

FORWARD

A YOUNG VOICE FOR SOCIALISM



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FROM THE EDITOR

A chairde, as the editor of Forward, I am delighted to present the latest issue of our publication. Since our last issue, much has changed both in Ireland and the world, and the contradictions of capitalism have only grown sharper.

The strike by the Palestinian resistance against the Zionist entity, and the subsequent genocide being unleashed on Gaza by the Israeli military have served as a flashpoint of radicalisation for many young people around the world, and Ireland is no exception. The plight of the Palestinian people has taken hold in the consciousness of Irish people with an urgency and longevity not seen for a long time.

The rise of the far right too is cause for serious concern. The main part of their attention, now shifted from the LGBTQ+ community to immigrants and asylum seekers, has seen them gain footholds in working-class communities around the country, spurred on by government facilitation, and the ceding of ground by the left. The burning of centres earmarked for international protection applicants, and the riots that we witnessed in Dublin last November, are obvious results.

These two big issues aside, the everyday machinations of capitalism still exercise their power over the youth on this island. Low wages, high inflation, casualised and precarious work; all of these are the everyday experience for youth in this country.

However, as our General Secretary points out in his contribution below, there exists in the youth today “the embers of revolutionary potential”, waiting only for the oxygen to give them life.

The work published below is a collection of some of the best work by members of the CYM over the last year, covering issues like partition of the island, rising militarism and the question of Irish neutrality, solidarity with Palestine, and trans healthcare.

It has been a pleasure to watch this work come across my desk, and to once more be able to work with my comrades in analysing the conditions we find ourselves in.

Beir bua,

Stiofáin Ó Sionnaigh
Éagarthóir
Iúil, 2024

**DEMANDS MOST MODERATE:
“DEFEND IRISH NEUTRALITY” OR ANTI-
IMPERIALISM?**



CON Ó LUASAIGH

Since the outbreak of war between Russia and Ukraine, and the recent upsurge in resistance in Palestine and the brutal Zionist response, debates on Irish neutrality have come to the fore once more. Protests have been organised under a variety of slogans such as “Defend Irish Neutrality” and “Support Neutrality”. The Connolly Youth Movement contributed to this in our disruption of the sham Consultative Forum on International Security Policy in UCC last June with the slogan “NATO Wars, Millions Dead”.

The main current in these debates on the left have been precisely this: to defend the Triple Lock, the self-proclaimed policy of neutrality in the south. This article will explore the approach socialists should have on this critical debate.

So what is the Triple Lock? This structure prohibits deployments of the Irish Defence Forces abroad unless the deployment has the approval of the United Nations General Assembly/Security Council, the Dáil, and the cabinet.

Of course, this in reality does not constitute absolute neutrality, but rather places very high obstacles to potential deployments. Furthermore, this only accounts for a single aspect of the government’s policy on foreign affairs.

The most obvious other aspect is the permission granted to the US military to establish an air base in Shannon Airport, making Ireland complicit in the invasions, occupations and domination by which America rules. Up to 3 million US soldiers have passed through Shannon since 2002. In one 24-hour period covering 5 and 6 April alone, Shannonwatch recorded at least 1,000 US military personnel passing through Shannon Airport, most on their way to or from the Middle East.

Another aspect is the economic one, in which Irish industries and educational institutions are increasingly interwoven with the burgeoning European military-industrial complex. Nothing stands in the way of Irish or international capitalists, in combination with Irish research institutions, developing and producing murder machines on this island. In fact, this is an industry that is booming in recent years, with military

exports from the south quadrupling in value from 2019 to 2021.

Likewise, the government has had a direct hand in giving out export licences for the booming export market with Israel of so-called ‘dual-use products’ - goods that can be used for both civilian and military purposes. In recent years, the value of military products (including dual-use goods) have outstripped the traditionally massive export market of agricultural goods.

We find that neutrality in this theoretical form simply does not exist. Campaigning for the reconstruction of what is a deeply insufficient framework in the first place is not a constructive way of combating the rising militarism around us, and is indeed a blatant example of following the most moderate demands of parties and organisations on the anti-militaristic left.

Should we oppose the pushes by the southern government to weaken its already problematic foreign policy framework? Yes, as the alternative amounts to the abandonment of the cause of anti-imperialist solidarity. But should we focus our efforts on the maintenance and fine-tuning of the Triple Lock? Should we be neutral on Zionist colonialism and occupation?

The obvious answer to both these questions is no. Socialists should instead be pushing beyond this simplistic framing of the issue towards a more positive, anti-imperialist sentiment that lays semi-dormant in the consciousness of the Irish working class. We should also be using the obvious hostility the ruling class has for this impotent neutrality to point out that the interests of the Irish ruling class and the EU are in lockstep. The reality of the EU’s crucial support for Zionism and militarism is the most significant opportunity we have to drive a wedge between the near-unanimous support the EU has in the South and this working class anti-imperialist consciousness.

What's more, the reality is that this island is already in NATO. This is primarily because the North, through its occupation by Britain, is a part of NATO. The British Army stations thousands of soldiers in multiple bases across the six counties as part of the ongoing Operation Helvetic. Aldergrove Airport outside Belfast is, like Shannon, used as a de-facto US airbase, with increasing traffic being redirected there due to the recent agitation around Shannon.

Through being further and further embedded in EU militarisation, the South is also in line with NATO by proxy. As of Finland and Sweden's recent accession to NATO, 96.5% of the EU's population resides in a NATO member state, totaling 85% of EU states. European 'defence' policy is inseparable from the warmaking and militarisation policies of the imperialist United States.

Posing the question as one of defending neutrality rather than opposing the spiralling militarism, especially of the EU, leads to strange places.

For instance, an article in Socialist Voice on the need for a popular front neglects to discuss EU militarisation and the increasingly indistinguishable imperialist policies of the EU and NATO, rather stating that the farcical Triple Lock should be "maintained and strengthened", and that the UN should be

reformed. Instead of proposing a head-on opposition to the rapidly expanding military-industrial complex in Europe, or attempting to clarify the objective role of the EU in the path to imperialist war, the article states that campaigning on other issues will "inevitably bring conflict with the EU and expose its true nature."

In offering moderate solutions by refusing to address the role of the popularity of the European Union, socialists discard the importance of polarising opinion on Europe and follow along with the incredibly unsatisfactory lowest common denominator on this topic.

There was once a time when Ireland conjured in the minds of the oppressed across the world a vision of defiance against vastly superior imperial masters, of resisting the shackles of colonial servitude. This is less and less so the case.

While our comrades in Palestine celebrate the solidarity and history of the Irish people which indeed is deep, the two governments in Ireland are falling in line with Zionism and its American overlord. Compared to the campaigns and actions even in Britain and the US, the response of Palestine solidarity organisations and trade unions in Ireland has been woefully inadequate.

This article outlines the problems with Irish

neutrality and the issues with defending or seeking to strengthen it as a core demand of socialist anti-imperialists. In the next issue of Forward, I will expand on this and discuss what we should do instead.



A CONSISTENT FAILURE

TRANS HEALTHCARE IN THE 26

MELINA



According to a recent study from BelongTo and Trinity College Dublin, young LGBTQ+ people in the south have faced a significant decline in their mental health since 2016. This decline stems in part from the global rise of the far right and the increasing number of prominent public figures that have begun to spew homophobic and transphobic rhetoric.

These issues are present in Ireland, but exacerbated by a total lack of competent public mental services, especially ones available to young people. For example, transgender people in Ireland face a near complete absence of public access to gender-affirming healthcare.

The trans healthcare system in the south is the worst in the European Union. It is incredibly difficult to access any form of gender-affirming care – extremely important for trans and non-binary people not only because it can make them feel more comfortable in themselves and alleviate gender dysphoria but also because it greatly reduces depression, stress, self-harm, and suicidal tendencies.

External issues combined with internal anxieties about their identities have resulted in large increases in anxiety, depression, and stress among the LGBTQ+ community. For example, 52% of LGBTQ+ young people say they have self-harmed, 64% report suicidal thoughts, and 26% have attempted suicide.

These figures increase dramatically when you look at young transgender and non-binary people.

They have higher rates of anxiety, depression, and stress when compared to their cisgender peers as well as a huge increase in self-harm and suicidal behaviours. A staggering 75% of trans and non-binary young people reported to having engaged in self-harm, 82% to having had suicidal thoughts, and 39% to attempting suicide.

If those statistics by themselves were not shocking enough, the most common age for young LGBTQ+ people to engage in self-harm was 14, the most common age for young

people to start openly expressing their LGBTQ+ identities. On-top of this, 15 was the most common age for suicide attempts among those surveyed.

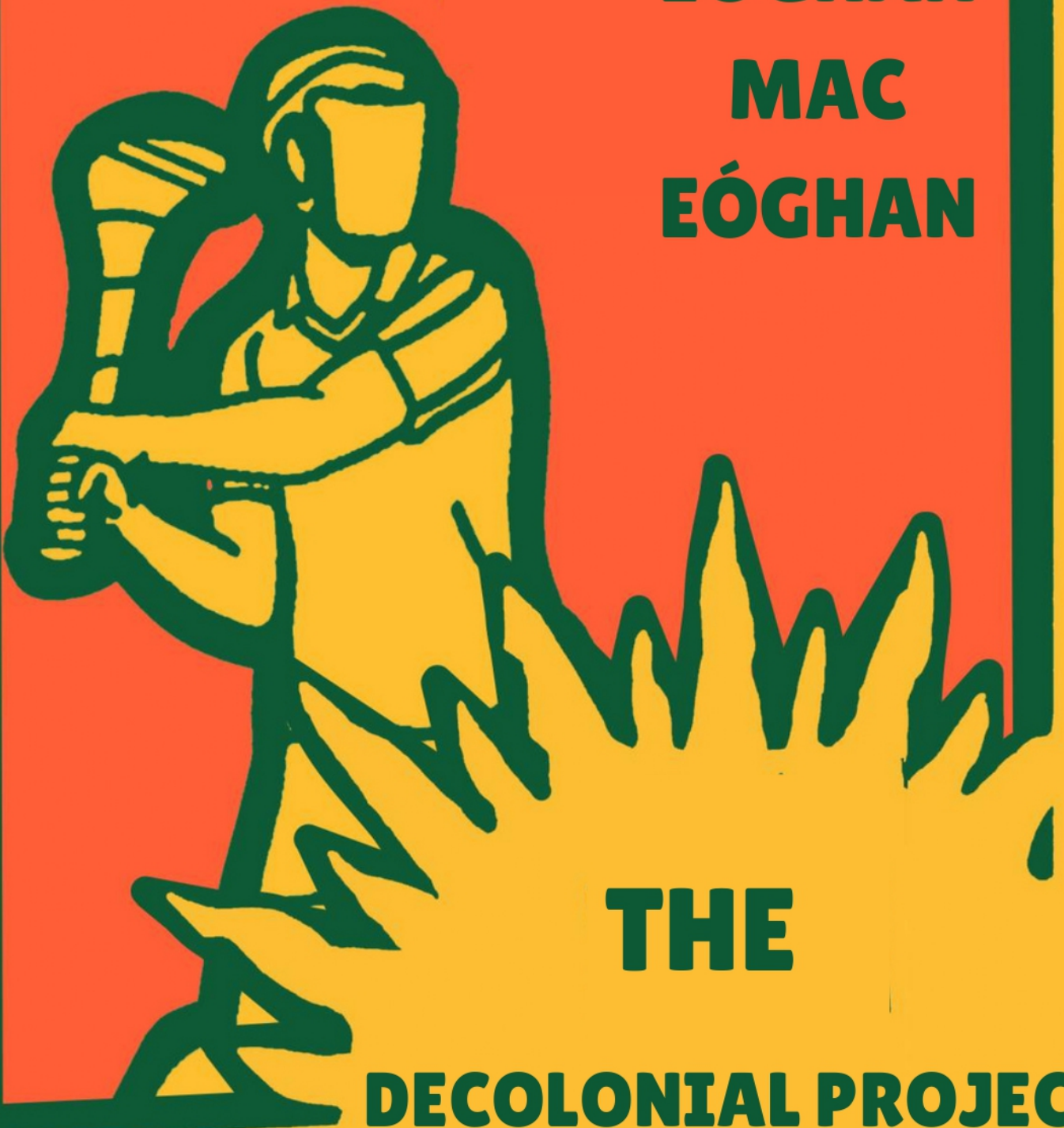
A major contributing factor identified in the study was the immense amounts of harassment and bullying that LGBTQ+ young people are subjected to in their day to day lives. Nearly 50% of those surveyed experienced bullying throughout school due to their identity – 72% reported experiencing verbal abuse, and 25% being physically assaulted.

This information shows the south's horrific failings in caring for its LGBTQ+ population. However, these figures are not surprising at all when you consider that the southern government has consistently neglected public mental health services for young people and has been consistently failing young transgender and non-binary people with the total lack of accessible gender-affirming care.

In order to prevent the mental health of LGBTQ+ young people from continuing to worsen, the Free State must:

1. Dramatically improve public mental health services that at present are barely fit for purpose.
2. Make public gender-affirming care more accessible to all young people who need it.
3. Ensure that all young people receive comprehensive education on the LGBTQ+ community in Ireland and abroad.

**EÓGHAN
MAC
EÓGHAN**



THE

DECOLONIAL PROJECT

AND OUR ROLE IN IT

The first free Irish person will not be born, they will be formed in the national and class struggle that we as socialist-republicans have committed ourselves to.

We face ahead of us a seemingly insurmountable foe. The occupation of our island, the exploitation of the working people of Ireland, and the subjugation of our national destiny to the demands of the capital exporting bourgeois class appear to us as the guarding hound of Culann; an unbeatable enemy force standing between us and the future we wish to build.

However, the conditions we face in Ireland only appear unchangeable because we have not yet become the people who are capable of changing them.

In *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon lays out the problem facing the colonised subject aspiring towards the liberation of their nation:

"You do not turn any society, however primitive it may be, upside down with such a programme if you have not decided from the very beginning, that is to say from the actual formulation of that programme, to overcome any obstacles that you will come across in so doing."

Fanon here addresses the colonised subject who has recognised both the myriad impediments thrust upon their nation and its working people by colonialism and the need to act, and to act decisively. No amount of reform could address the underlying raw violence that sits at the heart of a colonised society.

Only through resolving to sweep away all of the mechanisms by which the nation and its people are subjugated can the colonised subject begin the process of decolonisation. Only by accepting that decolonisation must be achieved by any means necessary will the decolonial program be successful.

Where do we see these mechanisms in the colonised nation? They are ever-present.

While the most noticeable symbols of the subjugation of the Irish nation and its working people – the colonial and comprador police forces, the foreign government institutions and military installations, the private landowners who work in the interests of the capital-exporting bourgeois class – are the most visible and easily identifiable aspects of colonialism in Ireland, they aren't the only areas in which colonialism has manifested. In fact, these targets of our program, being the most powerful, will likely be the last remnants of the colonial system to be dismantled in our nation.

The less easily noticeable way, but by no means less violent, in which colonialism manifests itself in Ireland is in our culture, or rather the suppression and commercialisation of it.

Cultural commercialisation

Whether in the free-state or the occupied six counties, the culture of our nation is subordinated to anglophone culture. Irish language spaces are exceedingly rare, and those that do exist only do so due to the diligent work of passionate volunteers and campaigners; even the Gaeltacht, the zone in which Irish is supposed to be the protected and primary language of public life, is treated as little more than a theme-park for tourists to visit for two weeks of the year.

Under the Stormont administration the Irish language service provision is ghettoised, restricted to a handful of communities, perpetuating the colonial myth that a person's community background determines their ownership of their own national culture.

The situation for Gaelic Games is similar. In the south, the vast majority are hidden behind a paywall, restricting coverage of our national sports to a privileged few who can afford to pay for a streaming service, if the games have any coverage at all.

In the north, the level of broadcast coverage is even worse, and sports

facilities are underfunded and neglected in favour of funding for grounds dedicated to British garrison games. Casement park, the largest facility for Gaelic Games in Ulster, has remained unusable for over a decade.

Our broadcast media is increasingly dominated by anglophone culture, with British and American media being seen as the norm rather than a foreign import. Those domestically produced pieces of media too are predominantly in English and are more-often-than-not retellings of British and American cultural tropes rather than an authentic representation of Irish culture.

Our culture is the culture of the subjugated, even in the ostensibly independent south. Our nation's culture is rarely experienced by

national ambition by denying the working people of Ireland an opportunity to imagine our nation free from the strangling influences of capitalist imperialism.

Before we can begin to overcome the baying hounds of occupation and wage slavery, we have to first overcome the influence of imperialist hegemony in ourselves. While we are unable to imagine a truly Irish future, we cannot plan the task ahead of us.

If we are denied the knowledge of our destination how can we possibly begin to plan our route? Our first task has to be liberating ourselves personally from Anglophone cultural hegemony –

developing national consciousness



Once we have understood the first front in the decolonial struggle, we must, as Fanon rightly observes, resolve to overcome this impediment to our national destiny by any means necessary.

its people, and on the rare occasion when our culture is finally given a space to be seen and heard, it is in a format where a person would have to pay a premium to access it.

If it weren't for the handful of community associations making Irish culture accessible for free, Irishness would be the domain of rich hobbyists, a dead culture only accessible for a high cost of admission.

Our national culture is the most basic aspect of our identity, the stifling of which stifles the Irish

What means are available to us?

What can the Irish nationalist in the modern age do to confront a globalised Anglophone cultural-media behemoth? What is to be done?

It can, and necessarily should, start small.

We don't begin our struggle by storming the barricades, we begin our struggle by understanding in ourselves why the

barricades must be stormed.

Our first struggle is on the level of the personal; to begin to normalise and truly love and favour our national culture above the culture of the hegemon will be the first challenge we face as we take up our national cause.

What can we do in practice to begin this process? We can take up the cause of our national language; Take the time to study if you haven't already begun doing so, use whatever Irish you have publicly and without embarrassment. To speak Irish in our nation dominated by the English language is a revolutionary act.

To hear others speaking Irish is a call to action.

Every foghlaimeoir and gaeilgeoir has had conversations with well-meaning people who say "I wish I had more Irish" or "I wish I had been taught Irish better at school".

It is true that the system for teaching the Irish language is in dire need of overhaul, but far too many people who say that they wish they had a better command of the Irish language do not use the free time they have to build their fluency.

Far too many who say "I wasn't taught Irish well" use that as an excuse for the rest of their lives not to pursue an understanding of their own national language. Many people truly do not have the time or energy after selling their labour for a pittance to make the effort to study, but many more do and instead squander that time on consuming Anglophone culture and endorsing the gradual erosion of our common culture.

To hear Irish being spoken around you, however briefly, however broken, is a call to speak what you have as well. A nation of béarlachas speakers is of more value to our national project than a handful of fluent gaeilgeoirí.

We can take up our national sports; We can attend the games of our parish and county teams. We can take our hurleys to public

parks for a poc about. We can begin to learn how to play hurling, gaelic, handball or rounders if we have never had the opportunity before.

To attend these matches and play these games publicly is a revolutionary act. It is a rejection of the Anglophone hegemony that prioritises British garrison games and increasingly imported American past-times over our own national sports. To see people playing these sports is a call to action, to take up these sports for the first time or to return to playing, to watch your local team play or choose to watch it on television.

Many fans of the GAA will have had the experience of talking to well-meaning people who lament that it would be good if these sports got better coverage, that they would take the time to watch if there was.

It is true that coverage and grassroots financial support for Gaelic sport is in a poor state, and that radical improvement is necessary north and south, but while it is true that many people in our country truly haven't had the opportunity to watch or play Irish sports, it is also true that many more choose to watch the English Premier League and spend their free time playing soccer or rugby rather than engaging with their own national culture.

The act of publicly showing your love for your national culture encourages others to do so. Our national culture is too valuable to leave to the state or sporting bodies to support on our behalf.

We can engage with and produce indigenous Irish media; We can read classic revalist stories, watch Irish language dramas and plays, attend trad sessions and learn to play Irish music.

To engage with these cultural forms, to appreciate and produce them, is a revolutionary act. In so doing you turn away, however briefly, from the predominant hegemonic culture and take

time to enjoy and cultivate your own culture.

To commit to these acts publicly; to play music at a trad session, to perform as Gaeilge in an amateur dramatics play, to perform live readings of revivalist poetry, all these are revolutionary calls to action. Even if among those who see these performances only one person feels compelled to explore this media themselves, that is one additional person who has begun to value their own culture above the culture of the imperialist and occupier.

As with each of the previous examples of activity we can undertake, this act takes away some of the power the hegemonic culture has over you. It is an act that develops national consciousness in yourself and, in embracing these forms, you begin to cultivate a preferential love for your own national culture. In short, these acts are the first steps in standing upright as a gael – fully confident in your ownership of your own national culture.

These calls to action may appear individualistic; more concerned with the politics of personal consumption than they are concerned with the liberation of the nation and the masses that labour here.

However, without fully class and nationally conscious cadres, the socialist-republican movement will have no direction.

Only a cadre with a well developed sense of both class and national consciousness can bring about the liberation of our class and nation, and it is only through developing a favouritism for our subjugated national culture over the hegemonic Anglophone culture that is imposed upon us that we will

develop a full national consciousness.

A decolonised Ireland will not result from speaking Irish, playing hurling or reading Ó Cadhain, but only movement stewarded by well-developed, proud gaeils has a chance of striking the blow that is necessary to free Ireland and its working people.

National consciousness can only be developed within ourselves when we turn away from Anglo-American cultural forms and rediscover our own national culture. A revolution against the colonialist and imperialist exploitation of our nation led by proletarians who are well-read theoretically, but have no consciousness of national conditions, will inevitably fail.

No “New Ireland” can be built until an understanding is achieved by those who have resolved to build it of what ‘Ireland’ truly is; of what Irish culture is.

Any New Ireland Movement has to be committed to a national popularisation of a modernist, progressive Gaelicism. A New Ireland Movement

that does not wholeheartedly adopt and promote Gaelicism is not a decolonial movement at all, as it has no commitment to a decolonial Irish culture, only a reassertion of Anglo-American culture.

A New Ireland Movement that does not wholeheartedly advance the cause of a modernist, progressive Gaelicism is not a decolonial movement at all, as it is contented to allow Irish culture to ossify and decay, like a museum piece to be



observed in an Anglo-American cultural terrain.

These deviations from true decolonial Gaelicism will be the pitfalls of a movement whose cadre are not sufficiently nationally conscious, and this consciousness can only be achieved through a personal commitment to turn away from Anglo-American culture and a sincere re-adoption of Irish culture. The task ahead

The Ireland we wish to build is one in which its workers have been exalted to command, its culture has been exalted to the dominant position, its destiny to be defined by the will of the nationally conscious working class.

To create this Ireland, we must first destroy the forces that stifle our ambition: the occupation of six north-eastern counties of Ulster, the power of the domestic and international capital-exporting bourgeoisie, and the hegemonic dominance of Anglophone culture.

These forces, like the hound of Culann, stand between us and our national destiny. They seem completely insurmountable. We must remind ourselves, however, that before we have taken up the struggle we are as Setanta was before he had committed himself to vanquishing the hound.

It is only when we commit ourselves, wholeheartedly, to our class and national

struggle; when we take the first steps, however small, to the liberation of ourselves, our class and our nation from bondage, that we will fulfill our role as he did and become our own Cú Chulainn, the person capable of carrying out the tasks before us.

Bobby Sands, quoting an unnamed older comrade, said "everyone, republican or otherwise, has their part to play". We do not have a choice over what our role will be. Our class and the place we call home has predetermined it. Our only choice is whether to shoulder this task or to shirk the responsibility placed on us.

To take up the mantle and responsibilities of the Gael, or to abandon our cause and allow the exploitation and occupation of our nation to continue.

The task ahead may appear impossible, but that is only because the person who will complete it will be born from us in our ongoing struggle.

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'THE MOST DANGEROUS GANG IN IRELAND'

YOUNG PEOPLE
SHARE THEIR
EXPERIENCES
WITH THE
PSNI

Somhairle Ó Tuathaláin



Over the last number of months the Connolly Youth Movement has been highlighting that the PSNI is not a force safe for young people; as seen with the fact that it strip-searched 27 teenagers in 2022 – in violation of its own procedures, and the dignity and rights of young people.

As part of this campaign the CYM has been hearing the opinions, experiences, and concerns of young people who feel they or their families have been victimised by police. The following details come from a survey which allows young people to anonymously talk about their experiences.

The vast majority of respondents thus far have been from the Catholic community, and almost half of all respondents were under 18 years of age. This shows that regardless of attempts to recruit from the Catholic population, that the actions and behaviour of the PSNI continue to disproportionately target this demographic. Furthermore, all respondents fell within the age brackets most frequently harassed by the PSNI through stop-and-searches.

Between April 2022 and March 2023 the PSNI reports that they stopped-and-searched 23,650 people. Of this, 11% were under 18, 40% were 18-25, and 27% were 26-35. The two most common excuses given for stop-and-search were suspected drugs or being stopped under “counter-terrorism” legislation.

Despite stopping thousands of people, only 6% of those stopped-and-searched were actually arrested. If any other force or organisation used a measure which only had a 6% “success” rate they would surely be put under review, and the measure would likely stop; but we all know the PSNI is an exceptional force.

These figures do not even include the unrecorded number of “stop-and-accounts”; wherein someone is not compelled to provide information or required by legislation to stop, but may due to ignorance of their own rights feel like they have no other option but to engage.

Concerningly, only one respondent felt confident that they knew their rights, with most only being aware of some of their rights. One such respondent said that they “get stopped for no reason, questioned in the street & when I’m out with friends”.



Former PSNI Chief Constable Simon Byrne: “We will have you kids” - Patten 20 Years On: Young People, Policing and Stop and Search conference

The respondent indicated that as a result of their father’s political affiliations their “family get harassed on a daily basis”.

This was not the only respondent indicating targeted policing due to who their family was. Another respondent – also under 18 – said that they “still suffer harassment” from the PSNI, and that the police have “dragged me off of school buses”. The respondent went on to describe how family members and family friends have also been “assaulted and harassed”.

Potentially targeted harassment of young people due to who their relatives are is not a new phenomenon. Children of those involved in Saoradh have repeatedly been subject to violent arrests and house raids, as seen in Derry in 2020 where a 14-year old with special needs was cable-tied and arrested during a house raid.

Such raids continue to happen despite former Chief Constable Simon Byrne

publicly walking back on his comments that the PSNI “will have your kids”, which he said at a 2019 conference on the use of stop-and-search against young people.

With this in mind it is no shock that another respondent – a Protestant who declared that they had been “kicked and battered by PSNI officers” – said that the PSNI “are the most dangerous gang in Ireland”.

These have only been a selection of the responses, and with thousands stopped each year, no doubt many more young people who have their own stories to share.

With this in mind, we would encourage young people to speak up about their experiences with the PSNI; particularly as the PSNI is about to embark on a recruitment campaign for a further 350 officers, and we would encourage people to have a serious conversation with any of their friends, co-workers or fellow students who are considering joining the PSNI about the nature of the force and its treatment of young people.

BRILLIANT EMBERS OF REVOLUTIONARY POTENTIAL

**An Analysis of the Issues
Facing the Irish Youth and
how we Combat Them**

**A contribution to the
James Connolly Festival
2024**

Tomás Ó Síocháin



The current order of world imperialism is in crisis. The same ten or so countries that were the primary imperialist powers of the time of Lenin, occupy that same economic position today.

However, we're seeing an economic deterioration in both output and the growth of profitability. Since the 2008 financial crash, there has been no real recovery to speak of, and consequently, we can see a heightening of contradictions and tensions internationally.

The "rules-based" order, in reality merely the international consensus, enforced militarily and economically to the benefit of the United States and its allies, is faltering.

China is challenging the technological superiority of the established imperial powers, one of the bases of the unequal exchange that characterises imperialism. As a result of these heightened contradictions, we're not only seeing an increase in military conflict, but also the emergence of a few consistent trends in the Western bloc, which are also affecting Ireland.

Firstly, we have the emergence of a more authoritarian form of neoliberalism.

Secondly, the rise of the far right, which has gathered steam in Ireland in recent months. The narrative surrounding immigration and housing has been captured completely by far-right actors. While the numerous far-right parties might not make major electoral gains, they've already succeeded in moving the establishment parties further to the right.

Finally, and maybe of the most importance to the youth, is the rise of militarism. We are seeing this materialise in Ireland through a concerted push to destroy any remnants of our military neutrality, and to increase military spending.

The government parties, Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil, and the Green Party, are looking to remove the Triple Lock and any other barrier to EU military

inter-operation.

Why is this of particular importance to the youth?

The people making these decisions are not the ones who are going to be on the frontlines. Rather, it will be us – young people. It is the working-class youth that will suffer most in war. It was telling that at the government's sham consultative forum last year, the only people of conscription age in the room were the CYM members disrupting it.

However, it would be a lie to say that Ireland is neutral.

The North of course is directly integrated into NATO by way of its occupation by the UK, with US warplanes using Aldergrove airport – much like they use Shannon – as a stepping stone for operations in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, the south is arguably already part of a military union through the integration of the Western European Union into the EU by the Lisbon Treaty. Added to this is the government's recent signing of an "individually tailored partnership programme" with NATO. This only integrates us further into NATO's intelligence apparatus, without making the jump to formal membership.

Even though they don't have popular support, they're finding ways to move forward deceptively.

However, these developments make sense, as the southern state has never been neutral. With the onset of the war in Ukraine, the government made this explicit, saying that while we might be militarily neutral, we are not neutral in the current conflict.

Therefore, I think it is important not to fall into the trap of a bourgeois pacifist notion of neutrality.

Ireland has no place in imperialist war or in any imperialist military blocs. Any attempts at militarisation in that direction must be opposed.

However, we're not looking for a neutral Ireland. What we should be looking for is an Ireland that is 100% behind the struggle of working and oppressed people across the globe.

What are the specific issues facing the youth?

There is still a great political apathy among the youth. This takes on an extra dimension in the north, where young people have grown up in the liminal post-Good Friday peace, where the promises made have never materialised, and the institutions of the state have only really proved to consolidate sectarian division.

Of course, with the impending doom of climate catastrophe, the youth of today possess a certain dread that didn't exactly exist among older generations. Add to this a milieu of other issues, such as a cocaine epidemic, and the political polarisation along gender lines, and the challenges facing the youth are stark.

That being said, there exist the brilliant embers of revolutionary potential.

The ongoing genocide by the Israeli state in Palestine has been a massive politicising influence. We have witnessed a huge wave of student direct action through campus encampments, both in Ireland and abroad. This has been a brilliant development, especially in light of what appeared to be a complete disengagement of the student population from student activity post-Covid, political or otherwise.

While we should certainly be wary of any promises from universities of "task forces" of

"working groups", which seem like attempts to stall and slow momentum, these encampments have been a great demonstration that organised collective action does work, and that students have the power to achieve political aims.

We have also seen a huge increase in political consciousness as a consequence of the genocide, not least the normalisation of calls for liberation, rather than ceasefire. Young people are beginning to see through the lies of the aforementioned "rules-based order". They are seeing the complicity of the EU and beginning to question if they were "ever really the good guys". We are beginning to see a slight decrease in favourability towards the EU. While it still sits north of 80%, this is still a start. A good part of that may be because of the rise of the far right and the media's focus on migration, but part of it is absolutely due to the EU's complicity in Palestine.

However, this shows that we must be unabashed in our condemnation of the EU.

Immigration isn't the problem with the EU.

The problem is the EU's economic control.



The problem is the EU's military initiatives.

The problem is its barefaced neoliberalism, with the privatisation and austerity, enforced by the EU's iron fist.

At the moment, the narrative is completely in the hands of the right. Maybe that's a consequence of the establishment "Left" parties having completely bought in to the EU. However, we shouldn't be afraid to make that point. It would be disastrous if that ground were to ceded.

The revolutionary potential of the youth should not be understated. There is more of an appetite for organised struggle among young people.

67% of people between the ages of 16-24 are favourable to trade unions. It is young workers who are predominantly in outsourced and casualised work, and they understand the role of organised labour. And young people are willing to act on this.

CATU, the Community Action Tenants Union, has brought the union model to the housing struggle, and is predominately made up of people under the age of 25.

Last year, with the Iceland strikes, I would estimate that nearly half of the workers that went out on strike were under the age of 25. Interestingly, as a result of the housing crisis, many of these workers lived at home and didn't pay rent. They therefore didn't have the same barriers to going out on strike and taking prolonged industrial action.

However, it doesn't seem that the ICTU unions are interested in organising younger workers.

SIPTU no longer have a youth committee. FÓRSA and Mandate have both shut down their youth committees in the past when they've become too "uppity". Mandate only recently voted down a proposal to have a member on their NEC as an observer with speaking rights. All we see is a lot of posturing but little tangible

action to facilitate youth engagement.

In a way, we find ourselves back at an infant stage of the workers' movement. The vast majority of private sector workers are un-unionised, and most of them probably haven't been asked to join one. In the US and elsewhere, we are seeing the rebirth of a grassroots form of union organising. We should be encouraging that and facilitating it in Ireland, whether the ICTU unions are interested or not.

Finally, we should be explicit in our union organising, whether it be in the workplace, or in the community, that it is class-based and militantly so.

It is not social partnership that we are struggling for – it is socialism.

So what can we take from all this?

It is the responsibility of the older generation to allow the youth to meaningfully participate in all areas of the struggle. Let us take initiatives, and let us make mistakes.

It is the responsibility of the communist youth to take advantage of the great revolutionary potential of the young people in this country, and advance even further the struggle for socialism.

**BABY WIPES
AND
ETHNIC CLEANSING**



**SIONNACH Ó
PHIONDAR**

**LUPILU, ASHDOD, AND THE
NAKBA**

Lupilu baby wipes have become the target of a nationwide campaign, as part of the broader BDS movement targetting Israeli goods. As the campaign escalates, it is worth looking back at the history of the land on which they are produced to understand why they are an important target of the BDS movement in Ireland.

The story of Ashdod, where the factory is located, is a reminder that Israeli goods, no matter how trivial and everyday, rely on the murder and forced displacement of Palestinians for the infrastructure needed to manufacture them.

In 1948, the area that would become the Israeli city of Ashdod was the site of Isdud, a

beyond the scope of this article, but I would encourage you to explore it nonetheless, as it makes the injustice of what was to happen in the last century even more stark.

Due to its strategically important location, Isdud was central to the 1948 war, with the Egyptian Sixth Battalion setting up position there in May. The following month, following an Israeli ground invasion, most of the local population fled.

That October, the Egyptians were forced to retreat after three nights of bombing by the Israeli Air Force. Shortly after, 300-500 residents of Isdud were brought out onto the street by Zionist forces. Males over 17

were taken prisoner, while women, children and the elderly were forced south to Majdal.

Abdullah Zaqut, a Palestinian teacher, recalls that in Majdal “there was a curfew”.

We lived in a ghetto. Go out to work with guards, and return with guards.

It wasn't long before they were forced south again, mostly to Gaza.

Before the 1948 war and Nakba,

Isdud was part of land that had been allocated to an Arab state of Palestine by the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine.

Isdud did not become part of Israel through diplomacy or international relations; it was taken by force. It was taken by bombs and it was taken by the forced expulsion of those who would not flee.

In the 1950s, Zionist settlements were formed in and around Isdud. In 1956,



Palestinian town in the Gaza district with a population of just over 5,300 people. Of course, Isdud's history began long before 1948.

In her 2005 book, *Palestine: A Guide*, journalist Mariam Shanin notes that Isdud was a continuous settlement from the 17th century BCE until the Nakba. Located near the coast and along the main route between Palestine and Egypt, it was an integral part of international trade in the region for centuries.

The rich archaeological history of Isdud is

Ashdod was officially established as a city. In the Israeli version of events, it is modern, progressive, and industrial.

Robert Chaim, one of the founding settlers, claimed when he arrived that “there was only sand and sea”. He went on to become the city’s first mayor and proudly claimed in the same interview that “this is a city that has never know ethnic discrimination”.

It is likely that some of the same families who were displaced in 1948 have once again been displaced by bombs again in 2024.

What is certain is that the same imperialist and capitalist interests that drove the destruction of Isdud in 1948, are doing the same in Gaza in today.

We have already seen greedy developers and real estate moguls begin to advertise Gazan land as if it

was theirs to give away. While it may seem impossible to imagine that people could forget Gaza, it was only eight years after the Nakba that Haim arrived in Isdud to find only “sand and sea”.

The erasure of Palestinian history has always been a necessary feature of the Zionist project and we must be prepared for them to deploy the same tactics they have always have.

Bear this in mind when you see packs of baby wipes in Lidl made in “Ashdod, Israel” – that Ashdod, Israel would not exist without the depopulation and destruction of Isdud, Palestine. The very production of the wipes is directly linked to the ethnic cleansing of

Palestine in 1948.

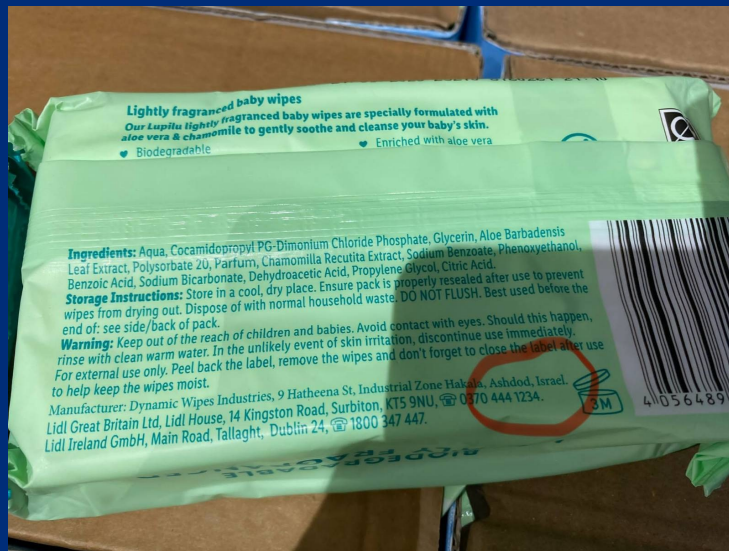
The sale of these wipes contributes to Israel’s economy and therefore funds the apartheid infrastructure of the state, and the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

This is why we call for a boycott of Lupilu baby wipes made in Israel. This is why communities across Ireland have been removing them from the shelves of their local Lidl shops. The people of Ireland will not stand idle in the face of genocide.

Lidl has also started to stock wipes produced by Cien in Israel.

From Killarney to Newry, BDS and Palestine solidarity groups have been engaging in direct action-based pressure campaigns to remove Lupilu baby wipes made in Israel from sale in their local Lidl branches.

To get involved, contact your local Palestine group or reach out to BDS Belfast who have been spearheading the campaign.



WHY JOIN THE CYM?



cym.ie/join

Who are we?

The Connolly Youth Movement is a communist and republican youth movement. We are a cadre-based organisation. Which means that all of members are highly dedicated activist committed to achieving socialism in Ireland.

What do we do?

The CYM agitates and organises around a wide variety of issues. From nation-wide problems like the housing question to local issues facing our communities.

**Membership is open to anyone
resident in Ireland aged 16-30**

Join the fight for a socialist republic

Join the Connolly Youth Movement

