

Forward

Youth Culture Democracy

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A Name For The Nameless

'Educate Your Child' – The Cuban Experience in Cildcare

Previous editions have *Forward* have looked at the problems of childcare provision in this country and they are by know well known to most readers, soaring costs, lack of spaces, lack of training for workers, poor pay and conditions for workers, and almost no union penetration, all these combining to create an industry that doesn't live up to the standards the education and care of our future generations need and deserve.

The 2005 budget was flaunted as the 'childcare' budget and we saw the typical and usual government response – business incentive. They created tax incentives and cuts to encourage more private enterprise in the industry. Their solution is increasingly to put the education and care of our children in the hands of profiteers. As usual the government's number one concern is to look after the business elite rather than the future.

The point of this article, however, is not to go over old ground again. It is to show another experience of childcare provision one that puts the child, the parent and the worker first.

In 1961, just 2 years after the revolution, the Cuban state began its commitment to help in the care and education of the very young, 0-6 year olds. It was starting from a very poor position. The previous years of US sponsored dictatorships were busy with drugs, gambling and prostitution and forcibly opposed any education initiatives taken by communities. In 1961 only 1,600 children were cared for by state or charitable organizations. Today around 874,000, approximately 99.5% of the 0-6 years olds in Cuba, are helped cared for by the State through childcare centers, community projects and family assistance.

This massive transition and development came through a dedicated commitment by the Cuban revolution and the Cuban people to make poverty history in their own lives and their own communities and is a living experience of an alternative child centered industry, as opposed to our profit orientated industry.

The State helps through two ways, institutional and non-institutional. The institutional care is through childcare centers and education facilities accommodating the geographic and employment conditions of the area it is in. This is very important in the industrialized cities. Accommodation is made for the increasing numbers of women employment and in third level studies who have young children. Paid maternity leave has been extended to the first year of the child. This acknowledges the hugely important role family plays in the early years of development. But also to allow women to return to work or continue work centers are set up in accessible locations for state provision.

The non-institutional method of care and education operates through the 'Educate Your Child' scheme which is focused on the family and community. This care now includes 70.9% of children between 0 and 6 and is extremely important in the rural and mountain communities.

This care aims to train families and communities in the latest education and health initiatives for children. Training and education becomes a key area for the carers so they themselves can educate in the best way possible. The plan seeks to integrate the education, health, and cultural systems into this key area of life. The women's movement and organizations also participate and develop the plan to meet the ever changing, progressing and developing Cuban society.

The 'Educate Your Child' plan focuses on individualized care for the first year or two so family plays the largest role here in the educating the infant. From 2-6 'group care' becomes the major player and 'joint activity' the concentrated area of development, teaching the child to interact and through interaction.

In Cuba across the 0-6 year old children in care there is 1 carer to every 6 children. This in a 'developed' country is impressive but considering the economic blockade on Cuba, the loss of trading partners, and the state of underdevelopment it has to come from, is a major achievement one that should be commended and learnt from. On a budget far less than the Irish equivalent the Cuban state manages to help care for more children and in a far superior manner and method than here in Ireland.

How have they achieved this? Through a State and people dedicated to the development and progress of society as a whole and not just elites, as in Ireland. We should be ashamed of our state and its ignorance of childcare provision and disregard for our future and we should learn how it can be done by this living alternative.

All details of the Cuban system have been taken from a UNICEF report from 2002

An Ghaeilge – Symbol of Resistance

A language means many things to many people. For everyone though it is a means of communication. You communicate thoughts and opinions through the language. But with different languages there are different outlooks. With different languages there is different literatures. There are different worlds. When you start speaking the conquerors language, you start viewing the world through the eyes of the conqueror. You are no different to the conqueror and there is no need to fight for a separate identity (country). But there is another aspect of colonisation and that is to make the native language the inferior language. Because of colonisation Indo-European Languages are the most widespread languages in the World. With the development of the mass media, the Anglo-American culture has swamped the Irish culture.

Many of Ireland's revolutionaries were Irish Speakers. Not only that but the majority of them were involved in promoting the language. It is often said that the Gaelic League bred the revolutionaries of 1916. Six out of the seven signatories of the Proclamation were members of the Gaelic League. Their philosophy was that to promote the Irish language freely, Ireland had to be Independent.

Is it a coincidence that the poorest regions in Ireland are the Gaeltachtaí, even to this day. I hear you say that can't be so, what with TG4 and Irish getting fashionable, but the latest figures from the Census indicate the worst area in the 26 counties for unemployment is in the Donegal Gaeltacht, Gaoth Dobhair. Is it no wonder that a lot of great Irish Socialists have come from the Gaeltacht, e.g. Máirtín Ó Cadhain and Peadar O' Donnell. When Hyde said he had the mission of "deanglicising Ireland", Ireland was a lot more culturally Gaelic then than it is now. When the Free State was founded in 1922 there were 250,000 native Irish Speakers. Today according to Donncha Ó hEallaithe's research there are only 20,000 native Irish speakers in the Gaeltacht. The Census has stopped collecting information on Monoglot Irish speakers since 1981. Today there is possibly no Irish Monoglots left, or if there is the amount would be less than your fingers on your hands. While I would not be a supporter of Monoglots, being that it restricts your world view to one culture rather than many other cultures. But the fact that there are no Irish language Monoglots show that they can't live in an Irish language World, that the English language permeates nearly every facet of the ordinary Gaeltacht life. Which makes it harder to restore the language, because the '*Seoiníní*' say why speak Irish when you can use English in every facet of life. The fact of the decline of the monoglots shows that their linguistic rights were not respected and therefore had to change to English for basic services. Daniel O' Connell argued that in order to talk to

the enemy (the English) you had to talk in their language, a policy which has decimated the language ever since. The majority of TD's in Leinster House can speak Irish, but don't too often talk it in the houses.

But it needn't be a depressing situation. We can promote the language. What can you do to help promote the Irish language? First of all if you don't know it, learn it. There are classes all over the country. If you have the language, there is no point learning the language if you don't use it. There are regular social events through Irish, which will help you to improve your fluency and make new friends! As well as that there is a wide Irish language media from TG4, Raidió na Gaeltachta, Foinse, Lá and many Irish language websites. You can get different services through Irish. You can buy Irish language Books, CD's Posters, cards, Computer software, etc. You can even get an Irish language telephone service. Since the inception of the Official Languages Act 2003 for the 26 counties, you are entitled to a service through Irish. For areas lacking Irish you can campaign for promotion in those areas. And one last thing, nearly every Irish person has cúpla focail because of the education system. Use those cúpla focail in your daily life. Like using Dia dhuit, conas atá tú, Go raibh maith agat, Tá fáilte romhat and Slán whenever you meet people. Most people will understand them and you will get a positive response most of the time. The Irish language is a beautiful language, and indeed the Gaelic culture is a beautiful culture full of history, art, music, dance and when you take part in this culture you will see it for yourself. Remember Gaelicising the country starts with yourself. Think of any area in your life that doesn't have Irish and Gaelicise it.

Go n-éirí leat.

Caoimhín Ó Cadhla

Rhythm of Time by Bobby Sands

There is an inner thing in every man, do you know this thing my friend?
It has withstood the blows of a million years, and will do so to the end.

It was born when time did not exist, and it grew up out of life,
It cut down evil's strangling vines, like a slashing searing knife.

It lit fires when fires were not, and burnt the mind of man,
Tempering leadened and hearts to steel, from the time that time began.

It wept by the waters of Babylon, and when all men were a loss,
It screeched in writhing agony, and it hung bleeding from the cross.

It died in Rome by lion and sword, and in defiant cruel array,
And the deathly word was "Spartacus," along the Appian way.

It marched with Wat the Tyler's poor, and frightened lord and king,
And it was emblazond in their deathly stare as e'er a living thing.

It smiled in holy innocence, before Conquistadors of old,
So meek and tame and unaware, of the deathly power of gold.

It burst forth through pitiful Paris streets, and stormed the old Bastille,
And marched upon the serpent's head, and crushed it 'neath it's heel.

It died in blood on buffalo plains, and starved by moons of rain,
it's heart was buried at Wounded Knee, but it will come to rise again.

It screamed aloud by Kerry lakes, as it was knelt upon the ground,
And it died in great defiance, as they coldly shot it down.

It is found in every light of hope, that knows no bounds nor space,
It has risen in red and black and white, it is there in every race.

It lies in the hearts of heroes dead, it screams in tyrants eyes,
It has reached the peaks of mountains high, and come searing 'cross the skies.

It lights the dark of this prison cell, it thunders forth it's might,
It is "the undauntable thought" my friend, that thought that says "I'm right!"

Endemic Homelessness

Homelessness is now a chronic problem across the country but by far the worst affected area is Dublin's inner city, although it should be noted these people come from various places and counties to Dublin for whatever chances they can get here. It is hard to walk a hundred meters without seeing numerous homeless people, and most of these are young. There are charities like Focus Ireland and the Simon community who organize shelters and food where they can but this is never enough and more importantly never tackles the real issues behind the problem.

The lack of adequate housing and the inability of the state to provide are political issues. Organisations and charities that want to make a difference had better start campaigning for a change of government and ultimately a change of economic system. We are in the middle of a building boom and yet we cannot house many of our young people.

Recent reports show almost all homeless suffer from respiratory problems like asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia. Very high levels of emotional and psychological problems have also been recorded and it is also well known the abuse of drugs, in particular heroin, that this community of people suffers.

In 2002 the count of homeless people was 5,800 this figure has been consistently on the increase, the same count in 1989 recorded 1,500 homeless. We could now conservatively estimate over 6000 people and this after the so called 'celtic tiger'.

Capitalism has failed to and will continue to fail to tackle these problems for it is driven by the need to continually increase profits. The creation of profit for those owners of large amounts of capital is this systems number one motivation. The needs of the few come first. The demands of the wealthy make the living and dignity of the many ordinary people and the most vulnerable in our society impossible.

Crime, Gangs and Terror

When this article was being written there had been 26 gun murders in this state. Most of these happened in an execution style fashion, and most were related to gangs, crime and drugs. The general public was particularly shocked and appalled by the recent murder of an innocent 20 year old apprentice plumber Anthony Campbell who just happened to be doing the wrong job at the wrong time when hit men came to assassinate Martin 'Marlo' Hyland a known supplier of large quantities of cocaine and heroin.

There are always causes and reasons behind explosions of violence such as we have witnessed in the last number of years. Yet the mainstream media and state are not willing to honestly investigate because they know what they will find, decades of neglect and underdevelopment, poor education and public services, an almost total lack of meaningful amenities for working class communities, and most importantly an impoverishment of youth culture and pride.

The media knows these are the causes but instead of presenting open and critical debate on this they force the 'law and order' line down our throat. They invite guests from the NYPD flaunting the 'success' of zero tolerance while brushing aside the murder of a number of innocent black people by the police in New York as a necessary evil. The 'blueshirts' Fine Gael have a field day presenting themselves as the 'law and order' Party, and McDowell and the government pass

increasingly oppressive legislation grossly violating our civil rights and strengthening a police force that is loosing respect very rapidly.

The obvious crime problem in this country is of course a 'law and order' issue but first and foremost it is a social problem with social causes that need to be tackled and if not all the reactionary legislation in the world isn't going to make squat of difference. Campaign groups, independent TD's, the Communist Party, Sinn Fein councillors and TD's have been saying this for years. These words have fall on deaf ears and their actions get blocked, because the State's, both north and south, do not wish to help communities help themselves as this will threaten state power and the dominance of big business.

It is largely young working class men who get involved in criminal gangs and it is largely these who both carry out the murders and get murdered themselves. Why? They do because it gives them a sense of power and false sense of control over their own destinies and lives, one they know they cannot get in the legal real world of employment, mortgages, rent, loans, tax, etc. It is escape from at best a 9-5 office job of incredible boredom and at worst unemployment and continual boredom. The life of crime and gang offers temporary control, power, escape and freedom, but it isn't real and it is doesn't last.

To really escape the depressing reality that faces us as young working class people we need to face it, to understand it, and ultimately to change it by our own actions. We need to be proud of who we are, of our tradition, of our culture. Only then can we start to create and control our own destinies and begin to achieve real power over our own lives, what we all ultimately seek. The state will condemn us and call us 'vigilantes'; they will harass us and attack us because if we seek power we ultimately must confront the state.

To resort to criminal gangs is the easy way out, and only ends up in deeper enslavement. The harder but wiser option is to respect and educate yourself and your community, to begin very slowly and in small ways to seize control of power, first by voting, then by campaigning, then by organising and ultimately by leading. We have a proud and long working class tradition in this country. We must learn it, we must use it and we must continue it.

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Which is the Bigger Scandal?

It cost the state and us taxpayers 25 million, through the McCracken and then later the Moriarty Tribunals, to find out that Charles Haughey robbed us of over 11 million!! The current FF leadership is heavily involved in this scandal as it was Bertie Aherne as finance minister who signed of many of the now infamous blank cheques to Haughey. It was also the taxpayers who paid some of the outrageous legal fees the Tribunals built up. Once again it is ordinary people who pay heaviest for the corruption and abuse of elite politicians. Ireland's government really is a committee for managing the affairs of the capitalist class, as Connolly understood it.

2006 in Review

This years has been an eventful with not much to celebrate and a lot to mourn. As with all negatives a positive is not far behind. From the constant attacks upon ordinary people's services and livelihoods the struggle emanates and grows. People are beginning to link privatisation to the European Union to imperialism and to Ireland's partitionist states.

The corrupt, undemocratic and parasitic nature of both states on this island have been plain to see in 2006 and the Connolly Youth Movement will continue to show this and continue to fight this, hand in hand with their brothers and sisters in Ireland and across the globe.

Shell to Sea

In 2005 5 men from Mayo were jailed for defending their family and community against the dangerous and harmful interests of 3 multinational companies, Shell, Statoil and Marathon. Three months after their imprisonment and due to public support and demonstration the 5 men were released and rejoined their family and friends in Rossport to continue their opposition to the reckless greed of the Shell consortium.

2006 saw an escalation in violence in the community. The State has thrown its full oppressive and violent force behind the consortium and has laid siege to the community and protesters. Beatings are regular yet no arrests, other than the initial 5, have been made. The demands of the Shell to Sea campaign are reasonable, the safe refining of the gas off shore. They are opposed to the dangerous refining of the gas in a community where one accident or general wear and tear could be disastrous, yet rarely does the campaign get a fair hearing. The media have thrown the full power of its vast propaganda machine behind the State and the multinationals. Class lines have been drawn and class interests are obvious for all to see.

Sale of Aer Lingus

It appears our government learns nothing from experience. We have all witnessed the disastrous privatisation of Eircom, and only few will comment otherwise, and in 2006 the government made further moves to privatise another key state structure Aer Lingus. If the Eircom example isn't enough we only have to look across the sea to the debacle and dangers of privatised transport in England to see it isn't good for the workers or consumers. And with Michael O'Leary, the union bashing bastard, looking to get his greedy paws on it we should be even more opposed. But to presume our government can learn is to presume they want to learn and that is where we are wrong. They aren't driven by the agenda of what is good for this island as a whole they are, as Connolly said, but a committee for managing the affairs of the capitalist class, O'Leary and co.! It appears early in 2007 industrial action is on the cards it seems workers and unions are realising the negative impacts of privatisation, lets hope we can apply these to future struggles.

Shannon and Torture

In February of this year it came to light in newspaper reports that Shannon airport is being used, on top of the transportation of over 600,000 US troops on their way to commit murder, to transport kidnapped 'terrorist' suspects to countries like Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia to be tortured for information or forced confessions. We in Ireland know full well the use of torture on 'suspects' and the often horrible miscarriages of justice that take place. We have suffered at the hands of British torture, now we are helping these same scenes take place in far away countries, away from the eyes of our 'democratic' government.

The government and state was condemned severely by the recent report (Jan. 07) by the EU Temporary CIA Committee which said Minister Dermot Ahern had failed to answer questions, only the EU itself fails to answer our questions about its growing militarism!

Nothing has shown the weak, subservient nature of the 26 county State more than the use of Shannon airport. Our State, both government and security forces, have not the 'balls' to stand up to the US, not even to question the US, as they represent vital foreign direct investment to this neo-colony. The 'Republic' is a pathetic state.

Loyalism and Reaction

Last April witnessed a brief, if highly publicised, skirmish on the streets of Dublin. We would do well not to over emphasise the significance of this minor event. The 'love Ulster parade' came to town and with it its inevitable reaction. Paisley and co. wanted to achieve one of two things, either not to be allowed march or to march but be violently stopped to 'prove' protestants aren't welcome in Ireland and thus further cement the culture of partition. This is loyalism in a weak and pathetic state desperately clinging to the past. Those who threw stones ultimately played into the hands of loyalism and strengthened partition.

1916, Commemorate and Emulate

Quickly following on from the love Ulster parade came the 90th anniversary of the 1916 Rising. Connolly Youth, through Rising Youth, along with comrades, from Eirigi, Sinn Fein, Republican Socialist Youth Movement, Conradh na Gaeilge and many non-aligned democrats organised and partook in numerous events during the celebrations from handing out proclamation to postering town and organising walking tours. This time gave us opportunity to present Ireland's democratic non-sectarian tradition, in stark contrast to the love Ulster events.

The state commemoration made a mockery of the politics of Connolly and Pearse and turned into a recruiting parade for the 'free state' army. Rising Youth finished its celebration with a great gig in the Conradh with the audience entertained and brought on a world-wide tour of working class struggle by Pol MacAdaim and Anne Feeney. The success of these events has led Rising Youth to continue into the new year and many more events and campaigns will grow from this small but important example of republican, democratic and communist unity.

Loss of a Working Class Hero and Leader

Michael O'Riordain 1917-2006

On the 18th May 2006, aged 88 Michael O'Riordain former General Secretary of the Communist Party of Ireland and Spanish civil war veteran passed away. The 'Red' O'Riordain had dedicated his life to the international working class and had been a foremost Marxist activist in this country for many years. For fighting in Spain and for his communist views Mick was imprisoned without trial during the second World War in the Curragh prison camp. A few years after imprisonment Mick was key in founding the Irish Workers Party, a forerunner to the Communist Party of Ireland. On

his death, as is often the case with great men and women, many who had nothing to do with him in life came out of the closet with praise, there is no doubt had Mick been able to see this he would have thought it funny. The only fitting tribute to Mick is to continue his work of building the international working class movement, the CYM is committed to doing this.

Harney's Resignation and Failure

It has been headline news repeatedly and numerous media folk and celebrities have made point of it, our health service is a joke, a joke that would be hilarious if it wasn't directly causing the death of many each year. The CYM feared the worst when Mary Harney took over, an individual driven by a commitment to maximising profits of Ireland's capitalist elite indeed she even married one. She is opposed to what our health service needs, a State commitment to local service, education and prevention. On a small budget a lot can be done this way, take Cuba's first class service as an example.

Mary Harney and her ideologies failure to improve the service were confirmed and admitted in September of this year when she resigned as Party Leader of the Progressive Democrats, neither progressive nor democratic! A Minister in command of her portfolio would never have been under threat in her party, a Minister failing miserably could not hold onto her party.

2007 holds many more struggles and points of conflict we must learn from each year to strengthen ourselves for the next.

Gang of Four – Interview

Tripod, 10th Dec '06

Gang of four are back (to cash in?).

Judging by the set list comprising of their first two albums, this appears to be true.

No new material. Last year they released 'Return the Gift' which was basically a cover version of their first album 'Entertainment'. So maybe this is inevitable given the resurgence in this style of funk punk but where their peers, Mission of Burma and The Fall have continued to record and release new material that is vital, the only unfinished business of Gang of 4 is the paycheck. So are they really just looking for Franz Ferdinand's audience?

On the night they played their first two albums almost in their entirety.

Occasionally they soar with songs like, 'Essence Rare', 'Damaged Goods', 'Paralysed' and 'Why Theory'. More often than not the set sounds uninspired, and you could hear this in the playing. Apart from lead singer Jon King hopping around the stage like a loon engaging us with his energy, they lacked enthusiasm.

Afterwards we interviewed a fairly 'tired and emotional' Andy Gill (Guitarist.)

Here's what he had to say for himself

How did you guys meet and where are you from?

Andy Gill: Me and Jon (King) were mates in school, at 14 or 15, and then we both went to university together and... the band started in Leeds and that was it.

How did you get your name?

A.G: The Chinese twats!

How does it feel to be back together again and is the enthusiasm still there from you guys and the crowds?

A.G: I think it is. The last couple of years it's been really strong everywhere we go. Fantastic reactions. We did that party outside of Dublin (electric picnic) and festivals in Glasgow, Spain, Portugal and Brazil. The reaction is always the same – it's always really good people that are bang into it. I didn't know what to expect in Brazil. No idea.

Do they (South Americans) get the lyrical content?

A.G: They do. I mean our records you can't get them in the shops they're bootlegs, but yeah they're in to it.

So have you played in Ireland previously?

A.G: Last summer was the first time we ever played. Back in 1980 we were going to come over here and they said “Okay, if you want to go to Ireland that adds £20,000 to your insurance.” And I was thinking ‘you wha?’ And that’s what it was. Because of the “perceived troubles”. It was such an oversight. I’m tremendously glad we’ve come back here.

Your known as a very political band through the nature of your lyrics and songs, do you see yourself that way?

A.G: Gang of Four ye, the thing we do first and foremost we talk about stuff that happens to us, our friends, the people we know and a lot of it is observational; ‘Well this is what I’ve seen happen.’ It’s never ever about saying ‘Vote Labour!’ ‘Vote Socialist!’ Never ever about that.

A lot of it seems to be taken from Marxist or Socialist theory?

A.G: A lot of it. Absolutely. Y’know, where do you take your ideas from? You take it from the stuff your interested in. What we were interested in was strong ideas that we thought were true ideas. “Non-bullshit” ideas. It’s not like ‘We are socialists! We’re going to bang on about that and forget everything else! We’re just going to go on about socialist propaganda.’ No way! That’s not what we’re interested in. Whatever’s a good idea we’ll hold it up to the light and if it’s true we’ll hold on to it and do something with it. And that involves a lot of Marxism.

Was the group active in a political manner in the late ‘70s, given the polar nature of the country in this era?

A.G: There was constant fighting in the streets... We were very active. Gang of Four were one of the first bands, white bands to be involved in Rock Against Racism, and one of the first white bands to be involved in Rock Against Sexism. We were absolutely right at the beginning of that. But we didn’t have an agenda, I can’t emphasis that enough.

It comes across from the lyrics that you kinda did.

A.G: We didn’t have an agenda. The things that we believed in we believed in. If something came up we would discuss it. ‘Are we doing this?’ ‘Yeah, I really believe in this. I don’t care if it costs us money. We believe in it and we’ll do it.’ We are not like *Billy Bragg*.

Billy Bragg’s not a bad guy!!!

A.G: Did I say he was a bad guy? He’s a lovely bloke. He really fucking is. But the contradiction is that his version of it is you always make left-wing music- whatever that is (!). And he’ll do a lot of labour songs. That’s fine. It’s not our thing.

Your debut album ‘Entertainment’ is generally considered by fans and critics alike to be your best. Do you agree and does the band agree?

A.G: I think it’s a great, great record. I think we put our finger on the thing that was interesting to us. It’s very hard to keep doing the same thing – you don’t want to keep doing the same thing.

The second album is different

A.G: Yes, it is. I think it’s absolutely as good as the first album.

It sounds a lot more funky and a little more laid back.

A.G: It’s slightly more funky! On the first record there is a feeling of intensity. It does boil in to anger. In a great way. There’s less anger in the second record, but it’s good. But ‘Paralyse’ is on the second album and if that’s not angry I don’t know what is.

So the sleeve art-work of ‘Entertainment’ features three drawings of a cowboy exploiting a Native American, which yourself and Jon designed. Why these particular images, which are so distinctly American?

A.G: I think... I have to say I’m obsessive about American Indians, totally obsessive since I was five years old. It’s something that stayed with me all my life. Something that’s always upset me is there incredible maltreatment. And Jon was in Belgium for some reason, but he was looking in the t.v guide and he wanted to find out what to watch, and he saw this thing – it’s a very famous cowboys and Indians series (*struggles for the reference he’s looking for...*), but in

Europe they have this series that everybody watched. He was looking in the guide and that was the image that we used. We took it, and blocked out the faces so they couldn't be seen – got to be careful we've been sued for quite a few things!

Who came up with the slogans for it?

A.G: That's just me and Jon going 'what do you think?' Blah, blah, blah and 'here?' Blah, blah, blah.

Your song 'Ether' references "Long Kesh prison". It's the most overtly political song on 'Entertainment'. Given the outcome of that situation – ten men dead – does this change the context of the song and the way in which you play it live? Particularly in Ireland tonight?

A.G: When we wrote that song we were disgusted at the British treatment of the prisoners. That's how that song was written. We were sick. When I think about the song, it's not just about Northern Ireland and the problems there... It's about the relationship with your normal life. What Jon's singing about, is his own aspirations. It's what we all think. We don't all sit around thinking about the awful political problems in the world. What we do is think about our own lives.

But politics relates so much.

A.G: We think about what's good for us don't we? We think 'I want to get a flat screen t.v.', politics and the way those things relate. We talk about our lives and while we are getting on with this, The British are torturing these people in Northern Ireland. That song was written in 1979, but change a couple of words it could be last year, could be Guantanamo.

What grabbed you first musically – was it just punk or other influences?

A.G: Punk had very little influence on Gang of Four. First off, there's Bob Dylan, reggae, we loved The Who.

Something about Dr. Feelgood?

A.G: Dr. Feelgood, I will hold my hand up – the most influential band on Gang of Four. Totally. The thing I loved about Dr. feelgood... Have you ever seen Dr. Feelgood live? Fuckin' hell! These people came from Canvey Island. I don't know if you've ever been there. I went this summer – I recommend every person to go. You would not believe what it's like!

Where is it?

A.G: It's East London. But way, way east. It's on the Thames – it's an Island on the Thames. You can't believe it – go there! Because it's the most amazing thing you'll ever see in your life! It's the biggest shit – hole in Britain, anywhere in the world. It's worse than America, and Canvey Island came up with one of the best bands that ever existed. To me. Awesome.

Have you written or recorded any new Gang of Four stuff?

A.G: We've got a great song on the go at the moment. I'm so excited I can't tell you.

Is there anyone releasing music today that you feel is innovative in their approach?

A.G: No. Nobody is. People now it's pathetic. They're an abysmal bunch of twats.

Are you saying it's all shit? Or are you talking about the mainstream? Do you take much interest in the underground scene?

A.G: I do. I listen to everything that's going on. There's so many bands that copy Gang of Four – Bloc Party, Franz Ferdinand, Blah de Blah de. Do any of them take on board the ideas? No, they don't.

The ideas of... your lyrics?

A.G: Yeah, The wonderful thing about us was – I don't want to blow my own trumpet, but I will (*laughs heartily*). The thing is it's the most amazing music, structure, ideas – that's the thing! You've got these amazing ideas about what's going on in our lives combined with extraordinary musical ideas, that are ideas that we're not use to, they're new ideas. What pisses me off, you've got Bloc Party, The Futureheads, my mates...

Would you rate the Futureheads?

A.G: I love 'em. I think they're brilliant, but lets have some ideas.

What about cutting edge approaches to music? I mean you're talking about pretty mainstream acts here!

A.G: Absolutely. The thing is I get so many CD's coming to me all the time. I listen to this, I listen to that. My position about music is, what I want to do..(*trails off..*) we wanted to engage... I did art at university and I thought it was too self serving, too insular, too about it's own self and it didn't relate to or speak to normal people. You didn't have to have a degree to get the idea and that's what Gang of Four's about. It's not Kylie Minogue – God love her!

So Gang of Four were a subversive reaction to their era, what do you make of someone like Chris Morris through shows like 'Brass Eye'? Do you find it subversive or just offensive?

A.G: I think it is subversive. I think it's clever. Occasionally offensive. He's got my vote.

Forward in Struggle – International News

On October 16th, the Czech Republic's Interior Ministry dissolved the Czech Communist Youth Union (KSM) on the basis of its socialist program calling for common ownership of the means of production. This was despite international outcry against its plans, from not only the international communist and socialist movements, but numerous parliamentarians, intellectuals and celebrities, even Bono! The KSM is continuing its fight for socialism and is challenging the decision in the courts. For further information: <http://www.wfdy.org/infoksm2.htm>. The Connolly Youth Movement has already made demonstrations to the Czech Embassy, and was out protesting on the 13th December with WFDY members world-wide in solidarity and support for the KSM, against the Czech Government's actions. Get in contact join us!

In Latin America, the 'left' continues to win elections across the continent, and is helping create a powerful bloc in opposition to U.S. Imperialism. Hugo Chavez, champion of Socialism in the 21st Century, has been re-elected on the promise of furthering the Bolivarian revolution with this renewed mandate. However, we can no doubt expect some nasty tactics from the American supported opposition.

In Nicaragua, Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega has been returned to power after a gap of 16 years after winning the Presidential elections on November 5th. In Ecuador, radical leftist Rafael Correa has been elected president. Finally, Cuba remains defiant, despite exuberance by the Miami mafia and the Bush administration following Fidel's recent illness, Cuban Economy Minister José Luis Rodríguez remarked at the recent Non-Aligned Movement summit:

"In the hypothetical case that Comandante Fidel remains ill, would there be a change in Cuban policy toward a market opening? I can categorically say that is not foreseen, the Cuban people do not want that."

Fortunately, it would seem Cuba would have no fear from Miami based dissidents any time soon considering they spent their recent \$7 million worth of funding from the U.S. government on a chainsaw, Nintendo Game Boys and Sony PlayStations, mountain bikes, leather coats and Godiva chocolates. All the more amazing considering Cuba's internationally re-known health service has a budget of about \$1.2 million, including its export of Cuban doctors worldwide, from Operation Miracle in Venezuela, to relief efforts in Pakistan following the earthquake in 2005.

Speaking of the Non-Aligned Movement, it recently concluded its 14th Summit in Havana, renewing its struggle against imperialism and colonialism and committing itself to re-vitalisation; all the more necessary after recent world events.

In Iraq, you are probably aware that Bush and Blair have been forced to backtrack as the country remains on verge of full scale civil war, with both making overtures to Syria and Iran to aid in the reconstruction of the country – illustrating all too clearly how much trouble the U.S. is now in. However, control over Iraq's oil resources remains firmly in American hands, and no doubt will remain so! We should not be afraid in recognising the importance of the Democrat win in the mid-terms helping lead to this.

Finally, at its conference in Riga, our brave friends at NATO are seeking to expand to include South East Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea as members. No doubt comrades it's for peace, freedom and national independence, rather than maintaining U.S. hegemony in the region!

While we shouldn't to be too optimistic, it does seem U.S. Imperialism is on the back track, at least for the moment, and the left and anti-imperialist forces are beginning to grow again in size and confidence. It's about time we got our own act together in fighting against imperialism in our own neo-colony and statelet. As we can see, it's certainly not an impossible feat, and is in fact our obligation to our brothers and sisters struggling daily around the world.

Diego, Castro and the Roman Empire!

Maradona, one of the greatest footballers to play the beautiful game, has, in recent years become concerned and vocal about the state Latin Americans affairs and people in general round the globe. This renewed interest in other people and not just bags of the white stuff, seems to have come from his visits to Cuba and it's hospitals in which he recovered from a serious heart and weight problem. When in Cuba he met 'El Presidente' Fidel Castro and looks to have been greatly influenced by the long serving Cuban leader, going so far as to have a tattoo of him on his leg and one of Che Guevara on his shoulder for good measure. Previously Maradona had been an out spoken critic of the Falklands war and British Imperialism.

After recovering from his illness a new Maradona emerged, something like the old one who was loved world wide for his amazing skills on the pitch (England and Brazil excluded!), to take on new challenges and return to the public arena in a good light. He now has his very own variety/chat show on Argentinian T.V, where his guests have included, Pele, Hernan Crespo and the one that caught the eye and naturally caused the controversy, Fidel Castro. In this interview Maradona hailed the Cuban leaders revolution and its staying power and his experience that he has lent to the new South American struggle for a better way of life. Maradona also went on to say he would lead a march against George Bush when he attends the 'Summit of Americas' in Argentina to which Castro had not been invited.

In an age where football has been so commercialised and ruined by super bucks from mafia oligarchs like Abramovich(Chelsea), Berlesconi(AC Milan) and Glazer(Manchester United) it is indeed a treat to find the fighting working class spirit, of most football fans, left in players like Lucarelli and ambassadors like Maradona. The corrupt nature of big owners has crept into the game too in a grotesque fashion. Diving and cheating are common place and supported by managers and pundits. Tackling has become a yellow card offence and it is rare to see honest effort.

Ordinary hard working fans save up for years for overly priced tickets to view a dishonest sport that is rotting quickly to the core. The money pumped into the game is laundered money robbed from ordinary people in former soviet countries or Italy. This money buys and pays the wages of cheating players. It buys off referees and other teams as witnessed in Italy. Players, like Beckam, are now bought solely for their commercial value in Asia and other developing countries. Drugs are also a growing problem. It is fans like you and me who get robbed when we pay to see this sport in stadiums or on pay-per-view. It is disturbing even to consider the difference between the wages of a footballer and the wages of a fan. This inequality breeds frustration.

This is why when people like Maradona come out in opposition to privatisation and poverty and express the hopes and aspirations of ordinary people we should take them seriously and bit by bit try to take the peoples game away from the business men and back where it belongs in the hands of the people.

"For me he is a god" Maradona on Castro

"To me he is human trash" Maradona on Bush