East Wall. Their last remaining play is invariably the same — to suggest that those who disagree with them are misled by lies and fake news."

This claim echoes many of the tropes identified by Mondon and Winter in their analysis of the mainstreaming of the far right in France and Britain, particularly the representation of the far right as a radical alternative to a

dominant "woke" or "liberal" political and media class and the demonisation of the working-class as some sort of undifferentiated mass without agency just waiting to be stirred in a given direction by far-right agitators due to the actions of "out-of-touch" elites. Accordingly, the working-class can be blamed for phenomena like the election of Donald Trump or Brexit regardless of evidence showing these were predominantly middle-class movements (Trump polled lower amongst working-class whites in 2016 than Bush had in 2004).

False narrative

This false narrative of "the people" has two major consequences. Firstly, it legitimises and disseminates the far right's own claims to be speaking for the "left-behind" in society when they present immigration as something "done unto" white people. Secondly, the media inadvertently promotes the idea of the far right as an anti-establishment force regardless of their actual policies. Taken in combination, these create a false dichotomy wherein the rational, enlightened media and political class are on one side and "the people" on the other, exposing the public to a media-created narrative wherein the far right can claim authenticity and thus generate support.

The work of Clifford, O'Malley and Hanlon, all published in major national newspapers, represent the early stages of this process in an Irish context. All three treat the far right as either an irrelevance or an expression of "authentic" public anger in their haste to demonise their existing enemies on the left. In doing so, they repeat the errors made in Britain, the US and France which have helped the far right move from an irrelevance to centre stage within a generation.

What then, does this teach anti-racist activism in Ireland? Whilst there are several excellent anti-racist journalists (Shamim Malekmian and *The Beacon*, for example), the legacy media still has much wider reach and influence. To this end, anti-racist activity in Ireland has to include calling out distorted coverage and the spread of misinformation about the far right if their rise is to be held back at this early and critical stage, and the media held accountable for their role in potentially legitimising them by failing to provide accurate and critical coverage. Without this, the Irish media could well repeat the same abrogation of responsibility that has wreaked havoc across British and French society. ★



CAPITALISM

TOMMY MCKEARNEY
CAPITALISM

SILICON VALLEY Bank (SVB) collapsed last month, causing major turbulence across the world's financial sector. Within a week of its closure, the Financial Times was reporting that the value of global bank stocks had fallen \$460 billion. Fearing meltdown from contagion, state-controlled treasuries across the capitalist order made huge sums available to bail out troubled institutions. Devotees of lightly regulated free-market capitalism, paradoxically, expressed no qualms about demanding unlimited state intervention to save their fortunes. So, what on earth happened?

On the surface the answer appears straightforward. SVB had invested (or gambled) too much of its depositors' capital in assets that couldn't be quickly realised and made negotiable without incurring severe loss. Since a majority of the bank's clients were from the currently struggling high-tech sector, this caused a crisis. Many of

these companies sought to withdraw their savings to cover immediate shortfalls in income. As word spread that SVB was having difficulty meeting its obligations, panic spread, customers withdrew their deposits causing the bank to collapse.

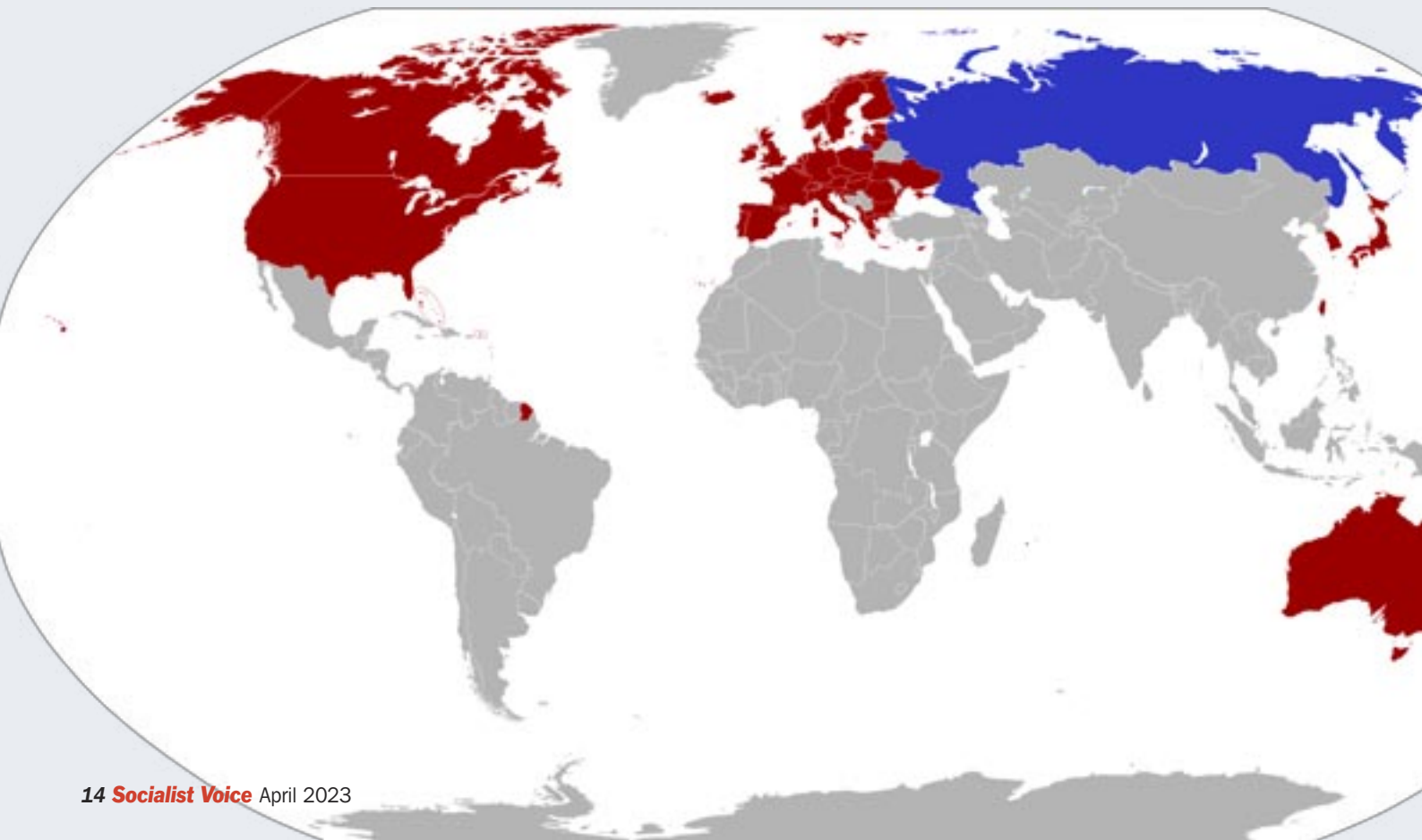
The real question, though, is how or why did the failure of one bank cause such turmoil across the financial sector and on a worldwide scale? In reality, the reason for the crisis runs deeper than a localised liquidity problem leading to a widespread stampede. The problem is fundamentally one relating to contemporary capitalism or more accurately, finance capitalism.

Over the past four decades, the implementation of neoliberal economic policies in the US, EU and Britain has accelerated the outsourcing of manufacturing overseas. A consequence of this has been increased importance of and growth of the financial services industry in the aforementioned regions. This has resulted in two distinct yet ultimately related phenomena.

GLOBAL BANKING: A HOUSE OF CARDS



WAR AND PEACE IN A SHIFTING GLOBAL POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT



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First, due to the decline of an indigenous manufacturing sector, financial institutions in the above-mentioned areas need to export finance in order to gain and maintain profit. This syndrome was identified over 100 years ago by Lenin in his classic, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Ominously, he underlined the determination of early 20th century finance-exporting imperialist powers to access and dominate global markets and to do so with military force. Little imagination is required to see parallels with the present day.

Second, because of the dominance of the financial sector in these economies, additional profits are also sought through a variety of inherently risky investment vehicles. Hedge funds, PFIs, venture capital institutions, crypto currency agencies, corporate bond markets, debt trading are just some of these instruments. All of these revolve around speculation rather than material production.

Invariably, greed and the impulse to maintain competitive rates of profit

lead to greater risk-taking, amounting to gambling and leading to the inevitable bust. This financial matrix always involves the banking sector at one level or another. Consequently, failings within the former can quickly become a crisis for the latter and thus occasionally, a threat to the entire free market system.

It is at that stage the capitalist state intervenes directly in order to forestall widespread meltdown (with the underlying threat of social revolt). For example the US treasury moved rapidly to guarantee SVB depositors and provide the banking sector with access to emergency funding. The Swiss government made over \$50 billion available to crippled Credit Suisse bank before forcing it accept a takeover by its rival UBS. Elsewhere, ECB and Bank of England were buying dollars to ensure market liquidity. As James Connolly said, "governments in capitalist society are but committees of the rich to manage the affairs of the capitalist class..."

How this turmoil will impact on Ireland is still unclear.

Nevertheless, it's unlikely that we shall escape unscathed since this country is embedded in the market-driven part of the world economy. And on that global level there exists the almost insoluble conundrum of reconciling the need to curb inflation on one hand and to print money to bail out banks on the other.

The fallout from such practices, at best, will be a difficult economic environment which will be impossible for us to avoid. Should this cause a reduction in the tax-take from the now challenged high-tech companies on which the Dublin exchequer depends so heavily, the implication for Ireland's working class is bleak. Yet again, austerity will impact harshly on the poorest.

There is only one remedy capable of ending these frequent rounds of economic turmoil with attendant hardship and misery for working class communities. The solution is an economy planned and designed solely to answer people's needs rather than a system catering for enrichment of the few: it's called socialism. ★

RAYMOND Ó DUBHGAILL WAR AS POLITICS

WAR IS A SLAUGHTER, a living hell, visited first and foremost against the working class. As Lenin noted, "a bayonet is a weapon with a worker at both ends". War too is invariably orchestrated by members of the ruling class, who are spared the peril of death or physical danger in exchange for their most sagacious leadership qualities. These brutal facts are easily forgotten, so saturated are we in the western world in the nauseating propaganda of militarism, jingoism and ignorance that is the background noise of everyday life in 2023, as we slouch obliviously towards nuclear annihilation. War has become a spectator sport of the most repugnant kind, draped in the false vestments of liberal humanitarian concern and a Manichean cosmology that projects all of its bloodthirstiness and barbarism onto the perpetual enemy (Russia, China, Iran, and all of those disobedient nations in Africa, Asia and Latin America), one who must be disciplined or even eradicated at all costs, all the while assuring the comfortable western subject of his superior moral standing.

Another truism, per Carl Von Clausewitz, holds that war is the continuation of politics by other means. We must be absolutely clear that the

current state of geopolitical tension, in which China, Russia and likeminded nations are openly discussing the de-dollarisation of international trade and an end to US hegemony and taking active steps to achieve these goals, is strongly likely to escalate into a global war given the existential threat this poses to US imperialism. The US' inability to thus far diplomatically challenge or reverse such moves, and limit China's growing influence on the world stage, is an indication of this. As with the destruction of the Nordstream pipelines, if a political solution cannot be found, a military one will. Of course, we may already have seen the commencement of this global conflict in Ukraine, though this would only be one of many fronts, including the Chinese island of Taiwan, should things escalate as they promise to. We are facing into the grim prospect of either World War III, or another bloody Cold War, fought via proxies, or both.

The necessity for global mass mobilisation on a peace and anti-war platform has never been more urgently apparent. For too long has the left, such as it is, been drawn into pathetic equivocation on issues of war and anti-imperialism. The position in popular discourse once held firmly by anti-war voices, for example in opposition to the US/UK/NATO war on Iraq, has been vacated and filled by a rabble of bleeding heart imperialist warmongers, who of

course theoretically oppose war, but for whom Assad/Gaddafi/Putin/ delete as appropriate is so uniquely evil that only a protracted war costing hundreds of thousands of lives is the only morally justifiable position. Of course, they would never enlist in such a war themselves, but are more than happy to send the workers of another country to die in their stead. Astonishingly, in all of the western political class' endless pronouncements on the Ukraine war since it began 15 months ago, the moral implications of this "outsourced" military policy are never even mentioned, let alone considered in any depth.

As the contradictions underpinning the global order continue to heighten, so too does the contradiction between war and peace. We must therefore stake out an unequivocal and immovable position that is anti-war, anti-imperialist, pro-peace and pro-worker. We must call out the hawkish, warmongering position of reactionaries and liberals alike for what it is: bourgeois imperialist ideology that places the value of workers' lives at zero. We must steadfastly oppose the dogmatic control of global affairs by imperialist powers, and place politics and power back in the hands of the working class. We must mobilise urgently in a workers' struggle for peace: the fate of the future of the world depends on it, while the ruling class relies on our silence and complicity. ★

States imposing sanctions on Russia are almost exclusively from the AUKUS and NATO alliances with the global South and Middle East, Africa and Latin America missing from imperialism's lineup



POLITICS

VARADKAR TURNS THE CORNER (PART ONE)



JIMMY DORAN HOUSING CRISIS

THE TAOISEACH Leo Varadkar has said that he believes the government have now turned the corner on housing. In turning this corner, the government have turned their backs on the housing needs of the citizens of Ireland.

A blatant example of this is the latest government scheme which puts Ireland up for sale. Investment funds are buying up the bulk of second-hand homes coming onto the market because of this scheme. Investment funds who “invest” (buy) homes in Ireland can lease them back to local authorities for a fixed period ranging from 10 to 25 years for a guaranteed rent set at 20% below the market rates for the full period. These properties are then used as local authority housing and rented to citizens as public housing.

On the face of it, this may appear to be a way of providing much needed additional public housing for people. In actual fact this policy makes it impossible for ordinary working people to compete with finance capital who continuously outbid them when attempting to buy a home.

A NOTE ON UKRAINE

NIAL CULLINANE PROXY WAR

IN THE MARCH *Socialist Voice*, a piece on Ukraine proposed the proximate cause of the war is NATO. There are good reasons why Communists in Western European countries should highlight NATO's role to its own populations insofar as it helps counter one-sided narratives of the conflict. However, some have also been guilty of over-emphasising proximate causes at the risk of appearing silent or apologetic on immediate causes: the Russian state

monopoly capitalism and its ambition to consolidate its influence over a state it perceives to be in its “sphere of influence”.

Communists know there are no good or bad imperialisms. Nor is the enemy of my enemy necessarily my friend. Nor is crony capitalist Russia some “objectively progressive force” because it is an obstacle in the way of Western imperialism and claiming to fight xenophobic nationalists. Its actions have strengthened NATO, and there are plenty of xenophobes within its borders if it is genuine in its desire to eradicate neo-

POLICING SOMETHING ROTTEN

PAUL DORAN GARDAÍ

IN 1984 A BABY was found dead on a beach at Caherciveen. He was murdered: stabbed 28 times. At that time Gardaí arrested a young woman and got a confession from her for the young baby's death. It was later proven that the Gardaí forced the confession from this innocent young woman and that they acted despicably to her and her family. An enquiry was held by the state which was a farce to say the least. The Judge leading the enquiry was as misogynistic as the Gardaí.

In December 2020 a young black

man with mental health problems was shot dead by armed Gardaí in Dublin after he attacked a shop worker and refused to drop a knife in a subsequent stand-off with Gardaí outside his house. There are constant reports of racial profiling by the Gardaí and recently the Taoiseach has admitted that this does go on. Young people of colour are constantly stopped and searched just because they are people of colour. Who can remember what happened to John Carty, brutally murdered by the Gardaí in Abbeylara, Co. Longford back in May 2000, whose body was then illegally removed before the state pathologist could examine it?



With the average house price in Ireland now at €359,000, investment funds are squeezing out the vast majority of ordinary working people who are attempting to buy a home.

Average rents in Dublin for a three-bed house are €2500 a month. With this scheme, the investment fund will get a guaranteed €2000 a month in rent from the council, the property will be maintained by the council for the duration and handed back in showroom condition to the investors after 25 years.

This is how investment funds view the housing market in Ireland now. Investment funds look for a yield of 4% per annum on their investment. Using this as their baseline calculation, a €2000 per month income on the investment allows them to pay up to €600,000 for a home or, and this is key, an average of €600,000 each for a group of properties. This allows them to bid way above the asking price as they buy up multiple homes across the state. They will buy up second hand homes en masse once they average out a €600,000 or below.

With the average house price in Ireland now at €359,000, investment funds are squeezing out the vast majority of ordinary working people who are attempting to buy a home. Estate agents do the dirty work by offering €20,000 over market prices if people will sell to investment funds. Many homes don't even go up for sale now as

they are sold in this way, with people taking the opportunity of getting extra money when selling their home.

As a result of this government policy, investment funds are able to snap up the vast majority of homes that come up for sale and rent them back to local authorities. They can afford to pay well above the market rate for houses and outbid any young couple who have managed to scrape together the deposit and mortgage approval to buy a home.

With less houses available for sale on the open market to the ordinary citizen, they are left with no other alternative but to rent. This in turn increases demand for rented accommodation which in turn leads to rent inflation on the never-ending merry-go-round of profits for corporations and misery for the working class.

Of course financial institutions want to maximise their profits and still attempt to keep market value and sale prices to a minimum. If they can buy a €350,000 home for €400,000 their return will be 6% p.a. under this scheme.

Of course, capitalist greed and competition will eventually lead to multiple investment funds getting involved in this practice and prices rising to match returns. This could potentially

lead to a time when all homes or the vast majority of homes in Ireland are owned by investment funds. This is already the case with much of the commercial properties from office blocks to hotels. The class issue is always ownership: this is where the power lies. These investment funds will hold incredible power over the state and our people as they will be able to turn on and off the supply of housing at a whim and set the rents. This is the Ireland of the Fine Gael/Fianna Fáil regime, where everything is up for sale to the highest bidder.

The commodification and the privatisation of the supply of homes in Ireland has been completed. We had already reached the stage where most citizens are unable to buy a home due to low wages but now the few remaining who could are outbid by finance capital. This is what Varadkar means when he says "we have turned the corner on housing". He means it's "job done" in the sell-off of Ireland to the corporate elite. Mission accomplished.

At one time the government owned up to 50% of housing in Ireland; now the investment funds own the government. The system isn't broken, it is designed this way. It's called Capitalism. ★

Communists know there are no good or bad imperialisms.

Nazism.

Ultimately, there is just imperialism, inter-imperial rivalries among different state monopoly capitalisms and the respective ruling elites' geopolitical interests. There is also our commitment to the right of nations to self-determination. The Russian political and military elite no doubt has concerns over expanding NATO membership, albeit an entity the Russians once indicated a willingness to join and which they have occasionally cooperated with in the past – see "Partnership for Peace". But the Russian political and military elite can

also, given their nuclear armoury, adequately protect their borders without violating the internationally recognised borders of others.

While NATO should turn down Ukrainian requests for membership, is it not unreasonable to expect the Ukrainian people to "de-militarise" their society in total? The degree of indigenous militarisation is entirely a matter for the people within the border of Ukraine to self-determine through their own political and class struggles. We should not impose internal de-militarisation to appease the concerns of foreign

interests. Would Irish people like it if, in a struggle with Britain, the international community imposed de-militarisation on us to suit the whims of our more aggressive and powerful neighbour because they claimed "legitimate strategic interests" over us? While Communists should have no issue with realpolitik in international affairs, it should not be the realpolitik of state monopoly capitalism we settle for. One might also suggest that expecting a country to de-militarise is unreasonable and impractical when its neighbour has just invaded it. ★

According to a recent report, relentless racism and discrimination is the primary cause of suicide among Travellers

According to a recent report, relentless racism and discrimination is the primary cause of suicide among Travellers. The rate of suicide in the Traveller community is six times higher than the general population. More than two thirds of Travellers have lost a loved one to suicide and almost 90 per cent are worried about suicide in their community, says the report which focuses on the rapidly growing Traveller community of south County Dublin. Conducted by independent consultants S3 Solutions, which specialises in community and voluntary sector research, the study was commissioned by the Clondalkin Travellers' Development

Group, Tallaght Travellers' Development Group and Ballyfermot Traveller Action Project. Gardaí have for decades targeted the Traveller community, in order to pump up their crime-detection figures.

The Gardaí have not changed their attitude in over four decades; their management training hasn't changed. At their training centre in Templemore, new recruits are given less than an hour of training in dealing with Mental Health, yet we have as a state allowed these so-called professionals to tackle crime in what is a vastly different country than the 1980s, when they put Johanna Hayes through mental torture through

their sheer ignorance and misogyny. This writer knows many Gardaí who are good decent people and full of empathy. Unfortunately, it is run in a management style that is possibly the worst in Europe. Its head of Police was trained by the British State who have a notorious record on policing and systemic corruption. He should go immediately, and a structure of policing put in place with the community as its core focus.

It is time to stop the rot within the Gardaí, stop the corruption in the Gardaí and, most importantly, bring about a situation whereby people can have confidence in a community police force. ★





CENTENARY OF THE SHADOW OF A GUNMAN

JENNY FARRELL

SEAN O'CASEY'S play *The Shadow of a Gunman* premiered 100 years ago, on April 12, 1923, at the Abbey Theatre.

It is set during the War of Independence in a Dublin tenement. Davoren, writer of romantic verse, shares a room with Seumas, a peddler and onetime patriot who has now retreated into religion, superstition and bed. The other tenants believe Davoren is an IRA man on the run and assure him of their support. Flattered, he does not contradict them, and the ardent young patriot Minnie Powell falls in love with him.

Other tenants include: Mr. Grigson, an alcoholic loyalist, adored by his wife Mrs. Grigson; Mrs. Henderson, admirer of the clerk Mr. Gallogher and his imagined literary skills; and, in addition to Minnie, Tommy Owens, who repeatedly declares his willingness to die for Ireland. They all crave some glamour from the supposed gunman Davoren.

A friend of Seumas, Maguire, arrives and leaves a bag of peddler's goods, he says. When news arrives that Maguire has been killed in a robbery, it becomes clear that he was a genuine IRA gunman. British troops storm the tenement. Seumas and Davoren discover to their horror that the bag contains bombs. The men are now desperate to get rid of the bag, and Minnie bravely hides it in her room without the men stopping her. The soldiers terrorise the tenants and discover the bombs. Minnie is arrested and accidentally shot when the IRA ambushes the British while they are taking Minnie away. The women, especially Mrs. Henderson, stand up to the invaders while the men grovel before them.

O'Casey portrays life in the Dublin slums as characterised by poverty and lack of prospects, war, terror, and violent death. Their inhabitants do not seem to offer much resistance. The actual freedom fighter

RATHLIN POET: "THE WAR GAME"

MARINO BERTUCCELLI

LIVING ON Rathlin Island, six miles from Ballycastle in North Antrim, Mary Cecil ponders life and chronicles her thoughts in poetic form. "The Rathlin Poet", as she is known, has penned a great many poems, including anti-war verses: hardly surprising for the daughter of a soldier psychologically scarred during service in WW2.

Rathlin, surrounded by many shipwrecks, is a place where all faiths share the cross-community graveyard at St Thomas', so it is no surprise that amongst them lie servicemen of various nationalities. The slaughtered of two world wars lie in this place, presented to the island by the sea, human wrecks laid ashore for eternal rest.

At a time when the Irish government is stealthily pushing its 26-county republic away from the principle of neutrality that has persisted since its very foundation, pushing towards conscription of its Defence Forces into EU and NATO armies, pushing its people to war, this poetic offering from Cecil, "The War Game" is timely.

When Irish, UK, EU and US governments scowl upon citizens that justifiably question their policies or dare to challenge or seek explanation for their enabling of what seems like the perpetual slaughter of Ukrainian and Russian citizens, rather than seeking ceasefire and peace, it is refreshing and reassuring to hear this poetic voice rise and challenge the status quo.

The War Game

They want to conscript my heart
Into the killing machine
Of war without end
Abandon my soul
In the battlefield's of conscience
Weaponize my mind
And deny my humanity
On the altars of hate
Kill my belief in the oneness of all
To commit to not seeing
What must be seen
Beyond the screens
Where war is a game
Sanitised and sacrosanct
Turn off the light of understanding
Feel the hate
Of the merchants of war
Till the end of our world

O'Casey creates multiple parallels in this play, which on the one hand serve to generalise the action, but also contribute to a comic-grotesque aspect to the tragedy

Maguire passes unrecognised through their midst, while the mechanisms of oppression are massively present, especially the British army. O'Casey, in contrast to the romantic image of a united, heroic people, draws disunity, escapism, disillusionment on the one hand, and illusions on the other, lack of leadership, and the inability to realistically confront one's own situation.

Early on in the play, Gallogher writes to the IRA, complaining about neighbours, people of his own class, in which he asks the IRA to intervene using force. His incomprehensibly phrased letter earns the neighbours' admiration. Fascination with the word, form, ritual, is reinforced by a lack of education and religion. Minnie Powell also defies her own common sense: she falls in love with the romantic myth of the freedom fighter and his devoted lover, who is willing to sacrifice her life for him – an image she has absorbed from an early age in songs and stories.

Belief in the power of the word, the sign, is put to the test and proves useless. Neither the holy statues and images in Seumas' room nor their 'loyalist' counterparts protect the tenants from the arbitrariness of the British soldiers, who throw the Bible on the floor and force Grigson to pray and sing for their amusement – now the Word is controlled by the enemy. And Davoren's name on Minnie's chest does not protect her from the fatal bullet.

O'Casey creates multiple parallels in this play, which on the one hand serve to generalise the action, but also contribute to a comic-grotesque aspect to the tragedy. This helps create a distance from the action and the characters, allowing the audience to see more clearly what the playwright is saying, ultimately helping them to confront these weaknesses.

Donal Davoren and Seumas Shields are people of intellectual and cultural ambition and insight who

could be leaders in the eyes of the community from which they came – they share certain qualities with the people. Yet there is a contradiction between insight and action. Seumas has withdrawn from life and responsibility and he fails to recognise Maguire's true character. Seumas, too, is a shadow of what he might have been.

Davoren initially appears different. He has the will and the ability to free others from their ignorance, but he does not live up to his responsibility. His responsibility for the tragedy is all the greater. Maguire, however, is not presented as an alternative. His brief action seems thoughtless. He is as responsible for Minnie's death as Davoren is. The national liberation movement fails to reach the broad masses of the people: Maguire moves through them fleetingly and unrecognised. The real and the fake gunman overshadow the play, and Seumas asserts that the gunmen do not die for the people, but the other way around. Minnie is shot not by the British but by the 'real' gunmen.

The tragedy is that the people have no leaders who are in tune with them and the times. Their best leaders were executed in 1916. Nevertheless, all the human qualities necessary for liberation are there and embodied in the people as potential.

These include above all women, their lack of self-absorption, their capacity for loyalty, responsibility and self-sacrifice, their courage, their undamaged interest in poetry. But important qualities are common to both genders. A spontaneous solidarity, for example, prevents all the slum dwellers from betraying Davoren. Minnie and Maguire sacrifice their lives for something beyond themselves that they believe will bring liberation. In his creation of contradictory, realistic characters, O'Casey builds a growing awareness of a possible alternative inherent in things as they are. ★

Cecil considers her anti-war poems to be amongst her most important work

Cecil considers her anti-war poems to be amongst her most important work and at a time when there is continuous western momentum driving nations into war rather than towards unity and peace, who could disagree that the world needs to hear their message? Observing that money-making on the back of war is colossal, she views money, power and greed as being the great levers generating this seemingly unstoppable momentum. Like many, she believes the end to this conflict can come through peace negotiations, and questions why they aren't happening now.

Cecil suggests that a great philosophy to embrace is "the Earth is but one country and mankind its citizens" and explains that her passion for writing anti-war poetry rises from the unseen and immeasurable damage that war causes, her personal experience triggered in turn by her father's experience of war. Her father whom she describes as highly intelligent and a great humanitarian, served in WW2 where what he witnessed affected him profoundly, drove him into alcoholism and in turn made her childhood a struggle. She experienced poverty and insecurity when growing up, something she describes as a real cost of war, something that goes down through the generations.

Poignant as Cecil's poem is she also provides a chillingly relevant quote from Nazi Hermann Goehring:

"Of course the people don't want war. But after all, it's the leaders of the country who determine the policy, and it's always a simple matter to drag the people along whether it's a democracy, a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism, and exposing the country to greater danger."

Hermann Goehring at the Nuremberg trials

This Nazi quote on how to drag the people along into war, "into the killing machine" as Cecil describes it, sounds familiar, doesn't it?

They will not conscript Cecil's heart, comrades, nor mine.
Peace, Land, Bread.
The Ballycastle Comrade

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END NOTES

ON GRAFFITI AND PUBLIC SPACE

**Advertising
looms out over
public areas
from bridges
and billboards,
moves through
them on
buses, Luases,
lorries, and
occasionally,
imprinted
unbeknownst
on the human
body itself**

LAURA DUGGAN

COMMODIFICATION

DUBLIN MAY not boast quite the same scene as other cities, nor does Ireland in general, but no journey through any urban centre is devoid of the plague of advertising or of the sight of its counterpart, graffiti. Opposing sides of the same coin, they both involve the co-option of public space, just for very different purposes.

Graffiti at its core can be described as an expression of the individual over public space: in a sense a claiming of it – “This is me, look at my name!”. Even if that were the extent of it, it would be hard to claim that graffiti is not also a political act in a capitalist system based on consuming. While not all graffiti is political in content or even intent, graffiti exists as an act of resistance to the capitalist commodification of space, to the homogenisation of urban space, and of subversion of notions of public and private space.

As citizens in the street, we are bombarded by controlled, blank and often dead public spaces that are devoid of greenery, colour or art, comfortable spaces to be, and any sense of belonging or place. This limited public space is then also invaded by private spaces that are cordoned off, outside of our control, but dominate the surroundings. Advertising looms out over public areas from bridges and billboards, moves through them on buses, Luases, lorries, and occasionally, imprinted unbeknownst on the human body itself. One business in Australia put indented plates across bus stops and benches, so that when people sat down their latest ad for shorts was imprinted on their thighs.

Even without new sly ways of branding people, a bus stop is never just a bus stop under capitalism. Rather than let it be a provider of shelter when it rains, a place to get information relating to the stop such as timetables etc., instead, they are deemed to be under-utilised spaces unless they are lit up with advertising 24 hours a day. Even public transport, which has been discussed at length in these pages, cannot just be allowed to be authentically public: instead, it must be invaded by these small realms of paid-for private space, both inside and outside.

Of course, graffiti is not an answer or solution to the above, it is a reaction and therefore can also be co-opted, such as with “street art”, graffiti’s socially acceptable cousin. This is not to diminish the contribution that street artists make to cityscapes. Banksy is one of the most familiar political street artists and their work is immediately recognisable with its explicit anti-capitalist and anti-consumption message. Ironically, as Banksy has gained wider acclaim, their works have been collected and sold off to private collectors.

This commodification of street art has in some ways been used to attempt to push graffiti off the street. There are examples all over Dublin of where once graffiti could be found scrawled across the walls, where now street art has been used to “clean up” the area and replace it. An increasing number of these murals come with an accompanying plaque of the logo of the business that has sponsored the piece or, worse again, just turned the wall into an actual advertisement. Public art should be for the public and, while graffiti writers exist on the edge of that sentiment, they are a more genuine part of it than company X trying to sell you Y through pretty pictures.

A city “disfigured” with tags and running writer battles playing out on hoarding is one that that is not only deeply preferable to a manicured city of hostile architecture and advertising, but is also evidence that there are at least a few people there demanding to be heard and seen on a par with, if not over, the corporations that would etch their name into the very sky if they could. ★



POETRY

To Burn or Not to Burn is a bilingual tanka (5-7-5-7-7 syllables)
by Gabriel Rosenstock in response to artwork by Banksy.

To Burn or Not to Burn

tá sé ag éirí fuar
níl mórán fágtha le dó
bratach mo tíre?
tar éis a bhfuil déanta aici
ar mo shonsa 'is ar son an domhain!

brr . . . it's getting cold
not much left to burn 'round here
the flag? you jokin'!
after all my country's done
for me and for the whole world!

Julian Assange

Bhís gach áit, tráth
Nach mór id' dhia, uileláithreach,
gach áit
Cá bhfuilir anois?
Níl fáil ar íomhánna úra díot
Ag iompú id' dhia ataoi
Dofheicthe, thar m'eolas

You were everywhere once
Something of a god, omnipresent,
ubiquitous
Where are you now?
There are no recent images
You are becoming a god
Invisible, unknowable

