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## IRISH NEUTRALITY UNDER THREAT

'It is pointless attempting to guess the rationale underlying the Biden visit. It is obvious, however, is that it has been used by the Irish ruling class to polish its subservient relationship to US-led imperialism. This is dangerous because it facilitates bringing an end to what is left of our neutrality.' **Tommy McKearney**

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# IRELAND

## ON THE VISIT OF JOE BIDEN



**TOMMY MCKEARNEY**

### NEUTRALITY THREAT

**W**E COULD WASTE a lot of time speculating on the real purpose behind the Biden visit.

Nevertheless it is worth reflecting on the nature and impact of his trip to Ireland and especially how the Irish establishment reacted to it. Ostensibly the US president was coming here to celebrate the so-called achievements of the Good Friday Agreement. However and in spite of the fact that that particular accord related directly to conflict resolution in the six counties, Big Joe spent only a few hours in the North before rapidly heading south.

Admittedly the Stormont Assembly is not up and running. It is not obvious though, why that should have prevented him from spending equal time north and south. The narrative that the USA had played a huge role in what has been described by his friend Senator George Mitchell as a model with international significance should surely merit more than a whistle-stop tour.

Why not a quick visit-cum-photo opportunity to the Giant's Causeway or a boat on Lough Erne or some other equally frivolous but good-natured gesture? A veteran politician must surely have recognised the value of that type of simple exercise. By raising the region's profile and ingratiating himself with the northerners, his influence could

have been so much more significant.

In contrast to his almost dismissive treatment of the North, Biden spent his time across the border in relaxed and convivial mode. Of course he delivered a formal address to the joint houses of the Oireachtas but apart from that, it was almost as if he was on holiday. Particularly so since he was accompanied by several members of his family. There was a pleasant journey to Carlingford to meet distant relatives followed by a dander through Dundalk. Later there was a moving pilgrimage to Knock and a poignant meeting with a priest who had anointed his late son. Then there was the "take me home to Mayo" outing in front of Ballina Cathedral. All so endearing to an uncritical media and public.

Adding to the overall merriment was a charming little gaffe when somehow he got confused between the New Zealand rugby team and the thankfully now disbanded RIC Special Reserve, a.k.a. the Black & Tans. An easy enough mistake to make for an 80-year-old Yank. Especially so for someone who clearly must, you might be led to believe, have some acquaintance with Irish history causing such a slip of the tongue. No wonder the British media was so scathing. Fortunately for him though, annoying the Brits still pleases a certain section of Irish society.

Once in the Republic, he received a royal welcome despite the protests of a

## ON NATO & IRISH NEUTRALITY COMMUNIST PARTY OF IRELAND



**23RD APRIL 2023  
STATEMENT**

**T**he Communist Party of Ireland strongly condemns the decision of the coalition government to appoint Ms Louise Richardson, Dame Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, to chair the government's Consultative Forum on International Security Policy and to draft the final report on the future of the security of this state.

The government intends to hold a series of staged events with "military experts", both national and international, to pontificate on why in

today's world no one can any longer be neutral and why we should follow the example of Finland and Sweden in joining NATO. Tánaiste Micheál Martin said that Dame Richardson "has a strong expertise in security policy" and will "play a hugely positive role in chairing the discussions".

The question must be posed, who has in the past and who now threatens this state? The government has not outlined where the threat to the Irish people comes from and why we need to change our traditional policy of neutrality. The only state to have attacked towns and cities in this country has been the British state – a member





gallant few. Lost among all the “Welcome home Joe” tomfoolery was the stark fact that here was the man who presides over the world’s largest imperialist power being treated as if he was a favourite uncle returning from a lengthy exile. Not that Biden completely neglected his duty to the empire he leads as he reminded audiences of the US contribution to war in Ukraine.

Nevertheless and notwithstanding criticism of US foreign policy made by a handful of left-wing TDs and a small number of protesters on the streets, President Biden returned to Washington having created an Irish government approved feel-good factor. Ireland can now bask in the knowledge that it has earned a pass grade from the White House.

The smug feeling of self satisfaction was captured nicely in an interview former Taoiseach Enda Kenny did with RTÉ. The presidential visit, he said, had solidified our relationship with the United States, helping maintain the favourable opinion multi-national corporations have of this country. A situation summed up, according to Enda, by president of the EU Commission Ursula von der Leyen. The lady recently commended Ireland as a shining example of how a small country can prosper within a larger union. Ursula didn’t mention, by the way, our housing and homeless crisis, wretched health service or gross inequality.

However, let’s face, this small island has a cosier relationship with the world’s largest power bloc than another small island, that one over in the

**In light of the party’s abject refusal to censure the US administration, the Pentagon can rest easier. It seems clear that if in office, Sinn Féin will not deny US troops landing-rights at Shannon.**

Caribbean. The country that has caused its enormous neighbour such annoyance, it has been blockaded for the past 60 years.

Joe’s visit has assuaged, one would imagine, some nagging doubts the White House may have had about a similar threat emerging in Ireland. The Yanks have long admired Ireland’s legislative commitment to free-market neoliberalism. There was some concern, however, that the worsening of the aforementioned housing crisis, two-tier health service and systemic inequality all exacerbated by inflation, could undermine Irish people’s belief in the American way of doing business.

While the coalition parties greeted the visitor with slavish devotion, a question mark surrounded the attitude of the Republic’s largest opposition party. A series of opinion polls over the past year have consistently shown significant approval for the allegedly left-leaning Sinn Féin. Might that party, if in office, prove difficult for a US administration to deal with?

Well, there is no longer much room for worry. Mary Lou and Michelle seemingly have no intention of rocking the boat. When offered the option to follow a lead set by People Before Profit and boycott Biden’s Oireachtas address in protest at his foreign policy, Sinn Féin refused and sat obediently throughout his speech.

In light of the party’s abject refusal to censure the US administration, the Pentagon can rest easier. It seems clear that if in office, Sinn Féin will not deny US troops landing-rights at

Shannon. By thus tolerating one flagrant violation of Irish neutrality they might well be persuaded to concede on other areas.

Away from the Dáil, the response to the presidential visit was equally uncritical. On the contrary, it was bordering on the cringeworthy. The Irish media reported Biden’s every move with RTÉ providing wall-to-wall coverage. Unsurprisingly as a result of such intense publicity, large and enthusiastic crowds gathered in Ballina to welcome Joe back home.

As mentioned at the outset, it is pointless attempting to guess the rationale underlying the Biden visit. What is obvious, however, is that it has been used by the Irish ruling class to polish its subservient relationship to US-led imperialism. This is dangerous because it facilitates bringing an end to what is left of our neutrality. If not so, then why did Tánaiste Mícheál Martin appoint Louise Richardson, Dame Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, to chair the government’s Consultative Forum on International Security Policy?

Consequently, there is cause for concern but no reason for despair. The Irish bourgeoisie is not as confident as it appears. There is a simmering discontent with conditions in this country that will not be satisfied with royal or presidential visits. It is, nevertheless, imperative that we continue to articulate the only viable alternative to capitalist and imperialistic barbarism: a socialist society.

of NATO. A state whose security and military policies Dame Richardson fully supports. The other main threat to the Irish people came from the EU, when the Commission forced the Irish government to accept liability for 42% of European bank debt and impose austerity on our population. Remember Jean-Claude Trichet’s threat that “a bomb would go off in Dublin” if bondholders were burned?

They will tell the people why we should increase our military spending in line with NATO, while tens of thousands go without homes and shelter. At the same time, as part of this state’s contribution to NATO’s proxy war in their country, they house tens of thousands of Ukrainians fleeing that war in the middle of a deepening housing crisis.

What is clear is that the central issue to be discussed at these heavily controlled forums is “security”, not

**The other main threat to the Irish people came from the EU, when the Commission forced the Irish government to accept liability for 42% of European bank debt and impose austerity on our population.**

peace and neutrality, or a more vigorous, independent foreign policy. They will not discuss the advancement of global peace or enhancing the peace-keeping role of the United Nations.

Richardson, who holds both Irish and US citizenship, is clearly a safe pair of hands. She is totally committed to advancing the strategic interests of US foreign and security policy. She is on record supporting the US decision to invade Iraq without UN sanction because “We [USA] felt strong enough to react on our own, and so we did”. She has also a track record of supporting British military and political policy in Ireland.

The Irish state has clearly brought her on board to secure what they require, i.e. the creation of a false consensus in favour of the abandonment of Irish neutrality to defeat any possible demand for a Constitutional

amendment enshrining neutrality.

The National Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Ireland issues a call to all those concerned about peace and who oppose this state joining NATO to come together to oppose this “security” roadshow at every opportunity. Not to give it any democratic veneer, but to render it unworkable.

The neutrality of this state is one of the last vestiges of the 1916 Proclamation and the Democratic Programme of 1919. Both advocated that an Irish state must align with the oppressed of the world and not with the oppressors.

The majority of our people are in favour of neutrality and peace. We need to mobilise now against this attempt by the government and the state to abandon neutrality by the back door.



## VARADKAR TURNS THE CORNER. Part 2



BY JIMMY DORAN  
**HOUSING**

IN PART ONE last month[1] the government's latest scheme – more like “scam” – to solve the housing crisis was highlighted. Local authorities are renting homes from investment funds for periods of between 10 and 25 years for an average of €2000 a month in Dublin. These houses are then used as public housing for qualifying citizens.

Let's look at this from a financial perspective to see who benefits. With the investment fund getting a guaranteed rent of €2,000 a month, that is a total of €24,000 per year or €600,000 over a 25-year period, for a property bought by them for circa €400,000. That is a 150% guaranteed return on the investment over 25 years or 6% per annum. The ownership of the home remains with the investment fund, while coupled with this, the council maintains the property and returns it to the investment fund in show-house condition after the 25-year period.

The investment fund can then sell the property for another profit. As house prices in Ireland have increased by an average of 300% over the last 25 years, this would make the value of the property at circa €1,200,000. The Investment fund's total profit for the 25-year period would be circa €1,400,000 on their original investment of €400,000.

The council on the other hand pays €600,000 to the investment fund and receives the average council rent of €300 per month totalling €90,000 for the duration, making a net cost of €510,000. If the council was to buy the property then it would have to pay a potential €1.2 million to buy the home, three times the original asking price of €400,000 when added to the other costs: a total of €1,710,000.

It does not make economic sense for the state to rent properties back from investment funds in this manner. There are numerous much more financially rational alternatives available.

The state could buy these second-

## WAR



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JIMMY CORCORAN  
**NEUTRALITY**

THE NATO PROXY war against Russia grinds on with the capitalist “news” media full of stories and analysis of the expected Ukrainian offensive. Absent from all imperialist commentary are proposals for ending the war other than by the military, economic and political defeat of Russia. The peace proposals put forward by the People's Republic of China were quickly removed from political discourse and calls for a ceasefire have been equated with appeasement. The ruling classes within the US, the EU and the UK are determined to bleed Russia in Ukraine, irrespective of the cost in Ukrainian and Russian lives. All this to maintain the hegemony of US imperialism and to strengthen its hand as it prepares

to militarily confront the PRC.

The war has had consequences for the people of Europe and the wider world. The US has strengthened its military and economic position in Europe. NATO has increased in numbers and the US has achieved its long sought increase in “defence” spending by NATO members. The war has filled the order books of US armaments companies as NATO countries send weapons and ammunition to Ukraine. European countries are set to become more dependent on US energy supplies as they cancel contracts with Russia and the US bombs pipelines. Even Macron worries about the increased dominance of US imperialism within Europe.

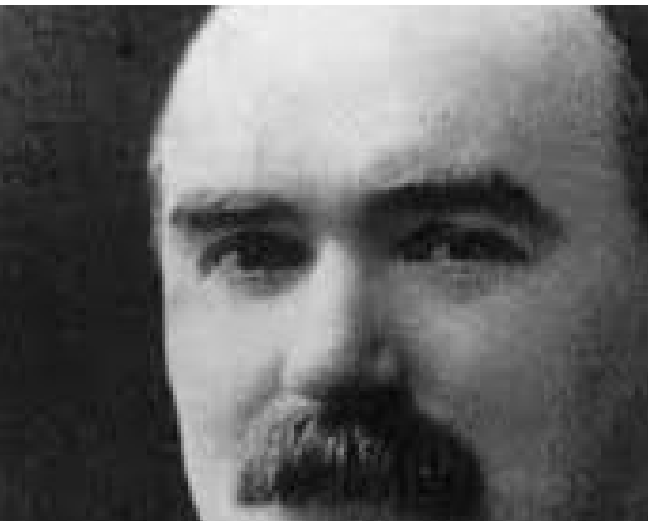
Censorship has increased, with the closure of Russian news outlets in Europe and the complete absence of any

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hand properties instead of investment funds for €400,000 (net cost €310,000 minus rent). It would cost less, and the property would be added to the State's public housing stock as a perpetual asset for the citizens.

The state could build public housing using a state construction company. This also would cost less, approximately €300,000, and the property would be owned in perpetuity by the state. It would also be cheaper net cost of €210,000 over 25 years.

The state could initiate a scheme whereby when citizens reach retirement age the state would buy their homes off them for, say, 50% of market value, €200,000, and allow the citizen to live there until their passing rent free. This property would then be added to the public housing stock and would have cost half the market price, although it could take 20 years or more before it entered the public housing stock. The retired person would have the benefit of a substantial lump sum payment on

**The state could seize some or all of the 166,000 vacant properties that exist today and rent them to people on the public housing list. With grants of up to euro 50,000 already available towards the cost of refurbishment this would be near**

retirement and a rent-free home until their passing. The lump sum would go back into the local economy and relieve pension poverty for thousands of elderly people in Ireland, at a net cost of €110,000.

The state could seize some or all of the 166,000 vacant properties that exist today and rent them to people on the public housing list. With grants of up to €50,000 already available towards the cost of refurbishment this would be near to cost-neutral for the state.

Government housing policy is nothing short of reckless and is the economic sabotage of public monies.

The suggested four alternatives above make much more economic sense, if the citizens' needs are the priority of the state. This is not the aim of our government's housing strategy. It is designed to benefit the interests of the capitalist class. The supply of homes for the citizens of Ireland has been transferred into the full control of finance capital, for their benefit alone.

On top of this scandal, the state has spent €220 million buying back council houses in Dublin that they originally sold to tenants for a fraction of their worth, back when the government started the process of the commodification of homes. This is the reality of the government's housing policy.

As we go to print, senior officials and ministers are holding confidential talks with the construction industry that will provide subsidies of up to €150,000 to builders per home built to "make construction more affordable". They could set up a state-owned construction company to reduce the cost of building homes but that is not the purpose of their housing policy.

The government's housing policy is a vehicle to transfer the social income of the state back into private hands. It is economic treason, a.k.a. Capitalism.

[1] Varadkar Turns the Corner, part 1. *Socialist Voice*, April 2023 Issue. (<https://socialistvoice.ie/2023/04/varadkar-turns-the-corner-part-one/>)

criticism of the dominant pro-NATO narrative in the capitalist media. There has also been an increase in state violence against anti-war demonstrations which is ignored by the capitalist press. Sections of the liberal and social democratic left have flocked to the banner of "liberty" and "democracy" as a cover for their support for NATO, which is and always was a vehicle for US foreign policy and domination of Europe.

Here in Ireland the war continues to benefit the ruling class. The genuine opposition to the war felt by the majority of Irish people is being manipulated in an attempt to abandon what remains of Irish neutrality and take the country into NATO or an EU NATO- lite army. The government have appointed an "independent expert" Dame Louise Richardson, Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British

**The war has filled the order books of US armaments companies as NATO countries send weapons and ammunition to Ukraine.**

Empire and supporter of the US invasion of Iraq, to chair the body tasked with "impartially" accessing Irish neutrality before calling for its removal. The Irish airwaves are populated with "independent" military and international relations experts with links to US and UK government-funded "think-tanks" explaining how "our" forces are fighting for democracy in Ukraine and elsewhere in the world. The last time an Irish political leader urged Irish troops to fight for "democracy and civilisation" was in 1914 when Redmond said it was the duty of Ireland to defend the British empire. Tens of thousands of Irish died and less than five years later the Empire showed its contempt for democracy by waging war against the decision of the Irish people to establish an Independent Republic.

Irish progressive and democratic

forces must rally to the defence and the deepening of Irish democracy. We must call on the Irish government to cease its attempts to abandon neutrality and instead call for an end to hostilities and genuine peace negotiations. As Connolly said, "the cause of Ireland is the cause of labour", and the cause of labour will not be served by Ireland supporting or joining NATO. Neutrality is a class issue, money spent on war is money diverted from social services. Those that die, kill and are wounded in wars are the working class, not the children of the ruling class.

Our tradition of neutrality was forged in our long struggle for independence and that struggle will not be advanced by now joining the oppressors. We must campaign for a united, independent and neutral Ireland.

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## WHY DO CORPORATIONS WANT YOU TO GO BACK TO OFFICE SO BADLY?

FREDDY ANUBIS  
WORK

COVID CAME and went but working from home is not going away, and yet, corporations are pushing their workers to go back to the office. Why? During Covid and the resulting lockdown, tech companies reaped record profits, especially the likes of Amazon, Netflix, Google and Facebook, or “FANG” for short. People were stuck at home, desperate for any sort of entertainment but they were not allowed to socialise, so the only option they had was to resort to the services of these companies.

In finance, the stock market is considered as a secondary market, meaning whatever happens on the stock market could be disconnected from actual operations of traded companies. As in, prices don't move proportionally based on actual profits, but based on speculation. Why is this worth mentioning? Because one major drawback of the shareholder theory is that it usually leads to myopia regarding real outcomes and thus financial catastrophes, including the one we are enduring now.

Corporations thought that having people stuck at home was good for business, as they were being led by myopic executives trying to please Wall Street gamblers at all costs. So they embraced en masse the idea of having workers working remotely from homes while hiring ever more remote workers. Some CEOs publicly announced that working in the office is a thing of the past now and their workers can indefinitely work remotely. But this backfired!

You see, one major limitation of capitalism is that it requires unlimited growth, hence unlimited consumerism. Yes, workers stuck in their homes are going to spend their salaries on online services, but on the other hand they are going to spend less and less on other goods and services such as cars and fuel, in cities designed mainly for cars, where they used to be stuck instead in traffic jams on their daily office commute.

Or maybe they move further away from mega cities to cheaper residential areas and save on their rent, causing the housing market to implode for a sudden drop in demand. Just imagine how this alone could reduce the homelessness problem.

## ACTIVISTS OCCUPY THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

MIRANDA LYNCH  
DIRECT ACTION

ON FRIDAY the 31st of March, the Community Action Tenants Union (CATU) occupied the Department of Housing at the Custom House on the Dublin quays, with the goal of delivering a letter of demands for tenants' protection and public housing to Housing Minister Darragh O'Brien. The *Socialist Voice* spoke to CATU activists to get the background of this event.

The action was a direct response to the lifting of the “eviction ban” by the government. 7,000 notices-to-quit have been issued since the ban was removed, putting this number of households at direct risk of eviction and homelessness. Recent news also showed that the Department of Housing failed to spend 1 billion euro which was designated for housing.

A CPI member who was present at the occupation mentioned: “I joined the occupation of the Department of Housing because I sometimes feel powerless. Our leaders don't listen, I hoped the action would spark a conversation. What CATU asks for is not radical: my younger sister lives in Belgium, and when her apartment was sold she was not evicted like she would be here. In Dublin it feels like landlords



**In finance, the stock market is considered as a secondary market, meaning whatever happens on the stock market could be disconnected from actual operations of traded companies.**

**The action at the Custom House was organised by CATU and supported by the Revolutionary Housing League, the Communist Party of Ireland, Anti-Imperialist Action, Connolly Youth Movement, People Before Profit, and Students 4 Change.**

If workers no longer need to live near their workplaces because they can simply work remotely, that would make traditional capital investment in real estate no longer a lucrative guaranteed option to which lazy capitalists can resort. Thus demand is lowered in the context of a more fragmented housing market, due the fact that the real estate properties in demand are now physically dispersed, reducing the possibility of controlling their prices or rents any more. Problem solved!

It just so happens that those very same corporations are either owned by shareholders that also own or invest in real estate assets, or those corporations themselves have real estate assets on their balance sheets, either directly or indirectly, in very intricate capital structures.

So there you have your answer: they are starting to realise that they have undermined their consolidated housing market by allowing for this new discovered freedom. So now they are backtracking on their promises, asking workers to go back to offices, while at the same time they lobby in states like Ireland to deregulate rent control.

are allowed to do anything. They will ask ridiculously high rents for studios that aren't even fire safe. It's not on."

We spoke to Fiadh Tubridy, CATU organiser and postdoctoral researcher of geography at Maynooth University about this action. She mentioned: "CATU's key demand is the reinstatement of the eviction ban, but this on its own is not enough. Further demands are the extension of the eviction ban to cover licensees, access to public housing for anyone that wants it, less reliance on the private rental sector, improved standards for emergency accommodation and the abolition of the inhumane direct provision system for asylum seekers."

"We will never beat the government and private landlords using the legal system because they have more money, which they can use to pay people to write reports and lobby their interests. As the union of people who are affected by the housing crisis, we need to use the resources we have: strength in numbers, and a committed membership. This means direct action. Doing direct action also gives people a sense of their own power, and makes people understand we don't need to rely on TDs, councillors and experts but we can take power into our own hands."

By now, many white-collar workers realise that remote work is viable and working from the office doesn't make any sense any longer. And now they see and hear the clear contradictory messages from their direct managers, who once said it's perfectly fine to work remotely and now they are pushing them to go to the office, or else.

Capitalism thrives on exploiting workers and cannot survive without them. They have been recently singing the praises of the likes of ChatGPT as the ultimate solution for the labour problem, where all workers can be replaced and all work can be automated. This is a bluff, a pie in the sky, like Elon Musk's plans to go to Mars that usually end in very expensive and embarrassing fireworks. It's just another false narrative to please the gamblers of Wall Street.

Let's call this bluff and fight for our right for remote work. Going to the office no longer makes sense: it used to get workers stuck in a loop from paycheck to paycheck. Now those workers can save enough money to have a say about their life and make better choices. So let's not give up this right.

"There are many examples in Irish history of people organising and taking collective action on housing problems. During the Land Wars, tenant farmers stopped paying rent and developed strategies to fight back such as the boycott, which was named after Lord Boycott, an agent for a British landlord. In the 1960s there was the Dublin Housing Action Committee (DHAC), which had many active CPI members. DHAC organised squatting, supported people to resist evictions, and prevented the conversion of housing into offices. After the financial crisis in the 2000s we saw groups like Take Back The City and the Dublin Central Housing Action, which supported people who were being evicted. Now CATU is trying to organise our communities so we can act collectively instead of as isolated individuals."

"In the end Darragh O'Brien did not come to talk to us. He doesn't want to deal with the consequences of his actions and be confronting the people he is putting at risk of homelessness. The Irish ruling class reflects the views of the landlord class, I'm sure he is fine with talking to landlord organisations. They are very organised and well connected, we have to be even more organised."



## Bodenstown

**MICK HEAL  
REPUBLICANISM**

ON FRIDAY 2ND June in Droichead Nua Community Library, Dr. Ruán O'Donnell will give a talk on the history of two lesser-known republican groups Saor Uladh and Saor Éire. The authorities believed such groups, dominated by radical and left-wing elements, to be a front for communist, physical-force republicans.

Saor Uladh, a left-wing republican organisation, was founded in County Tyrone by Liam Kelly in 1953 after he was dismissed from the IRA for his involvement in an operation in Derry without GHQ approval.

Saor Uladh forced its way into the headlines in November 1955 with a daring raid on the Royal Ulster Constabulary barracks in Roslea, County Fermanagh, wherein volunteer Connie Green was killed. In December 1956, they joined forces with large number of former Dublin IRA volunteers in the breakaway Joe Christle Group, performing attacks on customs posts, telephone exchanges and bridges.

In 1953 Kelly was elected to Stormont from Mid-Tyrone for The Irish Anti-Partition League and was also elected to the Irish Seanad in June 1954, due mainly to the efforts of Seán MacBride from Clann na Poblachta. Saor Uladh recognised the Constitution of the Republic as the legitimate authority in Ireland, which was unusual for republican groups during that time.

Though often overlooked, the membership of Saor Éire, established in the late 1960s, included former Kelly/Christle volunteers from the 1950s border campaign such as Liam Sutcliffe, Charlie O'Neill and Liam Daltun. They availed themselves of every opportunity to become involved in an agitating policy on social and economic questions.



# NO TO NATO Put Irish neutrality in the : : : c





# Constitution

**IRISH COMMUNISTS** SERIOUS ABOUT SOCIALISM



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## MULTIPOLARITY AND US HEGEMONY

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With the defeat of socialism in eastern Europe, the United States enjoyed a unilateral ability to shape the world in its own image.

### GRAHAM HARRINGTON IMPERIALISM

COUNTRIES WHICH had struggled for national liberation in Africa, South America and Asia were forced to submit to the institutions of imperialism which had been created after the Second World War – the International Monetary Fund, the World

Bank and the World Trade Organisation. States in Eastern Europe joined NATO and the remaining socialist states were forced into either a state of siege or reluctant engagement with imperialism.

This one-way trend has come to an end. It is clear that US hegemony is declining. Brazilian President Lula da Silva recently said as he visited China:

## PRIVATE PROPERTY IS THE LOCK; SOCIALISM

### CLOVER CARROLL CAPITALISM

IT HAS BEEN revealed by Sinn Féin TD Eoin O'Broin through parliamentary questions that the Department of Housing underspent in excess of €1.5 billion between 2020 and 2022. O'Broin has said that the underspend could have been used to build 40,000 homes.

In 2020, €92.7m was underspent; in 2021, €441m was underspent; and last year, €471m went underspent, showing continuous neglect of funding by the Department of Housing.

If we follow the trend of increasing underspending over the past 3 years, as well as the selling of public land to foreign investors and vulture funds, then we can expect the underspend this year to get closer to €500m. In the middle of

the housing crisis, the current government of landlords show bare-faced their class interests.

Time and again, it has been shown that landlords use their property to make the most money possible. Last year, five tenants described how they became the victims of a landlord's quest to make more money, namely Marc Godart of Green Label Properties, which is owned by Hesper SA, of Luxembourg. Mr Godart operated rooms in his property for Airbnb without the tenants being informed and while they continued to pay utility bills. Five tenants made complaints to Mr Godart and were subsequently issued eviction notices. When in contact with the housing charity Threshold they were told this was illegal. The tenants lodged proceedings with Residential Tenancies

Board (RTB); however, they were evicted on Halloween of 2022, before their case was heard.

One tenant told RTE "I was working from home, some of my housemates were there too, and Marc [Godart] came with about 15 people, many of them hefty men, big giants. He asked everyone to come into the kitchen, he said he wanted to have a discussion. Everybody came into the kitchen but then the door was locked and we could hear upstairs that people were moving in the rooms. I tried to open the door to go to my room but the men said nobody leaves. They took all our things out. We managed to call the police, they came but by then everything was all over, we were outside and they said it was not within their jurisdiction."

The RTB heard their case in

“Why should every country have to be tied to the dollar for trade?... Why can't a bank like the BRICS Bank have a currency to finance trade between Brazil and China, between Brazil and other countries?... Today countries have to chase after dollars to export, when they could be exporting in their own currencies.”

Where previously the US dollar was used as the intermediary in international trade, the Chinese Yuan, as well as other currencies, is being used increasingly. So, the world's largest economy in purchasing power parity (China), the world's largest energy exporter (Russia) and one of the largest economies (Brazil) have signed on to move away from the dollar.

A recent 10 billion dollar deal between China's state-owned Chinese National Offshore Oil Company and France's TotalEnergies is to be done through the Chinese Yuan. The Saudis have expressed their intention to join BRICS, and even India – which has tense relations with China – has indicated their intention of using non-dollar currencies in trade with Russia.

US senator Marco Rubio has expressed his horror at this changing state of affairs, saying in an interview that “there'll be so many countries transacting in currencies other than the dollar that we won't have the ability to sanction them.” (He believes this to be a bad thing!). Additionally, CNN broadcaster Fareed Zakaria had a recent article in the *Washington Post*

**Why should every country have to be tied to the dollar for trade?... Why can't a bank like the BRICS Bank have a currency to finance trade between Brazil and China, between Brazil and other countries?... Today countries have to chase after dollars to export, when they could be exporting in their own currencies.”**

with the headline “The dollar is our superpower and Russia and China are threatening it.”

To be clear, US power may be exposed, but it is not weak. US imperialism still has over 850 military bases, and the West is still the dominant political, cultural and economic power in the world today. The CIA is still able to interfere in almost any country in the world. Additionally, imperialism can not be reduced to just US military power. For example, in several African countries, France remains militarily and economically involved; in Asia, Japan and South Korea are acting as US proxies against China; and in the Middle East, Israel is still the US's main ally in the region.

The positive effect of multipolarity is that it allows independent countries to adopt their own development models, outside of the Bretton Woods system. The threat of de-dollarisation was a major factor in the invasion of Iraq and the NATO overthrow of Gaddafi in Libya. However, the changing global order has meant that in the past year, popular mobilisation forced French troops out of Mali, Burkina Faso and the Central African Republic, as African states turn towards China and Russia rather than the West.

In Latin America, Nicaragua, Venezuela (despite its problems) and Cuba have emerged as the vanguard of the move against US imperialism. Brazil and Argentina have talked about

developing their own currency, the Sur. China has brought peace between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which will hopefully end the horrific war in Yemen. In Asia, China has built a modern railway system in socialist Laos – still destroyed by American bombs – and US hopes to win over Vietnam seemed to have failed as that country moves towards closer co-operation with Beijing.

However, we must also remember that multipolarity is not the end in and of itself. Just because a country has been given the ability to develop outside the US-controlled order, does not mean that it will use that ability to build socialism. Far from it, in some cases.

Our struggle is not just against the United States, but against capitalism. But neither does this mean adopting a liberal purism, common among Western leftists, that every country must adopt our definition of socialism or else they are the enemy.

The cracks within imperialism are growing, and it is a fact that socialism cannot be built in a world controlled and dominated by the United States or its proxies. James Connolly famously declared “Neither King Nor Kaiser”, but in practice, the 1916 Rising could not have happened without German weapons. This didn't make the Kaiser progressive, of course, but it did show Connolly understood the need to remain principled against imperialism but also the need to have tactical sense to exploit the contradictions within it.

## ISM IS THE KEY

December and they were awarded €12,000 each. However, Mr Godart has appealed this, and it is awaiting a decision from the RTB. The rooms the tenants were illegally removed from are now for rent on Airbnb for €150 a night: more than double the average rent price in Dublin. Short-term accommodation such as Airbnb is growing quickly across EU member states, making up an average of one-quarter of tourist accommodation. Cian O'Callaghan TD recently claimed there were 16,000 properties on Airbnb in Ireland. These properties could be used to house every homeless individual in the country with some to spare.

Homes are not the only issue, as amenities are also important for a community. Local shops, community centres and spaces for sports and

**The answer to these issues is an all-Ireland public housing strategy that houses all of the inhabitants of Ireland, no matter their religion, race or gender.**

fitness are an important part of building areas to live. If these amenities are built on private land they are then subject to private rents. If their utilities are also private they are then subject to rising prices. If land and other finite resources are owned by the state then rent and utility bills can be regulated. If the buildings were state-run, for example, a sports facility, they could then be open to the public and free to use, unlike private facilities.

The answer to these issues is an all-Ireland public housing strategy that houses all of the inhabitants of Ireland, no matter their religion, race or gender. The far right would have us believe that the state has neglected those who are ethnically Irish and given homes and resources to refugees and immigrants. This is not true. Ireland is in a housing crisis, with 16,000 properties on Airbnb and nearly 12,000 people homeless, we can clearly see that private property is the issue. The facts speak for

themselves: the state neglects the working class of Ireland and gives handouts to the landlords and capitalists.

What an all-Ireland public housing strategy would look like is housing owned and built by the state and rented out to occupants at, for example, 15% of income. This would provide the state with adequate funding to maintain the homes and build new ones through a state-run building company, providing jobs in the public sector. Zoning and building of spaces for amenities would create local jobs and enhance the communities. This strategy is not impossible, but it would require a complete change in our current economic system to one based on the needs of the workers. The current coalition has no interest in this structure of society as it is not profitable. Such a system, run by workers themselves, would see the quality of life of all Irish citizens improve.





# KATJA OSKAMP

## MARZAHN MON AMOUR

ABOVE:  
Berlin Marzahn 1980  
Photo  
Gerd Danigel

JENNY FARRELL

THE SHORTLIST for the annual International Dublin Literary Award for 2023 was published in late March. Among the six books on the list is a book by the East German writer Katja Oskamp, *Marzahn, Mon Amour*. The title stands out for East Berliners in particular, who immediately recognise Marzahn as the GDR's once most ambitious and largest social housing programme, providing homes for over 270,000 people.

*Marzahn, Mon Amour* was nominated by Stadtbüchereien Düsseldorf, Germany. The book surprisingly made it past the establishment publishers who generally discourage voices from the ordinary people about ordinary lives, and especially if they write about not so cool places. In addition, Oskamp's book is about ordinary East Berliners, most of them pensioners, most of them women, ageing. In all these respects, Oskamp's book had the cards stacked against it. And yet, not only was it published, and nominated for the Dublin Literary Award by a West German library, it incredibly made it on to the shortlist.

The book is firmly rooted in a GDR literary tradition - that of truly valuing the ordinary, everyday lives of people, inseparably linked to the world of work. Perhaps the most famous example in GDR literature is Maxi Wander's *Guten Morgen du Schöne*

(1977, *Good Morning, Beautiful*). It presents interviews with nineteen women aged between sixteen and ninety-two, talking about their lives. A similarly themed book of interviews with men by Christine Müller, *Männer-Protokolle* (1985), was later followed by Christa Wolf's diary style publication *Ein Tag im Jahr* (2003, *One Day a Year*), where she records her own reflections on the same date every year, 27 September, 1960-2000.

The same interest in the everyday lives of ordinary people is reflected in the documentary by GDR filmmakers Winfried and Barbara Junge, whose epic series *Die Kinder von Golzow* (*The Children of Golzow*) began in 1961 and continued until 2007. It follows the lives of eighteen people born between 1953 and 1955. This grassroots emphasis was directly linked to the GDR's state cultural policy of making the arts directly relevant to the vast majority of the working population and to encourage them to participate in the arts.

The preservation of memory, as a fightback to the complete rewriting of history that took place after the annexation of the GDR by West Germany, became more important than ever. In contrast to some novels that bowed to the diktat of this New Order post 1990, the documentary style recording of ordinary people's ordinary lives that has claimed its own space. A splendid example of this is Katrin Rohnstock's interview based book *Mein letzter Arbeitstag*:





## Photo Haiku

ainneoin na caimiléireachta  
an ghrian ag taitneamh  
os cionn Bhleá Cliath

in spite of corruption  
the sun shines  
over all of Dublin

corupție—  
soarele tot străluce  
peste Dublin

*Abgewickelt nach 89/90. Ostdeutsche Lebensläufe* (2014, *My last day at work: wound up after 89/90. East German life stories*). This book presents the memories of GDR working people and their lives. A younger generation is currently scrutinising the actual life experience in the GDR, into which they were born, where childhood memories dominate, but they are old enough to rely on the truth of their memories and at the same time to reflect on post-unification life.

Katja Oskamp's novel *Marzahn, mon Amour* is a book about ageing, among other things, the search to give meaning to life at its every stage, and some new beginnings. Aged forty-four, the author-narrator retrain as a chiropodist. She finds a job in a friend's salon in Marzahn. This book is about her customers and her colleagues. Due to the area's demographics, and the chiropodist service, most (but not all) of her customers are elderly. Work is an important theme in the book, not only the narrator's own working life, but also the past jobs of her clients: "I look after the feet of some former bricklayers, butchers, and nurses. There's also a woman who worked in electronics, one who bred cattle and another who was a petrol pump attendant."

And so the reader encounters these people and their stories. To some these stories may not seem very spectacular, others will recognise in them the stuff of life. This becomes all the more authentic, as she relates some conversations in the Berlin dialect. This is in itself a hallmark of East Berlin, where speaking

in Dialekt is still more widespread across the social strata. East Germans frequently observe that to speak the way the ordinary people speak, is frowned upon the higher up the social ladder one ascends in the New Germany. And yet many persist — a small gesture of protest.

Oskamp writes with understanding and compassion, preserving and enacting the sense of solidarity and community that was a feature of GDR society. The characters in the book all support each other through life and through the difficulties of growing older and old. Their recognition of commonality supersedes any sense of superiority of status or money. Partly memoir and partly collective history, each person's story, beginning with their feet, is individual and related with respect, frequently communicating the client's sense of humour. Taken as a whole, the individual portraits depict a community of equals. Herein lies a specifically East German collective memory.

So perhaps it should not be so surprising at all that a German public library, catering as such libraries frequently do, for the not so well-to-do readers, has chosen *Marzahn Mon Amour* as their nomination for the International Dublin Literary Award. The prize for this, or one of the other five books on the shortlist, will be announced by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Caroline Conroy, on Thursday 25th May 2023, as part of the city's International Literature Festival.

ABOVE:  
Dublin  
Photo  
Jason Symes

Haiku: Gabriel  
Rosenstock

Romanian version:  
Olimpia Iacob



# James Connolly Festival

## 8-14 May 2023



Farah Koutteineh | Mick Wallace | Eileen Flynn



val



Arts | Culture | Politics



n | Eddie Dempsey | Denise Curran | Andrew Murray  
+ More





**The annual, week-long James Connolly Festival returns on 8-14 May 2023.**

**YORDAN MANDEV IS A MEMBER OF THE JAMES CONNOLLY FESTIVAL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE**

**YORDAN MANDEV**

**T**HE PURPOSE of the festival has always been the promotion of working class consciousness in arts, culture and politics. By way of achieving its objective, the festival features a number of artists, activists and educators from left and progressive movements.

We challenge social inequality and the class barriers with which the arts are fraught, encouraging an inclusive and collective approach to artistic expression. Our annual festival serves as a celebration of the rich working-class culture that exists in Ireland and provides a space for the people of our ever-evolving country to express the wealth of their culture and articulate their experience of life and struggle.

James Connolly remains Ireland's foremost working-class hero, founder of the Irish trade union movement. In his humble introduction to *Songs of Freedom* (1907) he famously remarked that "no revolutionary movement is complete without its poetical expression." He noted that "if such a movement has caught hold of the imagination of the masses" they would "seek a vent in song for the

aspirations, the fears and hopes, the loves and hatreds engendered by the struggle," and he commented that until the movement is "marked by the joyous, defiant singing of revolutionary songs, it lacks one of the most distinctive marks of a popular revolutionary movement; it is the dogma of a few, and not the faith of the multitude." It is in this revolutionary spirit, and a recognition of the importance of culture in both depicting and contributing to the class struggle raging around us, that the festival finds its ethos.

This year's edition will cover a large variety of topics with special emphasis placed on war and peace. The festival kicks off on Monday 8th May with a discussion led by Eddie Dempsey (RMT), Denise Curran (Mandate), Jimmy Doran (Trade Union Left Forum) and Michelle Byrne (The Week At Work podcast).

This will be followed on Tuesday evening by a discussion on "Tackling Racism In Our Communities" featuring local activists and politicians such as Senator Eileen Flynn, Joe Mooney (East Wall), Julianna Sassi (CATU) and Helena McCann (Dublin Communities Against Racism).

Wednesday 10th May will be marked by the showing of a play by Aoibh Johnson; the event starts at 7.30pm at The New Theatre. *The Daughters of Róisín* is "a poignant ode to Ireland's hidden past that explores the church and state sanctioned abuse against women over the last 100 years."

On Thursday 11th May an event focused on the 75th anniversary of NAKBA, also known as the Palestinian Catastrophe, will take place at the New Theatre and will be led by Awad Abdelfattah (Middle East Eye), Zoe Lawlor (Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign), Farrah Koutteineh (Communist Party of Ireland) and Daniel Lambert (Bohemian Football Club).

Friday 12th May is marked by two events. The New Theatre will host a discussion at 7pm featuring Mick Wallace (MEP), Patricia McKenna (Former MEP), Dr Karen Devine and Graham Harrington (CPI). The discussion will centre on defending Irish neutrality and will be immediately followed by the Connolly Rave in new Dame street venue Pawnshop with DJs Cathy Flynn (DDR), Naoise and Glenn Fitz.

Notably, Saturday 13th May will be marked by the pinnacle of the festival, the James Connolly Memorial Lecture. This year's edition of the lecture, to be given by Andrew Murray, focuses on US imperialism and the growing alarm over the possibility of a third world war. The lecture will start at 4pm and take place at The New Theatre. On the same day, the Theatre will host movie screenings accompanied by live scoring. This event is being organised by the Small Trans Library.

Sunday 14th May is Connolly Sunday, the festival's end date, and will include a special James Connolly Commemoration featuring Jimmy Corcoran (Communist Party of Ireland) Cllr Cieran Perry (Independent) and Harry Hawkins (Communist Party of Ireland) at 2pm in Arbour Hill.

It will be followed by a festival-closing music event and Cuba Fundraiser. Kicking off at 4pm in The Cobblestone, it will feature local musician Sean Óg and others.

For more information on the festival check [www.jamesconnollyfestival.ie](http://www.jamesconnollyfestival.ie) or find us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter using /ConnollyFest or #JCF2023.