

Forward

Youth Culture Democracy

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Crisis as Opportunity

Time to Act

Organise, Educate and Agitate

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Issue 16

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Crisis as Opportunity

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Let's turn this crisis into an opportunity!

All crisis present opportunities. What comes out of a crisis, and who benefits, is determined by the material force behind the different ideas and strategies for recovery.

During a given crisis, things that once seemed fixed and definite no longer appear so. People are scared but also activated. People mobilise. Debate is sparked and challenges presented.

In every crisis, however, there are opposing sides and conflicting strategies largely based in the fundamental question of who is to benefit and be dominant in the society that emerges.

The current crisis of capitalism is no different. It is full of opportunity for all sides.

Which side are you on?

There are very clearly two identifiable strategies for recovery, each with various strands and versions, but broadly speaking there are two camps reflecting the two major classes in our society, working people and the establishment class.

Share the pain and return to business as usual

The establishment put forward the idea that we should all share the pain and that we are all to blame for this crisis because we all got carried away and were all living beyond our means. This denies any structural root to the problems and alleviates the responsibility of government parties and big business in addition to projecting their problems and attitudes onto every working person.

But even while they preach sharing the pain it is very clear there is little real sharing being done. Working people are losing their jobs, their livelihoods, their homes, their public services and much more while the wealthy still have their private education, private transport, private hospitals and while some may take a pay cut it is a cut from 2.1 million to 1.8 million a year!

The truth behind this strategy, endorsed in varying degrees by Fianna Fail, the Greens, Fine Gael and Labour, is that working people are literally transferring both their own personal wealth but also their public wealth over to big business and the State.

This strategy is very clearly about a redistribution of wealth from working people to the wealthy and their institutions.

Once this is complete and we have weathered the storm we sit tight and await a global upturn that will lift us all. Ireland Inc. can then return to profit with a cheaper workforce that knows its place.

Or so their strategy goes.



A Republic for builders and bankers!

Those responsible must pay and structural change is required

There is an alternative strategy. One that argues those responsible in the Government, the Banks, the property sector etc. must pay. After all, they profited off the good times now they must pay during the bad times.

This is logical even from an economic perspective that argues when you invest you take a risk and that you must take the losses with the gains. This is patently not occurring.

This simple but fair concept for recovery is propounded numerous groups in various forms with different levels of details. It seeks to analyse the roots of the crisis. It portions blame and responsibility at both an individual and structural level and seeks to learn from the mistakes.

So, while not only proposing where the pain should be inflicted it also seeks to address the question of avoiding the necessity of pain in the future by addressing the structural weaknesses and flaws in our islands so-called development.

But, in order for progressive minded people to seize this opportunity to build a more equitable and socially just island there must be recognition of the material forces behind the opposing idea and the weakness of the forces behind a progressive strategy.

For those that have never considered the role of the State or for those that have denied its partisan nature or for those that have felt its relevance is in decline this must surely be a time for honest reflection. For this question must be addressed if those on this side of the fence are to gather enough of a material force to impose our strategy for recovery.



The Media

In the midst of this crisis of capitalism if one had landed in Ireland from another planet one would reasonably have thought that public sector workers (teachers, nurses etc.) and their Unions had together driven the economy into the ground and caused the global recession such was the debate presented by the media.

Rarely has such an obvious distortion of cause and effect been carried out on such a widespread basis.

Where was the investigative journalism into the causes behind the biggest crisis in capitalism since the Wall Street Crash? But if you wanted to see the home and registration of a Union leader you need only open one of many so called respectable papers.

The media clearly did not want to 'play the blame game' to find out the real causes and consequently those that should be made pay for the crisis but instead engaged in a scurrilous smoke screen of redirecting anger onto public sector workers dividing worker against worker.

But are we surprised by this, for who owns the media but big business? And so, do they present a fair and independent analysis of events? Do they reflect a genuine national agenda? No, they reflect the viewpoint and interests of their owners and so are a force that must be challenged and overcome by progressive people.

The State

The idea, propounded throughout the so-called partnership years and that gained common currency in the trade union movement, that the Government is neutral must surely be beaten by recent events. The Government, as an employer, has walked away from talks with Unions, broken agreements and imposed unilaterally vicious pay cuts upon its staff.

On top of this they have attacked public services as a further means of extracting wealth from working people. When Cowen cuts a bus route is he impacted by this? Is Michael O'Leary impacted by this? And this can be repeated across all public sector services we have witness since the start of this crisis.

Contrary to partnership theory, where the State plays an intermediary role between employers and unions, the State is in fact not just an employer but inherently tied for its own survival to the maintenance of the current order. Consequently they will not be swayed by logic or reason if that logic runs contrary to maintaining the current economic order. The State is not neutral.

It is not about how convincing our argument is or how many statistics we can produce to back it up or quoting the IMF to seek legitimacy. The State will only be swayed by material force, by mobilised people.

What convinced the Government to do a u-turn on pensioner's medical cards? Reasoned argument or feet on the street? And this time round in the budget what has stayed untouched and why? This is an example of the action required and positive force that must be mobilised in support of progressive ideas.

State Attacks Young People!

A key feature of State policy throughout this crisis has been an attack upon young people and their right to work and decent futures. The increasingly likely reintroduction of third level fees will alienate and exclude thousands of working class kids from third level education. The bailing out of Banks and developers via NAMA burdens future generations with debt they are in no way responsible for. The cuts to children's allowance will mean a less healthy diet and upbringing for many children. The lack of any job creation strategy or investment is condemning thousands to the scourge of forced migration often to lower wage economies. The likely cut to lone parents allowance will make the already difficult job of single parenting even harder and is likely to lead to increasing numbers early school leavers.

**THIS GOVERNMENT IS
HITTING STUDENTS HARD**



**LET'S HIT *THEM* WHERE IT HURTS:
THE BALLOT BOX**

www.studentvote.ie

Key Indicators

- **74,100** young people under 25 out of work -CSO QNHS September 2009.
- Youth Unemployment **has trebled** since Quarter 4 2006 when it was 24,500.
- Ireland has **2nd highest youth** unemployment in Western Europe.
- **1 in 3** young men under 25 or 32.4% out of work
- 1 in 4 young people under 25 or 25.9% out of work
- 22,400 young people out of work between 18-19 years
- 51,700 young people out of work between 20-24 years

ALBA – BOLIVARIAN ALTERNATIVE FOR THE AMERICA'S

As the crisis in Ireland continues to take hold, we are continuously being told how the European Union and its free trade policies represent the only way out. We are being bombarded with stories of how the crisis would be worse if it was not for the EU, of how the only hope of recovery is by continuing on the free trade path. However, whilst this continuous stream of propaganda from the Irish government, the EU and big business, makes having counter arguments heard difficult, another way is possible.

Across the Atlantic Ocean in Latin America and the Caribbean, countries are coming together in solidarity to work together for the good of its peoples, rather than the good of a small elite.



The “Alternativa Bolivariana par alas Americas” (ALBA) was set up as an alternative to the US sponsored Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTA). As with free trade under the EU, the FTA was equally based upon deregulation and profit maximization for the elite and multi-nationals, as always off the back of indigenous, local people. The EU and FTA respond to the interests of transnational capital. However ALBA advocates a socially- orientated trade block, based on the needs of the people of its members states and based upon solidarity and support for the different countries. It is a regional initiative aimed at helping promote solidarity between neighbouring states. It now consists of nine countries, Venezuela, Cuba, Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Dominica, Honduras, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Antigua and Bermuda.

ALBA wants to pursue the eradication of poverty in a real and meaningful way, based on actions and not soundbites. Whilst the EU makes supporting big business and profit making its primary goal, ALBA prefers to look after the well being of the dispossessed in society, those countries that are underdeveloped, basing its principles on justice and equality for all.

ALBA is supportive of creating real economies in its member states, of developing its agriculture sectors to bring about food self-sufficiency. It promotes sustainable farming. Agriculture is of fundamental importance for the survival of the people of Latin America.

ALBA has been very vocal in its opposition to market liberalization, deregulation and privatisation, as it rightly views these as working against the state’s ability to provide the necessary high quality public services for its people.

It emphasises public rather than private ownership and solidarity rather than competition. This contrasts sharply with the views of the EU or the US backed FTA, which strongly supports wholesale privatisation of public services. As we are aware, when public services are privatised, the word “service” disappears, as it becomes all about profit, therefore putting these important services out of the reach of the majority of people.

ALBA has also been critical in the setting up of a bank, called the Bank of the South. This is used for helping in industrial and agricultural output. What makes this initiative so important is that it will operate as an alternative to the IMF and World Bank. Loans given out by the Bank of the South will not come with the same loan conditions that the IMF and the World Bank impose.

ALBA has set up a number of public companies to serve Latin America, such as TeleSur (a Latin American news channel), PetroSur (an association of state oil companies), and Bank of the South as well as others. Very importantly these are not limited to ALBA members, with Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, amongst other countries having involvement in some of them.

Whilst ALBA is still in its infancy, there are plenty of examples of how countries working in solidarity can be successful. Venezuela provides Cuba with oil, in exchange, Cuba provides Venezuela with doctors and teachers. Cuba purchases soy beans from Bolivia at a reduced price, in exchange they have helped with Bolivia’s health and education systems.

ALBA is not a perfect model. It does have problems and will have many hurdles in the future. However it is an organisation that is still in its early years, having only been proposed in Venezuela in 2001, whilst not actually being formed until 2004, when Venezuela and Cuba signed its first agreement. It shows lots of promise and potential for the future. But most importantly, it offers a real and credible alternative to US domination and Free Trade Agreements.

'Che Part 1'

Superbly directed by Steven Soderbergh, this two-part film is an excellent look at this enigmatic and charismatic revolutionary. It is an intriguingly non traditional biopic.

The part of Ernesto "Che" Guevara, probably the world's greatest known Marxist guerrilla fighter, is played by Benicio del Toro. Del Toro won Best Actor at the Cannes Film Festival for his portrayal of Guevara. At times during the film it is easy to feel that del Toro is not acting, but that the film features a real life Guevara such is the quality of his acting. Regardless of how much one knows about Che Guevara, this film will be thoroughly enjoyed.



In general, the films look at two separate episodes in Guevara's life. Part 1 looks at the beginnings of the Cuban revolution in the Sierra Maestro mountains. Part 2 is based in Bolivia and the campaign there that ultimately brought about his execution. The first part of the film is entitled "The Argentine", the second "Guerilla". This review will look at the first part and the second part will be reviewed in the next issue of Forward.

The first 137 minute film begins with the young Argentine doctor Ernesto Guevara meeting Fidel Castro and agreeing to travel with him to Cuba to overthrow the hated and corrupt dictatorship of Batista . The film goes on to follow their progress in overthrowing the dictatorship. The film flicks between scenes from the rebel camps in the Sierra Maestro mountains to Che's sensational 1964 UN appearance in New York as well as his interview with Lisa Howard in Havana the same year. This makes for riveting viewing.

Unlike 'Motorcycle Diaries' this film solely looks at the political face of Guevara. People looking to see more on his personal life will be disappointed. The film focuses on the relentless work ethic of Guevara. We see him continuously involved in some form of work, training, teaching, scouting, leading assaults and speaking on behalf of the Cuban government. The film shows the day to day workings of an insurgency. His complete and total commitment to the revolutionary cause impresses all around him and Fidel soon promotes him to the position of Commandante, in what is obviously a very proud moment for Che. It is clear that Guevara is much more than the famous face that stares back at us from so many t-shirts worn by people who know little or nothing about the man.

As the film moves on, we see how passionately Guevara believed in education. He understood that for a revolution to flourish and succeed, it is of vital importance that the masses be educated. They must learn to read and write and to understand why they are involved in the struggle. Again and again we see Che say to new volunteers that they must learn to read and write before taking up arms and becoming guerrillas.

We also see the discipline that Guevara expected from his men. All of his men were expected to behave in a proper way, fit for a revolutionary. They were not to engage in extortion, intimidation or robbery. All local people were to be treated with respect. In one passage in the film, when some of the men attack and rape a woman, Guevara does not hesitate in issuing revolutionary justice. He expected and demanded that his men co-ordinate themselves with discipline and treat people with respect.

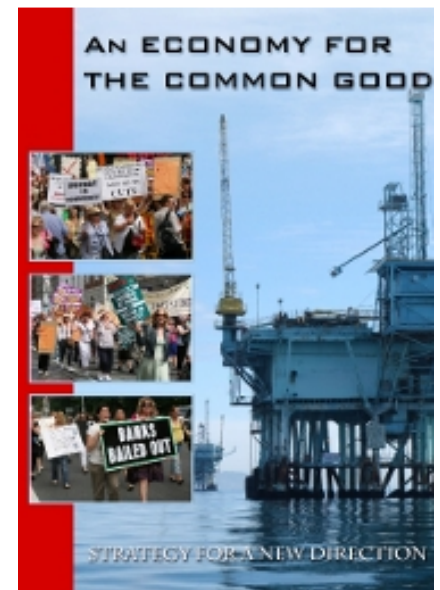
Later in the film, we clearly see Che's huge tactical awareness and talent as the Battle for Santa Clara rages. This was the battle that turned the struggle in the rebel's favour. The guerrillas engaged in street to street combat with Batista's soldiers, as they made their last stand in Santa Clara. Guevara's co-ordination and expertise is well demonstrated here.

If there is one part of this film that is disappointing, it is that it ends with Guevara and his fellow revolutionaries on the road to Havana. It does not show their triumphant arrival in the city. It almost feels like the ending of the film is an anti-climax. Perhaps the most words of the film are uttered in these final scenes by Che Guevara, when he says, "we won the war, the revolution starts now." Che was very much aware that a revolution does not end with the taking of power, but remains fluid and in need of protection and strengthening.



Solidarity Network
www.solidnet.org

The Purpose of SolidNet is to inform about the activities as well as the ideological and political views of different Communist and Workers' Parties on National and International issues.



Publication by the CPI

The tip of an iceberg of corruption

To a casual observer, the recent furore over Thierry Henry's handball may have seemed like a purely sporting scandal. In essence it may have been, but delve deeper and this is the tip of an iceberg of corruption in world football.

Ireland were drawn against France because of the implementation of a seeded draw, which effectively consigned smaller, lower ranked countries like Ireland and Slovenia to having to face off against higher-ranking countries like France and Russia.

Fifa only announced that the seeded draw would go ahead just two months before the draw was due to be made (originally the draw was to be unseeded, so all nations in the draw are equal). It was not coincidental that Fifa implemented the seeded draw just as bigger countries like France, Portugal and Russia were struggling.



The entire draw, therefore, was prejudiced in favour of countries with bigger populations, but that should come as no surprise because Fifa, the world football governing body, has at its helm some of the most corrupt individuals in sport. Vice president Jack Warner has been estimated by his own auditors, Ernst & Young, to have made at least \$1 million from black market ticket sales at the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

Warner was fined \$1 million by Fifa for this profiteering, but the Trinidadian kept his job as vice-President. Indeed, Warner is still regarded as something of a powerbroker within Fifa. When England began currying support for their 2018 World Cup bid, they found it necessary to play a token friendly in Trinidad to win Warner's favour.

Above Warner is Sepp Blatter, the man who recently ridiculed Ireland's attempt to enter the World Cup in a press conference. When Blatter was elected to President of Fifa in 2002, Somalian FA President and vice-President of the CFA (African FA) Farra Ado claimed that he had been offered \$100,000 to vote for Blatter.

Blatter's deputy Michel Zen-Ruffinen drew up a dossier in 2002 detailing the financial mismanagement within Fifa under Blatter, alleging that the collapse of Fifa's marketing partner ISL had led to losses of up to \$100 million. The dossier was taken to Swiss authorities, but no action was taken. When an internal investigation was launched soon afterwards by Fifa, it was halted by Blatter himself.

Aside from being corrupt, Blatter is also a sexist. In 2004 he said that women should "wear tighter shorts and low cut shirts to create a more female aesthetic" and attract more male fans. In 2007 and 2008, he attempted to circumvent immigration laws to introduce a cap on the number of foreign players in the team.

The seeded draw introduced by Blatter was not introduced by chance. Having big countries like France in the World Cup brings on more money than smaller countries.

Ideally, politics and football would be separate, but thanks largely to the efforts of Blatter, Warner and their cronies, the two are now entwined.

Connolly Youth Movement

Youth - Culture - Democracy

Ógra Uí Chongaille

Óige - Cultúr - Daonlathas



The Connolly Youth Movement (CYM) is an all-Ireland socialist youth movement committed to building a united socialist Ireland through educating and mobilising young workers and students.

The CYM contains young people from the many traditions on this island who have come together through their common belief in class struggle and their opposition to the inequalities of the capitalist system.

We are committed to fighting for young people's rights whether through unions, on the streets or in the communities we live in.

We actively support the Communist Party of Ireland and work with the Party to forward the cause of socialism amongst the young people of Ireland.

Named after the revolutionary working class leader, James Connolly, we take inspiration from his thoughts and actions to continue his struggle for liberation today. As internationalists, we also learn from the worldwide experiences of great leaders like Rosa Luxemburg, Ho Chi Min and Lenin.

Formed in 1964, the CYM has always defended and forwarded the rights of young people and today is no different. We will continue to organise, educate and agitate for a Worker's Republic and a socialist world.

- We seek the reunification of Ireland and an end to all forms of imperialism and exploitation. We work for the building of a Workers Republic.
- We are opposed to the European Union and see it is an undemocratic imperialist alliance imposing its will on working people.
- We support the trade union movement and actively encourage young people to join and get involved in their union. However, we oppose the 'Partnership' arrangement as it cripples unions fighting capacity.
- We are members of the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY). We actively support socialism in Cuba and elsewhere around the globe.

Join us in our Struggle!

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