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THE EU 'DEFENCE UNION' AND NATO'S WARS

Fionn Wallace on the European 'Peace' Facility



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THE EU 'DEFENCE UNION' AND NATO'S WARS



FIONN WALLACE
WAR AS POLICY

BEFORE THE WAR, the EU had never used common funds to reimburse member-states for the delivery of weapons to a third country. This precedent was established in February 2022 with €500 million for arms through the European Peace Facility (EPF), an off-budget instrument financed by member-states' contributions, established in March 2021 with a €5 billion ceiling. (The ceiling was increased to €2 billion in December 2022 and to €3½ billion in June 2023.)

The initial €500 million was topped up by €500 million in March, April, May, July and October and in January 2023, and €1 billion in April 2023. This August, Josep Borrell proposed a Ukraine Assistance Fund, a €20 billion military fund of €5 billion per year until 2027. It will operate through the EPF and send weapons to Ukraine even if peace is achieved.

The European Defence Industry Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act (EDIRPA) and the Act in Support of Ammunition Production (ASAP) were just passed. The former is a €300 million weapons group purchasing

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

EUGENE MCCARTAN
UKRAINE

UKRAINE IS haemorrhaging tens of thousands of soldiers, the west is pumping in trillions of US dollars, and the EU is pumping in billions of euros, yet there is no end in sight to this senseless slaughter. By the time this war ends, as it will, Ukraine will be a shadow of its former self.

It's been a long eighteen months for the Ukrainian people, suffering the loss of tens of thousands of its soldiers, a significant number of civilian casualties, and the destruction of large sections of its infrastructure.

The 26th of September was the first anniversary of the blowing up by the United States of the Nord Stream 1 and 2 gas pipelines, sanctioned by the Biden government, pipelines bringing Russian gas to western Europe and in particular Germany. It was a significant blow to the supposed independence of

the European Union from the shadow of the United States. It has seen the end of any independent political action on the global level by Germany and France, using the EU as their cover story. The inter-imperialist rivalries between the United States and the European Union have been temporally put on ice.

As this US-NATO proxy war with Russia drags on, and as we approach another harsh winter, the United States and the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyi, continue to reject all overtures for a ceasefire.

The war is escalating by the week—not from any victories by the Ukrainians on the battlefield; on the contrary, their much-heralded counter-offensive has collapsed. What ground they have gained can be measured in metres. The United States is stepping up its logistical support for Ukraine with ever-increasing supplies of ever-greater amounts of sophisticated weapons and

the training of Ukraine air force personnel.

The Irish government is getting in on the act by declaring that it was prepared to send a military training operation to Ukraine—a far cry from a neutral state. The taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, speaking at the recent United Nations General Assembly, called for greater support from member-states for NATO's war effort, a call that in the main fell on deaf ears. The majority of the nations of the world neither support the Russian invasion of Ukraine nor support the US-NATO war strategy in Ukraine. Most support the call for an immediate ceasefire, a position that Ireland should be championing if it was truly neutral and really wanted to end this senseless war.

Zelenskyi attended the same General Assembly and addressed an almost empty hall, as most of the world see him as nothing more than a puppet of the United States. Clearly his presence was intended to shore up support, particularly within the United States itself. Disillusionment with this war is growing among millions of



incentive fund, and the latter is a €500 million fund for increasing the production of munitions and missiles for the war.

The Commission is planning more handouts for the arms industry; a “European Defence Production Act” to boost the bloc’s defence industrial base is now in the works.¹ For Europe’s merchants of death, the war is the gift that keeps on giving.

At present, “Team Europe” is on the hook for €72 billion in support for Ukraine. €15 billion is military assistance measures, the remainder is principally assistance loans (€25.2 billion) and protection for displaced Ukrainians (€17 billion).² In June the Commission proposed a €50 billion “Ukraine Facility” for the years 2024–27. In just five years the EU will have prioritised €122 billion (€100 billion from the EU budget, €22 billion from voluntary contributions) for a war in a non-EU country.

Fifteen years ago, rich states pledged to deliver \$100 billion per year to help poorer countries combat global warming; and they still haven’t.³ This is when avoiding the worst impacts of global warming could require \$4.3 trillion a year by 2030.

This September the NATO

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LEFT/COVER

Nordic Battle Group ISTAR Training recently took place in Kilworth, including a visit from the Nordic Battle Group Force Cmdr and ISTAR Cmdr from Sweden
Source Irish Defence Forces
Creative Commons

figurehead Jens Stoltenberg told the EU Parliament foreign affairs committee that “President Putin in the autumn of 2021 sent a draft treaty that they wanted NATO to sign, to promise no more NATO enlargement. That was what he sent us and was a precondition for not invade [sic] Ukraine. Of course, we didn’t sign that ... so he went to war to prevent NATO, more NATO, close to his borders.” NATO says it forced Putin’s hand in Ukraine, and the hawks in Brussels, like Michael Gahler of the EPP, says there would be no EU Defence Union without Putin.

The circle is complete. Ukraine is destroyed, hundreds of thousands of men, women and children are dead, and the counter-offensive is failing. Ukraine is losing. Yet for NATO it’s mission accomplished. Stoltenberg is celebrating a record 8 per cent increase in arms spending by NATO members this year. NATO has expanded and consolidated, is flush with weapons contracts, and full of purpose. The EU has jettisoned its talk of strategic autonomy and bunkered down into the Atlanticist camp, sacrificing its economy and the well-being of its people for a war NATO admits it instigated.

The climate crisis necessitates

international co-operation like never before. Yet the United States has used the war to revive Cold War configurations. The table is being set for confrontation between NATO and China that will foreclose any hope of stopping catastrophic climate disaster and the destruction of life on earth.

The task ahead is to stop NATO from closing off the future. ★

Notes

- 1 Aurélie Pugnet, “European Commission mulls new European Defence Act before end of year,” *Euractiv*, 4 September 2023 (<https://tinyurl.com/44by48wc>).
- 2 European Parliament, “Financing Ukraine’s Recovery,” June 2023 (<https://tinyurl.com/ywa8b9v8>).
- 3 Kate Abnett, “Rich countries failed to meet their climate funding goal,” *Reuters*, 29 July 2022 (<https://tinyurl.com/29nbzs35>).
- 4 United Nations, Climate, “Finance and Justice” (<https://tinyurl.com/4w76ps6m>).
- 5 European Parliament, Committee on Foreign Affairs (<https://tinyurl.com/mryrajdp>).
- 6 Michael Gahler, European Parliament, 11 September 2023 (<https://tinyurl.com/4r8rd8rt>).

American citizens while the Biden regime pumps trillions into this unwinnable war, when the United States itself needs trillions of dollars invested in failing infrastructure, a non-existent public health service, housing, and decent jobs. Globally, the United States and the European Union continue to lose ground in relation to their proxy war.

Zelenskiy himself recognises that the writing is on the wall for his regime, a regime mired in corruption, a regime selling off public property to foreign agri-corporations, particularly American corporations. He has had to stand down numerous generals who have refused to see their men slaughtered for the sake of the United States and the European Union.

In mid-September, Zelenskiy, in an interview with the London *Economist* and in a desperate bid to ward off the growing unease with the course of the war, his failed counter-offensive, and the growing calls for a ceasefire, stated: “There is no way of predicting how the millions of Ukrainian refugees in European countries would react to their

The most honourable position for any Irish government would be to be at the forefront of calls for a ceasefire and peace negotiations.

country being abandoned.”

In the same interview he stated that refugees from Ukraine who are now living in many countries in Europe, including Ireland, have “behaved well . . . and are grateful” to those who have sheltered them, but it would not be a “good story” for Europe if a Ukrainian defeat “were to drive the people into a corner.”

The most honourable position for any Irish government would be to be at the forefront of calls for a ceasefire and peace negotiations. It is clear that the US-EU-NATO triumvirate will fight this war to the last Ukrainian, regardless of the cost in lives, mostly from the urban and rural working class.

By the time this war is over Ukraine will not be the same country. The most likely outcome is that it will end in some form of armistice, with Russia in effect taking control of Russian-speaking Ukraine. Russian-speakers suffered greatly after the US-organised coup in 2014. They have had their language banned, schools closed, and newspapers shut down, suffering widespread harassment and

discrimination at the hands of both the state and the ultra-right Ukrainian nationalist forces.

It is also quite possible that both Poland and Hungary will demand the return of territories historically claimed by both, areas populated by Polish and Hungarian-speaking minorities, who have also suffered at the hands of the Ukrainian state and the Ukrainian ultra-right since the 2014 coup.

Ukraine will be a rump, under the total control of the United States. The Ukrainian people are learning the hard way, with the loss of thousands of soldiers, that imperialism does not have friends, only interests to secure. The real losers will be the working people of both Ukraine and Russia.

Here in Ireland we need to step up the demand for an immediate ceasefire and peace negotiations, as well as demanding that neutrality be enshrined in the Constitution of Ireland, to tie the hands of the political and economic establishment and weaken imperialism’s triple lock grip on our people. ★



MANDATE CALLS FOR IMPROVED SERVICES

SV REPORTER
PUBLIC SERVICES

THE MANDATE trade union has called on the Government to use budgetary surplus to improve public services and housing while replacing the minimum wage with a living wage.

Mandate, representing more than 24,000 workers in the retail, bar and administration sectors, is calling on the Government to invest in capital spending, improving public services, and introducing a living wage. The union, which represents mostly low-paid workers, said that its members cannot afford private health services or the purchase of their own home and insists that the Government step in to address

these crucial issues.

In a pre-budget statement Mandate has called for

- the removal of sub-minimum rates of the national minimum wage
- the introduction of a living wage (at present considered to be €13.85 per hour) to replace the national minimum wage
- the declaration of a housing emergency and the implementation of the principal Raise the Roof policies
- new legislation to allow workers access to more hours
- strong collective bargaining legislation to enable workers to increase their wages.

The assistant general secretary of Mandate, Jonathan Hogan, said: “We

ORANGE AND GREEN AND BLUE-GREEN ALGAE

BARRY MURRAY
SECTARIANISM

THERE HAVE BEEN poisonous Green and Orange algae in the six north-eastern counties of Ireland for more than a hundred years. But now there are new poisonous algae making the headlines here. It's a blue-green alga that has infected Lough Neagh. And only a few minutes ago the local *Fermanagh Herald* has reported that Lough Erne in Co. Fermanagh has become the latest freshwater lake to be infected by these industrial algae.

No matter how often or how much climate activists or experts in the field publish and warn about climate destruction, it falls on deaf ears; often

deliberately so. But nature has its own way of forcing the sceptics to listen. And the blue-green algae have just upped the ante.

The reality is that climate destruction has been known about for many decades. But there has always been a counter-narrative, to the effect that climate destruction is not real, or is a “normal” process of nature. This narrative can always be traced back to those who benefit most from lax rules and deliberate avoidance of any pollution controls. Governments around the world close eyes and ears when industries put the pressure on them to allow industry to ignore climate protection regulations.

The biggest polluters of all, the oil

DISTURBING VISION OF A DRACONIAN POLICE STATE

TOMMY MCKEARNEY
FUTURES?

PAUL LYNCH'S novel *Prophet Song* has deservedly been short-listed for this year's Booker Literary Award.

The author spins a chillingly realistic tale of an Ireland governed by a fascistic regime in the throes of an armed conflict with its local opponents. The regime's definition of public order is maintained by a newly created Garda National Services Bureau, assisted by rigorously enforced media censorship.

The story is told through the eyes of Eilish Stack, a professional woman trying desperately to keep her family intact after the arrest and disappearance of her trade-unionist husband by order of the ever-present GNSB. Her distress is increased when her teenage son joins the insurgents and she is subsequently left unemployed, because her loyalty to the state is in doubt.

As the tale develops, the reader is taken from the disturbing era of a draconian police state into a dystopian period of intense and destructive street warfare in Dublin. Reluctant to abandon the hope of being reunited with her husband and son, Eilish refuses the opportunity to flee abroad, enduring mental and physical hardship as society around her is disintegrating.

All very well written and compelling; but really, would it not have been more realistic to have set the account somewhere else? Surely it would be more credible to have placed these events in some small African or South American country?

Well, actually, no. Apart from losing that “man bites dog” element of surprise by locating this novel somewhere other than Ireland, an invitation for deeper reflection would be missed.

While recognising this as a work of fiction, it surely raises the question of



are calling on the Government to meaningfully address the cost of living crisis by utilising a once-in-a-generation opportunity to invest the extraordinary budgetary surplus in public housing.”

Statistics from the Department of Finance show it will reap a budget surplus of €10 billion (£8.6 billion) this year, or 3½ per cent of national income. It is Mandate’s belief that this surplus should not be squandered through tax cuts but should instead be invested in improving public services for all.

“We are also calling on the Government to empower workers to improve their own lot by strengthening trade union legislation, including collective bargaining, while also legislating to allow workers to increase their hours at

Mandate is calling on the Government to invest in capital spending, improving public services, and introducing a living wage.

work as hours become available.”

He explained that Mandate’s position on the 2024 budget has been taken after extensive consultation with low-paid workers over the past two years. “We have conducted dozens of surveys of our members and also adopted positions based on our biennial delegate conference (BDC), which sets Mandate policies for the two years ahead. At our last conference, in 2022, members from all across the country prioritised housing, investment in mental health services, investment in autism services, enhanced workers’ rights, and the introduction of an employer-funded pension scheme.

“Importantly, the only commentary on taxation at our conference was to

close loopholes and ensure the largest corporations and highest-income households paid their fair share so that we can all have a decent standard of living. Nobody sought tax cuts.”

Mandate insists that this budget will have an impact on next year’s local and EU elections, and that politicians shouldn’t believe that workers can be bought with tax cuts. “We’ve gone through almost ten years of tax cuts since the austerity years, and virtually nobody has benefited from them other than the highest-earners. Workers need investment in the essentials—housing, health care, education, energy—and if they don’t see that happening we can expect the Government parties to suffer in next year’s elections.” ★

companies, have, since their inception, sailed merrily under the radar while paying billions to governments and political parties—and, yes, climate scientists too.

Who could be without a car? Who could be without plastic? Who could be without oil-derivative fertiliser? The world would stop without it; but it’s now stopping because of it.

Factory farming is another major source of pollution, driven by greed for yet more profits and under severe pressure from meat factories, dairies, food wholesalers and supermarkets to reduce prices. As a consequence, many farms have become both grossly overstocked and chemicalised. Slurry, chemical fertiliser and other crop

The reality is that climate destruction has been known about for many decades.

treatments are in turn washed off the land and into our rivers and lakes. Even sewage treatment plants the length and breadth of Ireland regularly discharge raw human waste into rivers and the sea.

At every level, all these polluting actions are caused by the desire to save money and increase profits. And, yes, there will be the deflection stories and absolute denials about the real causes of pollution and ultimately climate destruction.

All lakes and rivers, their paths and lands, should be in public ownership. They should be the central tenet of human health and well-being. And all of nature, like humans, should be governed by the rights of humanity, or

at the very least human rights law, a very simple beginning to the people owning the means of production.

However, the captains of industry, their PR teams and their tamed scientists are already hard at work to defer and deny that anything they are doing—or not—could possibly have anything to do with the spread of the blue-green algae in Lough Neagh and Lough Erne. A “freak of nature,” they will say. Just like the freak of religion in their use of the Green and Orange algae in the six north-eastern counties of Ireland to their benefit and the destruction of the majority of the population. ★

how credible the scenario being drawn by the novelist is. Is it remotely possible that the Republic’s century of parliamentary government might, under certain circumstances, morph into an authoritarian dictatorship?

What, for example, would be the response from a Fine Gael-Fianna Fáil coalition government in the event of another severe economic crisis if faced with popular demands for fundamental system change? What if debilitating austerity measures were causing a re-energised labour movement to call for abandoning the European Union in favour of aligning with the increasingly more powerful and therefore attractive BRICS?—a global partnership that includes China, imperialism’s current bête noire.

Could one envisage a situation, similar to that experienced by the characters in *Prophet Song*, where the state’s broadcasting agency has abandoned all

Would it ever be possible to imagine a special Garda unit similar to the secret GNSB being established, with enhanced powers of arrest and detention for those believed to be a threat to the state?

impartiality, becoming a mouthpiece for the regime? Perhaps the subverting of journalistic standards might occur after the minister for the media dismisses the broadcaster’s entire management board following an interview with a troublesome trade union leader.

Well, it hardly stretches credulity in a state that retains its well-used censorship-enabling Section 31.

Would it ever be possible to imagine a special Garda unit similar to the secret GNSB being established, with enhanced powers of arrest and detention for those believed to be a threat to the state? Surely a country that, since its foundation, had emergency legislation on the statute book granting it power to suspend trial by jury, among other draconian measures, would hardly require another, yet more powerful agency. Nevertheless, a well-established precedent is there to be invoked.

What also is the likelihood that

employment would favour supporters of the regime, or deny work to those deemed subversive, as recounted in Lynch’s story? A quiet word in an employer’s ear that “your man is one of them.” Maybe not so difficult to imagine when the history of the current state is considered.

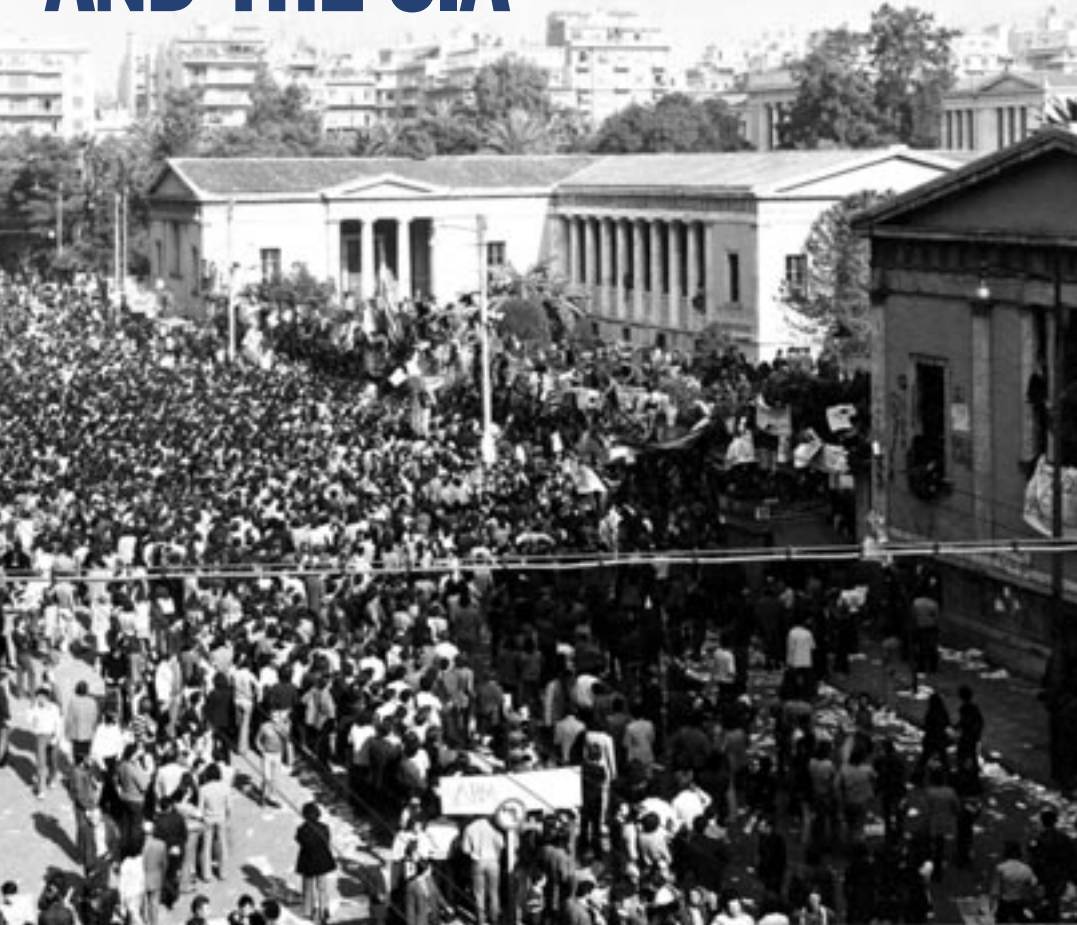
In short, Paul Lynch has not just produced a literary masterpiece but has rendered a public service in alerting us to the reality of disturbing possibilities. The first chairperson of the Republic’s current governing party was, after all, a self-proclaimed fascist. And there are, undoubtedly, more than a few blue shirts stowed away quietly in wardrobes around this state.

Thank you, Paul Lynch for *Prophet Song*, reminding us to stay alert. ★

● *Prophet Song* by Paul Lynch is published by Oneworld Publications, London.



THE GREEK JUNTA AND THE CIA



MATTHEW O'BRIEN
GREECE

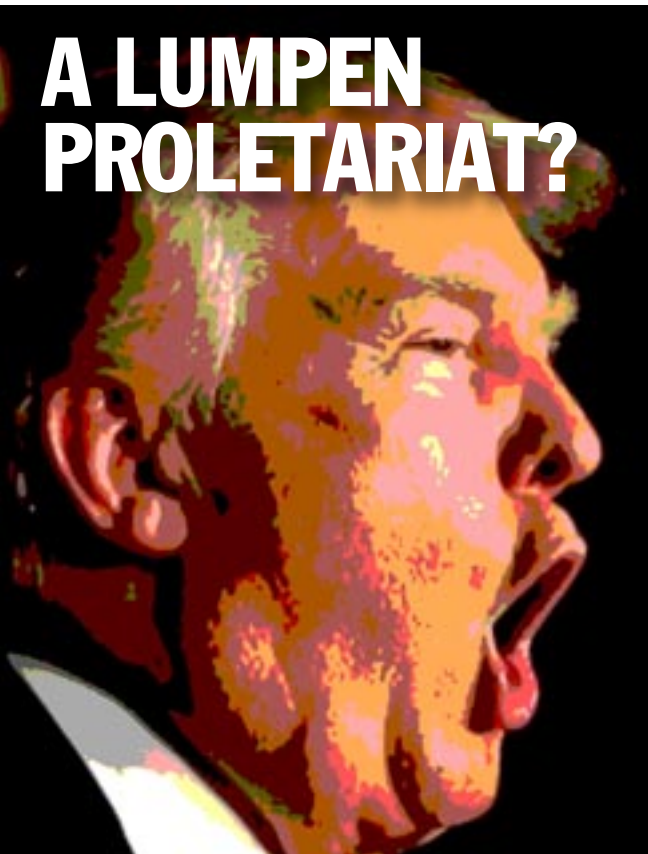
THE CENTRAL Intelligence Agency has a long history of fighting against progressive movements and supporting the most reactionary regimes ever seen. This can be seen by the CIA-backed coups against the democratically elected governments of Mohammad Mosaddeq in Iran, Salvador Allende in Chile, and Jacobo Árbenz in Guatemala, among dozens of others.

It also spent billions of dollars supporting leaders who massacred teachers, trade unionists, socialists, communists, and others. Well-known examples include Sukarno in Indonesia, Augusto Pinochet in Chile, Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan, and numerous other leaders who murdered millions.

The reason behind this approach was simple: these leaders were “tough on communism,” and they wholeheartedly supported private capital even if it led to massive poverty in their own countries.

The most deplorable dictatorship in Europe since the Nazis, the Greek Junta, was fully supported by the CIA. This was headed by Geórgios Papadópoulos, the type of leader much favoured by the CIA. He was fiercely anti-communist, so much so that when the Nazis took over Greece in 1941 Papadópoulos eagerly

A LUMPEN PROLETARIAT?



NIALL CULLINANE
CLASS

WHAT IS THE nature of those elements now aligned to the anti-immigrant, anti-trans, “nationalistic” and conspiratorial movements seen in Ireland recently? Do such movements mobilise from within particular and consistent segments of the class structure? Are such mobilisations evidence of a risk of far-right elements moving towards mass influence? What level of concern should we have about these groups?

Evidence suggests that such movements comprise some consistent characteristics. Ideologically, they appear prone to irrational, anti-scientific prejudice. Such ideologies associate with base emotions regarding imagined threats to children, women, the dangers of foreigners, etc. There is also a more self-conscious nationalistic element and some cultish religious preoccupations.

Given the available evidence on participants involved in such protests—

and such issues as the timing and location of activities—we might infer that they operate on the margins of the labour market—if indeed they are active at all. They are likely to aggregate around low to modest levels of formal education, given evident susceptibility to Facebook-style conspiracies.

How would Marxists conceptualise this grouping? Would such elements come under what Marx and Engels call the lumpenproletariat? If so, Marx and Engels were scathing of this group, categorising them in terms that many might find unpalatable. In the *Communist Manifesto* this social element is described as “the dangerous class, the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society.” Engels, in *The Peasant War in Germany*, describes them as “this scum of the decaying elements of all classes, which establishes headquarters in all the big cities.”

Marx, in *The Class Struggles in France*, refers to them as “a mass

On 21 April 1967 the Greek military launched a coup. Of the five officers who led the coup, four were very closely connected to the American military or the CIA.

Left

Students occupied the Athens Polytechnic. Communist students organised an illegal radio station which broadcast demands which were backed by enormous demonstrations of workers and youth.

Despite fierce repression and many casualties the Junta fell eight months later.

joined the “security battalion,” whose main task was to find and kill Greek partisans.

After the war he was the liaison between the Central Intelligence Service (KYP) and the CIA. The KYP was run by, and funded by, the CIA for its first eleven years. This was only stopped when Geórgios Papandréou became prime minister in 1964.

Because of internal problems, including King Constantine’s open opposition to the government of Papandréou and the growing right-wing sentiment in the military, the CIA and the king bribed numerous parliamentarians of the ruling Centre Union to resign, which caused the collapse of the Greek government in 1965.

This collapse would be followed by five short-lived governments in the span of less than two years, which led to the military coup.

A CIA report on 23 January 1967 specifically named the Papadópoulos group as one plotting a coup.¹ Even though Greece was a NATO ally since 1952, the information was never passed on to the Greek authorities

On 21 April 1967 the Greek military launched a coup. Of the five officers who led the coup, four were very closely connected to the American military or the CIA. Papadópoulos was “the first

CIA agent to become premier of a European country,” as he had been on the CIA payroll for fifteen years.²

The Junta was responsible for the murder of approximately 8,000 people in its first month, followed by the arrest and torture of thousands more during its seven years in power. Strict censorship was imposed, which led to many books and newspapers being banned. The Council of Europe and Amnesty International decried the human rights abuses in Greece, stating that “torture as a deliberate practice is carried out by the security police and the Military Police.”³ This, however, did not deter the US government as it continued to send the Junta military equipment and money.

The dictatorship of Papadópoulos ended after a massive student protest that began in the Athens Polytechnic. The student leaders were mainly from the banned far-left groups. These protests led to the more hardline members of the military overthrowing Papadópoulos on 25 November 1973.

The new leader was another CIA man, Dimitrios Ioannidis, head of the military police. He appointed another employee of the CIA, Adamántios Androutsópoulos, to be prime minister. It was under this government that the Greeks would invade Cyprus, which ultimately led to the Junta’s demise.

Nothing portrays the one-sided policy of the United States during the whole affair better than a quotation from Andréas Papandréou, describing his meeting with the US ambassador, Phillip Talbot. “I asked Talbot whether America could have intervened the night of the coup, to prevent the death of democracy in Greece. He denied that they could have done anything about it. Then Margaret [Papandréou’s wife] asked a critical question: what if the coup had been a communist or a Leftist coup? Talbot answered without hesitation. Then, of course, they would have intervened, and they would have crushed the coup.” ★

Notes

1 William Blum, *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions since World War II*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014, p. 218.

2 Charles Foley, “Greek dictator in CIA’s pocket,” *Observer* (London), 1 July 1973.

3 Blum, *Killing Hope*, p. 216

4 Roderick Beaton, *Greece: Biography of a Modern Nation*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 335.

5 Andreas Papandreu, *Democracy at Gunpoint: The Greek Front*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973, p. 294.

Politically, the lumpen proletariat were not only not involved in political actions with their “rightful brethren,” the proletariat: they were prone to be “bribed tools of reactionary intrigue.”

sharply differentiated from the industrial proletariat, a recruiting ground for thieves and criminals of all kinds living on the crumbs of society, people without a definite trade, vagabonds . . . varying according to the degree of civilisation of the nation to which they belong . . .” He later elaborates on the make-up of such groupings as incorporating “vagabonds,” “gamblers,” “pickpockets,” “beggars,” “discharged jailbirds”—in sum, “the whole indefinite, disintegrated mass, thrown hither and thither.”

It seems such social elements are treated as different from “honest” elements of the reserve army. Lumpen elements have a non-relation to economic production, sitting outside capitalist relations of production.

Politically, the lumpenproletariat were not only not involved in political actions with their “rightful brethren,” the proletariat: they were prone to be “bribed tools of reactionary intrigue.” Thus in Paris in 1848 Marx writes how Bonapartist forces mobilised lumpen

elements to crush the proletarian movements in the June Days Uprising. Donald Trump draws on similar elements today: the “Trumpenproletariat.”

Should the lumpen categorisation apply to those elements active in the Irish movements discussed above? Is this grouping a serious threat? Although this movement is dangerous in the physical and emotional threats it presents to its individual targets and selected groups, if the suggested Marxist categorisation above is correct they are also structurally powerless and politically insignificant, only of serious social threat where mobilised by other class forces for ulterior objectives.

There is no evidence that elements within the Irish ruling classes—a culturally sophisticated milieu that disowns “street politics” of any shade—have any political need for this grouping. Nor is there any compelling evidence that far-right views are permeating into the ideology of the working class; scientific evidence suggests the

reverse.*

Nonetheless, one should not be complacent. These groups present real threats to their imaginary enemies. However, their collective societal threat at a sustained political level seems marginal and is likely to burn out or operate at the societal fringe (as is the case with most self-organised activist movements).

Perhaps if such groupings have a base within elements of the atomised modern working class, rather than exclusively lumpen segments, their influence could be of greater cultural magnitude in disseminating reactionary attitudes among some elements of the population. We should not overinflate the threat of these micro-groupings, but neither should we entirely ignore them. ★

* Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, “New survey examines people’s attitudes to diversity in Ireland”



THE CONTINUING DANGERS OF STANDING UP TO ABUSERS

AC O'CONNOR
SEXISM

THE EXPOSÉ OF Russell Brand this month by the Channel 4 documentary “Dispatches,” and the on-line vitriol that followed, was a stark reminder of the continued dangers of standing up to abusers in a post-MeToo society.

A number of women and former colleagues were interviewed on their experiences with the sex-crazed comedian-turned-YouTube anti-establishment wellness guru. Accusations of rape, sexual abuse and

the grooming of young women, including a sixteen-year-old, were detailed alongside a wider reflection on the inaction of media producers, complaints that were ignored, and the general malaise concerning female objectification in the early 2000s.

When Brand was approached for comment he attempted to jump ahead of the story and instead published his own narrative on line, “to see that transparency [of his much-publicised sexual exploits] metastasised into something criminal that I absolutely deny makes me question, is there another agenda at play?”

Other than some interesting jump cuts in his video response, including between the words “always” and “consensual,” it is a standard copy-and-paste defence we’ve come to recognise: deny, deflect, play the victim. However, his recent pivot to reactionary on-line content, including interviews and events with Jordan Peterson and Tucker Carlson, and support of covid-19 and Trumpian conspiracies, has resulted in a smorgasbord of intellectual gymnastics among right-wing pundits.

Journalists with major media, including the *Sun*, which gave Brand the “Shagger of the Year Award, 2006–2009,” have been quick to separate themselves from the star. Talk TV and GBNews, however, propagated Brand’s conspiracies through “fair” debates. Andrew Tate has, of course, made it all about himself and his own cancelling conspiracy, and the internet is abuzz with accusations that this Channel 4/Times investigation was out to tear down yet another stalwart defender of free speech and alternative news.

Like Celebrity Big Brother’s White genocide conspirator Katie Hopkins, who attacked the validity of the interviews because of the anonymity granted to victims-survivors, “if you can’t see the person it’s also hard to see their truth”—as if this right-wing uproar, which absolutely denies accusations and attacks the accusers, isn’t justification

EMPIRES DO CRUMBLE!

SAJEEV KUMAR
IMPERIALISM

ENGELS SAID, “The nation cannot be free if it oppresses other nations. The force needed to oppress others in the end will turn against them.” All have a beginning, they flourish, and then they implode under their own weight.

Spain explored the world, discovered new land masses, and brought many territories under its control; then the Dutch took over; later Britain created an empire on which “the sun never sets”; and now US hegemony spreads its tentacles, suffocating many countries of the world.

Why have the Third World countries that are rich in resources got people who are poor? It’s a fact that during the colonial period there was blatant extortion from nations by imperialism. But what difference did independence for these countries bring to its people?

We understand that imperialism is not just colonialism or military aggression—which is only a form: extracting surplus value is the essence of imperialism.

Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel Prize-winning economist, says the United States extracts \$2 billion every day from developing countries in the form of debt repayment, with poor countries buying US government bonds (at interest rates as low as 1 per cent) to build their dollar reserves.

During colonialism, the colonies were deindustrialised and converted into mere suppliers of raw materials and used as markets for selling products made in the imperial countries. After colonies obtained independence they had to be industrialised, and had to depend on imperial countries, which had the capital and the technology needed for industrialisation. It was provided by neo-colonialism, with conditions that included privatisation, the



In the Republic a majority of sexual harassment happens in the work-place—almost 60 per cent.¹ Only 16½ per cent of the total number who experienced this form of abuse reported it.

enough.

Days after speaking at the transphobic Posie Parker demonstration in Dublin, dressed up as a “women’s rights” event, his fellow disgraced comedian Graham Linehan was also quick to defend the multi-millionaire Brand, accused of raping and grooming women.

Although recently dwarfed by modern alt-right politics, traditionalist American conservatism was also getting in on the controversy. In a particularly bewildering exchange, Dan Wootton, who is facing investigation into his own work-place sexual misconduct, chatted during his GBNews segment to the former Fox News starlet Megyn Kelly, who brought an unexpected approach to the infighting: “I hate to see conservatives . . . act like lap dogs to Russell Brand, just because he’s winked at their side.”

These contradictions among self-proclaimed women’s rights activists are nothing new (women’s rights, and children’s rights in particular, are tried and tested smokescreens for more hypocritical hate-filled rhetoric). However, it’s a stark reminder of the continued violence and challenges women face when they attempt to speak up against harassment—particularly when in a place of work.

In the Republic a majority of sexual harassment happens in the work-place—almost 60 per cent.¹ Only 16½ per cent

of the total number who experienced this form of abuse reported it. The same research noted that “unfortunately, employees may be deterred from reporting because they are fearful of repercussions that may follow for making a sexual harassment allegation.

Similarly, a survey by the Scottish Trade Union Congress in 2022 found that a third of women experienced sexual harassment in the previous year²; and, much like two of the interviewees in Brand’s documentary, 85 per cent of women said their report or experience was not taken seriously or dealt with appropriately.

It’s no coincidence that in work-places of low union density sexual harassment is more prevalent. 56 per cent of women working in hospitality have experienced sexual harassment, as have 47 per cent of those working in the services industry.³

Although legislation exists specifically criminalising work-place sexual harassment, as a result of trade union campaigning, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland notes that “employers are still failing to protect women from serious sexual harassment in their work-places and failing to properly investigate complaints.”

These aren’t concerns that you’ll hear right-wing “women’s rights activists” bring up. They don’t witness the modern world as it is but instead how they want

it to be. In their fantasised hierarchy, a woman’s “place” is as domestic servants and concubines; they shouldn’t be in work-places to begin with.

Much like the recent Britney Spears and Pamela Anderson documentaries, the Russell Brand reflection has highlighted this century’s cultural progress made in regard to women’s liberation; but the real economic change required is still nowhere to be found in popular debate or by any of the media that once rallied behind Russell Brand during his rise to fame.

For the reactionary right and their sympathisers, rather than addressing the unequal distribution of power, and the abuse of that power, in our society, the battlefields of a (cancel) culture war are preferred. ★

Notes

1 Shauna Bowers, “60% of those sexually harassed experienced it in the workplace,” *Irish Examiner*, 2 October 2021 (<https://tinyurl.com/2msfz2uy>).

2 Labour Research Department (London), “Health and safety watchdog ‘must act on sexual harassment’,” 4 April 2023 (<https://tinyurl.com/2pf7mr9>).

3 BBC and ComRes, “Sexual harassment in the workplace,” 2017.

4 Crushell and Company, “Sexual Harassment Claims before the WRC”

BRICS was formed to provide an alternative to the IMF and World Bank. At the Johannesburg summit in August 2023 six new countries (Argentina, Ethiopia, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE) joined BRICS.

extraction of resources from countries of the south, and unequal terms of trade.

The surplus obtained from the new industrialisation was not available to Third World countries to uplift the poor from misery; instead much of it was diverted to pay the interest on the credit provided by the imperial countries. Thus the condition of the poor remained the same, in spite of their “independence.”

Fed up with this system, many countries are thinking about freeing themselves from the imperial yoke. BRICS was formed to provide an alternative to the IMF and World Bank. At the Johannesburg summit in August 2023 six new countries (Argentina, Ethiopia, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE) joined BRICS, and it would not be a surprise if many more countries joined the group. Developing countries are contemplating moving away from the compulsion of having dollar

reserves for the exchange of goods and services.

In the Sahel region many governments were toppled by coups recently, to drive away regimes that are subservient to the imperial powers. The new government of Niger has shown French forces the exit, and declared that it will stop the export of uranium to France.

The G20 summit that took place in New Delhi was all over the news, while the G77 summit was held in Havana without any media attention. The G77 was undermined after the fall of the Soviet Union. António Guterres called G77 the voice of the global south. The discussions were based on the new international economic order, reform of the global financial architecture, and a rejection of unilateral coercive measures, the concentration of wealth, and the weight of the external debt.

China, the victim of the “century of humiliation” from the imperial

powers, was the main participant. The economic war of sanctions, the technology war to prevent China from getting an upper hand and geo-political manoeuvres are attempts to maintain US hegemony.

Thucydides was a historian of ancient Athens who said that war between Athens and Sparta was inevitable, because Spartans feared the growth of Athens. The “Thucydides trap” is a term popularised by Graham Allison to describe a situation in which an emerging power threatens to displace the existing power. The war in Ukraine and the US military exercises encircling China are indicating America’s desperation to maintain its hegemony. The global south wants to shrug off the burden of imperialism by new economic formations that are multilateral, are more democratic, and involve fairness of trade.

Empires do crumble under their own weight, however mighty they might seem. ★



CULTURE

NATURE BECOMING HUMAN THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF PABLO NERUDA



JENNY FARRELL
HEROES

IN HIS ACCEPTANCE speech for the Nobel Prize for Literature, Pablo Neruda describes his escape from the Chilean government of Jorge Videla across the Andes to Argentina.

The arduous and dangerous trek through this primeval world becomes a parable of humanity's path through its own history and present, a world that, despite the greatest dangers, is also always determined by the solidarity of the common people. His guides guard Neruda like their greatest treasure. In this solitude they encounter others who offer them shelter and food, indeed nature herself cares for their well-being. This inherent connection between nature, history and working people is the paramount theme of Neruda's poetry.

Neruda was born Ricardo Eliécer Neftalí Reyes Basoalto on 12 July 1904 in Parral, central Chile. His father, a driver of a ballast train on the emerging railway, takes him on journeys through the region, and so he

witnesses the hard physical labour of the railwaymen. This experience of primeval nature shapes Neruda's poetry and later defines the essence of the nature poems in *Canto General*.

His father, however, is unhappy with Neftalí's literary interest, and tensions ultimately lead to the young poet changing his name to Pablo Neruda at the age of sixteen. In 1923 he publishes a first collection, *Book of Twilights*, followed in 1924 by *Twenty Love Poems* and a *Song of Despair*.

Following the First World War, labour struggles in Chile increase significantly, with strikes and demonstrations as well as clashes with the police. The Communist Party, founded in 1911, could build on the vibrant FOC (Chilean Workers' Federation); and the communist movement in Chile was to become one of the most active in Latin America, thanks to the long tradition of trade union struggle in the copper and nitrate mines.

Ibáñez del Campo takes over the presidency in 1927. As minister of the interior, Ibáñez had commanded mass arrests and declared his aim as purging the country of "anarchists

100,000 in the Polish population.

This is not surprising, given the anti-immigrant stance that has been growing over a number of years. The Irish working class has more in common with those fleeing economic disparity and war, not just from Poland but other eastern Europeans, and those from African and Asian countries, than with those pushing anti-immigrant talking-points and those who misrepresent us in the Dáil.

It is not only immigrants that Ireland has this problem with. Refugees and asylum-seekers are not only attacked by right-wing agitators but also mistreated by the state. Many refugees and asylum-seekers are put into direct-provision centres that have appalling

CLOVER CARROLL
LANGUAGE

THE FAR RIGHT has been pushing the belief that Ireland has an immigration issue, that immigrants are replacing the Irish. While this isn't true, Ireland has a problem with immigrants—and that is, how they are treated.

The highest non-Irish population is Polish; and the largest non-English language spoken is also Polish; but it isn't taught in schools. Instead we teach French, German, Spanish, and Italian. There were 150,000 Polish people in 2016 according to the Polish embassy, but the 2022 census shows a drop of

CLASS SOLIDARITY BETWEEN CULTURES



The theme of *Canto General* is history: nature becoming human, the history of South America, the liberation movements, and the anti-imperialist struggle. The people become the protagonists of the historical process, beginning with the working people of Machu Picchu, descendants of the Incas.

and communists.” Neruda enquires about a diplomatic career. In 1927 he is posted to Rangoon, followed by Colombo, Singapore, and Java, returning to Chile, now married, in 1932. Chile is ruled by the new dictator, Carlos Dávila.

In 1933 Neruda is appointed vice-consul in Buenos Aires. Here he meets and befriends Federico García Lorca. In 1934 he is appointed consul to Spain, where the political situation is seriously deteriorating. In addition to Lorca, Neruda is acquainted with other leading poets of the time: Alberti, Hernández, Guillén. Neruda meets his second wife, Delia del Carril, a communist, and increasingly moves towards a communist position.

Franco’s coup in July 1936 is followed by repression, in August Lorca is murdered, and the Spanish Civil War begins. In *Spain in Our Hearts* (1937) Neruda eloquently and unequivocally sides with the Spanish Republic:

*Come and see the blood on the streets,
Come and see
The blood on the streets,
Come and see the blood
On the streets.*

In 1936 he meets Louis Aragon and Paul Éluard in Paris and organises and attends the Second International Writers’ Congress in Defence of Culture, after which Neruda and Delia return to Chile and Neruda completes *Spain in Our Hearts*.

Spain’s blood triggers the

conditions and are given little money to live on.

While it would seem that Ukrainians get treated better, many are put into shoddily converted centres that are unfit for anyone to stay in for any length of time. Irish people have a history of leaving home to look for work and better living conditions, notably in America.

One book that analyses the Irish diaspora in America during the time of the Famine is called *How the Irish Became White*, by Noel Ignatiev. He tells of the conditions that Irish people lived in but, more importantly, of the lack of solidarity they had with fellow-workers, specifically the freed slaves. The Irish of America went so far as to

memory of the tortured people in the history of South America; memory emerges as a central function of poetry, with the poet as witness. Memory becomes the constituent principle of the *Canto General*, completed underground ten years later.

The theme of *Canto General* is history: nature becoming human, the history of South America, the liberation movements, and the anti-imperialist struggle. The people become the protagonists of the historical process, beginning with the working people of Machu Picchu, descendants of the Incas.

In early 1939 the democratic president Aguirre Cerda appoints Neruda to facilitate the immigration of Spanish refugees. Neruda ensures the flight of about two thousand Spanish people to Chile.

After the Nazi invasion of the USSR, Neruda actively supports the Soviet Union and writes “Song for Stalingrad,” which deals with the common experience of the besieged, their resistance.

Neruda visits the Peruvian Inca site of Machu Picchu, which has a lasting effect on him. In 1945 he joins the Communist Party and supports the centre-left presidential candidate Videla in 1946, who a year later persecutes progressive forces and brutally suppresses trade unions. Encountering struggling miners, Neruda realises that art must be understood by the masses.

In 1948 political persecution forces him underground for about a year. He finishes *Canto General*. In late February 1949 he flees across

organise strikes against employers who planned to hire freed slaves.

While this doesn’t happen in Ireland today, what does happen is discrimination against Travellers. The state, the capitalists and the workers, consciously or not, worked together to make their home antagonistic. Irish Travellers who had been fighting to be recognised as an indigenous minority finally got recognition in early 2017, but since then little has changed. Cant, a language spoken by Irish Travellers, should be held to the same importance of being protected as Irish. The history of Travellers in Ireland, and how they were treated, should be known but it is ignored.

When Ireland unites, the numbers of non-Irish people and

the Andes to Argentina, then escapes to Europe, journeys to many socialist countries, and begins a relationship with Matilde Urrutia, who becomes his third wife.

The 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and China’s Cultural Revolution cast a shadow over Neruda’s unconditional support for all aspects of existing socialism, but it never affects his full commitment as a communist to a humane future. The 1950s also witness the Cuban Revolution, and Neruda hails it with his collection *Song of Protest*.

From 1969 Neruda is actively involved in the election campaign for Salvador Allende, who wins the election in September 1970. In 1971 Neruda receives the Nobel Prize for Literature. In November 1972 he returns to Chile seriously ill. On 11 September 1973 he hears news of the putsch, and the death of President Allende.

Pablo Neruda dies on 23 September. His funeral becomes the first manifestation of popular revolt:

When someone in a loud voice began to shout: “Comrade Pablo Neruda!” we all answered “Present!” . . . Then suddenly, the cry was “Comrade Victor Jara!” All at once, our voices cracked: . . . “Present!” . . . “Comrade Salvador Allende!” . . . “Present!”

In February 2023 an international team of forensic science experts found that Neruda had been poisoned, on the orders of the junta. ★

non-English languages will increase, and these shouldn’t be ignored but embraced. The far right who incite violence against the vast array of people who bring their language and culture claim to want to preserve Irish culture.

Culture is not static: it changes and has changed throughout history. The far right ignore history in favour of backward ultra-nationalism. Ultra-nationalism serves no-one but the ruling class and divides workers. Multiculturalism enriches a society; but when the state fails to aid Irish people to properly understand the people who bring their culture, the far right and fascists seize momentum and grow.★

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COMMUNIST PARTY STATEMENTS

Terrorist attack on the Washington Cuban embassy

**Statement by the Communist Party of Ireland
25 September 2025**

The Communist Party of Ireland condemns the terrorist attack on the Cuban Embassy in Washington on 24 September, and calls on the US authorities to provide greater protection to the embassy.

This attack must be seen in the light of the ongoing cold war waged by successive US administrations against socialist Cuba, including the illegal blockade, which has been repeatedly condemned by the UN General Assembly.

Neither the terrorism of the petrol-bombers nor the state terrorism of the blockade will defeat the Cuban Revolution, which will continue to act as a beacon for all those who struggle against imperialism.

The Communist Party of Ireland salutes the heroic Cuban people, led by their Communist Party, and calls for the ending of the blockade and all acts of terrorism against Cuba and its Embassies.★

Bring Lough Neagh back into public ownership

**Statement by the Communist Party of Ireland
25 September 2023**

The news and the scale of the ecological catastrophe at Lough Neagh are getting worse by the day. These issues did not come to light this month, nor indeed this year. The ecosystem collapse in the lough has long been contributing to the demise and suffering of the communities surrounding it.

Lough Neagh is the source of water for 40 per cent of the population in the Six Counties in the north of Ireland, and the sink for sewage of 40 per cent of the population as well.

Fishing and tourism are other important often-cited industries linked to the largest freshwater lake in Ireland. With the blue-green algae bloom reaching extreme levels, life in and around Lough Neagh is increasingly hard to sustain.

Causes for this catastrophe, which has claimed the lives of animals and seriously threatened the health of the local population, are manifold but related. From climate change, which

has already led to a 1°C rise in the water temperature, to an unprecedented amount of sewage from factory farming draining into the lough, the common denominator is the capitalist-driven race for profit that exploits our environmental resources beyond limits and beyond tipping points.

Leaving the bed and banks of Lough Neagh in the hands of an English aristocrat, the Earl of Shaftesbury, illustrates both our imperial exploitative history and the crippling present of private ownership of common resources.

Combined with governmental inaction and vested business interests, private ownership of Lough Neagh stands in the way of its management for the public good.

While the economic, environmental and health crises are always interconnected, the case of Lough Neagh is particularly striking as an example of capitalism's lethal grip on nature and communities. We call for people's ownership of Lough Neagh and the management of it in the people's best interest; conservation of its ecosystem; responsible use of water; and a fundamental change in industrial farming practices.★

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