Irish Marxist Review 9

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Editorial

Climate change gets real

On a global scale the most important political development over the last year, indeed over the last couple of years, has been the transformation of climate change from a well-grounded scientific prognosis to a palpable present reality.

This has included not only the familiar, but rapidly increasing, melting of the artic ice but also a heat wave in Alaska in June, ferocious temperatures of over 50ô C in Australia, the terrible Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, and the combination of heat wave and drought in California with the Polar Vortex across middle America down to the South. Now climate change has come to Ireland and Britain with the exceptional storms and floods of recent weeks.

Meanwhile the scientific evidence accumulates. Here is a graph which shows what is happening to ocean temperatures:
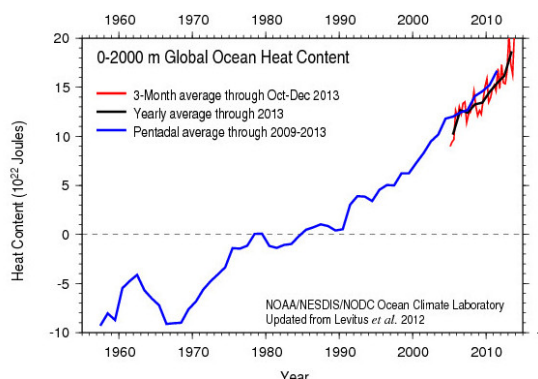
As the oceans heat up so storms become more frequent and more intense. The trajectory shown above guarantees that in the coming years (and not just later in the 21st century) we will see many repetitions, and worse, of the extreme weather that has ravaged Cork, Limerick, Somerset and the Thames Valley in the last month. In many cases the places affected will be enormously more vulnerable than modern Ireland or Britain and the human consequences will be immensely more tragic. One has only to think of a country like Bangladesh where many millions of people live on the banks of the countries three great rivers and where a one metre rise in sea levels would permanently flood one fifth of the land, home to 15 million people. All this will hit a country where people already live in extreme poverty and many literally starve on the streets. Its neighbour, India, is presently constructing the Indo-Bangladeshi barrier, a 3,406 kilometres (2,116 mi) fence of barbed wire and concrete nearly 3 metres high, allegedly to prevent smuggling of narcotics and already operates a shoot to kill border policy that has claimed 1000 lives.

While this kind of scenario is becoming an imminent prospect around the globe, the long term prospects are, of course, even more catastrophic. What will make it so deadly is not the change to the climate in itself, though that will be extremely serious, but the combination of this with a class divided capitalist system that ruthlessly subordinates people to profit. Vast areas of land will become infertile or uninhabitable, water and food supplies will be hit and the price of both forced up, generating conflicts, wars and refugee flows in the tens of millions which will be met with, at the least, callous indifference and, more likely, vicious repression.

Those who rule our planet, both the owners of the giant corporations and the governments of the major powers, are well aware of all this and have been so for many years if not decades. They have access to all the scientific data we do and much more besides. They have been repeatedly warned by their own (very cautious) expert committee, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and indeed politicians such as Barack Obama, Tony Blair, David Cameron and Chinese President, Xi Jinping, have all acknowledged the reality of humanly generated climate change.

Yet they have done and are doing nothing about it; or to be more precise they are doing nothing effective. The essence of what needs

to be done is simple and well understood: the world economy, not you, not your community, not Ireland but the **world** economy, which means its major players - USA, China, India, the EU, Russia etc - have to switch from being driven by greenhouse gas emitting fossil fuels (oil, coal and gas) to using renewable and sustainable sources of energy such as wind power, solar power and tidal power. This has to happen on a huge scale and it has to happen quickly. Nothing else and nothing less will do, but this is precisely what is NOT happening. Despite all the talk of sustainability and environmental awareness global carbon emissions, far from falling drastically, are rapidly rising. All of us, all of humanity, are being walked towards utter disaster.

It is of vital importance to understand clearly why this is happening. It is not ignorance, it is not even lack of compassion. Compassion for ordinary people is clearly not a characteristic that distinguishes our planet's rulers but its absence is not the main reason for their inaction. It is that, without exception, they are locked into capitalism, not only ideologically but politically and economically and capitalism is locked, by its very nature, into competitive capital accumulation.

This means that faced with even a small downturn in economic activity, say negative production of a couple of percent in a year (a recession) they are obliged to try to restore economic growth. It means that faced with a threat to the interests of their major companies - like Exxon Mobile, BP, Shell, Toyota, General Motors etc. all of whom are completely wrapped up in and committed to fossil fuels - they are compelled to defend them. Not one of the significant governments in the world is prepared to buck this iron logic. So for all the talk, for all the scientific reports, conferences and climate summits at Kyoto, Copenhagen, Rio and so on, nothing real happens.

Socialists have to face up to this reality, difficult as it is. We have to grasp the grim fact that both to prevent catastrophic runaway climate change in the future and to deal with the very damaging consequences of the climate change already built into the ecological system by past emissions, it will be necessary to break capitalism.

This is regardless of whether there is a mass movement against climate change. Obviously such a movement is desirable and should it emerge we will be an enthusiastic part of it, but it will not be a question of persuading or enlightening our rulers. It will be necessary, on pain of fascism and barbarism, to overthrow them and replace production for profit with planned production for human need which can only be done through working class struggle internationally.

The rise of racism

The picture is mixed but overall the last year or so has not been a good one for that global class struggle. Certainly the stunning momentum of 2011, with the Arab Spring and the general Occupy movements has been beaten back, most obviously in Egypt, and one consequence of this is that in a number of countries such as Thailand, Ukraine, and France it is the right that have been able to seize the initiative on the streets. With this has come an inevitable rise of racism, though it has taken different forms in different countries.

Ireland, though it has not experienced the dramatic political swings of some parts of the world is not immune to this process. The fact that over 5 years the working class movement, crippled by its Labour and reformist leadership, has not been able to offer a successful challenge to austerity has meant a predictable tendency to look for scapegoats, most obviously in the shape of 'foreigners' and immigrants.

The fact that this is predictable does not mean, however, that socialists can passively accept it or just shrug their shoulders. Because racism is such a mortal foe for the workers' movement we have an absolute duty to combat racism and wage an ideological and political battle against it. For this reason the question of racism dominates this issue of IMR.

We lead with an eloquent and powerful denunciation of the racism of the Irish state by Memet Uludag. The issue is of great importance because racism is widely portrayed as a phenomenon deriving from 'lack of education' and, by implication, from the lower working class. Uludag demonstrates clearly that racism in Ireland, which possesses a strong anti-racist popular tradition, comes from the top and is embedded in many of the practices of the state.

This is complemented by an equally powerful analysis of the rise (and decline) of the nazi Golden Dawn party in Greece by Nikos Loudos from SEK. Ireland is very fortunate in not having (yet!) a serious fascist party or movement. Loudos article, as he himself says, serves as a warning against the complacent idea that 'it couldn't happen here' as well as a guide as to how we can fight back.

These two major articles are complemented by book reviews by Conor Kennelly of Gary Younge's excellent analysis of Martin Luther King's famous 'I have a dream' speech and by Jim O'Connell of Marek Edelman's classic account the Warsaw ghetto uprising and John Molyneux's extended review of Sabby Sagall's newly published *Final Solutions* which offers a new approach to understanding the phenomenon of genocide.

Sectarianism in Northern Ireland is not the same as racism but it is clearly related and so it is highly appropriate that we also feature Seán Mitchell's outstanding analysis of how the recent rise of sectarianism in the six counties is a product of the combined crises of the economy and unionism. This is a long article but will repay reading and deals with a subject of crucial importance for socialism in Ireland. The perceptive reader will notice that Uludag, Loudos and Mitchell share a common underlying Marxist approach.

That same approach underpins Kieran Allen's discussion of the idea of a 'precariat' and Karl Gill's critique of 'intersectionality' and 'privilege theory'. As Allen points out the academic world resembles the clothing industry in its penchant for new and fashionable concepts. Both Allen and Gill understand why these concepts have a certain purchase in the present situation and do not reject them out of hand, but they also show how - like so many academic trends - they point away from a perspective of class struggle and working class self emancipation.

History

IMR is also committed to an ongoing engagement with Irish history and in this context we have Ruairi Gallagher's study of 'Irish Tories and social bandits of the 17th century', which follows on the work on the Whiteboys by Sean Moraghan in IMR 6 and Roy Johnston's review essay about the Larne/Howth gun runnings of 1914 partly based on the book *Hidden History: the Secret Origins of the First World War* by Gerry Docherty & Jim Macgregor. The latter requires a word of explanation.

Roy Johnston is a veteran Marxist and we are pleased to publish his contribution but we have reservations regarding the extent of the British Government's involvement in these events, which is his central claim. However we agree with Roy Johnston that this subject is worth further research as is the wider machinations of the secret state in the events the led to the outbreak of the war. So in the best tradition of debate we have published this article and hope it stimulates the interest of writers and historians of the period. We shall, of course, be returning to the question of the First World War in this anniversary year.

If the First World War was dominated by the horrors of trenches, today's technology permits the different horror of imperialist slaughter by remote control by means of drones. Mike Youlton reviews US anti-war activist, Medea Benjamin's recent book on 'Drone Warfare'.

Finally we have Stewart Smyth's welcoming review of Brian Roper's Marxist history of democracy which develops on themes explored by Tina MacVeigh in her IMR 8 article on 'Their democracy and ours'.

Is the Irish State Racist?

Memet Uludag

For revolutionary Marxists, there is an inextricable link between racism and capitalism. Capitalism is dependent on racism as both a source of profiteering, but more importantly as a means to divide and rule. Racism is necessary to drive a wedge between workers who otherwise have everything in common and every reason to ally and organize together, but who are perpetually driven apart to the benefit of the ruling class.[1]

The term racism refers to prejudice and discrimination against people on the grounds of their real or presumed ethnic origin. The main form of racism in the modern world has been, and remains today, 'White' European and North American racism against 'people of colour' such as Africans, Asians, Native Americans ('Indians') Arabs, Iranians, Polynesians etc. and their descendants. Sometimes, like today, this racism has also extended to certain Europeans such as the Polish, Bulgarians and Romanians and, there have been times, especially in Britain, when there was strong racism against the Irish. The focus of this article is state and institutional racism, this is because of the nature of the capitalist state is a more complex and therefore more difficult to expose and confront. It can be the most powerful form of racism as it can enable all other forms of racism to find ideological and political arguments to justify their racist acts.

From the beginnings of modern capitalist states; along with various state and national institutions, emerged the practical implementations and the ever developing complex policies of institutional/state racism. In the Irish Centre for Human Rights and National University of Ireland, Galway report *BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS: Tackling racism in Ireland at the level of the State and its institutions* the lack of political attention and understanding of state/institutional racism is described as follows:

> Direct racism and overt expressions of racism have dominated the debate on racism in Ireland in recent years. Racially motivated attacks and discrimination occurring in pubs, buses, restaurants and accommodation are apparent in the reports from the Gardaí and the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism. These attitudes and behaviours of the individuals who perpetrate the behaviour are, conceptually, what many regard as racism. The idea of examining racism as being state engineered or institutional is less accepted.[2]

Today, there is hardly any state or government in the world that will openly declare itself and its institutions as racist. Indeed many states have signed up to various regional and international agreements and treaties, such as various United Nations and European Union (EU) treaties whose focus is to eliminate racial discrimination. However, around the world, and especially in Western Europe, state/institutional racism today is more evident than ever. Especially within the EU institutional racism is taking the form of a joint, multi-state policy centrally imposed via EU level policies and practices.

State/institutional racism is indeed the most complicated and difficult form of racism to expose and confront because, unlike racist gangs on the streets, or the actions of racist political groups, it is not always easy to

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[1]Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, 'Race, Class and Marxism', *Socialist Worker*, 2011

[2]Louise Beirne and Dr Vinodh Jaich, *Breaking Down Barriers: Tackling Racism in Ireland at the level of the State and its institutions.* Irish Centre for Human Rights, National University of Ireland, Galway

recognise. State/institutional racism does not carry flags decorated with symbols of hatred. It cannot be banned; a state won't introduce laws against itself. Its own police force won't arrest and lock it behind bars in its own prisons. It is not easy to physically confront on the streets and smash. You cannot sit down with it and try to change its mind by putting forward reasonable arguments against racism. Why? Simply put, because it is not a group of human beings but a multi-dimensional system. What is more, you cannot ignore it by turning your back and walking away from it. It is not delivered by a simple-single act but as a process of complex, intermingled procedures affecting different aspects of peoples' everyday lives. As Ronit Lentin argues: 'Yes people can be individually racist, but by and large the issue is the state, because the state is the only body that has the power to actually exclude and include in racial terms [...]'.[3]

In the EU and the wider Western Europe, states have initiated various national campaigns and introduced various anti-discrimination laws but the issue of state/institutional racism has not gone away. Today, state/institutional racism has been proven to exist at various levels and in various forms in social and political life of nations. As socialists we must recognise state/institutional racism in every aspect of social, political and economic life to successfully identify its causes - the capitalist system and the state - and build our fight against it.

Legalising racism - Racism in Legislation

This involves the introduction of laws and legislation that discriminate against certain sections of the society or minority groups. One of the most significant examples of legislative racism being introduced into Ireland was in 2004. The Citizenship Referendum changed the progressive and non-ethnic constitutional right to Irish citizenship for babies born in Ireland with a nationality and ethnicity based racist law. With the changes, children born on the island of Ireland to parents who were both non-nationals would no longer have a constitutional right to citizenship of the Republic of Ireland.

Before the changes, Kieran Allen argued 'the citizenship and the rights that go with it [were] bestowed on anyone who is born in [Ireland]... But Justice Minister Michael McDowell [had] discovered a 'problem'. He [claimed] it gives foreign mothers an incentive to give birth here, causing crisis in maternity hospitals. Like a tabloid editor, he [had] coined a new phrase - 'citizenship tourism"[4]

In various countries such as Denmark, France, Belgium and Switzerland, governments have introduced - or attempted to introduce - various legal bans on burqa and niqab that Muslim women wear. Although there were no social or political problems caused by a tiny minority of women wearing the burqa or the niqab these governments made every effort to change the laws.[5]

In many countries, non-citizens have little or no basic political rights, such as the right to vote or to be an elected representative. In Ireland non-citizen residents are entitled to vote in local elections but they have no say in electing members of the Dáil - the Irish Parliament - who will legislate in the areas of immigration, migrant workers, citizenship etc. The Irish state 'legally' excludes non-Irish / non-EU minorities from having their say in national elections while these very same people have all the same economic duties and legal responsibilities as the Irish citizens.

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[3]Ronit Lentin, http://theliveregister.tv/blog/ireland-a-racist-state

[4]Kieran Allen, *Citizenship and Racism: The Case Against McDowell's Referendum.* Bookmarks Ireland, 2004

[5]Memet Uludag, 'School banned a Muslim girl from wearing the hijab' 2013, http://minordetailsnews.net

Delivering racist services - Racism in Executive and State Bodies

Racism and discrimination exists in various institutions and public services such as the police, health service, education system and various other public/national institutions. In Ireland, in many schools and hospitals, the cultural, lingual and religious needs of minorities (who are often the non-Irish, non-Catholic people) are not catered for. In hospitals, patients who will undergo operations are offered Catholic spiritual services but for a Muslim patient to demand such a service would be impossible. According to a report from the Integration Centre 'Almost 90 percent of [Ireland's] 3,300 primary schools are Catholic and, while migrants are not all non-Catholic, religion is the only grounds which schools can legally use to discriminate when it comes to enrolment.' The Integration Centre wants equality law changed so that schools with high demand for places can no longer give preference to children of a particular faith or refuse to admit a child on religious grounds. It said there is a trend of immigrant children going to certain schools and white Irish attending others.[6]

In Ireland, in 2013, the forceful removal of Roma children from their families exposed the collective, deep roots of bigotry, prejudice and racism in various state institutions, namely the HSE child services, the Gardaí and the legal system. From the beginning there was an assumption made by the state institutions and the authorities involved in the case, that the children were not the biological children of the Roma parents. The actions following this racial profiling exposed deep racism in some of Ireland's key state institutions. There was no crime, no evidence of child abuse but because the 'suspects' were Roma people and because the social services and the 'law enforcement' had a manufactured racial profile of Roma people, hair and eye colour was enough to remove the children from their biological families.

Racism in the Courts and Legal System

There is widespread evidence of prejudice, disbelief and disproportionate conviction in courts and racially biased rulings by powerful judicial authorities as well as failure to deal with hate crimes. Seeking asylum is not a criminal act yet many asylum seekers report that they are treated like criminals. The socialist Paul D'Amato argues that under capitalism we are encouraged to see crime as something quite simple. He writes: 'Laws are made so that society can function smoothly. Steal or kill, and you are punished; disobey these laws, and you pay a price. This superficial view fails to explain some glaring contradictions in the law and its application, or the social context in which crime is defined. As Rosa Luxemburg once wrote, bourgeois justice is 'like a net, which allowed the voracious sharks to escape, while the little sardines were caught.' Laws and the violation of those laws (crime) reflect the interests of the dominant class - both what is defined as crime, and how the law, which gives the appearance of fairness, is applied in practice.'[7]

The class nature of the criminal justice system is evident in every prison in every country: There are no rich people in Mountjoy prison. In the United States the class nature of the racist capitalist system is particularly obvious. The US puts more of its population behind bars than any other country in the world. 'But the number of incarcerated African Americans is the scandal within this scandal'. In 2009 there were just under 2.3 million people in prison and more than 900,000 of them were Black (that is 40 percent, or more than three times the percentage of African Americans in the population as a

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[6]'Faith-based schools may 'fuel racism' ' http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/faith-based-schools-may-fuel-racism-224489.html

[7]Paul D'Amato, 'Crime and punishment under capitalism.' http://socialistworker.org/2010/08/05/capital-crime-and-punishment

whole)[8]

An editorial in the US socialistworker.org powerfully described the nature of the racial State in the US:

> The U.S. justice system is a machine that victimizes Blacks, especially young Black men. According to The Sentencing Project, African Americans, who are 13 percent of the population and 14 percent of drug users, according to surveys, account for 37 percent of the people arrested for drug charges and 56 percent of those serving time in state prisons for drug offenses. As a result of these disparities, the federal government calculated that the odds of a Black male born in 2001 going to prison during their lifetime was one in three–compared to a one-in-17 chance for a white male.'[9]

The Irish criminal justice system is also deeply racist. In Ireland, judges claim to face a 'difficult task' in asylum cases and complain that [they] are faced with resolving two conflicting public policy options. But they are not shy of expressing a political choice as per the states position on asylum cases and deportations as a 'legal' fact. Judge Gerald Hogan remarked: 'We must not lose sight that there has to be, regrettably, a system of deportation if you are going to have an asylum system.' Hogan also admitted that judges were asked 'to adjudicate on stories from countries where they barely know what the capital is.'[10] Surely it would not be a very difficult task for judges who are given the responsibility and the unlimited authority in asylum cases to find out about the capital cities of the countries the asylum seekers are coming from. That would be the least they can do in delivering a 'just' verdict.

Hogan's claim reminds us of the findings of the Irish Refugee Council report *Difficult to Believe: the assessment of asylum claims in Ireland*[11]. The report found that the refugee application process takes many years with an extremely high percentage of rejection at the first instance and that 'over a third [of the asylum seekers] have been in this system [refugee application process] for more than three years'. Waiting periods 'of seven or eight years are not unheard of' and 'it is unsurprising that anxiety, depression and ill health are widespread.'[12]

The Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) is the key state agency for refugee applications. In the official mission statement its role is defined as: 'to investigate applications from persons seeking a declaration for refugee status and to issue appropriate recommendations to the Minister for Justice and Equality'. In other words, it is ORAC that decides whether an asylum seeker will be granted the refugee status or not. Refused applicants can refer their cases to the Refugee Appeals Tribunal and ultimately to the courts. But the Irish Refugee Council's report raises serious issues regarding the extremely low levels of acceptance by ORAC and the racist, disbelieving and the dismissive attitude of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal towards the asylum seekers. Sue Conlan, the CEO of the Irish Refugee Council said, 'What disturbs me about our findings is the fact that many people who appear to have legitimate claims appear not to be receiving a fair examination of their claim and are as a result being

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[8]Editorial. 'We have to win justice for Trayvon'. `http://socialistworker.org/2012/03/21/we-have-to-win-justice-for-trayvon`

[9]ibid.

[10] Judges face 'difficult task' in asylum cases, *The Irish Times*, `http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/judges-face-difficult-task-in-asylum-cases-1.1661085`

[11]'Difficult to Believe: the assessment of asylum claims in Ireland' Irish Refugee Council `http://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie`

[12]Gavan Titley, 'Asylum seekers in Ireland languish in the Magdalene laundries of our time'. `www.guardian.co.uk`

denied protection.'

The 'culture of disbelief' among tribunal members is a direct result of institutionalized racism. Claiming refugee status in any country is not an illegal act, and the burden should not be only on the asylum seeker to prove his/her circumstances to the state. The Irish state, as the facts and figures show, has a predetermined mind-set about the refugee applicants. The 'culture of disbelief' is not something that the asylum seekers should have to - or even can - deal with so that they can get a fair process and a just decision. While, on one hand, the state claims to have a well-defined and managed process in place, on the other hand, the actual decisions, which have real consequences for people's lives, are made based on the beliefs of 'powerful' and unquestionable people. This is exactly where the racism in legal institutions lies.

Yet for some figures in the legal business the refugee application process can be a lucrative source of income. Journalist Jim Cusack of the Irish Independent reports that in the past five years barrister Sinead McGrath, who happens to be the wife of former Fianna Fail minister Barry Andrew, received €1,140,832, from the Attorney General's office to fight asylum applications. Some of the other sums paid to various barristers fighting asylum cases over the past five years are as follows: Husband-wife team Emily Farrell and Daniel Donnelly €3 million, Siobhan Stack: €2,346,064, Sara Moorhead: €2,090,043. The total payment to just 5 individuals is over €8.5 million.[13]

In 2008, Barry Andrews was appointed as the Minister of State for Children. He lost his seat in 2011 and became the CEO of GOAL in 2012. Between 2008 and 2012, during most of which Andrews was a government minister, the Irish government has fought a hard and viscous battle against asylum seekers. What we have here is a cosy situation between the government, the legal system and the private businesses of legal practitioners. On one side we have a former minister who was part of the FF government's asylum/refugee policies that forced so many asylum seekers having to bring their cases to the courts, and on the other side we have his wife who earned huge sums from these cases. And in all of this, it is we, ordinary people, who paid the ministerial salaries and the huge legal bills of their partners. This is truly a case of profiteering from an institutionally racist and extremely discriminatory asylum system. This is a million Euro earned to get some people deported back to misery they had run away from, while the hubby pretends to work for people.

Racism in Immigration and Asylum Policies

At both a national and a European level, the implementation of immigration control policies and the general lack of care and duty towards asylum seekers and migrants mean that creation of a culture of discrimination against migrant workers and the creation of inhumane living conditions for asylum seekers. Anti-immigrant racism serves the ruling class of society very well. It provides a very convenient scapegoat on which to blame all the problems of society, thus diverting and deflecting working class anger away from themselves and at the same time it is part of a strategy of divide and rule setting one section of the working class against another. The idea that we must limit immigration is widely accepted, including by many people who would definitely not consider themselves to be racist. The case for immigration control is based on the assumption that immigrants are, in one way or another, a 'problem' for the host country. There are two ways in which immigrants can be seen as a problem: in terms of their numbers or in terms of who they are.

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[13]Memet Uludag, 'For some the state is a lucrative family business; making millions in keeping asylum seekers out' http://minordetailsnews.net/article/some-state-lucrative-family-business-making-millions-keeping-asylum-seekers-out

Members of Anti-Racist Network protesting in Dublin

Without exception every state implements a form of immigration controls. However at times of economic crises or serious domestic political turmoil this subject is brought up and used as a distraction from the real issues. A sense of critical urgency and panic is injected into to the public minds to stop the 'floods' of migrants coming from abroad. This 'urgent need to implement immigration control measures' is a strategy of well-choreographed political hysteria developed by the political rulers. For example, in 2010, German Chancellor Angela Merkel in her address to young members of Christian Democratic Union party said: 'German multiculturalism has utterly failed The idea of people from different cultural backgrounds living happily 'side by side' did not work The education of unemployed Germans should take priority over recruiting workers from abroad'[14] Merkel clearly ignored the fact that migrant workers had been in Germany since 1950s, invited in by the German state to work in mines and factories, and, what is more, she neglected to mention that Germany never had a national, inclusive, well defined policy on integration of migrants to begin with.

In Britain, 'wide-ranging measures to tackle 'illegal' immigration and restrict foreigners' access to health services are at the heart of the Government's legislative agenda for the coming year (2014), which was laid out by the Queen at the State Opening of Parliament in 2013. As well as blocking access to services, a new Immigration Bill is planned to make it easier to remove people from the UK by limiting rights to appeal and tightening the use of human rights law.'[15] This came shortly after the anti-immigrant and racist party, UKIP, made significant gains in the local elections. This is yet another example of a government using the immigration card to respond to the rising racist political rivalry and to prove to right-wing voters that they can be as hard a racist party like UKIP.

At the start of 2014 in Britain there was a media-wide hysteria about Bulgarians and Romanians - and eastern Europeans in general. They were consistently depicted by the tabloid media as destitute throngs swamping the country intent on living off the British taxpayer. Mainstream politicians have done precious little to confront such stereotypes and, in the Tories' case, have actually fanned the fire with militant rhetoric. In truth, there is overwhelming evidence that migrants from the EU's 'new member-states' make a net contribution to the British economy.

The conditions for asylum seekers in Ireland - and in many other EU countries - have never been humanitarian or fair at the most basic level. There are a number of legal/practical conditions that are designed to isolate people waiting for the completion of their refugee process, and ensuring that these people never feel at home or at ease during the years of extreme uncertainty. These conditions are not only inhumane but also provide the political and practical basis for easy and consequence-free removal and deportation by the Irish state:

- The first and foremost condition trapping the asylum seekers in the long process of refugee application is the legal ban on taking up employment. Many young, educated, skilled adults are banned from taking up employment opportunities, even during the time where labour shortage was an issue

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[14]Angela Merkel cited in 'German multiculturalism has 'utterly failed''. *The Guardian* `http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/oct/17/angela-merkel-german-multiculturalism-failed`

[15]Philippe Naughton, 'Immigration curbs at heart of Queen's Speech' *The Times*. 8 May 2013.

in many different sectors.

- Unavailability of access to third level education.

- Direct Provision and accommodation centres instead of employment and education rights. As per the direct provision system, adult asylum seekers are kept in accommodation centres, fed and are given a weekly sum of €19.10. This provision was introduced in 1999 and the actual amount has not changed since then. There is little or no freedom for asylum seekers living in these accommodation centres that are run by private companies and many have inadequate facilities and services.

The EU constantly invents new ways of keeping the legal and 'undocumented' migrants out. Shaun Harkin argues that 'In many respects, governments are doing less and less to regulate the flow of trade and finance between nations, but they are taking increasingly tough action to restrict the flow of people across borders. More restrictions will never stop migration - the economic imperative for workers struggling to feed themselves and their families will force them to cross borders, no matter what the risks. But the restrictions can make this much more dangerous and oppressive, by forcing the most vulnerable people in society into relying on smugglers and human traffickers, not to mention the exploitative businesses where they end up working.'[16]

The militarization of the U.S. border with Mexico and the EU border control agency Frontex are prime examples of how nation states increasingly tighten their borders. On one hand capitalists are dependent on migration across borders to employ them in their factories and businesses but on the other hand they also use the state's immigration control mechanism and restrictions to create a competition among workers, to define workers as native, migrant and illegal that will create divisions among them and enable capitalists to more easily exploit and intimidate workers. Such measures also give capitalists the flexibility to control the flow of workers depending on the circumstances such as the boom and bust times in economy. Workers and migrant workers are seen as fully flexible resources that the capitalists can fully control.

A specific immigration control measure the EU applies is the 'Readmission Agreement' signed between EU and third-party non-EU countries. This agreement is another step in EU's 'fortress Europe' border and immigration policies. The latest country to sign this agreement is Turkey. According to this agreement, the EU will consider easing-off the visa regulations and procedures for Turkish citizens and in return Turkey must accept the deported 'illegal' immigrants who had entered the EU via Turkey. With this new agreement, we see the EU/Frontex border control policies in action again. EU is now setting up partnerships with countries like Turkey to outsource the issue of migrants instead of looking after people and providing them with free, legal and safe passage, and proper procedures for applying for documented migrant and residency status.

Migrants and asylum seekers are increasingly viewed by EU governments as 'criminals'. During last two decades there have been more than 20000 migrant deaths at sea. As EU continues to militarise its borders using the border control agency Frontex, this 'Readmission Agreement' is a reaction to its failed, inhuman immigration and asylum policies. In 2013, we have seen the horrific tragedy in Lampedusa (Italy) where more than 350 migrants died at sea. Since this tragedy, there have been at least five similar incidents. Unfortunately, such tragedies rarely get reported widely and the little media attention paid to such tragedies never goes deep enough to analyse the real situation.

As the EU leaders and bureaucrats continue to bang on the drums of 'immigration

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[16]Shaun Harkin, 'Solidarity has no borders', *SocialistWorker.org*, http://socialistworker.org/2013/05/01/solidarity-has-no-borders

crisis' and 'problems caused by the asylum seekers' we should remember a few points: Firstly, the history of Europe is also the history of all sorts of migrations, including economic migration. Migrants are not new to Europe and nothing that has gone fundamentally wrong in Europe is due to the incoming migrants or asylum seekers. Secondly, seeking asylum is a right and a very natural response by people to terrible conditions in their own countries. Migration and seeking asylum must be seen, above all, as a humanitarian situation and must receive a humane response. There is nothing more understandable than a mother's attempt to create a better/safer life for her children, families running away from extreme poverty, people running away from wars, torture, oppression and dictatorial regimes etc. Packing a boat by 4-5 times of its capacity and hoping to cross the vast sea is not a lifestyle or an easy choice for these migrants. It is also not an act of blind madness. It is a necessary response to their objective conditions. Thirdly, the EU has never implemented inclusive, welcoming and accommodating policies for migration. Asylum seekers are always stigmatised and marginalised, migrants are always seen as the 'others'. At times of crises, migrants and asylum seekers are always attacked as the easy targets.

Today, for many asylum seekers and migrants there is simply no democratic, safe and legal way to come to Europe. Migrants must first make it into a EU country by whatever way they can before making an application for protection. That is why many people have no choice but to trust the human traffickers with their lives and the lives of their children. Don't these migrants know the dangers of crossing the sea in an overcrowded old boat? Of course they do. But instead of dying from poverty, war, torture back at home, they at least want to die trying. It is not a pleasant journey these people are making but a 'journey of necessity and hope'. What would you do if you were an Iraqi, Afghan or a Syrian civilian who lost everything?

Racism of Political Leaders and Public Representatives

Public statements by mainstream political personalities, inflammatory comments, racist jargon and speculative arguments create a false public debate and shape the public perception on minorities and immigrants. It has long been an aspect of the right-wing bourgeois political system to popularise racism by spectacular outburst of racist statements, followed by playing the 'freedom of speech' card and then claiming to be misunderstood. Here are a few examples of such racist outbursts from political figures and public representatives:

2009: Fine Gael Mayor of Limerick Kevin Kiely, 'Send home jobless nationals': 'I'm calling for anybody who is living in the State and who can't afford to pay for themselves to be deported after three months. We are borrowing €400 million per week to maintain our own residents and we can't afford it. During the good times it was grand but we can't afford the current situation unless the EU is willing to step in and pay for non-nationals. I'm not racist but it is very simple, we can't continue to borrow €400 million a week and the Government has to pull a halt and say enough is enough unless the EU intervenes and pays some sort of a subvention.' [17]

2011: Fine Gael's Darren Scully quits as mayor of Naas over his comments about 'black Africans: The mayor of Naas Darren Scully told the Kfm radio station he found 'black Africans' to be aggressive and bad mannered. Cllr Scully was accused of racism after the interview in which he said: 'I've been met with aggressiveness, I've been met with bad manners and I've also been played the race card.' When asked, 'It's been said, 'you would help white people but you don't help black people'.' He went on to say: 'After a while of this I made a decision that I was not going to take on representations from Africans. I've said that I would be

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[17]`http://www.limerickleader.ie/news/local-news/mayor-of-limerick-quot-send-home-jobless-nationals-quot-1-2190575`

very courteous to them and that I would pass on their query to other public representatives who would take their concerns It saddens me that people would call me a racist because I'm not. I know what I am as a person and I'm not any of those things.' Darren Scully re-joined Fine Gael in 2013. [18]

2014: Former Lord Mayor of Cork, Fine Gael councillor Joe O'Callaghan: A ban on the Burqa and Niqab is 'common sense': In an interview with Niall Boylan on Classic Hits 4fm, Joe O'Callaghan said Irish people are 'sometimes afraid of our own shadows to say things that might not be popular'. He went on to say that 'This has nothing to do with religious freedoms. The Koran doesn't even state that women should have to wear the Burqa or the Niqab' he said. 'Whether it's a balaclava or a burqa, we don't go along in this free secular liberal republic state of anyone hiding the wearers identity. I would say it's probably a medieval system.' The councillor said he wants 'everyone who lives in this country to be free and safe so any detachment from that, we should face up to it and say look this doesn't make sense'.[19]

Racism in the State/Private Media

The racial stereotyping of people using the power of media and imagery is widespread in our society. It creates fear and anxiety in society by presenting unproven, baseless arguments and media driven speculation as facts. In Ireland and elsewhere, contrary to their own claims the media is not an independent set of institutions. Overwhelmingly it is owned and controlled either by big business or by the state. If capitalists and the state have a shared racist agenda then the media will too, and in fact it plays a crucial part in spreading racist ideas.

One way this operates is through the employment and promotion of 'controversial' columnists such as Ian O'Doherty and Kevin Myers. Both of these worked for *The Independent* and both had as part of their brief the regular stirring up of racism. O'Doherty has written that 'If every junkie in this country were to die tomorrow I would cheer', and that gays are 'sexual deviants'. Among his specialities has been attacking Muslims arguing that Islam is 'the biggest threat to the West since the end of the Cold War'. For this he was rewarded by RTE with invitation to make a documentary called 'Now It's Personal' in which he spent a week with a Muslim family in Dublin. The documentary began with footage of 9/11 and of an extremist Muslim threatening to take over the world. In other words it was calculated to reinforce the association of Muslims with terrorism.

Kevin Myers writes things like, 'A hugely disproportionate amount of rural crime is by a handful of Travellers... they have generated an atmosphere of terror in rural areas unlike anything Ireland has experienced since the 1920s' and that 'no one can deny this unassailable truth: our unemployment figures have been made immeasurably worse by the large numbers of immigrants who poured unchecked into the Celtic Tiger economy'. In July 2008 Meyers wrote an article entitled 'Africa is Giving Nothing to Anyone - Apart from Aids' in which he asked, 'How much morality is there in saving an Ethiopian child from starvation today?' He attacked an anti-malaria programme sponsored by Bill Gates saying: 'If his programme is successful, tens of millions of children who would otherwise have died in infancy will survive to adulthood, he boasts. Oh good: then what? I know. Let them all come here. Yes, that's an idea.'

Of course O'Doherty and Myers are not typical but that they are given major platforms in the media is not accidental. Also alongside this overt racism there is a lower level but consistent tendency in the media as a whole to reinforce stereotypes with stories such as 'A gang of Romanian criminals is behind a sinister prostitution racket that

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[18]http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/fine-gaels-darren-scully-quits-as-mayor-of-naas-over-his-comments-about-black-africans-26794755.html

[19]http://www.thejournal.ie/burqa-cork-mayor-1309582-Feb2014/

has turned a well-known part of Limerick city into a red-light district, a *Sunday Independent* investigation reveals'. The media repeatedly present stories about immigration in terms of immigrants 'flooding' into the country. The use of the 'flooding' metaphor has become so regular that it passes without comment.

Racism in Foreign and International Affairs of the State

The 'war on terror' has produced a corresponding rise in Islamophobia with various states initiating legal, legislative and executive platforms against Muslims. EU leaders who constantly talk about the 'crisis of illegal immigration' are also the same leaders who started wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, who supported and sold arms to Middle-Eastern/ African dictators, who grabbed ever bit of fresh water sources and fertile land in Africa and with the help of local rulers, forced IMF policies and privatisation upon the poor nations of the world. These are the very same leaders whose policies are killing the planet and causing 'not-so-much' natural and environmental disasters and destroying the lives of millions. Why do we have drought and famine in Africa? Is it all because of gods' anger? Why are there 5 million displaced people in Afghanistan and 2 million in Iraq? Why are western governments and arms companies selling billions of Euro worth of arms to some of the most oppressive regimes in the world?

The EU leaders and governments are not suffering from a memory loss. They are just hoping that we won't remember all these and that we won't ask these questions. What were they expecting? That the killing zones of Iraq, Afghanistan, or the dictatorial African regimes not to have an effect in number of asylum seekers and migrant coming into Europe? Millions of Nigerians live under 2 Dollars a day. Many of the farmers in Central African countries have their natural water sources taken away from them by multi-national corporations. And despite all of these, there is not and there never was, an immigration crisis in Europe. Each and every decade we are fed with statistical lies and political perceptions that are presented as fact.

How do you kill in Iraq the same number of people as the population of Dublin or displace in Afghanistan the same number of people as the population of Ireland? How do you justify assisting imperialist powers to use your civilian airports on their way to kill civilian people? Fuelling Islamophobia, in this manner serves to create the popular sentiment that action is required for the greater good and the survival of modern, superior democracy and western style freedom and life.

Economic Racism - Cuts breed racism

Cuts to minority support programs, such as the Traveller, language support services for migrant children, along with reduced funding for various institutions working in the area of equality, anti-discrimination and racism, forces various economically vulnerable sections of the society to compete with each other and creates the myth of welfare tourism or 'jobs for citizens'.

Since the beginning of the global financial crisis the people who matter least to the capitalists and the state are always the poor, the working class people, migrants and minorities. All that matters is the financial losses of speculative investors and the wider economic protection of the wealthy elite and big business. In Ireland in the past five years have seen relentless cuts and austerity applied to all sorts of essential public services and services needed by the poor and dispossessed. While hundreds of thousands of working class families are pushed into poverty, single parents, the unemployed, special needs children, the sick, the elderly and the asylum seekers are left to fight for scraps to survive. School places and hospitals beds have been reduced to a bare minimum, while funding for various groups running anti-racist campaigns; providing support to victims of torture and various NGOs such as the Equality Authority have been slashed to almost nothing. Every vulnerable section of society has been forced to fight

for their very survival. The crisis showed us that the 'small', 'unimportant' people do not matter to the ruling classes of the country. As teachers and medical staff are reduced, families are forced to compete for school places while the sick are left to wait for months for a medical procedure. Asylum seekers, the inhumane direct provision system, and other vulnerable groups are suddenly presented as a burden on the ordinary citizens of the country. This environment also gives rise to divisive and racist debate where political leaders have stigmatized the 'lazy social welfare addicted young people', 'the welfare tourist migrants', 'the foreign workers that take Irish jobs' and 'the single parents that refuse to work'.

While more than €100 billion were given to bond holders and bank bail-outs, Travellers and their basic economic, social needs are labelled as a cost that the country cannot afford. As more jobs were lost and more pension schemes were closed, migrant workers are presented as the people who steal the jobs from the native Irish workers, 'Irish Jobs for Irish Workers', only if these jobs existed. Social housing has been reduced to almost nothing; the housing schemes have been replaced with the rent assistance system, thus making the waiting lists huge, while blaming the foreigners for getting into the queue ahead of the local people.

Austerity and cuts are not just hard economic attacks on ordinary people but they also serve to create a political atmosphere that breeds anxiety, demoralisation, fear, anger, division and ultimately racism. Austerity is not some unavoidable fact of life but the result of economic and political choices made by the ruling elites on behalf of the national and international capitalists.

The ruling elites not only attack the working class and every vulnerable sections of the society with hard economic policies but also with a political system that lacks democracy and creates social issues as part of the capitalist response to the crisis. During times of capitalist crises, the disadvantaged sections of society become even more vulnerable. The exploitation of workers increases on many fronts.

Divisions among the rich and the poor become a more evident. The capitalists and the ruling elites use any means to divert the attentions of the workers and the poor from the real sources of the miseries they endure. Thus, by cuts they breed racism; a much useful tool for the rulers to further advanced their economic and political agenda.

Racism is not just a mistaken idea or even a morally wrong one; for working people it is a deadly enemy. It threatens to divert, derail and divide the resistance working class people put up to austerity, cuts, the bosses and the government. And the state and its institutions play a central role in organising and promoting racism at various levels. Nation states promote the idea of national borders, nationalism, national culture and unity against the '*others*' while within the same society the rulers at the top continue to exploit the masses at the bottom. The exploitive, unequal concept of national or ethnic 'US' against 'THEM' created by official state policies enhanced by state/institutional racism hides the fact that workers of different nations, different colour and ethnicity have a lot more common with each other than with their own respective ruling classes. Getting working people to accept racist ideas and turn their anger on 'foreigners' (or Travellers, or Roma etc) makes them putty in the hands of unprincipled right wing politicians and the right wing newspapers. It turns them, in the words of Bob Dylan, into 'Only a Pawn in their Game'.

Is the Irish state racist?

The question whether the Irish state is racist or not needs to be answered. Let's think of some quick points and concepts and see if we can come up with an answer to this question:

- Years of discrimination and finger pointing at Roma people.

- Asylum seekers and the direct provision system which traps them in inhumane conditions without the right to work and higher education.

- Well documented, harsh, and anti-democratic refugee application and appeals process.

- Secret deportations of asylum seekers under harsh conditions.

- Various racist statements from national and local politicians about Africans, eastern European workers and others minorities.

- The famous referendum of 2004 to remove the constitutional right of citizenship to the children of non-nationals living in Ireland.

- Numerous examples of politicians, state bodies and media propaganda against migrants and non-nationals with the claim that they are committing social welfare fraud and draining the funds.

- A specific example of racial profiling at the airports: Passengers on some flights coming from certain countries are passport checked at the gate of the plane before exiting it instead of the normal passport control desks. This is to be able to push the 'unwanted' passengers back into the plane to send them back to where they came from. In this way they cannot come into the country and ask for asylum. Ongoing 'war on terror' in Afghanistan, the related Islamophobia and Ireland's support to it via the use of Shannon by US military aircraft.

- And finally, the economic crisis and the political-economic decisions of the governments to cut many of the social-public services which are much needed by the poor, minorities, and the deprived sections of the society. These are all the conditions in which fear and hatred can thrive: Job losses, family break-ups, emigration, housing crisis, cuts etc. are only some of these.

If you agree with these points you probably agree that the Irish state is racist. But no state, unless it is a fascist or an apartheid regime, will admit being racist. Even then, it would be a miracle to hear this voluntary admittance of being racist. While the state will reject in every possible way that they are racist, they will also introduce laws that discriminate against certain people in the society. The legal system of the state is fundamentally non-transparent, anti-democratic and in the hands of an elite section of the society.

States also play the nationalist game and introduce physical and political borders. These borders will be very useful in terms of controlling the people's migration as well as creating an artificial common national goal and national identity. These borders will create a sense of belonging and they will help in defining the 'us vs. the others'. Immigration control will be a useful tool in manipulating the society. Exclusion of rights, based on arbitrary human characteristics such as place of birth, colour of skin, religion etc. will become important aspects of nationalism. These will ultimately feed into racist state actions.

The state will directly or indirectly support wars abroad that will ultimately create a huge refugee crisis somewhere around the world. Following that, the political rulers will have no problem to compartmentalise the issues and direct all their attention on incoming war refugees. But ultimately state will protect the ruling class and to do that it will arm itself with propaganda machine, police force, spin doctors etc. These forces will always be useful to protect the outer fence of the state machine and the beneficiaries of this ring-fenced privilege. But they will also assume roles such as child protection, law enforcement and social order that the state needs have in place to operate in peace.

Conclusions

I would argue that the most important aspect of the fight against state racism is to explicitly and clearly expose the capitalist state and its racist institutions. The fight against a racist/fascist street gang that is attacking people may require some different urgent ac-

tions but when it comes to state racism, the task at hand becomes a lot more complex and deep and is part of the ongoing struggle against capitalism. The reason for exposing state/institutional racism being extremely important is not because of the pleasure of some 'intellectual achievement', but because of the necessity to turn it into a real, flesh and blood enemy and bring it out of its hiding places such as the state departments, court rooms, police stations, schools and indeed the news channels.

Many decent people and organisations denounce and distance themselves from the hatred and violence. But what is really needed is a grass-roots response and a working class struggle which links opposition to racism to a fight against the conditions in which they thrive, in other words, capitalism. The exposure of it as a 'physical evil of capitalism - and imperialism' will also enable us to start questioning its origins and its real objectives.

It will help us to understand how it operates and will aid us in our fight against capitalism. Only then, we can make direct links between the state and the suffering of the people in the hands of its racist institutions. Only then, we can clearly see that the institutional racism is not just a matter of state departments making some occasional mistakes, but that they are acting according a very clearly defined political setup. We can then see the link between state racism and all other forms of racism and realise how the racism on the street feeds off the racism of the state. For Marxists, the point is not just to understand all of this but also to change the whole system. Unless our attempts to analyse and understand the state racism goes hand in hand with dismantling the racist system, all of this hard work could make a great PhD thesis or a great article but it won't have any impact beyond the point of an intellectual argument.

The Resistible Rise of Golden Dawn

Nikos Loudos

The meteoric electoral ascension of the Nazi party Golden Dawn in Greece sent shockwaves all over Europe. Up from the marginal 0.29% it polled in the elections of 2009, Golden Dawn gathered just under 7% in the national elections of May and June 2012 sending 18 Nazi MPs to the Greek parliament. This, combined with the fact of Nazi squads operating in neighbourhoods, with repeated organized attacks, some of them murderous, on migrants, trade unionists, gays and activists of the Left, raised the spectra of the threat of fascism in a way that had not been the case for decades.

Golden Dawn; 'straight out of the sewers of history'

Golden Dawn does not resemble what used to be called Euro-fascism; they are not fascists with 'suits and ties', they are not ex-fascists masquerading as populists. They come straight out of the sewers of history; their leadership have been consistent Hitler admirers for decades. They are not Holocaust deniers but Holocaust nostalgics, openly racist, calling for the annihilation of the 'inferior races'. Their 'alternative history' model dreams of Greece having joined the Nazi Axis in World War 2 and ensured the establishment of the Third Reich. In the 'art' section of their publications, along with poems dedicated to the leaders of the German Nazi party, one could find also hymns to Satan and black-metal music targeting Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary and anything having to do

with what they called 'Judeo-Christian tradition'.[1] Their sub-culture worships hate, 'pure blood', violence, guns, and martial arts. Their annual youth festival was called 'Festival of Hate'. Their internal regime is not one of a political party; their para-military apparatus with their members following orders from superiors up to the level of the 'Führer, Nikos Michaloliakos, has been much more important than their political faade. Their public appearances echo the German Nazi Party with torches, dark uniforms, and goose stepping. In their internal procedures and their publications they have been using the swastika, while their members enjoy using the fascist salute. In their local chapters they have been practicing street fighting, arms use, and stabbing. Apart from these details, the majority of their local chapters form part of local criminal networks selling protection to bars, cabarets and brothels, and - most important of all- have been acting as local gangs attacking migrants in buses, in the streets, in their houses, stealing, beating up, humiliating and murdering.

I felt forced to provide all this information, not because in itself gives us any clue about the factors leading to Golden Dawn's appearance nor about the way to defeat them. But they are proof of the scale of the political crisis and the speed with which things can change because of the acute economic crisis. This is the kind of party that that has intervened in the political scene, and which, according to many polls[2], may be the third largest party after the next elections. The destabilizing effects of the crisis are something that we all have to take into account, in whichever country we may live. Greece is not an exception; on the contrary it can be a warning.

Actually, there have been many voices inside Greece, even in the last years while Golden Dawn was already developing as a political phenomenon, saying that fascism would

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[1] One of these black-metal 'artists' is now a Golden Dawn MP, Giorgos Germenis.

[2] We should be sceptical of these polls, for reasons I will explain later.

never be able to get out of the margins in this country. They put forward a number of arguments: the experience of Greece as an occupied country during the war; the important anti-fascist tradition of the '40s (Greece experienced the most important general strike under the German occupation, a strike that managed to stop the conscription of Greek workers as forced labour in Germany); the recent experience of the military dictatorship of 1967-1974, the living memory of mass emigration which was supposed to make the Greeks immune to racism, etc. All these have been important factors in the trajectory of fascism and anti-fascism, but as is now obvious they didn't stop Golden Dawn from seizing the opportunity of the economic crisis to make its mark on the political scene.

In order to see how and why, we have to examine the specific way the economic crisis made the political system implode in the last years, providing the space for Golden Dawn. Nevertheless, it's important to note that tradition does matter, and despite the 'national myths', fascists have been present in Greece for almost a century and in crucial periods they were not just 'in the margins'. Anyway, they were not born ex nihilo during the present crisis.

Even during the 1920s, there were cases of proto-fascist organizations, connected with politicians of the big parties of that period who were looking to the example of Mussolini as a way to cope with the rising radicalization of the workers movement and of the Greek refugees who had come to Greece after the collapse of the allied intervention in Turkey. In 1936, a fascist politician, Ioannis Metaxas, became prime minister and very quickly dictator, establishing a regime copying many of the rituals of Nazism. Fascist organisations were implanted among the youth and in the workplaces while all the genuine workers organizations and parties were disbanded. Ironically, history brought that regime - with its open inclination to German fascism - into World War 2 on the Allied side. This was because Greek capitalism's integration in West European imperialism was far more important than the

ideological affiliations of the government.

After the German invasion, though, a big part of the Greek ruling class moved to collaborating with the occupation forces and doing business with the Third Reich. During this period of collaboration, the Greek government created the 'Security Battalions', armed groups aiming to suppress the Resistance (by far the most important organization of which was the National Liberation Front (EAM), controlled by the Communist Party). The Security Battalions recruited what Trotsky called 'human dust': people who were eager to kill and betray just for some pocket-money provided by the government or the Nazis. Along with them, in parts of the country, more openly pro-German or clear Nazi organizations appear, having anti-communism as the central tenet of their 'ideology'. In local massacres committed by the occupation forces around the country - in some cases entire villages were annihilated after some act of the Resistance - it was these fascist groups who did the dirty work. The Germans in most of the cases were acting as soldiers. Torturing, rape, burning or burying alive people was a 'privilege' for the Greek fascists.

However, the Resistance triumphed and while the Germans were evacuating the country, their Greek friends threw away their uniforms and tried to hide (many of them didn't have the chance), while a few of them followed the Nazi army into exile. For a short period after the Liberation and before the official outbreak of the Civil War (1946-1949), the 'collaborators' were prosecuted and vilified. The Greek ruling class, though, discovered very quickly that they were in need of these people again. Fascist gangs started a campaign of terror against the Left round the country, under the protection of the local police. During the Civil War, they were given free rein in the countryside. The collaborators in a few years were rebranded as 'patriots' who saved the country from Communism, gaining recognition and benefits from the state, while the Left had to go under-

ground.[3]

These groups survived as 'clubs' in parts of the country and were re-activated in the early '60s, when the ruling class was surprised to see a new upsurge of the Left, student and labor activism. Costa Gavras' film 'Z', depicted the most famous case : the murder of Grigoris Lambrakis, MP for the United Democratic Left (the electoral front of the underground Communist Party) after one of his speeches in Salonica, in 1963. The fascist groups were used by the police and the Right to intimidate gatherings of the Left and the unions, organizing counter demonstrations, appearing as 'concerned citizens'. These fascist networks formed part of what in Greek political vocabulary was called the 'para-state', a nexus connecting the Palace, secret services, the gendarmerie, politicians and the fascist groups; at the service of the ruling class but running parallel to the official state. This nexus had a strong hold inside the army. In April 1967 that 'official' part of the para-state, the junta of colonels, took power to push through with full-force the campaign against the Left and the workers' movement.

The small group of leaders of the dictatorship went to jail in 1975 but a whole layer of cadre remained untouched. Torturers, cops, military, judges, advisers and ministers either stayed in their positions or just went home as if nothing had happened. In late 1976, at the funeral of an arch-torturer during the dictatorship, some of these 'remnants' made their appearance -shouting fascist slogans and attacking journalists. Among those bullies was Nikos Michaloliakos, a young cadre of the '4th of August'[4] organization, founded by one of the most openly Nazi-inclined 'intellectuals'

of the dictatorship, Kostas Plevris[5]. Michaloliakos was arrested and went to jail, but not for long. He was to go to jail again some years later, after being arrested for having explosives. His connections with the secret services (some of his fellow fascists who remained in jail for years have spoken out) enabled him to go free again very quickly.

The fascist terrorism of the first years of the 3rd Greek Republic became an inisignificant footnote for official history. But those were the years when Michaloliakos and other nostalgics were putting bombs in offices of the left, in cinemas playing Russian movies and in bookshops. Retired officers compiled personal arsenals, around which they built neo-fascist groups. They were not just nostalgics. The recently opened British Foreign Office files showed that the British Embassy was afraid of a new military coup in Greece even until 1980. The rising workers movement managed to drive all these neo-fascist groups and their military supporters to the margins. They were forced to set aside the guns and the bombs, and in 1984 they were regrouped in EPEN (National Political Union), a party founded on the orders of the imprisoned deposed dictators. Michaloliakos, who had already founded a group called Golden Dawn in the beginning of the '80s, became the leader of the EPEN youth[6]. EPEN had its best result in the Euro-elections of 1984, with 2.3% of the vote and electing one MEP. In the following years, New Democracy was able to gather the majority of these remnants, and EPEN disappeared. Michaloliakos was quickly replaced as Youth leader, and he returned to his openly neo-Nazi 'Golden Dawn' project.[7]

Before their recent successes, there had

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[3]The affinities with Golden Dawn are not only ideological. Many of its cadres have family connections with these collaborationist and anti-Communist groups of the 40s, including its most well-known leaders: Michaloliakos, Kasidiaris etc.

[4]Taking its name from the proclamation date of the dictatorship of 1936.

[5]Today Plevris is in LAOS (Popular Orthodox Party), while his son, Thanos Plevris, has left LAOS to join New Democracy.

[6]He had met personally the dictators in prison.

[7]I won't tire the English reader with footnotes from Greek sources. The best published books, from which I have crosschecked the facts on the history of Golden Dawn, are Dimitris Psarras, *Black Bible of Golden Dawn*, Polis, Athens, 2012 [in Greek] and Giorgos Pittas & Katerina Thoidou, *The Golden Dawn File*, Marxistiko Vivliopoleio, Athens, 2013 [in Greek].

been three failed attempts by Golden Dawn to emerge into the mainstream. This experience is important both for the way they managed to make steps forward and for the way they were blocked. Their first attempt was in the early 90s, rebranding themselves as 'Greek Nationalists', and trying to take advantage of the nationalist fever cultivated by the government, because of the tensions with the Republic of Macedonia. The collapse of state capitalism in Eastern Europe and the civil war in ex-Yugoslavia, made Greek capitalism very greedy for a big share of the Balkan market. This was accompanied by an ideological campaign and nationalist demonstrations organized with the support of the Church and semi-obligatory participation of school students. In those 'demos' Golden Dawners made their first public appearance and recruited some youth, trying to create combat groups to attack left-wing school colleagues. Their attempt failed having crashed on two counter-forces. On the one hand, the movement of school occupations managed to bring down a series of Ministers of Education and, combined with the workers' resistance, overthrew the neo-liberal government of New Democracy in October 1993. Golden Dawn could not find space in this radicalized milieu. At the same time, the intervention of the Left was able to show that nationalism was part-and-parcel of the neo-liberal attack. The Union of Bus Workers that was central to overthrowing the government was also an official supporter of the Socialist Revolution Organisation[8] when we were prosecuted for publishing a book supporting the right of the Republic of Macedonia to choose its own name.

The second attempt of Golden Dawn came in the mid-to-late '90s. This time racism was their main tool. The PASOK government had embraced neoliberalism and was attacking basic working class rights, and at the same time was cultivating a wave of racism against migrants, mainly from the Balkans. Police controls, intimidation, deportation, went along with the media targeting migrants as the root of every evil. Golden Dawn tried to make

a public appearance in May Day 1998, after already trying to build some local groups in neighbourhoods of Athens based on attacking left-wing activists and migrants. Again their attempt was blocked through a combination of workers' resistance and the intervention of revolutionaries. Workers' resistance didn't just inhibit the attack, but also created a net of protection for migrants against racism. Teachers' unions and hospital workers' unions were the first to take action against racist attempts of the government to exclude migrants from free education and health. At the same time, the counter-demonstrations organized mainly on the initiative of SEK (Socialist Workers Party of Greece) didn't allow them space in the streets. These two factors came to a head on a single day in June 1998. During a trial of neo-Nazis who had attacked members of SEK, a group of Golden Dawners brutally assaulted a group of left-wing students and education trade unionists who were in the courts for a different trial (resistance to the police during a recent demonstration). One of the victims narrowly avoided death. Among the neo-Nazis was the vice-leader of Golden Dawn, Antonis Androutsopoulos, who went underground for years to avoid arrest. Golden Dawn had to retreat under the massive outcry against them.

The third attempt came in the mid 2000s, again with racism as the spearhead but with Islamophobia giving an extra potential to the neo-Nazi propaganda. The discourse of the clash of civilizations suited a Greek government which was trying at the same time to be part of Bush's War on terror and to use racism as a divide-and-conquer tactic against the workers' movement. Golden Dawn endorsed Islamophobia and targeted Afghan, Pakistani and Arab refugees and migrants. But the anti-war movement was the one that determined the situation. Massive majorities expressed themselves against the wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and in support of the Palestinians. It was actually through the anti-war movement that communities who were to play a crucial role in the anti-fascist

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[8]The organization that later evolved into SEK.

action in the future (the Pakistani community in particular) were radicalized and joined ranks with the Left. The neo-Nazis remained constantly under pressure in the streets. In October 2005, after an attack committed by one of its well-known thugs, a demo reached close to their offices in Athens, and there were shots from shotguns coming from inside the Nazi HQ. Under the fear of the movement -and also feeling the threat that under those circumstances even the police would at last be forced to act against them, Golden Dawn's leadership decided to suspend its action. Golden Dawn then disappeared for two years.

There are some common elements in all these attempts of the neo-Nazis to intervene. First, in all these cases they tried to ride on a wave of reactionary ideology stemming from above - from the government and the ruling class. In all the cases the governments felt happy to see that their ideological campaign was taking a 'movement dimension'; for them it was one more argument to justify the attacks on the working class. At the same time, Golden Dawn had its own separate agenda. They were not just 'playing the game' of the government, but were trying to recruit and organize fascist nuclei in neighbourhoods and schools, on the basis of controlling the streets and street fighting against left-wing activists and migrants. Finally, in all the cases, their attempt failed after coming into collision with the real movement -trade unions, students and the Left - and in no case because of any action of the police or the state.

So what changed and allowed them to get into Parliament? An easy answer is to say that it has been the economic crisis. This is, of course, a crucial parameter but Golden Dawn's rise was not an immediate result. Economic crisis brought fruit to Golden Dawn but only mediated through political actions - actions in most cases coming from the government and the state and to a much lesser extent coming from the fascists themselves. The attempts to interpret the appearance of fascism in pure sociological terms can only reproduce their own cheap arguments. Until recently the

media were trying to convince us that Golden Dawn was a 'natural' product of the threat a big part of the population feels coming from the Muslim migrants. In reality, their electoral results have been quite the same in areas with big migrant populations and in areas with no migrants.

The gloss of a 'charity organization' on Golden Dawn hasn't been anything more than a media fabrication. The infamous photo of a Golden Dawner helping an old lady who 'was afraid of migrants' to go to the bank that hit the front pages a couple of years ago has now been exposed as nothing more than one of their leaders with his own mother! The 'soup kitchens' only for Greeks have been just clumsy photo opportunities out of their offices; nothing to do with any kind of solidarity network. Unfortunately this propaganda had an international impact, because it fitted with a superficial approach saying that the economic crisis and the social polarization by themselves provided roots for the fascists in Greece, leaving totally out of the picture the deliberate intervention of the ruling class to help them make a breakthrough.

What had actually happened was that racism and Islamophobia had been already deeply embedded in the political agenda of both the big political parties. The last years of the government of New Democracy (2004-2009) saw a culmination of racist propaganda and pogrom-like police campaigns against migrants. The fascist arguments were becoming part of the official discourse. After December 2008, the scapegoating of migrants was even more combined with the strengthening of a discourse of 'law and order'. December 2008 was the month of a rebellion that saw massive demonstrations and barricades round the country after the murder of a school-student by a policeman. The Greek ruling class had a glimpse of a revolution and was really scared. The government was to survive for some more months, but a third factor was already also shaping the situation. LAOS (The People's Orthodox Rally), a far-right party, which broke away from New Democracy, was gaining ground. LAOS entered the

parliament in 2007 with 3.8% and jumped to 5.6% in the elections of 2009. In the meantime, they had gained 7.15% in the Euro-elections. LAOS was the bitter fruit of the constant attempts of New Democracy (with PASOK trailing behind) to pull the political agenda towards racism and 'security'.

LAOS needs a special note, because its case shows that the boundaries between fascist and far-right populist parties can be quite blurred. Set-up by a firebrand politician of New Democracy, it was not an openly fascist party, in the sense of attempting to build a reactionary movement from below, or hinting in any way against the democratic system. Nevertheless, its leader, while still being in New Democracy was trying to establish links with the far-right and with the fascists; once he made an open call to Golden Dawn to join New Democracy, offer their 'capabilities' and take a ministry as a reward. Another fascist group, Greek Front, led by Makis Voridis[9], was integrated in LAOS. LAOS's youth section was under the control of the fascist groups. The ideological tango went like this: New Democracy was fueling racism, islamophobia and fear, LAOS was gaining ground, the government was using LAOS's 'success' as a justification for moving more to the right, with PASOK tailing all this frenzy.

LAOS was advancing, using the reactionary ideas of the ruling class in the crudest form, while at the same time being able to pose as 'against the system'. This trick came to an abrupt end in late 2011, while the Greek state was in the middle of the storm of the debt crisis. PASOK's government, despite being elected with almost 44% could not hold against the pressure of the general strikes. Papandreou resigned as prime minister and an ex governor of the Bank of Greece, Lucas Papademos was called to form a government of 'national unity'. It would be a government -with a banker/technocrat at its head- that would try to push forward the austerity measures showing no remorse towards the unions. PASOK and New Democracy joined as expected. But also the 'anti-systemic' LAOS

joined in. This opened the gates for Golden Dawn to enter the scene. The accumulated populist far-right dynamic had suddenly shattered on the massive unpopularity of austerity. Papademos's government effectively collapsed in three months (officially it survived for six months) after a succession of general strikes. The 'technocrat' instead of overcoming the 'conservatism' of the established political system, as they hoped, actually detonated the beginning of its end. Actually Golden Dawn was just one of the ways this enormous political crisis was expressed. The combined vote of New Democracy and PASOK is a striking indicator (5.7 million votes in 2007, 5.3m in 2009, 2 million in May 2012). The vote of LAOS from the high point of 386 thousand (2009) fell to 97 thousand (June 2012). A party of the Left, SYRIZA, advanced to be the second party in the elections of 2012. It is in the middle of this political earthquake -with the sudden implosion of the two biggest parties since 1981- that one can evaluate the 440 thousand votes of Golden Dawn.

Alas, the agenda of Golden Dawn was not only electoral. Since late 2008 they had established a presence through a 'citizens' committee' in an Athens neighbourhood, Agios Panteleimonas. In the years to come, they would focus efforts on that area, promoting their squads, patrolling the streets against migrants, shutting down the local playgound because of 'foreign children' playing there, attacking mosques, not letting activists nor politicians of the Left to campaign. In the meantime, they had made their first electoral success in the local elections of 2010, electing Michaloliakos as a councillor who was threatening to 'turn the whole of Athens into an Agios Panteleimonas'.

Their project was to create similar local groups in neighbourhoods and towns round the country, to frighten activists, migrants and minorities. And they really put this project forward; these last three years have been full of local confrontations, with fascist attacks, attempts to organize local 'parades', to control other squares in Athens through

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[9]Voridis was the official contact of Jean-Marie Le Pen in Greece.

replicating 'citizens' committees' etc.

If we fast forward our description to today, we can have a good sense of the balance of forces in this battle. Now the whole picture has changed. Five of the MPs of Golden Dawn are in jail, including its leader, Nikos Michaloliakos. Their attempt to organise demonstrations in support of their jailed leadership has been a total failure. Outside the Police Headquarters, when their 'Führer' was in handcuffs, no more than 200 Golden Dawners appeared, failing even to present themselves with their Golden Dawn t-shirts. Many of their local offices have been abandoned. Their annual march of 31st of January has been much smaller than last year's. Their jailed MPs have denounced Nazism, racism and violence. In Agios Panteleimonas migrants can walk with no fear, the most notorious member of the local fascist 'committee' is in jail, while the local police station officers are also being prosecuted.

The turning point came in September 2013, when Pavlos Fyssas, an anti-racist 34 year old musician was stabbed to death by a Golden Dawner in a suburb of Piraeus. Fyssas was attacked first by a 'battalion' of Golden Dawn who then stood aside and watched the murder. The police was also near the event and deliberately let the fascists commit their crime. The government was forced to act, pushing some judges to go on with prosecuting Golden Dawn as a criminal organization. The same ministers who were until recently defending Golden Dawn as a legitimate party and refusing to accept the calls of the movement for 'no platform for the Nazis' suddenly transformed into anti-fascist 'vigilantes'.

An explanation that went around the international media after these events was that the government was afraid of the growth of Golden Dawn and turned against it to inhibit its further advance. It is actually the same argument used by the Nazis themselves: it was supposedly the success of Golden Dawn that caused the backlash against them. The truth is exactly the opposite. It has been the failure of Golden Dawn to serve the agenda of the ruling class and the government that made them clip their wings for the moment. Golden Dawn hasn't been able to extend the example of Agios Panteleimonas to any other neighbourhood. Not only that, but wherever they tried to do it they provoked radicalization and local anti-fascist activity on a unseen scale. If the government and a part of the ruling class was hoping that the provocations of the fascists would create an ideological disorientation in the working-class movement and would make it easier for racism to divide the struggles, the result has been the opposite. More and more the workers' movement was fusing with antiracism and antifascism. More cases of struggle against austerity were targeting also 'the Nazis who support the government', and more cases of struggle against Golden Dawn were targeting also 'the government who covers for the Nazis'.

The summer of 2013 leading up to the murder of Pavlos Fyssas has been crucial, because Golden Dawn tried to raise the stakes. It was the first time they attempted to hit directly against the Left and the trade union movement. Some days before the murder of Pavlos Fyssas they had organised a fighting squad of them, armed with sticks and clubs, walking in military formation into the ship-yards of Perama. They physically attacked a group of trade unionists of the Communist Party, while shouting slogans against the 'communist controlled union'. In the past, Golden Dawn had organized attacks against left-wing activists and some provocations in the unions, but never such an open attack against well-known trade unionists while reproducing the calls of the ship-owners who had long been complaining that trade unionism is to blame for the high unemployment in the sector.

Golden Dawn was trying to intervene in a crucial moment of the class struggle. The government had attempted to advance its programme by shutting down the public TV-radio broadcaster in a single day. It was a message to the Troika (IMF, ECB, EU) that the government was still in a position to fight against the stronghold of trade unionism. That attempt backfired. The public TV remained occupied and self-organized by its workers for months and in just a few days the government lost one of the three parties supporting it -the Democratic Left-a party with Eurocommunist origins. The government remained with a marginal majority in the parliament and had lost its single 'left-wing' cover. Two possible strategies appeared inside the ruling party. One called for re-establishing some contacts with the Left and,crucially, with the trade union bureaucracy in order to go on coping with the workers resistance. This was the way they had been able to abort the all-out strike called by the high-school teachers, not through repression but with SYRIZA's trade unionists yielding to calls for stability. The other strategy called for a sharp turn to the right, escalating the civil-war inspired campaign against the left, racist campaigns against migrants, and more police repression. The Golden Dawn leadership decided to intervene in this debate, creating facts on the ground in favour of this second strategy. They were hoping to show to the ruling class that they have the ability to fight against the Left and the unions in a way the normal methods of the government and the police cannot. They miscalculated.

The murder of Pavlos Fyssas generated an immediate explosion of anti-fascist activity. Spontaneous demos erupted not only in the neighbourhoods round the scene of the murder but round the country. Local Golden Dawn offices had to be evacuated. School students joined massively the protests. In a few days the Unions of public sector turned an already called strike into day of anti-fascist action. A march of tens of thousands reached close to the Nazi headquarters in Athens. The government saw the ghost of December 2008

coming back to haunt them, and this time with the possibility of anti-fascist and anti-austerity rage merging. They had to start acting against Golden Dawn in order to save themselves.

The contrast between the sudden electoral advance of Golden Dawn between 2010 and 2012 and the reality of anti-fascist action forcing the government to take action against them in late 2013 cannot be explained through spontaneity. The protests after Pavlos Fyssas's death were spontaneous but they were also a product of consistent anti-fascist initiatives in the last years.

KEERFA (Movement United Against Racism and the Fascist Threat) has been central in this. Initiated by members of SEK, it brought together anti-capitalists, migrant communities, trade unionists, anti-racists and anti-fascists relating to most of the tendencies of the Left. KEERFA tried to put into action the rich tradition of the united front, while at same time being able to cope with the clear lack of will of the leaderships of the two main parties of the Left (Communist Party and SYRIZA) to be involved in anti-fascism. Actually when KEERFA was set up there were open criticisms for both parts of its goals: antiracism and antifascism. The issue of antiracism was considered by part of the Left as disorientating because it supposedly tailed the agenda of the government to shift the agenda from austerity to security. Antifascism was said to be unnecessary because Golden Dawn was still under 0.5%. LAOS was considered just a 'populist' party and exposing its fascist cadre and discourse was considered as a luxury. For good reasons or bad these controversies are now obsolete.

In these years KEERFA has had to organize at several and different levels. Neighbourhood committees to fight against the attempts of fascists to build local groups, mass demonstrations (with 19 January of 2013 being the best example) to show the power of anti-fascism in the streets, anti-racist activity to counter the official propaganda, action in trade-unions not to allow any space for the Nazis, and solidarity work with the migrant

communities against state racism, against fascist attacks or against bosses taking advantage of the situation. These initiatives provided confidence to big layers of activists in order to take action of their own. The examples in the workplaces have been the most impressive. Golden Dawners were trying to find ways to intervene but instead of that they were generating a wall of anti-fascism. In the hospitals, the campaign of 'blood donations only for Greeks' provoked impromptu demos from hospital workers and patients. In the schools, their campaign of recruiting students has led to widespread anti-fascist committees organized by the local unions. In the bus drivers, the only workplace were they had managed to enter officially, gaining seats in the union leadership, they were discredited and marginalized, especially after trying to organize provocations in general strike demonstrations. Over the last year anti-fascism in the workplaces became a movement of its own, with Golden Dawn MPs not even trying to visit workplaces because the unions, even in small factories, were threatening to strike against their presence.

The murder of Pavlos Fyssas just brought all this on-going work to the surface. It also exposed some other hidden truths. First, it showed the level of state complicity in the rise of Golden Dawn; it is revealing that when the government decided to move against the fascists, they had to get rid of a big chunk of the leadership of the police and the secret services. Local police stations in areas where Golden Dawn had a significant presence have been proved to be part of the explanation: police officers were informing the fascists about possible police action and about the initiatives of anti-fascists. Networks connecting Golden Dawn and capitalists were also revealed. The most intriguing has been the case of a shipowner who had an underground museum of Nazism and tons of guns stored in a warehouse, who was funding Golden Dawn and was also involved in the tabloid papers promoting fascist activity. The parliamentary Left were very slow to wake up to the danger. SYRIZA's central committee not long before

Pavlos Fyssas' murder had made a long statement on the prospects of a left government without a single mention of racism or the fascist threat. They were (and still are) considering political-electoral pacts with nationalist-right breakaways from New Democracy, leaving aside the 'difficult' issues of racism and police repression.

We are far from finished with the fascist threat. The collapse of the political system and the economic melt-down is going deeper. State racism is escalating. New Democracy PM, Samaras is in the forefront of promoting racist policies in the European Union. He didn't find a word of sympathy for the hundreds of refugees drowned close to the Italian island of Lampedusa. His minister of Public Order called the Asian migrants 'inferior culturally'. They are building more fences and concentration camps. The Greek ports police recently deliberately murdered families with small children coming from Afghanistan and Syria. Golden Dawn will go on trying to find ways to take advantage of all this. The trials of the fascists are themselves a gamble. Activists of KEERFA are deeply involved in the court cases, trying to make the legal connections between the many different cases of fascist attacks in neighbourhoods with the official prosecution against the Golden Dawn leadership. The judges and the police are still trying to find ways to present the cases as separate acts of violence and not connected with Golden Dawn as an organization.

Of course the state action cannot, in itself, save us from the Nazis. The difference is that now the anti-fascist movement feels vindicated and confident. Thousands of migrants cheered seeing Michaloliakos in handcuffs. Activists who had faced tough battles in the workplaces could breathe a sigh of relief. United front work can be more effective, since the parliamentary Left has recognized the need of action. The streets are ours and we're going to keep them that way. The 22nd of March, called in an international meeting in Athens, will be an important day of antifascist action in many countries. Fascists and far-right populists are trying to appear

in an organized way in the Euroelections, so as to gain from the desperation created by austerity and the crisis. Golden Dawn was supposed to be their best example. The anti-fascist movement in Greece has the duty and the opportunity to turn this situation upside down, showing to any prospective imitator of Michaloliakos the way not only to the prison but also into the dustbin of history.

The Permanent Crisis of 21st Century Ulster Unionism

Seán Mitchell

Last month, a frail and diminished Ian Paisley was interviewed by journalist Eamonn Mallie in what is likely to be his last major public appearance. For much of his public life the roaring voice of unionist intolerance and bigotry, Paisley seems anxious in his twilight years to cultivate a legacy as a voice of reason and good-neighbourliness. The contrast between some of his comments in the interview and Paisley's long record of sectarian agitation was clear, and in places bizarre. The 'whole system' of gerrymandering 'was wrong,' he now concedes. 'It was not one man one vote - that's no way to run any country. It should be absolute freedom and absolute liberty' - an astounding about-face for a man who came to international prominence as the arch-opponent of the civil rights movement. Bloody Sunday, he now tells us, 'was a very dangerous thing, and then the attempt to cover it [up] They were just making a protest within the law.' This from a politician whose party, the DUP, struggled to contain its outrage at the verdict of a Tory government that British troops had killed innocent civilians on the day.

Still, even by his own words, Paisley's conversion is an incomplete one. The victims of the Dublin-Monaghan bombings brought the attacks on themselves, he insists. He glossed over or claimed he could not remember the litany of bigoted statements made throughout the years (including calling Catholics 'vermin'). He was unapologetic about his involvement in organising the paramilitary Vanguard organisation, or his close cooperation with loyalist paramilitaries during the UWC strike in 1974.

People will disagree about the motivations and the sincerity of the 'Big Man's' transformation, but in some ways this misses the point: the real revelations were to be found in his scathing attacks on his DUP successors-First Minister and party leader Peter Robin-son and North Belfast MLA Nigel Dodds, whom he accused of staging a coup to oust him. According to Paisley, there are powerful elements in the DUP who are anxious to draw back from the power-sharing agreement and re-galvanize the DUP around sectarian posturing. This directly contradicts the image Robinson has tried to concoct for his leadershipone that presents itself in Washington and Dublin as the reasonable voice of 21st-century unionism, out to win the hearts and minds even of Catholic voters.

Predictably, Robinson reacted angrily to Paisley's charges, deriding his account as 'a failure of recollection'. But Paisley's attack signifies the weakness of his embattled and crisis-prone successor, who appears to be a sitting duck for any would-be leadership contenders. Long-time underling of Paisley and for decades the day-to-day organiser of the DUP, Robinson's ousting of Paisley was designed to appease the harder loyalist section of the party who were displeased with their leader's close relations with Martin McGuinness. Certainly, the replacement of Paisley's 'chuckle brothers' routine with the deadpan demeanour of Peter Robinson eased the nerves of some. But the change was cosmetic and the inherent problems of the DUP remained, and have even intensified under Robinson's leadership.

Much has been made of Paisley's apparent volte-face: had he mellowed in his old age or was he simply angling for a historical legacy that did not have the word 'bigot' as its main epitaph? In truth, Paisley's confused retrospective reflects the contradictions of modern-day Unionism as it tries to square sectarian politics with the reality of power-sharing in the North today: this conundrum is not specific to the ageing firebrand but is one that the entire historical project of Unionism now faces. After decades of branding anyone who worked with nationalists a 'Lundy' and

spouting the slogan 'Never' from innumerable platforms, Paisley - the embodiment of Unionist oppositional politics - stunned many of his followers by cutting a deal with his long-time enemy Gerry Adams in 2007, leading to the reopening of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the implementation of power sharing between Sinn Féin and the DUP. This wasn't the result of a maverick leader out to secure his legacy: it was the logical outcome of the historical conjuncture that Unionism now finds itself in.

On the surface Unionism appears to be stronger than ever. The Belfast Agreement solidified partition and entrenched the notion that constitutional change would only come about with support of the majority of people in the North: thus seemingly ruling out a united Ireland for the foreseeable future. The main threat to the state for decades, the Provisional IRA, has ceased to exist and its political wing now fully supports the security forces and accepts the hand of the British Queen. Certainly, stubborn resistance to the Northern state remains in some republican quarters - and small-scale armed 'dissident' actions remain a reality - but it hardly compares with the wide-scale resistance seen at the height of the Troubles.

Despite these successes, Unionism has staggered from crisis to crisis in the last number of years. Peter Robinson has been hit with scandal after scandal, resulting in the stunning loss of his East Belfast seat to the Alliance Party in the last Westminster elections. The spat between Paisley and Robinson, however, is a reminder that Unionist leaders have been fractiously divided for decades. Neither Paisley nor Robinsonnor Trimble before themcould claim to be the leader of a singularly united Unionist Movement in the way that past figures like Craig or Carson could. In short Ulster Unionism is not what it once was. Pulled by the realities of power-sharing with Sinn Féin and pushed by its own class contradictions Unionism has continuously spi-

ralled into crisis. Below, we examine the origins of this crisis, and how its interaction with other variables, namely the inherited sectarian structures of the state and the economic crisis, continues to fuel the resurgence of sectarianism in the North.

The Belfast Agreement and the Sectarian State

The 1998 Belfast Agreement was welcomed by a large majority across the island of Ireland. Although a demand among ordinary people for an end to armed conflict drove the peace process forward, at its core the Agreement was an attempt by local and Anglo-American elites to secure stability by plotting a way out of the impasse that the North found itself in by the early 1990s. Within official unionism, there was a grudging recognition that the old methods of open sectarianism backed up by crude repression that had sustained the Orange state since the 1920s were no longer viable, and that some form of political accommodation was necessary. To republicans it was increasingly clear that their 'long war' stood no chance of forcing a British withdrawal, and that a low-level military campaign was futile and unsustainable. The solution in political terms - aggressively managed by successive British, US and Irish governments - was an accommodation between unionism and nationalism in a devolved assembly at Stormont.

From the outset this political arrangement has been fraught with tension and prone to intermittent crises. The Agreement has been described as 'a cure for which there is no known illness,' because nowhere in its 11,000 words does it identify the problem which it purports to solve.[1] Instead, it relied on 'constructive ambiguity' - the notion that, for unionists, the Union is guaranteed, while at the same time, for nationalists, the path to Irish unity is secured. Furthermore, the very nature the Assembly perpetuates and rein-

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[1] Eamonn McCann, 'Tragedy is opportunity for conflict resolution envoys', *Belfast telegraph*, http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/columnists/eamonn-mccann/tragedy-is-opportunity-for-conflict-resolution-envoys-28747476.html

forces existing communal divisions - all Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) have to declare themselves Unionist, Nationalist or 'Other'. The First Minister is always from the largest Unionist or Nationalist party, the Deputy First Minister from the largest party on the 'other side'. Every election consists of two parallel contests to elect the party seen as the best champion of 'their own' community. Any elected representatives who want to opt out of the sectarian headcount by designating 'Other' are consigned to the margins when it comes to voting in the Assembly on issues requiring 'cross-community support', for example. Thus the 'new' Stormont institutionalises sectarianism in a fundamental way.

The political system in the North is therefore based on an inherent contradiction. On the one hand we have a political set up based on 'power sharing', wherein old communal animosities were to be sidelined in favour of cross-community cooperation. In a new, prosperous Northern Ireland closely integrated into an Anglo-American free market powerhouse, sectarianism was to become the fading shadow of a retreating epoch. On the other hand power-sharing seems in some ways to have further entrenched communal divisions, giving rise to a system in which the unionist and nationalist blocs today dominated by the DUP and SF - united in their commitment to neo-liberalism - are continually at loggerheads over peripheral, so-called 'cultural' issues. The result is that Northern Ireland plc is in an almost permanent state of crisis, as sectarian animosities are continually inflamed over flags, parades and sharp differences over how to deal with the past. Consequently, rather than watching the slow decay of sectarianism over the past year we have witnessed its resurgence. The political structures in place in the North have not only proven consistently incapable of challenging it: they are part of the problem, and there is widespread exasperation among ordinary people at the lack of progress in moving forward.

This way of running things has had a poisonous effect as the Assembly perpetually descends into communalism and sectarianism trickles down towards to the street. For this reason, and contrary to establishment claims, the structures of the Northern state have led to an intensification of sectarianism rather than its decline. In Belfast, for example, the number of 'peace walls' has more than doubled since the Agreement. The level of fear has not fallen, and in interface areas, it has increased. There is now genuine and quite rational fear of physical attack in some 'interface areas'. Persistent low-level sectarian attacks have been a regular feature of life in sections of the North, particularly in Belfast and north Antrim, and have at times become more orchestrated in character as loyalist paramilitaries seek to flex their muscles. Today, as sectarianism is again ratcheted up, fear grows that we are headed back to 'the bad old days': in late September a young nationalist in Brompton Park - just across the Crumlin Road from the so-called loyalist 'civil rights camp' was set upon by a gang roving the area in a car while walking with his girlfriend, suffering permanent disfigurement of his face and head: his 19-year old brother committed suicide two years ago, after suffering permanent brain damage in a vicious sectarian attack in the same area four years earlier. Protestants too have been the victims of sectarianism. In the summer of 2013 a number of Catholic youths attacked a small Protestant enclave in the Blacks Road in Belfast, and a number of Protestant churches and homes have been attacked over the last period. The fear is that such horrible incidents will now become routine.

Economic Crisis and the Resurgence of Sectarianism

While an unstable accommodation between unionism and nationalism lay at the heart of the political institutions thrown up by the Belfast Agreement, its economic underpinnings of are crucial to understanding the current revival of sectarianism. The Agreement was patched together during the boom years of the mid-1990s, when the Celtic Tiger was in full stride in the South and the property

bubble seemed to confirm the promise that an end to armed conflict would bring new prosperity to the North, including those working-class communities hardest hit by the Troubles.

Under the influence of London and Washington, local elites aimed to reposition themselves in the global economy through restructuring the Northern Ireland economy along neo-liberal lines.[2] The substantial public sector that had grown up during the 'Troubles' would be chopped down to size, with redundancies in the thousands; New Labour's mania for privatisation and the Blairite assault on the welfare state would be extended aggressively to the North; in the longer term more 'flexible' labour arrangements and a drastic cut in corporate tax rates would provide the foundations for a new, private-sector led economy. A revived tourism sector and a 'globally competitive (i.e. low wage) knowledge economy' would serve as the economic foundations of a 'new' Northern Ireland.

The onset of global economic crisis in late 2008, however, and the dramatic downturn since has laid bare many of the flawed assumptions behind these ambitious plans, though none of the political parties at Stormont seems inclined to change course. Belfast has the highest retail vacancy in the UK, and the bulk of foreign investment has involved massive public handouts to multinational corporations offering low-wage employment in call centres and the like. As elsewhere, the bursting of the real estate bubble has meant that many working-class homeowners are struggling to hold on to houses that are not worth what they owe on them. A recent report noted that standards of living have fallen further in the North than anywhere else in the UK.[3] Poverty remains deeply entrenched, its effects felt most severely in areas that suffered the most during the Trou-

bles.

Even in a period of boom, the combination of communally-organised political institutions and an aggressive neo-liberal assault on the welfare state would mean that the potential for peoples' frustrations manifesting themselves in renewed sectarian violence is never far from the surface. But in a period of protracted economic crisis, the danger of sectarian polarization and renewed and wide-scale violence is a real one. Sectarian tensions have been escalating in the North, driven by both the 'respectable' wing of unionism represented at Stormont and by the combined agitation of loyalist paramilitaries and the Orange Order, who have orchestrated a series of confrontations over flags, parades, and what they describe as a 'cultural war' against their 'Britishness'. The clearest sign yet of this resurgence in sectarianism has been the return of loyalist violence to the streets of Belfast, starting during last year's marching season, peaking in the run-up to and after Christmas in the 'flag protests', and then returning ferociously around this year's Twelfth.[4]

In July 2013, loyalists set up a 'civil rights' camp at an interface at the end of Twadell Avenue in North Belfast, and in the east of the city the UVF has painted over a council-funded George Best mural and replaced it with a sinister profile of a masked paramilitary gunman - side by side with a quote from US civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. on the need for the 'oppressed' to forcibly take what the 'oppressors' won't give them. In August, a republican-organised anti-interment march through the city centre was met by thousands of loyalists, who attempted to lay siege to the parade, attacking bystanders and police and ransacking one of the better-known mixed pubs in the city centre. At the start of the school year, three Catholic schools in loy-

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[2]For details of this see Brian Kelly, 'Neoliberal Belfast', *Irish Marxist Review* 2

[3]'Northern Ireland living standards had steepest fall in the UK,' *BBC News* 10 Feb 2014 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-26120255>.

[4]The most recent period of violence originated with a banned Orange parade past the Ardoyne shops in North Belfast. Night after night, the streets of North Belfast and some sections of East Belfast were consumed by rioting. Undeterred, Unionist politicians and the Order went further. Additional marches in the same area were called in subsequent weeks in an effort to turn Ardoyne into a 'New Drumcree'.

alist areas were threatened and warned not to re-open, although nothing came of the threats and the schools are functioning as normal.

The renascent sectarianism that these incidents demonstrate has taken the establishment by surprise, though none of it should come as a shock: low-level sectarianism has been a persistent feature throughout the post-Agreement period - particularly in Belfast - at times erupting into serious violence.There can be no doubt, however, that in the last few years, particularly over the last 18 months, incidences of sectarian confrontation have become more and more frequent and orchestrated.

Deeply invested in the Agreement, Sinn Féin shares a responsibility for the resurgence of sectarianism in recent years. Increasingly it reflects the outlook of a substantial Catholic middle class that has made its peace with the Northern state, and which rather than seeking a radical overhaul asks only for some room within the existing arrangements for its expression of 'Irish identity'. Sinn Féin fully accepts the communal premise of the Agreement, that there exist in the North two main 'traditions' - unionism and nationalism - equally deserving of tolerance and respect, and which must be accommodated perpetually into the future.

Much like the Nationalist Party, which dominated Catholic politics in the North before 1969, SF sees itself increasingly as the mainstream representative of 'nationalist interests' in a communally divided society. They aim not to overcome sectarian divisions, but (like the DUP) to be seen as effective at securing the best carve-up for their side of the divide. This means that the growing disparity between rich and poor within the 'nationalist community' is ignored, and that on the rare occasions when discussions of issues like poverty and unemployment etc. are taken up, they are used mainly to illustrate the (minimal) lingering differences in conditions between Protestant and Catholic workers rather than their common interests in resisting the growing disparities between rich and poor in

the 'new' Northern Ireland. This is a recipe for benign apartheid - 'equal but separate' development without any need for unity.

The Historic Crisis of Unionism

Undoubtedly, however, the main thrust of discontent over the last period has emanated from within the ranks of Unionism. Working-class Protestant communities, like those in Catholic areas, have gained little from the peace process. There is a deep well of anger that progress is not being made and that working class people are being left behind. For this reason the DUP have consistently tried to raise sectarian tensions to deflect anger from their own inability to deliver substantive change in the lives of ordinary people. Fearful of losing their voting base to hardline loyalists around Jim Allister's TUV (traditional Unionist Voice) and the PUP (Progressive Unionist Party), the DUP has been completely silent in the face of escalating sectarianism, with their local MLAs standing should-to-shoulder with Orangemen and paramilitaries.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the loyalist flag protests were preceded by a systematic attempt by the DUP to raise sectarianism in East Belfast. The flag protesters had come onto the streets in response to 40,000 leaflets delivered across Belfast slamming the Alliance party for 'backing the Sinn Féin/SDLP position that the flag should be ripped down on all but a few days' and urged people to tell the Alliance party 'We don't want our national flag torn down from City Hall. We can't let them make Belfast a cold house for Unionists.'[5] The focus on the Alliance party resulted from that party's victory over DUP leader Peter Robinson in his East Belfast stronghold at the Westminster election. It is doubtful that the DUP leadership, so wedded to portraying Northern Ireland as 'open for business', intended to unleash a wave of disruptive protests across Belfast. But this was

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[5]Goretti Horgan, 'Loyal to the Flag', *Socialist Review*, February 2013

the consequence nonetheless.

The Flag protests were not the first time in the post-ceasefire era that Unionism has descended into outbursts of sectarian street protests. On a number of occasions, such as the Garvaghy siege of the late 90s, the Holy Cross protests in 2001, the loyalists street protests of 2006 or the various outbursts around Ardoyne and the Short Strand, sections of Unionism have taken to the streets to stoke sectarianism. To an extent, these incidents can be explained by the sectarian grandstanding of Unionist politicians and paramilitaries. However, they also represent a deeper malaise within Unionism.

The historical project of Unionism is in a protracted crisis. In truth, this process predates the current period, and can be traced right back to the Civil Rights movement and the decline of the Orange state that set in from the early sixties. It is a crisis, however, that has continued apace in the post-agreement period, and further intensified in the last few years. Why has this been the case? Unionism has always been defined, both organisationally and ideologically, as an all-class alliance of Protestants, designed to capture and maintain state power. This project has been undercut throughout the last few decades for two main reasons. Firstly, the decline of the Orange State - coupled with the acceptance of the British Government that the Northern state could only survive with the support of a section of the Nationalist population - meant that Unionism was pushed into the power sharing with Nationalists. Gone are the days of absolute Unionist authority over the state and with it the ability of Unionism

to dictate the political agenda of the North.

Secondly, the material mechanisms for maintaining Unionism as an all class alliance have been severely undercut. The well-documented decline of traditional industry decimated the social base of Unionism and weakened it as a project that could corral the protestant working classes. There are no shipyards, no mills, and no factories to parcel out jobs to Protestants. The security industry remains overwhelmingly Protestant, but the days of an exclusively Protestant police force are gone. This collapse of industry also had the consequence of corroding the social fabric of many protestant communities. The prescription of the Unionist and Nationalist elites to this crisis, a mixture of austerity and neo-liberalism, has only made the situation worse.

One symptom of this crisis has been declining support within Protestant communities for the Belfast Agreement. Whilst a clear majority of people both North and South of the border supported the Agreement, support amongst Protestants from the outset was less secure. According to Jonathan Tonge, 'With both Nationalist parties endorsing the Agreement a 99 percent yes vote was recorded among Catholics, but only 57 per cent of Protestants voted likewise'. Within six months of the referendum this had dropped further; only 41 percent of Protestants, as against 72 percent of Catholics, felt that the Agreement benefited unionists and nationalists equally.

As the years went on, the notion that 'Protestants were losing out' while 'Catholics were getting everything' - energetically promoted by Unionist politicians - continued to gain traction. By 2005 only 2 percent of Protestants believed that unionists had benefited more than nationalists from the agreement. When asked in a 2008 survey which community they thought had benefited most from the Belfast Agreement, 78 percent of Protestants responded that it was the Catholic community. Whilst the notion that Catholics were doing better out of the Agreement was quite widespread, the facts

don't quite add up. As the report itself comments; 'Protestants perceive the Belfast Agreement to have benefited Catholics unequally to Protestants, [but] respondents generally didn't understand why or how this had happened, and may have been basing their answers on a perception that Catholics had benefited rather than from actual evidence'.[6]

The notion that Catholics were gaining to the detriment of Protestants has gathered pace in some quarters since the economic crisis of 2008. In the absence of a struggle that could articulate the real and genuine anger into a class direction; the notion that the 'other side' is to blame has gained traction. Secondly, the crisis of Unionism has caused it to fracture, meaning that forces outside of the DUP have begun to grow which in turn has caused the DUP to continuously tack right in the hope of courting favour with disaffected loyalists. In essence, therefore, the current resurgence of sectarianism must be understood as the intersection of **the political crisis of Unionism** with **the deepening economic crisis driven by the recession**. Journalists' accounts from within the ranks of the riots suggest that beneath the communal defence of the 'right to march', it is the increasing economic desperation in working-class Protestant areas that is fuelling the riots. 'It came to a head because the taigs were getting away with everything, getting everything they want, and we just can't hack it any more,' one local resident told David McKittrick, adding that it was easier for Catholics to get jobs. 'Aye, definitely. They get the work on building sites and all.'[7]

Socialists must therefore begin from a different starting point than the middle classes who express their disdain at the rioting. Where mainstream condemnation combines revulsion at the violence with deep class contempt for the communities involved, we have

to insist that the deep anger persisting among sections of the Protestant working class at their losing ground in post-Agreement Northern Ireland is not the problem. The problem is that under the influence of sectarian bigots in the DUP and loyalist paramilitaries the rioters misdirect their anger toward Catholics, who live in conditions as bad as or worse than those prevailing on the Shankill, rather than directing it upwards, at those who benefit from the poverty at the bottom - including the leadership of the DUP itself.

Flags, Parades and 'Protestant Culture'

Increasingly, Unionism has sought to make up for its shortcomings by portraying itself as forthright defenders of an embattled 'Protestant Culture'. Conflicts at Assembly and local government level over so-called 'cultural' issues - chiefly the right of Orange marchers to parade through majority nationalist districts where they are unwanted, but also over the flying of flags on public buildings, the attempts to foist 'homecoming parades' for British military regiments on mixed communities, decisions over whether to fund or acknowledge the rights of Irish-language communities, etc. - continually aggravate sectarian enmity and resentment, and shape the context in which, in the absence of progressive alternatives, loyalist paramilitaries continue to exert a substantial influence in working-class Protestant districts

This notion of 'Protestant culture' - widely promoted by both sides in the 'New' Northern state - rests on the claim that Orange Parades and flag flying are somehow innately Protestant. Consequently, a consistent attempt has been made by various forces in the establishment to promote 'protestant culture' as an integral part of the 'New North-

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[6] *Ten Years On: Who are the Winners and Losers from the Belfast Agreement?*,http://www.academia.edu/3238672/Ten_Years_On_Who_are_the_Winners_and_Losers_from_the_Belfast_Agreement

[7] David McKittrick, 'Rioting by night, peace by day: Belfast seeks a swift solution', *The Independent* http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/rioting-by-night-peace-by-day-belfast-seeks-a-swift-solution-8104884.html

ern Ireland'. Part of the 'two traditions' approach, this argument absolves the state from finding any permanent solution to the conflict here other than 'peaceful coexistence' between cultures. It seeks to placate sectarianism and to manage it.

In reality this strategy is falling apart, and if anything, is leading to increasing disorder. Part of the problem with promoting the notion of 'Protestant Culture' and the two traditions idea more broadly, is that it tends to lead to more division, not less. It ingrains a sense of 'other', portrays sectarianism as something natural, and lends justification to all sorts of divisive notions. Beyond the vacuous rhetoric spouted by Unionist politicians, the truth is that talk of 'Protestant Culture' has increasingly become an excuse to justify all manner of sectarian activities. For instance, we are now expected to accept the flying of Union Jacks in communities as 'cultural': the reality couldn't be any different. Flying union jacks has always been a means of intimidation, a way of marking territory. Thus, when Union Jacks go up the message that follows is 'Catholics stay out'.

The Orange Order is another case in point. In a vain effort to ingratiate the Order, and include it into the wider neoliberal agenda of the State, millions of pounds were poured into a campaign to rebrand it as a cultural organisation and to repackage the Twelfth as a colourful and harmless day out with the kids -'Orangefest'. As well as this some £4 million was poured into the organization's coffers - including large sums from the austerity-obsessed southern state. Despite this, there are now more contentious parades rather than less in Northern Ireland. Still, the Northern state encourages us to see organisations like the Orange Order as an integral part of building a 'shared future'. But this is a contradiction in terms. How can an organisation whose raison d'etre is to maintain division be part of a shared future? The idea that the Orange Order is simply a commemorative outfit, a sort of Battle of the Boyne re-enactment society, is nonsense. The Orange Order is an institution that actively seeks to reinforce sec-

tarian order and division in society. Time and time again they prove themselves incapable of change. In short, the Orange Order aren't a part of the solution to sectarianism, they are a fundamental part of the problem.

When Unionist politicians or Orange leaders talk of 'Protestant Culture' they wish to convey an image of something benign and harmless. But it is not surprising that the term tends to arise when Orangeism comes under criticism for actions that are anything but. Even the idea of 'Protestant' culture is misleading. Protestantism is a global religion, yet Orange marches etc are something particular to the North of Ireland. It is not comparable to say 'Jewish culture', the various practices which are common amongst Jewish communities the world over. Yet even if we accept that Orange marches are somehow cultural, this does not give them carte blanche legitimacy. All cultures or cultural practices must be judged on what they entail and what consequences they have for wider society. It was once part of the 'cultural' practices of the South of Ireland to lock women up in laundries because they had children out of wedlock or did not conform in one way or another to the supposed moral code of the church. Certainly this horrid oppression of women was part of the 'catholic culture' of the day, which viewed sex as something bad and women as innately inferior to men. But this did not stop right minded people in coming out and condemning it and eventually succeeding in abolishing it. The same goes for the practices of Orangeism, be they cultural or not.

The Real Face of Orangeism

Orangeism has never been a benign cultural movement; rather it has always been a deeply political project, and a reactionary one at that. A cursory glance at its history will illustrate this. The Order was formed to defend 'the King and his heirs' and to support the political, economic, and social domination of Ireland by a minority grouping of great landowners, business men and Protestant clergy known as the 'Protestant Ascen-

dancy'. These elites consciously saw the Order as a counter-revolutionary force, 'a barrier to revolution and an obstacle to compromise', and actively opposed the Protestant led 1798 Rebellion. In the 19th century it was reinvented by Unionist industrialists, and became a powerful tool in tempering the rise of trade unionism in Ulster and in opposing the anti-colonial movement throughout Ireland. Throughout the 20th century it was a key component of the 'Orange State', instituting discrimination and solidifying sectarian division. Crucially, when the spectre of working class unity was raised, the Orange Card was deployed. Indeed, as Liam Clarke recently noted in the *Belfast Telegraph*, the Order has historically been a barrier to progress of any kind:

> The Order has been dragged kicking and screaming into every century since 1800. It opposed Catholic emancipation, the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland and even the introduction of the secret ballot. It has also been opposed to nearly every successful political reform since partition.[8]

Still, some sections of the Order reject this description, and prefer to portray the organisation as a 'respectable' religious outfit. Historical experience, however, tells us otherwise. From the first sectarian riots of the 1840's, to the pogroms of 1912, 1920, 1935, 1949 and the Orange riots of 1969, right through the tunnels of Dunloy in the 1980s and the streets of Drumcree in the 1990s, Orangeism has always been synonymous with sectarian violence. This is not accidental. Rather, it is the logical outcome of the confrontational strategy of the Order. Despite talk about 'tradition', Orange parades have always been about immediate objectives, namely political

and territorial domination. As a former leading Orangeman, John Brown, once explained:

> On 12 July and other occasions the Orangeman marched with his lodge behind its flags and drums to show his strength in the places where he thought it would do most good. Where you could walk you could dominate and other things followed.[9]

In the main, it is the Catholic community that has been on the receiving end of this exercise in domination. Still today, the polarization that the Order encourages provides a context for sectarian attacks on Catholic homes and even murder across the North. For this reason, Socialists support the right of residents to oppose the sectarian coat trailing of the Order. As the protestant historian William Brown pointed out, it is absurd to expect Catholics to react any differently giving the history of the Order:

> Even if we exclude the hatred, mayhem and murder this marching can in certain circumstances generate, it is patently ridiculous nowadays to expect the Catholic-nationalist community always to show tolerance and forbearance to something that was designed 'to keep the papists in their places' and 'to show them who's master'. The politics of the ascendency is both foolish and dangerous.[10]

But we also have to understand that it is not just Catholic residents that lose out. The tension that Orangeism creates has the effect of dragging us all backward, and it is invariably the people at the bottom, both working class Protestants and Catholics, that lose out the most. Working class Protestants have as

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[8]'Why cuddling up to Orange Order would be a mistake for the DUP' ,*Belfast Telegraph*, http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/debateni/blogs/liam-clarke/why-cuddling-up-to-orange-order-would-be-a-mistake-for-the-dup-29421787.html

[9]'Marching against time', *Socialist Review*, Issue 200, September 1996

[10] William Brown, *An Army with Banners: The Real Face of Orangeism*, 2003

much a stake as anyone in creating a society free from sectarianism. Sectarian politics has laid waste to working class protestant areas, and offers no hope for a future for the people of the Shankill or the Sandy Row. Orangeism is a barrier to building an alternative to this mess. Despite the fact that most people in the North wish to see a more integrated society, the Order is resolutely opposed to it. It's modus operandi is to maintain divisions between Catholics and Protestants, it discourages mixed marriages, and evokes notions of 'protestant unity'. Crucially, as the living standards of working class people are being cut across the board, the Order encourages notions of 'the other side are doing better', weakening the urgent necessity for Catholics and protestants to come together to fight the cuts.

Furthermore, the divisive politics of the Order is working to produce further divisions. At the 2010 Twelfth of July march in County Down, the Grand Master of the local Orange Lodge, told the gathered crowd that 'multiculturalism and diversity politics are a mask for intolerance and hatred towards the established majority'.[11] The LGBT community too has become a target for the Order. The Unionist newspaper, the Belfast Newsletter, described the 'resolutions' that 'each Twelfth gathering is expected to support:

> Orangemen and women will pledge their support for the flying of the Union Flag on public buildings and oppose gay marriage at 18 demonstrations across Northern Ireland on July 12.[12]

What any of this has to do with 'protestant culture' is anyone's guess? The fact that the Order chose opposition to Gay marriage as one of their main pledges is just another example of how Orangeism is about the promotion of exclusion, rather than about celebrating culture. It is also testament to the fact that Nationalist resident groups are not the only people who have a stake in opposing Orangeism.

However, it would be a mistake to view everyone who partakes in Orange marches as unreconstructed bigots and to write them off entirely. The Order contains many working class people who can be won through struggle to socialist politics. Famously, during the 1907 Dockers strike the Order split, with many of its more progressive and labour minded brethren going on to form the 'Independent Orange Order'.[13]

Still today many working class people will have some association with the Order. As the social fabric of many working class areas has been eroded organisations like the Orange Order have come to fill the vacuum. The routine of Lodge meetings or the pride and discipline associated with band practices can give many working class people a sense of 'belonging': particularly amongst the young and disadvantaged who have little other recourse for recreation. Whilst acknowledging this, however, socialists have to be clear in pointing out that Orangeism ultimately holds the whole working class back. James Connolly long ago pointed out this contradiction:

> Viewing the procession as a mere 'Teague' (to use the name the brethren bestow on all of Catholic origin), I must confess that some parts of it are beautiful, some of it ludicrous, and some of it exceedingly disheartening.

> The regalia is often beautiful; I have seen representations of the Gates of Derry that were really

[11] Seán Mitchell, *Why All Workers Should Oppose the Orange Order*, http://www.swp.ie/node/4716

[12] 'Orange Order set to pledge support for the Union flag and oppose gay marriage at this years Twelfth celebrations', http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/regional/orange-order-set-to-pledge-support-for-the-union-flag-and-oppose-gay-marriage-at-this-year-s-twelfth-celebrations-1-5205602

[13] For more on this see John Gray's seminal account of the strike, *City in Revolt*, 1985

a pleasure to view as pieces of workmanship; and similar representations erected as Orange arches across dingy side streets that, if we could forget their symbolism, we would admire as real works of art.[14]

Connolly, however, understood that behind the majesty of the Orange procession lay a politics that all workers had a stake in opposing.

The Orange Order was not founded to safeguard religious freedom, but to deny religious freedom, and that it raised this religious question, not for the sake of any religion, but in order to use religious zeal in the interests of the oppressive property rights of rackrenting landlords and sweating capitalists.[15]

We should be forthright in our opposition to Orangeism, but we should also not overestimate its strength or weight in society. Orange parades certainly still bring out thousands of people and the organisation remains a formidable force with thousands of members and influential backing within the Assembly. However, its size and weight within society has considerably declined. Its membership, once as high as 100,000, is now down to about 30,000 and the behaviour of the Order of late has turned many people from its doors. Indeed, one poll showed that only 8 percent of Protestants agreed with the Order defying Parade Commission rulings.[16]

The Impossibility of 'Progressive Loyalism'

Void of a stable base in Protestant areas, the DUP has increasingly come to rely on sectarian grandstanding and the support of loyalist paramilitaries. It is a strategy long used by Unionist parties, but it is fraught with difficulties. The shift to the right by the DUP has created a space where other loyalist forces, namely the PUP and the UVF, have grown. The PUP claims that its membership has increased from around 100 to 500 in the last year. Undoubtedly the party has benefited from both its involvement in the flag protests and the growing disillusionment with the 'Big House Unionism' of the DUP. It is likely, therefore, to make small gains in this year's local elections.

The PUP has long purported to be a working class party and the progressive voice of Unionism. It holds a number of what might be called 'old labour' positions around economic questions. However the growth of the party has plainly not come from these positions: instead it has derived from its sectarian stance around flags and parades. Those who bemoan the absence of a 'progressive loyalism' that will speak for the protestant working class miss the point entirely: any set of politics based on communalism will always be driven into the cul de sac of sectarianism. What the PUP is doing is exploiting genuine working class anger and misdirecting it in a sectarian direction. Their argument is that the deterioration of working-class life in Protestant areas is down to Catholics getting preferential treatment: their 'solution' is to attain these resources at the expense of the 'other side' through whipping up sectarian violence and intimidation. Moreover, rather than developing an independent working class politics, the

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[14]James Connolly, *July the 12th*, http://www.marxists.org/archive/connolly/1913/07/july12.htm

[15]James Connolly, *Labour and the Proposed Partition of Ireland*, http://www.marxists.org/archive/connolly/1914/03/laborpar.htm

[16]'Northern Irish People to Orange Order: You Can't Walk Where You Want,' http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/northern-ireland/northern-irish-people-to-orange-order-you-cant-walk-where-you-want-29581681.html

PUP will be pushed in line behind the 'big house Unionists' of the DUP. This was made clear by PUP leader Billy Hutchinson's support for 'Unionist Unity' at the party's most recent conference:

> Today the Progressive Unionist Party reiterated its commitment to Unionist unity, recognising that this is the best way to maintain the Union while also addressing in partnership the complex issues that affect our most disadvantaged communities.[17]

PUP banner at the loyalist 'civil rights' camp on Twadell Avenue.

Loyalism has always represented a certain class division in Unionism. When Big House Unionism has fractured loyalist forces emerge which combine a discontent with Unionist elites with a renewed and intensified focus on anti-Catholic sectarianism. The way that the PUP exploits genuine concerns over poverty and unemployment to increase sectarian tensions is reminiscent of loyalist movements throughout the history of the Northern state. In the 1920s, the Ulster Protestant Association articulated a reactionary response to mass unemployment by calling for expulsions of Catholics from workplaces. In the 1930s, the Great Depression and the corresponding decline in industry in the North, also caused Unionism to fracture. One consequence of this

was fissures to the left - most famously around the Outdoor Relief Riots. But less well-known is the development in the period of right-wing loyalist movements, principally the Ulster Protestant League, which combined class discontent over unemployment and poverty with a reactionary sectarianism. The same can be said of the emergence of Paisleyism, which exploited growing unease with the post-war economic downturn to promote an intensification of sectarianism. And today loyalist paramilitaries claim that Protestants are losing out, and that Catholics are doing better. Common to all of these loyalist movements is that they combine working class discontent over economic issues with a reactionary narrative that points the finger at Catholics. Many of these movements emerged at the behest of a Unionist leadership desperate to maintain their own support base. But they then develop a life of their own, as the Flag protests have shown.

Whilst loyalism today shares many characteristics with reactionary movements of the past, there is one crucial difference; loyalism today is far weaker. Think of the Ulster Workers Council strike, when loyalists brought Northern Ireland to an effective standstill. Or the mass protests and 'general strike' around the time of the Anglo-Irish Agreement which had more limited consequences, but still conveyed considerable strength. Whilst its true that these 'strikes' had more in common with a lock-out than a traditional industrial action- whereby people were intimated by paramilitaries not to go to work- they did signal a degree of social weight within loyalism. The decline of old industry has undercut this social weight . Around the time of the Garvaghy dispute, loyalists talked of shutting the North down as they had in the past. Certainly there was widespread violence. But there were no strikes, life went on. The loyalist flag protests are on an even smaller scale. Whilst they have had a considerable impact on society here, creating no go areas, heightening tensions and causing wide scale disruption they are on a far

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[17]'Unionists must co-operate: PUP boss', *Belfast Newsletter*, http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/regional/unionists-must-co-operate-pup-boss-1-5580760

smaller scale than past loyalist movements. In short, loyalism no longer has the power to take us backwards to the days of the Orange State, but it can play a role in holding us all from moving forward.

Are Catholics Gaining over Protestants?

In addition to claiming that they are the victims of a cultural war, loyalists have been arguing for some time that Catholics have been gaining from the Peace Process whilst Protestants have lost out. This perception has been driven in part by the rise of a new and confident Catholic middle class which has made its peace with the Northern state and is content to carve out a space for itself in the current order. The richest part of Belfast, the Malone Road, for example, now has a Catholic majority. The idea that Protestants are losing out is also fuelled by the deterioration in Protestant areas themselves. One of the most striking features of poverty in Northern Ireland over the last 20 years has been the way Protestant working class areas have steadily climbed up the deprivation figures. So, while Catholic areas were highly over-represented in the 10 percent most deprived areas 20 years ago, today about 40 percent of the most deprived areas are Protestant.

Loyalists are correct in saying that protestant working class areas are deteriorating, but they are wrong to point the finger at Catholics. In fact, despite perceptions to the contrary, the fact remains that by most socio-economic determinants, Catholics continue to do slightly worse than Protestants. In 2007 the religious composition of the population of working age in the North was found to be 53 percent Protestant and 47 percent Roman Catholic. Yet, 54 percent of those unemployed were Roman Catholic, compared to 46 percent Protestant, making Catholics 1.4 times more likely than Protestants to be unemployed. Indeed, this trend is observable across all age groups, with Catholics being more likely to be unemployed than Protestants, young and old alike. The same can be

said of housing, where Catholics continue to be disproportionally affected by the housing crisis. In North Belfast for example, Catholics make up 45 percent of the population yet some 74 percent of those on the housing waiting list are catholic.

Much of these differences can be put down to regional trends rather than some new form of discrimination: for historical reasons, things remain worse in Catholic areas, which are concentrated in the West of the region where wages are lowest and services poorest - mirroring the North-South divide in England. In Belfast unemployment between Catholics and Protestants is almost identical. The fact remains, however, that Loyalists are wrong that Catholics have been doing better than Protestants economically. Whilst these figures clearly disprove the fallacy of a Catholic advantage over Protestants, they mask the extent to which Protestant communities have faced a serious decline over the last number of years. There are many reasons for this decline: the engineering and other manufacturing jobs that used to provide relatively well-paid, secure employment in Protestant areas have gone. Educational disadvantage hits the Protestant section of the working class, especially boys, hard - though all children in the North are poorly served by a selective education system.

Agency work is often the only option - jobs that earned £12 an hour 10 years ago but now attract only the minimum wage and offer no security. The reality of poverty, however, is that both Protestants and Catholics loose out. Even before the recession, median wage levels in the North generally were just 85 percent of those in Britain - over £15 a week less than the next lowest-paid region of the UK, the North East of England, now it's down to about 82 percent of wages in Britain. However, in the absence of any class based alternative the notion of one community doing better has been the predominant way that anger has been directed.

The protesters are right, then, that the Protestant working class has not benefited from the peace process. But neither has the

Catholic working class. It may have made some sense 40 years ago to see the interests of Catholic and Protestant working-class communities as separate and distinct - even contradictory. Undoing the effects of generations of discrimination and exclusion meant striking a new balance between the communities. Conventional thinking saw the game as zero-sum: giving to the Catholics meant taking from the Protestants. This was never an accurate assessment, but there was enough truth in it to make it seem plausible. Now it makes no sense at all. Today, there is no solution to the problems of deprived Protestant areas which would not also be the solution in deprived Catholic areas. There is no separate Protestant or Catholic working-class interest. The working class will advance in the future together, or, to the detriment of all, it won't advance at all.

The Socialist response

Unlike media pundits and other others on the left, we should not see the current resurgence of sectarianism as being about culture, identity, or some vacuous notion of a 'clash of competing rights'. What we are witnessing is the crisis of capitalism mediated through the political specificity of the North: unemployment and austerity are causing a well of anger which reactionary forces are anxious to exploit. But as Marxists we understand that these same underlying factors can give fuel to class struggle and new opportunities for the Left. Socialists have to be confident about the possibilities that class politics offers for building a serious resistance and winning working-class Catholics and Protestants to a new and effective round of mass struggles.

The type of visceral sectarianism we have seen over the last few months is a very dangerous development, and one that cannot be ignored. But we should resist the temptation to see it as an inevitable and permanent facet of life. New obstacles have emerged for the left certainly, but significant opportunities remain. The economic crisis, and a raft of soon to be implemented cuts, has the potential to further worsen the situation. Working tax credits have been massively cut; Housing Benefit has been cut for people on benefits and few people in work now get it. If the Assembly passes the Welfare Reform Bill and brings in the Bedroom Tax and further cuts in disability benefits, then Northern Ireland is set to lose more income than any other part of the UK. But these issues can also be a source of resistance. If we are to make any serious headway in the coming period then we must find ways to build both a movement against these cuts which undercuts the notion of one community doing better than the other, whilst simultaneously linking this with a fight against the sectarian ideas and organisations which hamper any real unity emerging.

However, the history of the labour movement in the north going back before the founding of the Northern Ireland state suggests that sectarianism has played a crucial role in paralysing every attempt at advancing independent working class politics in times of capitalist crisis. In trying to demonstrate the potential for class politics, socialists tend to emphasize the high points of workers' unity in the norththe 1907 dock strike, the 1919 engineers' strikes, the Outdoor Relief riots of the thirties. But each of these episodes also demonstrates the resilience of sectarianism: the post WWI recession saw a massive general strike in 1919, but also the rise of the Ulster Protestant Association and the pogroms of the 1920's. The post WWII decline in industry saw a rise in Labourism and the Northern Ireland Labour Party but also generated an early form of Paisleyism.

The political lessons of the last great economic recession in the 1930's are of paramount importance. In 1932, a sustained campaign of agitation around unemployment brought thousands of Catholics and Protestants into the streets. An attempt by the state to crush the movement by force was met by sustained rioting on both the Shankill and the Falls, creating Belfast's first non-sectarian working class riot. But again, despite the mass movement, sectarianism didn't just disappear. Sectarian attacks continued

and the Revolutionary Workers Group, which had developed a base in both Protestant and Catholic areas during the strike, were forced to contend with the rise of organizations like the Ulster Protestant League and the sectarianism of Unionist politicians who viciously resisted any notion of class unity.[18]

In other words the history of the labour movement in Belfast suggests that economic crisis presents both the potential for a united working-class response and for a retreat into the familiar groove of sectarian scapegoating. There is little appetite in the North for a return to the violence of the Troubles. But we have to be clear that in the current situation, with a deepening economic crisis as its backdrop, the potential exists for the emergence of class struggle against austerity and at the same time the possibility for a renewal of sectarian tensions. The cuts, austerity and discontent with the establishment has created a situation where the continuation of the status quo is not a viable option for ordinary people on either sides of the divide. The question for the working class in the North remains this: in the face of this impasse, will we move forward towards class unity, or backward into the cleavages of communal politics?

In attempting to build a left in the North two strategic approaches towards the Protestant working class have historically prevailed. The first position, prevalent amongst republicans, writes them off as a singular, reactionary bloc. Here, Protestant workers are viewed merely as the dupes of Unionism, incapable of breaking from the shackles of Orangeism. In the past this position was justified on the left by a crude materialism, which categorised Protestant workers as a privileged cast, above and separate from their Catholic counterparts. Certainly, real and significant differences did exist between Protestant and Catholic workers, and no serious socialist movement could afford to ignore this. But ultimately sectarianism had the effect of dragging all workers backwards - living standards across the board have been lower in the North than corresponding regions in Britain- and as such, all workers had a stake in opposing it. Today, the differences between Protestants and Catholics are even more marginal, rendering any notion of privilege null and void: ultimately both Catholics and Protestants have an interest in fighting together. Furthermore, any movement of the left that confines itself to one community will face serious pressures to revert to communal politics. Historically this has meant a retreat from class politics into a version of left Nationalism or Labour Unionism.

The second approach is the reformist one. This position, dominant amongst the trade union leadership, seeks to win Protestant workers to class politics by ignoring or at worst justifying the sectarianism of loyalists. This approach is evident in the failure of the Unions to present any sort of clear opposition to the upsurge in loyalist violence in the last period. It can be seen also in the attempts by some union leaders to build a relationship with the 'protestant community' by effectively entering into alliances with loyalist paramilitaries. Taking its cue from the Northern state, the Unions accept the notion of the 'two traditions', and refuse to take a stand against loyalist sectarianism. In the short term Unions fear that any opposition to loyalists will jettison their protestant support. True, some loyalists would no doubt criticise the unions if they were to come out against sectarianism. But the reality is that in the long term this position paralyses the labour movement and forces it to retreat every time sectarian enmity rises. Despite this, the Unions and Trade Union struggle can play a crucial role in challenging sectarianism. At 36 percent, the North has a higher trade union density than any corresponding region in Britain or the Republic of Ireland[19], bringing hundreds of thousands of Catholic and Protestant workers together. If the unions can be pushed into action, then the environment for challenging

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[18]For more on this see the author's forthcoming book on the ODR riots.

[19]*Trade union statistics* 2012, `https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trade-union-statistics-2012`

sectarianism will be much more favourable. But if we ignore the menace of sectarianism, then that unity will be short-lived and the divisions will emerge once more.

Socialists, therefore, can neither write off the protestant working class because loyalist ideas currently predominate within a section of it, nor can we shirk from the difficult questions when attempting to build a movement of working class opposition to austerity. Common to both these positions is the equation of loyalist and the Protestant working class as one and the same. It ignores the long tradition of labourism and trade unions amongst protestant workers, and neglects the many Protestants who have no truck with loyalism or Unionist politicians. Common too is a separation of the political and the economic, a sort of *'Render unto Loyalism the things which are loyalist; and the Trade Unions the things that are the Trade Union's'.* Socialists do not separate political and economic questions. On the contrary, we see them as inextricably linked. Socialists understand that through struggle workers can change their ideas. Class struggle is, as Marx put it, a 'self-changing' process. Therefore when Protestant and Catholic workers fight together, the terrain is changed, and an opportunity arises for sectarianism to be challenged. However we should not confuse an opportunity with inevitability. As Marx put it, revolutionary action must be 'practical-critical'.[20] That is to say it must combine a practical engagement with the building of real struggle with an ideological offensive against bourgeois ideas. The history of the left in the North, unfortunately, is the history of the separation of these two things.

For this reason, the only principled and sustainable position for the left is to build

a movement which brings Protestant and Catholic workers together, whilst simultaneously fighting to break workers from reactionary ideas like Orangeism. This is why socialists are not neutral on the National question. As Lenin argued, socialism 'assesses any national demand, any national separation, from the angle of the workers' class struggle'.[21] Socialists do not call for an end to the border out of some desire to unite the historic Irish nation. We do so because we understand that if a real workers movement is to be built in this country, then it must overcome all sources of division, including the ideas of Orangeism in the working class. But we also understand that this cannot be done on the basis of Irish Nationalism. Gerry Adam's plan to have a referendum on Irish unity is a case in point. What he is effectively asking protestant workers, and catholic workers for that matter, is to vote to separate from one rotten state in the North, in order to unite with another rotten state in the South. Socialists of course want to see an end to the border. But we stand in the tradition of James Connolly and fight for a 32 County Workers' Republic that can offer a future for all workers on this island, Protestant or Catholic.

Socialists must able to link the day to day issues around pay, jobs or funding with a wider political fight in society. This relationship between the practical activity of bringing workers together through struggle and the political fight against reactionary ideas within that is the key to left wing strategy in the North. Ultimately this process can only be synthesized by a revolutionary party, rooted in struggle and capable of challenging backward ideas within the working class. The task remains to build it.

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[20]Karl Marx, *Theses On Feuerbach*, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm

[21]Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/self-det/ch04.htm

The Precariat: New Class or Bogus Concept?

Kieran Allen

Rather like the clothing industry, the academy has its changing fashions. The enterprising social science academic will invent a concept and market it extensively in books and peer-reviewed publications. The more citations it receives from other academics, the more successful his or her career becomes. The key strategy lies in getting ahead of the curve - hence the premium placed on neologisms, the invention of new words.

'The precariat' is one such fashionable concept. It is a play on the word 'proletariat' but it signifies a much more modern, up to the minute capturing of the latest trends brought about by globalisation. It was developed by Guy Standing, a Professor of Economic Security at Bath University who has since moved to the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. Prior to that he worked as an economist with the International Labour Organisation for two decades and became known as an international expert on 'flexibility'. A sceptic of the dominant neoliberal discourse, Standing's outlook derives from another fashionable figure in academia, Karl Polanyi. This effectively argued that the extreme forces of the market had to be counterbalanced with regulation. In 2002, as an ILO economist, Standing argued that there had to be changes in the welfare state to reflect the rise of the 'flexi worker' who were seen as the core group in modern society. Later the term 'flexi worker' morphed into 'the precariat' and Standing's fame in academic circles shot up.[1]

If it were simply a matter of the academic-publishing complex producing new words, it would barely merit discussion. But words like 'the precariat' are concepts that feed into theoretical understandings. And, despite the ornamentation and jargon that surround much academic theorising, theories are ways in which we understand the world beyond our own direct experience. Such understandings are sometimes linked to actions and strategic choices. Certainly, Guy Standing's concept of the precariat has important implications.
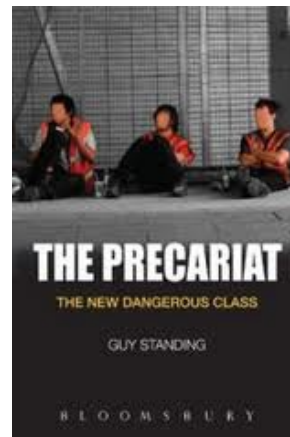
Guy Standings book *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*

The precariat, according to Standing, are people who lack seven main forms of labour security. They do not have adequate income earning opportunities because of the return of mass unemployment; when they do find work, they have no protection against arbitrary dismissals; they do not have defined job descriptions; they have no work security in terms of proper health and safety regulations or limits on working time or unsocial hours; they have no career path or opportunities to up skill; their wage are not protected by minimum wage legislation or indexed against inflation; they have no collective voice. This is a description of the conditions facing millions of people today - particular those who are migrants, young or the elderly who are forced to return to work because of inadequate pensions.[2]

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[1] J. Breman, 'A Bogus Concept' *New Left Review* 84, November-December 2013.

[2] G. Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, London Bloomsbury Academic , 2011, p 10

Different interests?

Standing's purpose, however, is not simply to describe - but to theorise. In other words, to offer a way of understanding these developments which serve as a guide to action and policy. Mimicking the language of Marxism, he argues that the precariat is a new 'class in the making'. In other words, it is not organised or conscious of its distinct interests but the objective conditions for its existence as a class have been produced by neoliberal globalisation. The central point - and indeed the key implication of using the term 'precariat'- is that this class has distinct interests to those of the 'proletariat'. Here is his argument,

> The precariat was not part of 'the working class' or the 'proletariat'. The latter term suggests a society consisting mostly of workers in long term stable, fixed-hour jobs with established routes of advancement, subject to unionisation and collective agreements, with job titles their fathers and mothers would have understood, facing local employers they were familiar with'[3]

We shall return to this peculiar definition of the working class later but for the moment note its mythical tone and its image of working class as somewhat conservative. Standing has, in fact, a broadly contemptuous attitude to this 'old' working class. He argues that it is simply 'a term embedded in our culture' from centuries past and he agrees with André Gorz's proclamation made, ironically, before the May 68 general strike in France that the 'end of the working class' occurred long ago.[4] By this he means that it ceased to have historic agency -able to unite around common interests and forge a new society. The hopes of those who want change now rest with the 'precariat' - this new class in the making.

But what might this change amount to? Here Standing's critical but continuing support for the ILO's social liberalism shines though. At the root of this approach is a dislike for the 'labourist' politics, which dominated the working class movement. But while his attack on 'labourism' is sometimes reminiscent of the language of the anti-capitalist left, in reality it is an attack from the right. The old workers movement is presented as a conservative force who sought security under the protection of a bureaucratic state. The 'salariat'- a jargon sociological term for white-collar workers - have apparently, along with the elite, 'most of the financial capital and have gained vastly more income' without evidence of working harder.[5] Standing virtually writes off trade unions as 'necessarily adversarial and economistic' and suggests that the precariat needs new collective bodies, which engage in 'collaborative bargaining' not just with employers but with other groups of workers, 'because its interests are not the same as those of the salariat or core employees, who have labour unions to speak for them'.[6]

Sheltering behind a technological determinist outlook and the siren call of inevitability, Standing argues that a focus on 'big state' reforms has become an historic anachronism. The precariat are presented as 'globalisation's child'. Globalisation, in turn, arose from an 'emboldened group of social and economic thinkers' who disliked the state and 'its planning and regulatory apparatus'. 'The tragedy', Standing argues, 'was that, while their *diagnosis* made partial sense, their *prognosis* was callous' [7]

The less callous solution, Standing suggests, is a further break from the 'big state'. He argues that 'contrary to the labourist declaration that "Labour is not a commod-

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[3]ibid p.6
[4]ibid p.7
[5]ibid p.171
[6]ibid p.168
[7]ibid p.5
[8]ibid p.161

ity", there should be full labour commodification'.[8] Thus, while Marx critiqued capitalism for turning living creative energy into a mere commodity, Standing suggests that the process did not go far enough. Full monetary values should be placed on all benefits workers grudgingly receive from employers. The 'fancy' heath insurance benefits that US workers received, for example should be scrapped and converted 'into benefits that can be bought by market choice'.[9] More bizarrely, Standing calls for the ending of maternity leave because this non-market benefit is subsidised by taxpayers, including the precariat, who will never receive it.[10] He extols the virtues of volunteering with NGOs as against bureaucratic welfare services. There is even a nod in the direction of David Cameron's rhetorical suggestion to let public sector workers run their units as co-operatives, which tender for contracts - presumably at somewhat lower wages.

If this is the central thrust of Standing's argument, then why has the term 'precariat' gained such currency on the left? Noam Chomsky, for example, has declared it a 'very important book' and uses the term 'precariat' regularly. The wider Occupy movement adopted the term even as it forged strong links with some of the unions in the US. A smaller element, however, such as 'Advance the Struggle', went further and declared that,

It is hard to tell poor, unemployed, undocumented, immigrants, people of colour, that we too, have a stake in the struggles of union workers, especially relatively privileged workers. This is an unpopular reality that many revolutionaries and leftists do not want to confront[11]

Insightful critiques of Standing's arguments have been made by writers like Richard Seymour but, oddly, he argues that 'the appellation precariat works as a populist interpellation' and so it is a concept that can be embraced by the left to help 'found a new, radical majoritarian politics with an anticapitalist core'[12]

There are a number of reasons why the concept of the precariat has permeated some left discourse in the recent past. One lies in the internal construction of Standings' book. Despite arguing for a more commodified version of capitalism, it draws on themes that have appeared in the anti-capitalist movement since the Seattle uprising in 1999. Thus, there are attacks on the corporate take-over of universities and a defence of 'the commons' and urban spaces that are being invaded by commercial interests. There are gestures to the argument about the 'social factory' that originally emerged in the Italian workerist movement of the 1970s as Stranding critiques the 'blurring' of the work/leisure division. There is a wider argument made against neoliberal globalisation and a recognition that it has led to a worsening of life conditions for the majority. Yet despite the often impressionistic tour of these themes, the central point of the book remains an argument that the precariat have different interests from the organised working class and need a more commodified form of capitalism accompanied by global regulation and a Basic Income to allow them to participate more actively in the market.

There are other external reasons why the book received a relatively positive response. One is that many people - and the young in particular- experience a high degree of insecurity because of the re-structuring of Western capitalism. This re-structuring has acceler-

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[9]ibid p.162

[10]ibid p.162

[11]'Longview Occupy and Beyond: Rank and File and the 89% union' *Advance the Struggle* February 2nd 2012 http://advancethestruggle.wordpress.com/2012/02/02/longview-occupy-and-beyond-rank-and-file-and-the-89-unite/

[12]R. Seymour 'We are all precarious - on the concept of the precariat and its misuses' *New Left Project,* http://www.newleftproject.org/index.php/site/article_comments/we_are_all_precarious_on_the_concept_of_the_precariat_and_its_misuses

ated further since the crash of 2008. As a result some of the conditions of existence that were once experienced by some of the poorest sections of the working class are spreading to much wider layers. Take, for example, college graduates. We will use data from Ireland to illustrate the scale of the changes.

Currently Ireland has an extremely high number of people with third level qualifications in the 25-34 age bracket. It amounts to 48 percent of this age cohort, compared to 33 percent in the wider EU. Most young people enter college with a traditional aspiration - that a degree offers a chance of a better life and a 'career' that affords some security. Many indeed assume that it is a ticket into the middle class. Yet the reality is very different. Youth unemployment has risen to 30 percent and that is after the return of mass emigration, which particularly affects youth. Before taking up work, many will spend months on unpaid internships. After that they will most probably go through a series of temporary contracts before getting a permanent job. According to the ASTI, the secondary teachers union, the newly qualified teachers will spend an average of eight years on temporary contracts. Moreover as they enter the labour force, they will experience lower pay and lower pension rights because trade union leaders have sold these young workers out. Given these circumstances is it surprising that there is a certain appeal to an argument about a difference of interest between 'the precariat' and 'the proletariat'?

The second reason, however, has to do with the ideological confusion that has engulfed sections of the anti-capitalist left. The crash of 2008 was similar to that of 1929 in being a general 'systemic crisis'. The response of the workers' movement was strong in particular countries such as Greece but, overall, there has not been sustained or successful resistance. This discrepancy between the scale of the crisis and the weakness of working class response has led to a search for 'new' theories to explain this.

Moreover, as Perry Anderson pointed out long ago, Western Marxism has increasingly been located in academia and has focussed on culture and idealist forms of philosophy that are often divorced from an involvement in class struggle. It may be ironic that Anderson was the author of this piece but his point that Western Marxism survived in a different milieu to classic Marxists such as Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg still holds. This has important implications because the broad orientation of academic leftism in the social sciences has been to dispute the capacity to the 'old' workers movement to struggle for anything other than economistic sectional demands. Not surprising then two types of new theories have emerged in academia to explain working class passivity and, unfortunately, these have gained some traction among leftists.

One is the notion that neoliberalism has entered the very soul of workers so that they are now incapable of thinking in a real collective sense. A good example of this approach is Jennifer Silva's *Coming Up Short: Working class Adulthood in an Age of Uncertainty.* This argues that younger workers are no longer able to connect personal traumas to public issues and, therefore, adopt fundamentally individualistic stances. Another approach, however, is to focus on structural changes in the nature of capitalism and in the working class. Epstein and Krippner's work on 'financialisation' which argues that profit is no longer linked to production is a good example of writings which emphasise changes in the structure of capitalism.[13] Standing's The Precariat is an example of the latter. These structural changes, it is suggested, require an orientation away from organised workers towards wider social movements and the 'precariat'. Variations of these arguments have won a hearing in sections of the anti-capitalist left who fear that the over-focus on organised workers might cut them off from 'the movement'.

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[13] G.Epstein, *Financialisation and the World Economy* New York Edward Elgar, 2005 and Greta R. Krippner 'The financialisation of the American economy' *Socio-Economic Review* 2005 3(2):173-208.

This then is the wider context for the reception that Standing's 'precariat' has received. At the core of the book is a method - derived primarily from the academy- that is at variance with an active Marxist approach to the world. Not only does it discount the fact that the fundamentals of capitalism are rooted in the commodification of human labour, it seeks to 'read off' supposedly 'inevitable' changes from 'globalisation'. In other words, it replaces an analysis of political struggle within the workers' movement with a 'faux nostalgia' that writes off workers either as victims of internalised neoliberal values or redundant because of the structural economic change. The massive gap in all these writings is any examination of the strategies and policies that arise in the workers' movement from the domination of reformism.

The role of reformism

Reformist influences became deeply rooted in the Western labour movement first in the late 19th and early 20th century with the rise of German Social Democracy and the British Labour Party and then, again, during 'the Golden Age' of capitalist expansion from 1948 to the early seventies. The hegemony of these ideas affected - and still affects - every aspect of working class life: the separation of 'industrial relations' from political struggle; the rise of a professional union bureaucracy whose primary purpose is to bargain rather than lead struggle; the subtle patronage structures that co-opted working class fighters into official structures; and, crucially, the implicit acceptance of divisions between workers created by the market as the price to be paid for conforming to the system. The hegemony of these ideas did not arise from a thin layer of labour aristocrats, as Lenin originally suggested,[14] or even, purely, from the apparatus of union and Labour party bureaucracies. These apparatuses certainly played a vital role in sustaining reformist methods and practices when grassroots anger threatened to move beyond

the accepted limits but reformist ideas arose out of the experience of workers in a particular phase of capitalism and if Labour parties were not there to give them expression other -sometimes left nationalist - forces arose to perform the same function.

Today we have entered a new phase of capitalism and the reformist politics which dominated labour movements are in crisis. The leadership layers have embraced social liberalism and only try to tack on a few pathetic 'left' gestures to appease their base. The mass of workers who suffer exploitation and growing insecurity are left in a contradictory position. Many want to fight - as most ballots that are taken for industrial action in Ireland testify. But they often lack confidence and still expect others to represent or fight for them. More broadly, a new revolutionary alternative has not yet emerged that can give voice to the common interest of workers. The systemic crisis of capitalism is, therefore, being reflected in a crisis within labour movements and there is a massive fight underway to resolve it in favour of those who wish to see a challenge to capitalism itself. Part of that fight involves relating, precisely, to some 'labourist' sentiments in order to move them in a revolutionary direction. Standing has no interest in such an outcome and so his new concept of the 'precariat' comes with an attempt to ideologically legitimise divisions between workers.

But even if this is the effect of his arguments, we still need to deal with them in their own terms. This is a somewhat slippery task because of the impressionistic manner in which the book is written. Nevertheless, there are a number of key themes we will focus on to critique his argument.

A mythical proletariat

Standing's approach to social class is drawn from a variant of Weberian sociology, which sees it merely as a number of *categories* with defined characteristics. The class structure is supposedly composed of an elite, a 'salariat' -

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[14] T. Cliff,'The Economic roots of reformism' in *Neither Washington or Moscow*, London: Bookmarks 1982.

white collar workers who have 'pensions, paid holidays and enterprise benefits, often subsidised by the state'; a 'proficians' - professionals or technicians whose skills are in high demands; and manual workers.

Marxists take an entirely different approach to social class and see it as a *relationship* that is formed with an opposing class in the process of production. Production here is not understood in the narrow sense of simply manufacturing but rather the way human energy is used to transform our environment. Work that is conventionally categorised as belonging to 'services' -such in education and health- are also sites in which class relations are formed. These 'services' help reproduce new generations of workers and increase their productivity. They are therefore part of transforming the environment to meet expanding and socially determined human needs.

The key point - which Standing misses entirely - is that these relations under capitalism are based on exploitation and are shaped by the underlying logic of capital: namely, a drive for self-expansion, based on an endless search for a high rate of profit. This means that far from the working class being a static category, it is continually being changed by capital and its own struggles against it.

Thus it is absurd to start from a picture of the manual working class from a distant era. If core sections of organised workers were drawn from skilled workers, miners or car workers in the past, it does not follow that it remains the case today. Currently, for example, white-collar employees in Ireland have higher rates of trade union membership than skilled workers. 37 percent of clerical employees are members of a union compared to 30 percent from craft workers.[15] And if manual workers won some security from employers during the Golden Age of capitalism, it does not follow that they continue to have 'stable' jobs with prospects of advancement in 2014.

Quite the contrary. The general picture now is one of declining security for all workers as capital seeks to compensate for declining rates of profit by increasing the rate of exploitation. Manual workers in most advanced economies have been losing out on pension security; employment security with the rise of mass unemployment; job description security with the constant pressure for flexibility. In Ireland, for example, the number of defined benefit pension schemes has declined from 2,500 in 1990 to only 800 today. In the last four years alone, 400 of these schemes have closed, impacting 65,000 workers.[16] One recent study in Europe found that only 32 percent of all workers thought they had good employability prospects - i.e. could get another job at similar pay and conditions if their own one closed - while 23 percent of industrial workers feared for their job security in the next six months[17]

Clearly, therefore, the manual working class cannot be defined by stable, secure patterns of employment. Insecurity - or precariousness - is a condition that does not just characterise one group but is a condition affecting the wider working class in varying degrees.

The myth of a privileged salariat

The 'salariat' - primarily office and white-collar workers - have probably undergone the most change in recent decades due to the nature of capitalist re-structuring.

A hundred years ago, office employees had a 'trust' relationship with their employer because they worked in close proximity and were rewarded for loyalty to the firm. In the 1930s, Lewis Corey characterised this group as 'honoured employees' who had close and confidential relations with their employers. Even by the late fifties the sociologist, David Lockwood, was arguing that 'the clerk and the

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[15]CSO, *Quarterly National Household Survey Module on Union Membership 2009* Table 3a

[16]'Pensioners may face cuts under reform package' *Irish Times*, 20 November 2013

[17]Eurofound, *Quality of employment conditions and employment relations in Europe*, Eurofound, Dublin , 2013

[18]D. Lockwood, *The Blackcoated Worker*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1958 p.58

manual worker do not, in most cases, share the same class situation at all'.[18] He pointed to differences in status and work situation as the primary reasons.

However, in 1974 the American Marxist, Harry Braverman, challenged this idea and pointed out the growing 'proletarisation' of white-collar work. He showed how the wages of routine white-collar workers had fallen below skilled manual workers initially and then below those of many unskilled factory workers. His central argument was that 'Taylorist' methods in term of loss of autonomy and a shift to managerial control were spreading from the factory floor to the office.[19]

A Privileged Salariat?

Since then the process of 'proletarianisation' has accelerated dramatically. Instead of a 'trust' relationship between most white collar employees and their managers there is an 'audit' relationship. Their 'outputs' are measured through mechanism such as Key Performance Indicators. They are then 'benchmarked' against each other to increase insecurity and stress. There is a growing trend to 'performance related pay' to link salaries to productivity. With the rise of mass third level education, the salaries of routine white collar workers have often fallen further compared to the wider labour force. However, a small minority of these employees have been pulled into the ranks of management. With the demise of the family firm and the growth

of large corporations, the task of organising the systematic exploitation of larger numbers of workers requires a large managerial cadre. This strata, - which have been dubbed the 'new middle class' by Alex Callinicos[20]- are often rewarded with higher salaries and bonuses. They are mainly engaged in unproductive activities that serve the specific methods of capitalist exploitation. However, the vast majority of salaried workers have seen an increase in job intensity and declining rates of pay and security.

Standing's claim, therefore, that the 'salariat' have 'most of the financial capital and have gained vastly more income' without working harder is patently absurd. Its purpose however is rhetorical. By presenting a fictitious image of a privileged 'salariat' and a conservative manual working class, he aims to establish a space for a supposed new class, which have different interests to them. The reality, however, is entirely the opposite. The majority of white-collar employees are increasingly being drawn into the conditions of existence of the wider working class. They are being subjected to more intense forms of exploitation and, as part of that, a regime of insecurity is being enforced on many of them.

Once again, far from the formation a 'precariat' we are witnessing a growing proletarianisation and accompanying this is a regime of insecurity - or if you would prefer 'precariousness'.

Labour is needed

As Kevin Doogan has pointed out, Standing grossly exaggerates the trends to part time and temporary work in globalised capitalism.[21] Worse, he misrepresents the reason why insecure or 'precarious' employment is increasing.

Capitalism is a system characterised by both vertical and horizontal struggle. Each capitalist seeks to maximise the exploitation

[19]H.Braverman, *Labour and Monopoly Capital*, New York:Monthly Review Press 1974

[20]A. Callinicos, 'The new middle class and Socialism' *International Socialism Journal*, Vol. 2.No. 20, 1983.

[21]K.Doogan, *The New capitalism and the Transformation of Work,*London: Polity 2009

of their own workforce but they are also engaged in a horizontal struggle with their fellow capitalists for access to credit, resources and labour. Just as labour is dependent on capital, so capital also needs human labour. Even those sections of capitalism that are furthest removed from direct production in services or manufacturing, still need workers to monitor their computer screens or their investment returns.

Capitalists, therefore, worry about holding onto labour. They worry about high rates of turnover. They worry about the loss of skilled labour to competitors. They dislike having to train and bear the costs of moulding new workers into the particular regime of their firm. Broadly, therefore, in advanced countries they seek to hold onto workers when there is a booming economy or even when rates of capital investment are relatively high. Here are figures from the OECD:

	2000	2011	2012
OECD Countries	11.3	11.9	11.8

Table 1: Temporary employment as a % of dependent employment

These figures reflect a pattern whereby workers are mainly hired as permanent employees - even if that permanency has become increasingly insecure. Munck has made the valid point that Standing's argument is 'eurocentric' because he is pointing to precarious employment in advanced countries while implying this is a global phenomenon.[22] Rates of 'informal' employment in poorer countries tend to traditionally average around 40 percent. For many in the global South, there is nothing new about 'precariousness'.

Ireland presents another interesting variation on the general pattern. Here are the most recent figures from the CSO.

	2000	2011	2012
In employment	1735.4	1861.3	1841.3
Full time	1455.2	1423.8	1396.0
Part time	280.3	437.5	446.3
Part time - Not underemployed	Na	300.4	298.6
Part time - Underemployed	Na	137.1	147.6

Table 2: Full Time and Part time Employment in Ireland 2000-2012

By underemployment the CSO means involuntary part time work where the employee has no other options. The OECD, using figures mainly derived from the Irish CSO, asserts that part time employment has jumped from 18.1 percent of those in employment in 2000 to 25.0 percent today. It also claims that temporary employment has jumped from 4.7 percent to 10.2 percent.

These variations tell a very different tale to that of Standing. His central argument is that the precariat arose as 'globalisation's child'. But 'globalisation' is one of those class neutral terms invented by sociologists, which enable academics to engage in impressionistic and rather unspecific discussion of what purport to be inevitable trends. The doyen of this style of academic theorising is Anthony Giddens - now Baron Giddens - who claimed that 'third way' social democracy, was an inevitable concomitant to globalisation.[23]

Standing takes a very different approach to Giddens but his argument that the rise of the precariat is an inevitable result of 'globalisation' suffers from a similar problem. It ignores the central dynamic - and the contradictions - inherent in the drive of capital to expand itself. Where

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[22] R.Munck, 'The Precariat: A View from the South' *Third World Quarterly* Vol, 34 No. 5, 2013, pp 747-762

[23] A. Giddens, *The Third Way and the Renewal of Social Democracy* , London: Polity, 1998.

there is a concentration of capital, there is a bigger need for labour. The uneven spread of capital - primarily as a result of imperialism- explains why there is more competition between capitalists in some countries than in others. This also helps to explain why there is a greater need for labour in some countries than in others.

One of the central features of capitalism is that there are different rhythms of investment in different periods. Ultimately, this is dependent on the expected rate of profit. When the rate of profit is low, there is a fall-off in investment and as a result there are higher levels of unemployment. This has been a key trend in the last decade in particular. One indication of this is that in 2000, cash holdings - uninvested profits - represented 9.5 percent of global assets but by 2012 this had risen to 12.4 percent. In absolute terms, the cash holdings of publicly listed enterprises jumped from $2.3 trillion dollars in 2000 to $6.5 trillion in 2011, the year of the latest figures. [24]

Declining rates of profits produce contradictory consequences within capitalism. On the one hand there are greater pools of unused labour and, on the other hand, there is an intensification of exploitation of the existing labour force. Capitalists seek to use the threat of insecurity and unemployment to increase the surplus value extracted from each worker and to decrease the necessary costs of employing them. It is this dynamic which produces greater insecurity or precariousness in employment and Ireland, is prime example of this. During the Celtic Tiger there was an insatiable demand for labour and so many were offered 'permanent' contracts. But when investment dries up - declining to about one third of what it was at the height of the Tiger economy - precariousness grows hugely.

Once we locate precariousness within the dynamic of capitalism, it becomes clear that it is not a category that applies to a particular social group but to the working class as a whole. Standing captures one aspect of the change towards greater insecurity but refuses to locate it in the dynamic of capitalism itself. This is why he favours a utopian market based solution that suggests that commodification suits a mythical new class. It is also why his theory is a deeply ideological analysis of the process because it legitimises the creation of more division within the working class by purporting to find a difference in interest between those who are currently precarious and those who are not.

Atomised and powerless?

In the old days there were miners who lived in tight knit communities and developed a collective voice but the precariat are dispersed, fragmented and denied a space to organise collectively. They can only succeed through social movements of the streets - but not the workplace. While this is not spelled out by Standing, it is certainly an implication that some demoralised sections of the left have embraced. It is, however, a classic case of apoliticism.

Between 1911 and 1913 the Irish labour movement was built amongst the most casualised sections of the workforce. The core of Larkin's ITGWU was drawn from dockers and carters who were effectively day labourers.

During the Celtic Tiger, most workers had permanent jobs and there was little sign of a large casualised workforce. Workers were in a more economically advantageous position because of the shortage of labour but their militancy and social achievements were minimal.

The difference had to do with the pol-

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[24]ILO, World of Work Report 2012 p. 75

itics that dominated the respective labour movements. The revolutionary syndicalism of Connolly and Larkin gave expression to a form of class struggle unionism that placed a premium on working class solidarity as distinct from any respect for the rules of industrial relations. Mass pickets and blacking were the tactics that welded together a casualised workforce into a fighting force that terrified the employers.

Modern Irish trade unionism, however, is dominated by Labour Party figures who favour social partnership. During the boom years, they actively restrained workers from imposing any significant cost increasing claims on employers. For example, that leadership attacked a proposal at a SIPTU conference for a campaign to force employers to make mandatory pension contributions. Even during the boom years, this type of business unionism exacerbated divisions within the workers' movement.

After the crash, the fostering of divisions between workers as a method of promoting compliance with austerity became a standard practice. It is now routine for union leaders to promote changes which 'red circle' some conditions for existing workers while accepting disgraceful attacks on new entrants. But compliance via division is not confined to new versus older workers. The original vote to reject the Haddington Road agreement was overturned by a two-fold strategy. First, the union leaders turned a blind eye as their friends in the Labour Party pushed through emergency legislation in the Dail to change the conditions of public sector workers by legal decree - the infamous Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act. Second, with that stick firmly placed behind their back they told one group of workers that they were not being hit as hard as others and that 'it could be worse'.

Nothing better illustrates the crisis of reformism than the huge retreats that have been undertaken in the post-crash years. Those who promote spurious sociological explanations, which suggest that there is a necessary 'atomisation' because of 'globalisation' and the 'precariat', miss the point. 'Atomisation' is primarily the result of a social partnership strategy that relies on fomenting demoralisation and defeatism to ensure compliance with austerity.

Conclusion

The precariat, therefore, is a fashionable but quite bogus concept. It reflects- but does not help to solve - a major problem in the workers movement today. We need an entirely different approach.

First, we need stronger socialist networks to promote the common interests of workers in resisting austerity and capitalism. That means opposing union agreements that sacrifice one group of workers to 'red circle' conditions for others. The reality is that once conditions are reduced for temporary workers, they become the norm for all later. When there is a small cohort of intimidated and abused workers, it will act as a break on any union advance. Opposing these divide and rule tactics will necessary involve socialists in opposing business unionism and social partnership.

Second, we should support mass unionisation drives which organise workers in sections of the economy which rely more on temporary and zero hour contracts such as the fast food industry and the retail trade. This will involve a break with the current 'organising model' that is promoted by many unions. This model, which has been imported from unions like the SEIU (Service Employees International Union) in the US, is based on more tokenistic

forms of struggle in order to reach partnership agreements with employers when sufficient union density has been achieved.[25] The reality is that the only union that will be able to organise the mass of young workers who face the brunt of insecurity is a fighting union that is willing to break laws and engage in the most militant tactics to defeat ruthless employers.

Third, the current model of trade unionism is totally inadequate for the struggles ahead. It is based on organisational structures that are divorced from the workplace. It relies on a professional ethos, which promises casework and advocacy within official industrial relations structures. It decorates itself with a fake tokenistic leftism that is a cover for its abject passivity. Such a model of trade unionism is entering a period of crisis whose outcome is still unknown. What is required is a different form of class struggle trade unionism based on grassroots initiative.

Fourth, an aspect of the crisis of reformism is that social movements can emerge on the streets, which are far more militant, more anti-capitalist than anything occurring in the work place. Socialists should be unreservedly enthusiastic about such movements and willing to learn from new generations of fighters. We should reject any type of defensive syndicalism that plays fails to recognise that such movements can play a major role in the re-composition of working class politics. But within those movements, we also need to point boldly to the importance of focusing on and involving organised workers.

From Tahrir Square to Puerta del Sol in Madrid, there have been magnificent street movements, which have helped to re-awaken a new militancy in workers. But the occupation of squares in itself cannot break the power of the profit-extracting machine. Only the militancy of the streets **combined with** the power of workers in the workplaces can do that.

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[25] K. Allen, 'Social Partnership and Union revitalizatiuon: The Irish Case' in G. Gall (eds) *The Future of Union Organisaing*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009

Irish Tories and social bandits of Seventeenth Century Ireland

Ruairí Gallagher

...Here's the finest of stories,
'Tis of Redmond O'Hanlon, the chief of all Tories.
Here's the feast of O'Rourke, the fight of O'Mara's,
And the battle of Aughrim, and the fall of O'Hara's.
Here's Cathier na Gapul, and Manus M'Connell,
With his merry man Andrew, and Randell O'Donnell,
With other great Tories, Irish rogues, Rapparees,
Once plenty in Ireland, as leaves on the trees.

-Popular poem dedicated to the Irish Tory outlaws titled *Irish Rogues and Rapparees*.

Tories or Tory had been a term commonly used by the English to describe Irish outlaws or bandits, deriving from the Irish word *tóraidhe*, meaning raider or pursued person. During the 1690's, the phrase Tory became common in order to distinguish supporters of King James II and during the 'Glorious Revolution' from the Whig counterpart; and it is a term, ironically, that is still in usage today by the anti-working class political party of the British Conservatives. Nevertheless, Irish Toryism can trace its antecedents to the Cromwellian Wars of the 1640's and 1650's in Ireland, particularly after the collapse of a centralised Royalist war effort in 1649-1650, after which thousands of irregular forces carried out a partisan war against the Parliamentarian regime. Historian Micheál Ó Siochrú, has pointed out that Tory rebels could be successful at civil disorder with attacks such as: sabotages, ambushes on convoys, damaging property and surprise attacks on isolated garrisons, but they could not hold towns or territory, and a considerable force of Parliamentarians would always result in their retreat.[1] Toryism increased in 1651, perhaps coinciding with the Scottish Covenanter invasion of England and its decisive defeat at the Battle of Worcester. The Subsequent Tory unrest did considerably disrupt the Parliamentarian regime until 1653, when, three years after Oliver Cromwell's departure from Ireland, many of the Catholic Confederates or Tories left Ireland to join armies in Europe thereafter. With the Restoration of the English monarchy in 1660 under Charles II, many of the Confederate forces returned to Ireland, with an optimistic expectation of being restored to the properties or estates that had been confiscated during the era of the English Commonwealth. As events unfolded, very few Irish Confederates would be restored to their properties during the Restoration period. The Restoration settlement - consisting of the King's Declaration in 1660, the Act of Settlement of 1662 and Act of Explanation of 1665 - finally resulted in very few Catholics, militant Confederates or ensign-men being restored to their former properties, an outcome which would leave a residue of burning resentment. In the nineteenth century, historian J.P Prendergast became one of the first academics to analyze the phenomenon of Toryism, later referring to the Restoration settlement as a 'tragedy in three Acts'.[2] A contemporary, the Catholic Primate of Ire-

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[1] Micheál Ó Siochrú, *God's Executioner, Oliver Cromwell and the Conquest of Ireland*, (London, 2008), p. 197.

[2] For an informative overview of the Tories during the Cromwellian era and throughout the Restoration period see J.P Prendergast: *The Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland*, (new ed., Great Britain, 1996), and particularly, *Ireland from the Restoration to the Revolution, 1660-1690*, (London, 1887).

land, Oliver Plunkett, and one of the most prolific writers on Toryism, summed up the tragedy of the dispossessed aristocratic Tories:

> In my diocese, that is, in the counties of Tyrone and Armagh, there were certain gentlemen of the leading families of the houses of O'Neill, MacDonnell, O'Hagan, etc. Up to twenty-four in number together with their followers; they were deprived of their properties and took to assassination and robbery on the public highway, entering at night to eat in the houses of the Catholics.[3]

It was during this appalling socio-economic epoch that Toryism emerged and was sustained throughout the latter half of the seventeenth century, while Irish industry deteriorated in the 1660's and 1670's as a result of the Cattle Acts and Navigation Acts.[4] The Cattle Acts had initially imposed a prohibitive duty on cattle and sheep, and then completely forbade exports of Irish livestock, beef, pork and bacon. Also, the Navigation Acts blocked the direct import of colonial produce to Ireland, such as sugar and tobacco - generally affecting the Irish importer who had relied on direct imports. With the result that land confiscations and the negative economic consequences of the Cattle and Navigation Acts helped to develop a type of 'prototype nationalism' among the Tories. This was an insurgency in alliance with the Catholic populace who generally provided intelligence or tacit support for the Tories because many viewed them as simply avengers of the wrongs of the English gentry and crown government. Nonetheless, with banditry also being a persistent problem for European states, J.P Prendergast has pointed out that Sir Arthur Chichester, Lord Deputy of Ireland (1605-15), even referred to Irish bandits or Woodkernes at the beginning of the seventeenth century as 'the White Moors'; alluding to the Spanish expulsion of the Moors from Andalusia during the Spanish Reconquista.[5]

One can also compare the Tories to the late historian and Marxist Eric Hobsbawm's conception of the Social bandits/Primitive rebels of early modern Europe. Intellectual studies on bandits began to grow in importance from 1959, with Eric Hobsbawn's creation of the concept of 'social banditry', in his work, *Primitive Rebels*. Hobsbawn explained that social banditry is essentially 'endemic peasant protest against oppression and poverty; a cry for vengeance on the rich and the oppressors, a vague dream of some curb upon them, a righting of wrongs'. Hobsbawm put forward the thesis that social bandits are essentially;

> Peasant outlaws whom the lord and state regard as criminals, but who remain within peasant society, and are considered by their people as heroes, as champions, avengers, fighters for justice, perhaps even leaders of liberation, and in any

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[3]Oliver Plunkett to Baldeschi, from Dundalk, 27th Jan 1671, in Monsignor John Hanly (ed). *The Letters of Saint Oliver Plunkett, 1625-1681*, (Dublin, 1979), pp. 157-161.

[4] L.M Cullen, *An Economic History of Ireland since 1660*, (3rd ed., London, 1978), pp. 13-19.

[5]J.P Prendergast, *Ireland from the Restoration to the Revolution, 1660 to 1690*, (1887, London), p. 57.

[6]For an intellectual and hugely fascinating Marxist interpretation of banditry in pre-Capitalist European societies see both Eric Hobsbawm's: *Primitive Rebels*, (London, 1965) and, *Bandits*, (new ed., Great Britain, 2001).

case as men to be admired, helped and supported.[6]

Hobsbawm was influenced by Fernand Braudel's classic three volume history on *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the age of Philip II*, which dedicated a sub-chapter to the phenomenon of banditry in Europe in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; particularly the appearance of banditry in the Italian States, Sicily, Catalonia, Andalusia, and in the border-zones of the Turkish Empire, France, Venice, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania and Hungary etc. According to Braudel's thesis, early modern European banditry, therefore, represented righters of wrongs and a form of vengeance upon the ruling class and its lopsided justice.[7] Braudel pointed out that banditry can also receive the support of the nobility as demonstrated by the links between the Neapolitan or Sicilian nobility and bandits in southern Italy.[8] There would seem therefore to be an interesting link between banditry and its potentiality in a revolutionary situation.

Karl Marx and Michael Bakunin, as co-members of the International Working Men's Association, often argued on the nature of which class would lead the revolution. Both agreed that the proletariat (working-class) would play a role, but Marx saw this group to be the decisive revolutionary agent whereas Bakunin considered the possibility that the lumpenproletariat - consisting of unemployed, peasants, common criminals, bandits, etc. - could become the vital mover of a revolution. In Bakunin's *Catechism of a Revolu-tionary*, he argued that robbers and bandits could prove to be 'the mighty force for the victory of the revolution' and creating an alliance with robbers and bandits could produce a new

> [s]pirit and a new goal, embracing all peoples...Rough and wild to the point of cruelty, these people have a fresh strong nature that is untrammelled and not used up, and this [is] open to live propaganda, and if the propaganda is life and not doctrinaire, it will succeed in reaching them.[9]

In contrast, Marx consistently argued that only he proletariat could be the crucial revolutionary agent of any giving revolution. As Marx explained:

> Of all classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern Industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product.[10]

Despite the intellectual debate between Marxism and Anarchism on the nature of which class was to be the important mover of a revolution, Toryism generally showed the same socio-political characteristics as banditry in early modern Europe, and this is exemplified by the Nangle/Costello rebellion (1665-166) in north Connaught. Dudley Costello and Edward Nangle lost their estates during the Cromwellian period and had failed to be restored to their

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[7]Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the Age of Philip II*, (3 vols, London, 1995), p. 746.

[8]ibid p. 750

[9]Quoted from Zeev Ivianski, 'Source for inspiration for Revolutionary Terrorism - The Bakunin - Nechayev Alliance', in *Conflict Quarterly*, p. 53.

[10]Quoted from Anne Robertson, 'The Philosophical Roots of the Marx-Bakunin Conflict', in *What's Next*, December 2003.

properties during the Restoration. Both Nangle and Costello carried out audacious sabotages and hit-and-run attacks on the properties of the Protestant landlords and gentry in Leitrim, Mayo and the surrounding counties of both north Connaught and south Ulster. Nangle and Costello had been 'agrarian reactionary' Tories whose grievances were in opposition to the English settlers, and they were determined to reclaim their estates and properties. There was fear within English circles that if the Nangle/Costello rebellion were not suppressed, it could well develop into a wider insurrection, which would cause deeper difficulties for the Restoration government. In order to thwart the Nangle/Costello rebellion, James Butler, the Duke of Ormond, ordered the townspeople of Belturbet in County Cavan, to erect an inland fort during 1666. Costal fortifications preoccupied the government during the Restoration period due to hysteria about a possible Dutch or French invasion.[11] The Catholic Irish populace refused to provide intelligence to the English authorities; instead, they gave tacit or explicit support to the Tories as Edward Nangle and Dudley Costello continued in 1666 to carry out several daring acts of sabotage on the settlers and their property;

> In Connaught we hear of outrages by Tories. Three or four companies are in quest of them, but the inhabitants of that country where they are, are generally their friends, and will give no intelligence where they may be met with. They have lately burned several houses, and threaten others.[12]
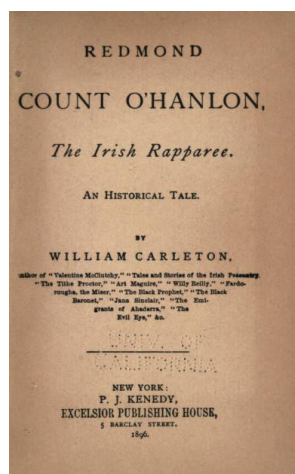
The Nangle/Costello insurgency was a major threat to the Restoration government, with many of the Catholic populace being supportive of these men, and refusing to betray those that they deemed as heroes battling against a domineering English government. Toryism received a major setback with the death of Edward Nangle, who was killed during a raid of the village of Longford in July 1666. By 1667, Costello and his band of Tories continued to subvert the authorities with a violent form of 'economic war' against the settler class, with destruction and raids on cattle until Costello was eventually shot dead by the English general, Theobald Dillon, on March 1667 in County Mayo. Following the death of Costello, his party of Tories were routed and disappeared without trace. Nevertheless, the Nangle/Costello revolt had demonstrated that Restoration Toryism had a social and political edge which had the potential to develop into a sustained campaign of resistance against the new political and social order.[13] Toryism was a phenomenon that could largely depend on the local support of the Irish population, and could also - albeit through sporadic raids - seriously threaten the internal security of the Restoration regime. Moreover, the seditious activities of Dudley Costello and Edward Nangle, like some of their fellow Tories, can also be regarded - depending on one's perspective - as the actions of insurgents or primitive resistance fighters. Tories or bandits in general failed think in terms of a modern revolutionary political ideology, such as Marxism or Irish Republicanism; neither did they develop a radical economic doctrine, in terms of agrarian reform, and they failed (along with their fellow Tories in north

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[11] Paul M. Kerrigan, *Castles and Fortifications in Ireland, 1485-1945*, (Cork, 1995), pp. 107-108.

[12] George Warburton to Joesph Williamson, 11th Dec 1666 (*Cal. S.P. Ire., 1666-1669*, p. 252).

[13] S.J Connolly, *Religion, Law and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland 1660-1760*, (New York, 1995), p. 206.

Connaught or south Ulster) to re-occupy the land. In this respect, the Tories share the same characteristics as Hobsbawm's social banditry, ie defence or restoration of the traditional order of society with nostalgia for the past. Social-bandits or the Tories were less revolutionaries and more ardent fighters against the new order. They were revolutionary traditionalists who regarded as oppressive the English administration with its chauvinistic apparatus; they sought to take Irish society back to pre-Cromwellian times when dispossession coupled with transplantation would have been unimaginable. With hindsight, it can be seen that if the Nangle/Costello rebellion had conceived of a modern revolutionary doctrine or developed greater communications with Tories in the other provinces of Ireland, given the circumstances of the time, their actions would have perhaps resulted in a wider rebellion outside north Connaught and south Ulster.

REDMOND

COUNT O'HANLON,

The Irish Rapparee.

AN HISTORICAL TALE.

BY

WILLIAM CARLETON,

author of "Valentine McClutchy," "Tales and Stories of the Irish Peasantry," "The Tithe Proctor," "Art Maguire," "Willy Reilly," "Fardorougha, the Miser," "The Black Prophet," "The Black Baronet," "Jane Sinclair," "The Emigrants of Ahadarra," "The Evil Eye," &c.

NEW YORK:
P. J. KENEDY,
EXCELSIOR PUBLISHING HOUSE,
5 BARCLAY STREET,
1896.

William Carleton's inaccurate but entertaining nineteenth century novel on the life of Redmond O'Hanlon

With the suppression of the Nangle/Costello rebellion, Toryism continued throughout the 1670's, managing to successfully overstretch the government's inadequate troop numbers during the early 1680's. In comparison with those Tories active during the Restoration, Redmond O'Hanlon, or Count O'Hanlon as the French had known him, was arguably the most famous Tory that Ireland produced - as seen by the large amount of literature and songs as been written about this fascinating character. William Carleton's inaccurate but entertaining nineteenth century novel on the life of Redmond O'Hanlon romanticized the character somewhat - depicting O'Hanlon as handsome, popular among his people, and cunning at evading capture by the English authorities.[14] O'Hanlon's favourite retreats were the wooded areas of Slieve Gullion, the Mourne Mountains and the Fews Mountains of South Ulster. These areas, particularly in South Armagh, have periodically witnessed an absence of efficient state power. As late as 1975, Merlyn Rees, then the British Northern Ireland Secretary, described South Armagh as 'Bandit Country' in regards to the Irish Republican Army's (IRA) guerrilla campaign during the recent 'Troubles' of the late twentieth century.[15] O'Hanlon was a dispossessed aristocrat and his ancestral lands had been confiscated during the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland, and not restored during the Restoration of the monarchy. Popular tradition would later regard Redmond O'Hanlon as an Irish Robin Hood who robbed the rich and gave to the poor.[16] O'Hanlon had successfully extorted protection money or 'black rent' from wealthy merchants, landowners and even from the ordinary Catholic populace. According to S.J Connolly, this indicates,

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[14]For an entertaining but largely inaccurate account of Redmond O'Hanlon's life as a Tory outlaw see: William Carleton, *Redmond O'Hanlon, The Irish Rapparee, An Historical Tale*, (New York, 1896).

[15]Toby Harnden, *Bandit Country: The IRA and South Armagh*, (London, 2000), p. 14.

[16]J.C Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923*, (new ed., London, 1981), p. 105.

that Toryism represented not just a rearguard action against the social and political order, but predatory banditry as had been common throughout early modern Europe.[17] Therefore, perhaps one can compare the unscrupulous Redmond O'Hanlon to Robin Hood and many other famous early modern European outlaws such as Diego Corrientes of Andalusia, the Slovakian Juro Janosik, the famous Scottish outlaw Rob Roy MacGregor and the Albanian Skanderbeg, or English highwayman Dick Turpin. In similar fashion to O'Hanlon, popular culture has also represented highwayman Dick Turpin as daring, elegant, gallant to women, and a Robin Hood who robbed the rich on the English highways and gave to the poor. English highwaymen can also be regarded in many instances as criminals that robbed and terrorised their victims for self-gain, similar to modern day criminals. However, many ordinary people who come into this world with nothing and leave this world with nothing, long for popular stories of the hero in society who courageously defies his oppressive enemy; brings hope to the hungry and expropriates the wealth of the few for the benefit of the many. In this respect, popular tradition has also re-created Redmond O'Hanlon as an Irish Robin Hood. But we are fortunate enough to be provided with a valuable anecdote by Archbishop Boyle, which he wrote in 1678, and this also helps to reaffirm the notion of O'Hanlon as a popular outlaw. The anecdote begins with O'Hanlon and eight other Tories ambushing Captain Chichester and his company of four or five men, his Lady and Lord Cawfield's daughter, while travelling near Dundalk. There was a short stand-off until eventually Captain Chichester and his company surrendered themselves and handed in their weapons to the Tories as Archbishop Boyle explains:

> Hanlon who commanded his small party of villains he led them a mile into the mountains and there searched them all and took away what moneys they had, and finding but 2 cobs in Mrs Cawfield's pocket he would not rob her of her small stock. He finding Capt. Chichester much hurt he gave them all their liberties and stripped them of no clothes.[18]

O'Hanlon's actions can in many ways be regarded as those of a social bandit or a Robin Hood, insofar as he could be daring in the face of the enemy and had the support of the Catholic populace. However, O'Hanlon was more contradictory: he could be ruthless to the Catholic populace as well as to the Protestant landed gentry. In a society ravaged with the Cromwellian Wars of the 1640's, made worse with the Act of Settlements and Explanations of the Restoration, flexible tactics had to be applied in order to resist injustice. O'Hanlon had been a dispossessed aristocrat of the Gaelic gentry, and like many dispossessed Tories, shared a burning resentment against the new proprietors and the landed system that came into place under the Restoration. A system in crisis is often singularly cruel and the most vulnerable are treated with contempt. Moreover, in order to defend a culture and its way of life, it simply rules out any counter-violence to its own violent rule. However, history will remember the heroes' of bygone eras - the Redmond O'Hanlons - who take to the hills or mountains to continue

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[17]S.J. Connolly, *Divided Kingdom: Ireland 1630-1800*, (New York, 2008), p. 167

[18]Archbishop Boyle to Orrery, Dublin, 15th June, 1678, in Edward MacLysaght (ed), *Calendar of Orrery Papers*, (Dublin, 1941), pp. 202-203.

a war of attrition against a far superior enemy because it is understood that the poor have little choice but than to resist with methods their enemy understands.

At the same time that O'Hanlon's retreated to the Fews Mountains of South Ulster and the north Connaught vicinity, Toryism also emerged in the 1680's in areas of landed upheaval or dispossession such as Munster and Leinster, as well as the counties Cork and Kilkenny. The most notable of these Tories was the gentleman robber Colonel Richard Power, a son of a dispossessed aristocrat from County Cork and the 'Three Brennans' of Kilkenny. The Three Brennans, an ancient Sept of Ossory in the north of Kilkenny, carried out the famous raid on the Duke of Ormond's castle at Kilkenny and robbing his highly prized plate.[19]

As with Ireland, banditry appeared in Europe in this period often where common political borders had existed before, as with France and Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia; the Pyrenees border region with Spain; and the frontier between England and Scotland.[20] The weakness of central government, the stark economic conditions and a lack of adequate policing would lead to the continuance of banditry in Europe and Ireland throughout the 1670's and 1680's. News of ambushes, robberies and house burglaries became an almost daily occurrence. The English feared that if Toryism were not suppressed, it could 'grow into petty rebellion, especially in Ulster'.[21] In order to effectively suppress banditry, the English government set-up bands of mercenaries consisting of dragoons and foot soldiers that were tasked to proceed into previously inaccessible mountainous or wooded areas, in order to liquidate Tories in their strong-holds. Well known Tory hunters such as: Sir George Acheson; Sir Hans 'Tory Will' Hamilton; Sir George Hill and Sir George Rawdon were commissioned by county justices to spearhead the suppression of Toryism.[22] But one of the most effective measures for suppressing Toryism included offers of pardons to entice fellow Tories to betray and murder each other. Indeed, J.P Prendergast explained that as late as 1695, any Tory outlaw who killed his comrades was entitled to a pardon. Tory hunting and murdering became common, and was legalised in 1718 and these laws continued to be in force until 1776.[23] It was under these circumstances that Redmond O'Hanlon was assassinated by his traitorous foster-brother, Art O'Hanlon, at Eight Mile Bridge, County Down, on 25th April 1681. The Duke of Ormond then appointed General Lucas (who had overseen O'Hanlon's assassination) as an army lieutenant and gave Art O'Hanlon a pardon, along with £200 blood money, for his services.[24]

The policy of offering pardons to defeat bandits was also followed in early modern European states, as was the case in Spain and Naples. For instance, Fernand Braudel explains how the Venetian government used pardons to remove brigands in Crete during 1555, how Genoa granted pardons to bandits in Corsica and how the Turks adopted analogous measures dur-

[19] John P. Prendergast, *Ireland from the Restoration to the Revolution, 1660-1690*, (London, 1887), pp. 142-143.

[20] Julius R. Ruff, *Violence in Early Modern Europe 1500-1800*, (Cambridge, 2001), p. 222.

[21] Sir G. Rawdon to Viscount Conway, 29th Nov 1673 (*Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series.*, 1673-1675, pp. 37-38).

[22] Éamonn Ó Ciardha, 'Woodkerne, tories and rapparees in Ulster and north Connacht in the seventeenth century', (M.A. thesis, University College, Dublin, 1991), p. 155.

[23] John P. Prendergast, *The Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland*, (new ed., Great Britain, 1996), p. 176.

[24] Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ulster*, (new ed., Belfast, 2001), p. 144.

ing this period in Anatolia.[25] Julious R. Ruff described another instance where the Spanish viceroy on one occasion pardoned 188 bandits, in return for military service in Italy, the Balerics, Gilbraltar, and Oran.[26] It was only with the conclusion of the War of Spanish Succession that the Spanish monarchy could assert greater authority outside Castile and effectively curb banditry. In sum, these practices in Europe and Ireland, were successful insofar as they broke up bands of bandits from within, caused distrust and managed to convert many bandits to becoming the local government's protectors rather than their enemies.

'Ho! Brother Teig, what is your story?'
'I went to the wood and shot a Tory;'
'I went to the wood, and shot another;'
'Was it the same, or was it his brother?'

'I hunted him in, and I hunted him out,
Three times through the bog, and about and about,
Till out of a bush I spied his head,
So I levelled my gun, and shot him dead.'

-Popular nursery rhythm dedicated to the Tory outlaw.

These policies were a measure of weakness and confirmed the inadequacies of a central government. It was desperate to defeat the threat of banditry. Despite this, banditry continued to disrupt European society until the emergence of capitalism with the Industrial Revolution in Britain and the creation of the centralised modern bourgeois state after the French Revolution in 1789. Toryism or banditry was a pre-capitalist phenomenon; as industrialisation expanded, peasants from the countryside flooded into the growing cities they became part of a new class, namely the industrial proletariat.

For revolutionary Marxists today, it is important to acknowledge the courage of the bandit Tories of these early times. They were rejecting both an oppressive English administration at the time of nascent capitalism and a new order that was gradually destroying a noble Gaelic civilisation and its way of life. It must also be remembered that the Tories essentially provided Ireland with fighting men and fighting leaders. Today, in the epoch of neoliberal globalisation and ever increasing attacks on the working-class, we need more of such fighting leaders. The Tories were trailblazers of the struggle to win a new society which would follow Marx's maxim: 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their need'.

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[25] Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the Age of Philip II*, (3 vols, London, 1995), pp. 748-749.

[26] Julius R. Ruff, *Violence in Early Modern Europe 1500-1800*, (Cambridge, 2001), p. 222.

Oppression, Intersectionality and Privilege Theory

Karl Gill

Many people today under capitalism are faced with oppression. Some people are more oppressed than others and people are oppressed for many different reasons. Generally people face oppression on the basis of their sexuality, race, class, gender, gender identity etc. and this oppression has a real and often disabling impact on people's lives and how they interact with others, work and learn. It also has an overall impact on how society functions as a whole. In the process of coming to grips with and understanding this oppression, social theorists have come up with many different analyses. Two analyses which are often linked are 'Intersectionality' and what is broadly referred to as 'Privilege Theory'. These are the two concepts which I will be dealing with in this piece and outlining what I think Marxists might have to say on the matter.

Proponents of Privilege Theory (PT) can be very different and range from the anarchist left to the liberal-dominated NGO sector. For the purpose of this piece I will be dealing with as many aspects of PT as possible in an overall analysis of the general concept. Referring to PT as a 'theory' is sometimes challenged by its proponents however this is something I do for ease of discussion. The concepts defined within PT were written by authors in books and when this has been discussed in universities these authors are referred to as theorists - so 'theory' is not meant to be a pejorative label.

You may have come across PT when hearing someone say 'check your privilege' in response to a form of prejudice. PT is the idea that we all have various levels of privilege which comes from our personal experiences in life based on our identity. Those with most privilege are considered to be white, straight and wealthy men so the closer you are to the race, sexuality, class and gender with most power and dominance in society the more privilege you have. According to privi-lege theory, because we all have unearned advantages that we are often unaware of, people need to examine their own level of privilege before they can express solidarity with more oppressed people in society and if you are not constantly 'checking your privilege' you are part of the problem and de facto an oppressor. The premise of this is that white people benefit from racism, straight people benefit from homophobia, men benefit from sexism and so on.

This is a particular view of how oppression works. In this view people are oppressed by other people who have not had the same experiences in life, that is, experiences of prejudice. For example, unchecked gender privilege means you are complicit in sexism; or unchecked race privilege means you are racist by definition.

In one sense, the fact that so many people have come to this view is a huge step forward. People have very good reasons to point out racism, sexism etc. and encourage people to reflect on their reactionary ideas. However the questions we need to ask are: will personal reflections alone defeat oppression? Is this the best method for tackling homophobia? Can we beat Youth Defence and the Iona Institute by encouraging them to reflect on their own positions in society? Where does this oppression come from and how can we go about wiping it out once and for all?

Socialists should be on the side of people who agree with PT and Intersectionality and we should work together to tackle oppression and bigotry. However it should be the job of Marxists within all movements to argue with people in a constructive and comradely manner and put across a Marxist analysis of oppression.

The beginning of PT can be traced back to its development in 1960s America where it was predominately referred to as 'White Skin Privilege' and used by some writing during the civil rights and black liberation move-

ment. In 1967 the Students for Democratic Society published a book by Noel Ignatiev and Theodore Allen which included two articles; *White Blindspot* and *Can White Radicals be Radicalized?* These pieces argued that white activists tended to put much less emphasis on racism when examining American labour history and when organising current struggles. They also argued that the biggest block to building class struggle and revolution in America was the chauvinism of white workers.

This approach made a resurgence in the early 1990s. In 1990 Peggy McIntosh wrote a book called *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.* In this book McIntosh argued that white people have a full knapsack of privilege due to the fact they live in a world tailored to their needs and that this knapsack weighs you down - so the more privileged you are the more weighed down you are. You must carry this knapsack around with you and never forget its weight when talking to a person of colour - hence 'check your privilege'.[1]

Recently this concept has resurfaced within the Occupy movement and in US and British sociology schools in universities. Often the notion that we all have various levels of privilege that you must check is taught as a given fact in sociology books and lectures.

At the height of the Occupy Wall Street movement a very important document was doing the rounds and being discussed at open assemblies. This document was called *Checking Your Privilege 101* and it came from the Transformative Justice Law Project of (TJLP) in Chicago. This group is made up of different academic activists who stand for prison abolition, gender self-determination and what they call transformative justice. In *Checking Your Privilege 101* they list twelve forms of privilege. These vary from 'Life on the outside privilege' to what they call 'passing privilege'. Life on the outside privilege is explained as being the privilege of not being in prison, as prisoners do not have the same access to certain things as non-prisoners

do. Passing privilege is 'The privilege to be able to 'pass' as a more privileged group, such as a light-skinned person of color passing as white, a transperson passing as non-trans, a disabled person passing as able-bodied, etc'. Other privileges include, Body Size Privilege, Religious Privilege, Educational Privilege and of course Race, Class and Gender privilege.

While the notion that we must go around constantly checking people who are flaunting their 'Passing Privilege' may seem almost laughable, to some there is, however, a very important argument here. You can see the importance of taking this line of thinking seriously when you read how the TJLP define 'Class Privilege'.

> Class Privilege: The privilege of being a person raised with financial stability and access to financial safety nets through family or other assets. Class privilege can also apply to someone who has accrued wealth over time. In our society, class privilege often dictates 'opportunities', 'freedom', access to 'legal rights' and the power to influence political systems and the media. In our experience, class privilege has been one of the privileges most devastating to radical organizing when gone unchecked by those who have it.[2]

Clearly this definition of class is a problem. While obviously it is true that the family you were born into can be an advantage or disadvantage to you, can we really justify a discussion of class in terms of privilege? Obviously activists with a decent income should always keep in mind that not everyone can afford to eat in that restaurant or travel to that protest or conference. But this doesn't mean that all those with secure, or relatively well-paid jobs are of a different class or part of the problem. If we apply the general thesis of PT, that we all have various levels of

[1] Bill Mullen - 'Is there a White Skin Privilege?' 2013 `Socialistworker.org`

[2] Transformative Justice Law Project of Illinois, *Checking Your Privilege 101*

privilege, this line of thinking becomes very similar to the notion that society is made up of many different classes and this is a notion often used by the right to divide people.

Marxists argue that in capitalist society there are two main classes; the working class and the capitalist class. Now while many people may not self-identify as either one of these, for Marxists, class is an objective relationship based on one's position in the process of production. The days when the vast majority of people worked in manual production in factories may have passed, but the fundamental division between those who own and control capital and those who don't - between exploiter and exploited - remains. Under capitalism today you can work for Google on 70K a year or you can own your own small business, employ 2 or 3 people and earn 50K a year or less. However the person who works for Google is selling their labour power to the company and having a profit made out of it, whereas the person who owns their own business is directly profiting off the labour of the people they employ. Also the person who owns their own business has far more control over their own life than the person who is under the thumb of a manager and CEO in Google (no matter how nice their offices are). We need to acknowledge that a huge number of people today work in call-centres, the service industry, self-employment, shop floors, restaurants, the entertainment industry, IT etc. and that traditional factory workers are now, for various reasons, the minority (although they remain an important factor). Again this does not change the fact that a call-centre worker, for example, creates a profit for their firm and therefore is a member of the working class.

There are of course some people who are 'middle class' and these people fall into two main categories: first, those who own small businesses or are self-employed; second those who, while working for a salary, play a managerial role, i.e. they are paid not for their labour power alone but also to manage the labour (and exploitation) of others. However, many self-employed people such as taxi drivers, trades people, gardeners etc.. live and work in working-class communities, live with working-class people and make their living without benefiting from the work of others.

What is involved here is not just an argument about definitions or labels but an analysis of the way society is structured and how it can be changed. Socialists think that this is a useful way of looking at society as it has the potential to empower and unite people. Making this broad definition of working class, rather than individual identity or particular occupations or lifestyles, the point of departure for the struggle means identifying a social force that actually has the potential power to defeat the system. However if we take the *Checking Your Privilege 101* definition of class we are into potentially dangerous territory as it can only serve to divide people who are essentially members of the same class. Also, the notion that telling members of the ruling class to 'check your class privilege' will actually achieve anything is farcical. The only thing that will make a capitalist think twice about their actions is if there is a threat to their profits, not appealing to their good will. However, the *Checking Your Privilege 101* document is widely accepted as representing the liberal wing of the concept.

There are other places on the left and within activism where PT can be found, for example within Anarchism. There is a debate within the anarchist movement internationally between what are referred to as 'class struggle anarchists' who have a near-Marxist analysis of capitalism, and take the view that there are class roots to all oppression, and other anarchists who turn to the postmodern social theorist Michel Foucault to explain oppression. Foucault argued that power exists everywhere in society and is not just concentrated in the state; applying this theory to oppression you can see clearly how PT comes into it. If power exists everywhere, in every relationship in society (as opposed to power being overwhelmingly concentrated at the top and having an influence at the bottom) then it is easy to see how PT can be applied here,

that men benefit from sexism etc.

However, no matter how radical a spin is put on this concept the central problem with the theory remains, namely that other working class people, and not the ruling class, are seen as benefiting from identity-based oppression. It is no use saying you support liberation and socialism and then disregarding all class analysis in order to cry 'Check your privilege!' at working-class people. What proponents of PT need to keep in mind is what exactly oppression is, and how it works. How does oppression reproduce itself? Where does oppression come from? And ultimately how can we get rid of it? In essence what PT comes down to is a view of oppression as the personal choice or decision of the oppressor.

Also within PT there is a fundamental confusion between privileges and rights. Calling something a privilege makes it almost sound dirty, like something you shouldn't have or like something you should feel bad about because someone else doesn't have it. Obviously, it is far better to extend rights to all than it is to restrict rights to some. LGBTQ people do not have access to marriage - do we make straight people feel bad about getting married because of this or do we fight for everyone's right to marry?

PT seems to be limited to recognising inequality and oppression on an individual level; more about urging people to make individual confessions than about fighting the root cause of oppression. In this context, prejudice is normalised as just a part of society and the ability to change it is diminished. Oppression itself does capitalism's work by dividing us and individualising us and PT does nothing to challenge this either.

What PT also does is ignore the connections people have in society; we are not all individual, independent actors in the game of life. We have friends, family, neighbours, colleagues etc. and we are influenced by the different oppressions they face as well as the ones we ourselves are subject to. It is said that men benefit from sexism but it is not said often enough that men also have sisters, mothers and partners who are victims of sexism. Men

live with women so the fact that women earn less due to sexism is not a case for demanding men feel bad about this - it's a case for women (and men) organising to demand equal pay, and not by lowering men's income. The only person who benefits from paying women less is the person who pays them in the first place - the capitalist.

Because the amount of privilege you have is based on your past experiences in life owing to your identity it means your privilege is an unchanging status. So no matter how much solidarity you express, or how many years you spend fighting for the rights of more oppressed people, you are still an oppressive scum bag if you do not acknowledge the fact that you are privileged because you are a man, or you are white, straight etc. Altogether PT paints an absolutely hopeless scenario where society is dominated by oppressive working class people and we can't really do anything about it.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a method of analysis often used by some people on the Left to discuss the different forms of oppression that people face in their daily lives or lived experiences. It is used to look at how these different oppressions intersect and how they impact on people. Intersectionality emerged from the black feminist movement because of a very important analysis of how black women faced both racism and sexism and even the latter in different ways to white women. Proponents of Intersectionality focused on the oppression of women as defined by racism.

In 1974 a new organisation of black lesbian feminists was born in Boston, Massachusetts

in America called The Combahee River Collective. In April 1977 (three years before they disbanded) they wrote their official statement to explain their politics. The concepts defined in this statement are widely quoted by proponents of Intersectionality today even though the term 'Intersectionality' isn't used in it. In fact the term itself only began to be used widely in the early 1990s.

The formation of the Combahee River Collective comes from a really positive perspective. This was a group of some of the most oppressed women in America coming together, discussing ideas and figuring out their own liberation. This was in direct response to the sexism of the male-dominated civil rights and black nationalist movements and the often-implicit racism of the white-dominated women's movement. While they did not necessarily feel that they were completely cast aside by these movements they did think that often their own issues were not taken up and other issues were prioritised.

They say in their statement:

> Above all else, our politics initially sprang from the shared belief that Black women are inherently valuable, that our liberation is a necessity not as an adjunct to somebody else's but because of our need as human persons for autonomy. This may seem so obvious as to sound simplistic, but it is apparent that no other ostensibly progressive movement has ever considered our specific oppression as a priority or worked seriously for the ending of that oppression..We struggle together with Black men against racism, while we also struggle with Black men about sexism.[3]

This is a good starting point. The fact that, in a deeply racist and sexist society, they bravely demand an end to sexism within their

movement is fantastic. However while it is important for us to recognise that this group and others like them came a very good place, Marxists should have some clear criticisms of this document. Clearly their oppression is real and clearly they are victims of both racism and sexism (as well as capitalism) but does their analysis advance their position? Can their emphasis assist in their struggle against oppression?

First of all, while they identify as socialists and discuss economic inequality, there seems to be no real class analysis. Instead they opt for discussing things in terms of privilege:

> We do not have racial, sexual, heterosexual, or class privilege to rely upon, nor do we have even the minimal access to resources and power that groups who possess any one of these types of privilege have.

Secondly there is this statement:

> We are not convinced however, that a socialist revolution that is not also a feminist revolution and anti-racist revolution will guarantee our liberation.

This is a good principle as long as it is not a condition for taking part in a revolution. Before we have a revolution must we guarantee that each and every worker is consciously both a feminist and an anti-racist? Do we ask the working class to wait and not revolt on the basis that there is still sexism and racism in society?

Understanding the development of class consciousness is fundamental to Marxism and to how exactly we beat oppression. A revolution is a process. A revolution starting from very basic economic and political demands can turn into a socialist revolution. A socialist revolution includes not just large street protests and college occupations but also mass strikes and general strikes where the entire working class down tools and withdraw their labour. In this process everything gets thrown

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[3] *The Combahee River Collective Statement* - 1977

up in the air and everything ends up landing in different places, everything changes, including people's ideas.

People's ideas are developed and based on real, material objective conditions and during a revolutionary period these conditions change radically. Even in the smallest of struggles today we can witness a shift in people's ideas as people learn rapidly when they are forced into fighting the system. During the Egyptian revolution in 2011 we witnessed Muslims, some of whom may at some stage have held prejudice views about Christians, form a protective ring around those Christians (Copts) while they prayed and vice versa. We have seen people concerned about the property tax end up coming on protests for abortion rights. When people are engaged in their own battles they become more ready to express solidarity with others who are engaged in other battles. People's consciousness shifts radically in a revolutionary process.

As Marx said in the *German Ideology* in 1845

> Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary; an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution. This revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew.[4]

We don't only beat oppression by beating capitalism, we also beat oppression in the process of beating capitalism. If a revolution throws off the muck of ages (like racism and sexism) then a revolution can open the way to everyone's liberation. Arguments will still have to be had and socialists and feminists will have to argue against sexism and racism and every other expression of oppression we meet in a revolution - but we can still say that men, women, black and white, gay and lesbian working together against capitalism in and of itself is a major blow to oppression.

While the ideas behind Intersectionality initially emerged in the 1960s/70s it came back into being with the rise of postmodernism. In 1983, postmodern theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw wrote an essay entitled *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity and Violence against Women of Color*. In this essay she made a clear link between intersecting or overlapping oppressions and postmodernism: 'I consider Intersectionality to be a provisional concept linking contemporary politics with postmodern theory'.[5] Further to this in 1995 Caroline Andrews wrote a paper called *Ethnicities, Citizenship, and Feminisms: Theorizing the Political Practices of Intersectionality*. In this she wrote:

> Postmodernism has given visibility to fragmentation, marginalization, and multiple identities. The question of how to theorize the intersection of feminism and ethnicity partially reflects postmodern sensibilities. Postmodernism is certainly an important intellectual step towards the reconceptualising of difference. The idea of multiple, fluid identities, of things being both what they are and what they are not, of the end of metanarrative all these open up the debate for the better understanding of difference[6]

However this connection with postmodernism is nowhere to be seen in the circles

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[4]Marx, *German Ideology*, 1984

[5]Crenshaw, 1983 - quoted in the `charnellhouse.org`

[6]Andrews, 1995 - quoted in the `charnellhouse.org`

where it is discussed today. I want to argue that the core concept of what is now called 'Intersectionality' is nothing new. For generations the left have discussed, in various ways, how different people are victims of oppression in different ways. Trotsky and Kollontai in early 20th Century Russia discussed what is called 'the double burden of women' to refer to how women were both wage workers and homemakers and men were not. Marx talked about how the working-class Irish emigrants in England had it worse than most of the English working class and the European left through the 20th century resisted anti-Semitism and recognised how working-class Jews were oppressed in a different way to the rest of the class and so on.

Marxists must recognise that it is vital to challenge racism, sexism, homophobia etc. and not simply concentrate on economic struggles or say certain things can wait until after the revolution. While people are being oppressed nothing can wait. However, this necessary struggle is not helped by complicated, often abstract, academic terms or concepts which can be used by the knowledgeable activist to berate working class people who may hold some reactionary ideas. We need to disagree with people and patiently argue why racism and all other prejudice is bad.

Also, Marxists should keep the concept of class central to our analysis. It is because we live in a class society that oppression exists in the first place. All oppression arises from the class division in society. So the ability to wipe away oppression depends on having a class analysis and acting on it. Class cannot be viewed as just another way in which humans are divided, but as a key division in society that gives rise to prejudices between other real human differences. All struggles are intrinsically linked but revolutionaries need to work to connect struggles through solidarity and broad alliances that bring different groups together. Socialists should see themselves as 'tribunes of the oppressed' and use every space they occupy to highlight the plight of the most oppressed people in society. It is not good enough to just say you are against racism if you do not demand that non-Irish people also have a right to a home, education, job and health in this country and make this demand at every turn and opportunity. Lastly we need an organisation that can do all this. But this organisation needs to reflect and represent the class. The revolutionary party should be a multi-racial, multi-gendered, multi-identity international working-class organisation that challenges the capitalist and class roots of oppression.

Review: Sabby Sagall, *Final Solutions: Human Nature, Capitalism and Genocide*

John Molyneux
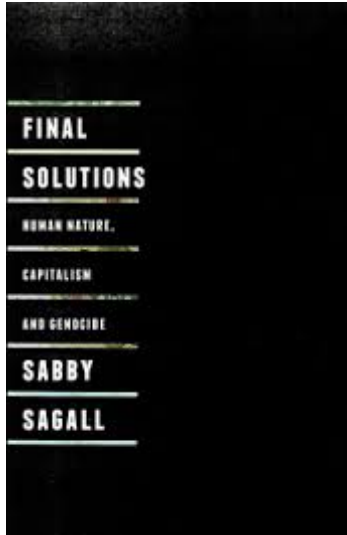
Sabby Sagall, *Final Solutions: Human Nature, Capitalism and Genocide* Pluto Press, 2013 £20.50

Sabby Sagall has written a hugely ambitious book which covers immense historical ground and attempts to answer one of the most challenging historical and theoretical questions of our time. The historical events it deals with are four genocides: that of Native Americans at the hands of European settlers; the Armenian genocide perpetrated by Turkey; the Nazi Holocaust and the Rwanda genocide of 1994. The question it tries to answer is how to provide a convincing overall explanation of these dreadful events.

The essence of his argument - and this is what makes this book so distinctive and original - is that such an explanation requires a combination of socio - economic historical analysis with psychoanalysis. The historical analysis is based on classical Marxism, or what might be called orthodox historical materialism i.e. it takes as its point of departure the development of the forces and relations of production and the consequent class struggle. The psychoanalysis is drawn mainly from Freud as mediated by the Freudo-Marxism of the Frankfurt School, in particular the work

of Erich Fromm.

As might, perhaps, be expected given the author - Sagall is a very long standing member of the British SWP - he tends to take the relevance of Marxist historical materialism to the problem more or less for granted - there is no sustained comparison of Marxist historical explanations of these events with non-Marxist explanations of them. He does, however, feel the need to justify in some detail the psychoanalytic concepts which he believes are necessary to supplement or complete more conventional Marxist analysis in this field and this takes up the first half of the book. In the second half, he attempts to demonstrate the applicability of this Marxist/psychoanalytic methodology to each of the aforementioned genocides in turn.

The most important concept deployed by Sagall is that of 'social character' developed by Fromm. For Freud, human behaviour and character is heavily influenced by the unconscious and each individual's unconscious, and therefore their character, is shaped primarily by their experiences in early childhood and how these interact with their basic sexual drives and development.

Freud's analysis of this process, with its concepts of oral, anal and genital stages, the Oedipus Complex and sublimation, though enormously influential and genuinely insightful, is open to the criticism of being asocial in that on the one hand it focuses on separate individuals (and their parents) and, on the other, claims to be universal across all societies and time periods.

Fromm's concept of social character gives the Freudian account a Marxist twist by being applied not to isolated individuals but to social classes or communities and by being shaped by that class/community's role in the process of production (as productive or unproductive, exploiter or exploited , reactionary or progressive). To this Sagall makes the impor-

tant addition of the idea of social character also being formed by the experience of the given class/community in the class struggle, especially its experience of victory or defeat. In Sagall's hands, therefore 'social character' is a class and historically specific concept.

His argument as a whole is as follows: first, that genocide is 'a modern phenomenon rooted in the social, economic and psychological nature of capitalism [a] society based on individual greed and competiveness, political domination, the alienation of human labour and the commodification of human beings and their relationships.' (p.248).But because capitalism is only episodically, not permanently, genocidal, this background analysis must be supplemented by analysis of the specific circumstances and conflict precipitating the genocide and the social character motivating the perpetrators to carry it out.

In particular, Sagall identifies the capitalist 'middle class' (or petty bourgeoisie) with their 'anal destructive' and 'authoritarian' social character as the prime agents of genocide, especially when they 'have suffered major historical defeats or other forms of extreme stress' (p.248). In the genocide of Native Americans he focuses on the middle class English Puritan and later the Scots-Irish as main villains of the piece. In relation to the Armenians, it is the middle class would be modernisers of the Young Turk movement in the Ottoman Empire. In the Holocaust it is the petty bourgeois based Nazis and in Rwanda it is the middle class Hutu Power leaders and their peasant followers.

In the case of the Anglo-settlers in North America, there is a clear conflict with the Native Americans over land occupancy, usage and ownership but this is augmented and driven to genocide by the social character of the settlers with its puritanical sexual repression, its anxieties about salvation and its suppressed rage at religious persecution and other violent conflict in Britain.

The Young Turks were a middle class movement that wanted to modernise the Ottoman Empire in order to save it. They were frustrated in their attempts, disorientated and driven to narcissistic rage by the progressive disintegration of the Empire in the 19th and early 20th century. This rage was tipped over into genocidal aggression by catastrophic defeats in the 1st World War and projected on to the Armenians 'the enemy within'.

In Germany the already authoritarian social character of the middle class, as it developed in the 19th century, was intensified by the experience of defeat in the 1st World War and the trauma of the Great Depression and given expression by Hitler and the Nazis. The decision to launch the Final Solution itself in 1941/42 was precipitated by defeat on the Russian front which signalled the collapse of the Nazi dreams of conquest.

In Rwanda the background to genocide lay in a long period of domination by Tutsi minority which was intensified and racialised by German and Belgian colonial rule. With independence a Hutu based government was established and many Tutsis went into exile. For a while the economy grew but then in the early nineties it crashed and the exiled Tutsis launched a civil war to regain power. Rwanda was traditionally a very authoritarian society and the economic collapse, combined with panic that the invading Tutsi forces were on the verge of victory, precipitated the mass slaughter of Tutsis.

The question that immediately confronts a reviewer is does Sagall's argument stand up? Answering it is no easy task. I note that in his review of the book in Socialist Review Donny Gluckstein, who has written books on the Nazis and on the Second World War and so is no ignoramus on these matters, concludes with the rather evasive remark 'Whether he [Sagall] has succeeded is something that the reader will have to decide.' I am not surprised. A proper scholarly assessment of Sagall's thesis demands expert knowledge of each of the four genocides he investigates, plus a serious grounding in psychoanalytic theory in its totality, plus a good grasp of historical materialism and issues of historical method. In all likelihood this will be the work of many specialist hands rather than one individual.

Here I will confine myself to some overall, rather impressionistic comments and a discussion of some issues that it throws up.

First, the book is well written and clearly explained; the first part on psychoanalytic concepts is more difficult than the second on the actual genocides but in general it is accessible to the lay reader and is certainly full of very interesting material. Second, it combines a large amount of theory with a great deal of wide ranging empirical evidence and this is a very impressive achievement. It is clearly the product of a deep and sustained engagement with the material and the issues it raises.

The tone of the book is also impressive. Sagall's commitment to social justice and human liberation and, of course, to ensuring that the horrors he describes are not repeated, is evident throughout but there no descent into rhetoric or superfluous moralizing. It is a scrupulous, social scientific investigation.

This said, the first problem that strikes me is a very basic one: is psychological analysis really required here? Clearly all human action from the most everyday to the most historically significant has a psychological aspect or component to it, just as it has a biological or physiological component. Neither walking down the road nor storming the Bastille is possible independent of the law of gravity but that doesn't mean we expect historical analysis of the French Revolution to include an exposition of the theory of gravity. Sagall acknowledges this problem when he writes, 'if we wish to analyse the causes of the First World War, Lenin is more useful than Freud' (p.55). In other words, although a psychological dimension is involved it can be 'assumed' or taken for granted because it is a relatively minor element whereas it is economic, class and political factors that are causally decisive.

One answer to this objection is that the best Marxist history does incorporate the psychological element as a link in the chain of analysis that begins with the development of the forces of production. The outstanding example of this is Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* and it is notable that in the Preface to that mighty work he writes, 'The

dynamic of revolutionary events is directly determined by swift, intense and passionate changes in the psychology of classes'. But the psychology involved here is an understanding of changes in consciousness, mass or individual, rather than invoking the role of the unconscious, and hence does not make use of Freudian or psychoanalytic concepts such as id, ego and super ego or projective identification which Sagall wants to employ.

But Sagall advances a different argument. He maintains that there is a fundamental difference between the genocides that he is trying to explain and other bloody historical events such as the First World War (or, for example, the suppression of the Paris Commune or Franco's terror during and after the Spanish Civil War, or Pinochet's repression in Chile) in that the latter were 'rational' but the former were 'irrational'. What he means by this is that in the First World War or in crushing the Commune the ruling classes were acting on the basis of, and in rough conformity to, their economic and class interests. His four chosen genocides, however, were 'irrational' in they did not correspond to the objective class interests of their perpetrators. This is why psychoanalytic concepts are needed.

This seems to me a difficult argument in that distinguishing or separating out the rational and the irrational in human behaviour and human history as clearly separated out as Sagall tries to do is not easy. I suspect that unconscious drives would be very much at work in the slaughter of the Communards, and in all sorts of repression and individual and systematic torture etc. And it seems to be an unfortunate fact of history that no brutal regime has ever fallen through a shortage of torturers or thugs to enforce its will. (The famous Milgram Experiment of 1961, which showed the readiness of 'normal' citizens to torture when ordered to do so by an authority figure, is relevant here). Genocide, the attempt to exterminate a whole people, is clearly at the extreme end of the spectrum of human cruelty but is it qualitatively different in this respect from other forms of brutality that have gone on throughout the history of

class society?

Sagall defends his insistence on the need to deploy psychoanalysis not just on the grounds that unconscious factors were at work in the genocides he considers but that these genocides were so contrary to the class interests of the perpetrators that these unconscious factors have to be considered a major part of the explanation and that without them the genocides would not have taken place.

In itself, this is a strong argument but whether or not Sagall has shown that this was so in relation to each of his chosen episodes is a question to which I will return shortly, but first want to raise another issue: the concept of 'social character'. It is reasonable to argue that social classes develop certain distinctive 'character structures' on the basis of their roles in production and history but this does not tell us how much weight should be attributed to this factor in the analysis of history. It is also reasonable to argue that there exists such a thing as 'national character', formed by history, but we know how such a notion is often abused in journalism and poor history writing. Clearly Sagall's social character concept is much superior to and more Marxist than, that of national character, but some of the same dangers may arise. In the case of 'social character' these danger is compounded by the difficulty of providing empirical confirmation of claims about the nature of particular social characters (e.g. that the German middle class were 'authoritarian').

Sagall addresses this problem with the claim that there are four kinds of evidence for social character: social or social psychoanalytical surveys; psychoanalytical case studies; historical studies; realist creative literature. But much of this may be of doubtful reliability and sometimes in this book I think Sagall makes assertions about groups' social character (e.g. the Scots-Irish) on the basis of secondary sources that would be very open to challenge.

When it comes to the application of his theories and hypotheses to the four genocides I think Sagall's accounts are not equally convincing. Most convincing to my mind is his treatment of the Nazi Holocaust. This may be because here he is able to build on the masterly work already done by Trotsky, as well as many other Marxist hands ranging from the Frankfurt School to Mandel and Callinicos. It may also be because it is with the question of the Holocaust that Sagall has been most engaged and which may have driven the whole enterprise. Also the massive diversion of resources involved in the Holocaust does seem to run clearly counter to the Nazi regime's overwhelming interest in winning the war.

I also found the section on the Armenian genocide pretty persuasive but certainly lack sufficient knowledge of this episode to pass any confident judgment. In the case of Rwanda I was more doubtful but felt even less qualified to offer an assessment,

It was the account of the Native American genocide that I found least satisfactory. This is because I was not persuaded of the argument that was predominantly 'irrational' in the sense defined by Sagall. This is partly because the process was gradual and protracted, over centuries, rather than a sudden outburst of ferocious destructiveness, as was the case with the other three. It is also because the settlers had such a clear self interest in terms of driving the Native Americans off the land and crushing their resistance. Doubtless this process involved innumerable excesses (in which social and individual character may have played a part) but I don't think the genocide as a whole was driven by these unconscious psychological forces rather than the irreconcilable clash of opposed modes of production and conflicting economic interests.

Sagall supports his argument by an extended comparison between the extermination in Anglo-America and the conquest of Latin America which though brutal in the extreme stopped short of actual genocide, attributing the difference to the different social character of the Spanish and Portuguese conquistadors and settlers. I thought this gave the latter too much credit and the more likely explanation was the fact, also mentioned by Sagall, that in the North the conflict was over

land, whereas in the South it was over control of labour. In other words, the Spanish and Portuguese refrained from full genocide because they needed the indigenous population to work for them, as was the case with African slaves in the US. But Sagall can counter this objection by saying that what made this genocide irrational was precisely that it deprived the white settlers of a potential labour force. Perhaps in the end it comes down to a question of degree.

These doubts and problems are intended to stimulate discussion, however, and not at all to negate the interest and value of the book. I don't think it would be possible for anyone to cover this ground and attempt to answer the questions Sagall does here without raising a multitude of issues requiring further debate and discussion. That this book will, hopefully, be a provoker of such debate, and a significant reference point within it, is itself a major achievement on which the author should be congratulated.

Review: Gerry Docherty & Jim Macgregor, *Hidden History: the Secret Origins of the First World War*

Roy H W Johnston
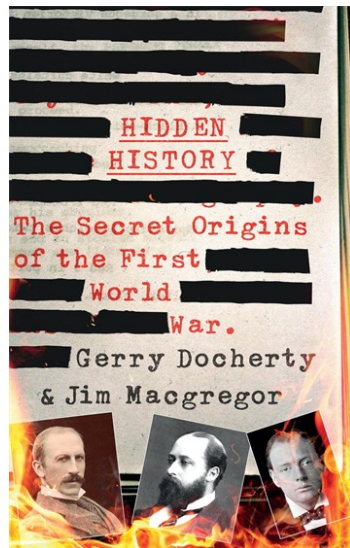
Gerry Docherty & Jim Macgregor, *Hidden History: the Secret Origins of the First World War* Mainstream, Edinburgh, 2003 £20

A contribution to the debate on the origins of World War One

I came across this book by chance in a context where I had been struggling with writing an essay on the origins of WW1 and its relevance to Ireland, arising from some reminiscences of my father Joe Johnston (1890-1972). He had told me that the Larne and Howth gun-runnings in 1914[1] were used as a device to deceive the Germans about the British likelihood of entering the war, should they attack France via Belgium.

This at the time did not register, but I picked up on it when I wrote the introduction to the 1998 re-publication by UCD Press of my father's 1913 book *Civil War in Ulster: its Probable Consequences*[2]. This suggested some research trails to follow, but these however lapsed, until they became somewhat urgent, now that the centenary of these events is nearly upon us.

I wrote some critical draft notes[3], based on some initial research. I have to thank David Burke for drawing the above book to my attention; it turns out that my draft notes are pointing in the same direction as Chapter 25 of *Hidden History* where the Irish dimension is analysed.

I have since read the book, and done some initial comparative study with other sources, including some relating to Sir Henry Wilson and the Imperial General Staff, as well as the 1923 Asquith work on the origins of WW1 and that of Wolff (1934) giving the German experience.[4]

Much remains to be done, and I hope to publish an in-depth study in due course. However I have delved enough into related publications to be convinced that *Hidden History* is **not** simply a conspiracy-theory jaunt, but a serious attempt to uncover how British imperial strategy really developed, in the aftermath of the negative experience of the Boer War, in the direction of instigating a war to destroy Germany while making it look like Germany initiated it.

So I am presenting what follows as a sort of brief abstract of my future in-depth review, in the hopes that it will be seen by at least some historians and critical scholars in time to

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[1]A substantial shipment of guns for the Ulster Volunteer Force, bought in Austria and shipped from Hamburg, was landed at Larne in April 1914. A smaller quantity was landed at Howth in July. There is evidence that both events were with the connivance of the British imperial elite. See *Hidden History*, especially p.316.

[2]This was an attempt to build support for all-Ireland Home Rule among northern Protestants. An annotated version of this historic book was published in 1998 by UCD Press and is still in print. For an e-version contact `roy@rjtechne.org`.

[3]For these notes see `http://www.rjtechne.org/polit/irlww1.htm`

[4]HH Asquith, *The Genesis of the War*, Casell 1923, Theodor Wolff, *The Eve of 1914*, Gollancz, 1935.

influence any seminars relating to the Larne and Howth gun-runnings. The Howth guns were transported in a yacht owned and captained by Erskine Childers, then working for the Admiralty.

Howth occurred about 10 days before August 4 1914 when war was declared, by a Liberal-Tory majority supported by Carson and Redmond, to the cheers of the assembled MPs.

The decision to go to war did not originate from the Cabinet; it came as a result of a 'secret elite' via the War Office and the Entente, and was open to constitutional question. The King was included in this 'secret elite' group. So we have King and colonial bureaucracy bypassing the Cabinet, and managing to achieve a Parliamentary majority, as a result of informal Entente agreements with the French.

The references to Erskine Childers in *Hidden History* will add to controversy about this episode; he is presented basically as a British agent; the truth, I suggest, is more complex. Erskine Childers motivation in the Howth episode I think was to arm Redmond's Volunteers to be a Home Guard for Ireland in the coming war, in an all-Ireland Home Rule politically reformed situation.

Childers had written a book supportive of Home Rule in 1911, and had been active with his cousin Bob Barton exploring the work of Plunkett and the co-operative movement. In the context of his Howth arms delivery, however, it seems he was 'taken for a ride' by Sir Henry Wilson and the British imperial strategic plans; the latter had been actively supportive of the earlier Larne gun-running, and the Curragh conspiracy, and was the prime mover in the context of the imperial interests in ensuring that the British Expeditionary Force existed and was ready to go in August 1914. The Howth event was to reassure the Germans that the British were prioritising the Irish problem,.

It is quite impossible in a short review es-

say to summarise the complex machinations of imperial policy arising from their African experience which Hidden History uncovers, but I must try to list some of the key episodes. It begins with Cecil Rhodes setting up a group of executors for his will, in such a way as to ensure that his wealth, derived from his exploitation of African resources, would be used to further the influence of the British Empire. These included Lord Alfred Milner, Lord Rothschild, Lord Esher and several others who acted as a 'secret elite' in support of an imperial expansion agenda. With their resources they had an outer circle of influential people whom they were in a position to fund in such a way as to make things happen. The book goes into this in detail; it seems the 'secret group' was set up in 1902 and continued in existence until 1925.

Key events for which they defined the agenda, and in some cases implemented it, included the setting up of the 'Entente Cordiale' between Britain and France in 1904 in a form that was not a formal alliance, and did not have to refer to Cabinet. Though Britain had a treaty of alliance with Japan, the elite group managed to ensure that this did not trigger British participation in the 1905 war with Russia, despite a violent encounter with the Russian fleet in the North Sea, involving British ships. The 'secret elite' had identified Russia as a key ally of France in the future war on Germany.

Key contacts in the Franco-Russian networking were Poincare and Isvolsky[5]. There was an attempt by Kaiser Wilhelm to agree a pact with his cousin the Tsar which the 'secret elite' were able to kill via the Duma, with the influence of Isvolsky and Poincare.

On the home front they had Balfour and Asquith under their influence, and they managed to get control of Lloyd George, who had initially been an independent radical activist, by a trick involving a court case in which Carson had a role defending him in a context re-

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[5]See HH p.205 ff. Raymond Poincare was French Prime Minister from 1912; he was from Lorraine and strongly anti-German. Alexander Isvolsky had been Russian Foreign Secretary up to 1910; he subsequently became Ambassador to France. Isvolsky was in effect an agent of the secret British imperial elite group.

lating to Lloyd George's promiscuity. Milner in the Colonial Office, was one of the original 'secret elite' activists; Grey in the Foreign Office, and Haldane in the War Office became associated later. This group developed complete control of the media, via the *Times* and the elite press, as well as the 'gutter' component.

Prior to Sarajevo there were several episodes (eg Agadir) that could have led to war, but in each case war was avoided, basically because Wilhelm did his best to avoid it, and succeeded. Then came Sarajevo, but I will not attempt to summarise the detailed activity on the international 'secret elite' network which resulted in the Russian attack on the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in response to the latter's attack on Serbia. The French responded in alliance with Russia, and the Germans responded in alliance with Austria-Hungary.

The Germans counter-attacked the French via Belgium, and this brought in the British, with the Germans branded as the aggressor. The Irish dimension made this possible, because the Germans thought the British were occupied with Ireland. The Larne-Howth ploy had worked.

So, in conclusion, may I urge anyone considering writing about Larne and Howth in centenary mode not to do so without having read this book. Also may I add a further suggestion: was the 10% ratio of gun quantity between Larne and Howth a strategic decision by Sir Henry Wilson and co? He explicitly wanted to wreck the Home Rule process, and get Ireland partitioned; did he also wish to encourage a rising of the activists so as to execute the leadership? I have heard this suggested, and having read this book it seems totally plausible.

I hope this review will pose some questions in peoples minds and generate some queries to my email address. I am conscious that as an actual review of the book it is inadequate. If I am to do more however I feel I need to interact with a competent critical historian with some understanding of imperialism. Can I invite anyone interested in this subject to contact me at `roy@rjtechne.ie`.

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Review: Gary Younge, *The Speech, the story behind Martin Luther King's Dream*

Conor Kennelly
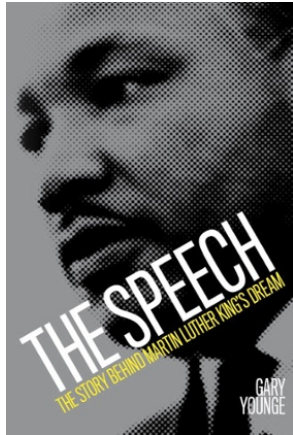
Gary Younge, *The Speech, the story behind Martin Luther King's Dream* Guardian Books, £6.99

On the 29th of August 1963 at the height of the American Civil Rights movement, Martin Luther King delivered his iconic 'I Have a Dream' speech that was the final act in the mass March on Washington. Over a quarter of a million people from all over the US, marched on a stiflingly hot American summer's day to demand Civil Rights. Up to that point, it was the largest mass demonstration in American history. The marchers were predominantly African American though a significant minority of whites did take part. The march and the speech took place in a deeply racist America where a de facto apartheid state prevailed. In the Jim Crow South the majority of African Americans couldn't vote nor have equal access to health and education and were forced to ride on segregated buses and eat in segregated restaurants. The Ku Klux Klan could murder Civil Rights activists with impunity while the police brutally beat up protesters.

Gary Younge deconstructs the manner in which the speech has been manipulated and subverted across the political establishment such that even an openly racist right-winger like Glenn Beck can shamelessly appropriate it for his own ends. Younge places the speech's true relevance in the current context of an America with its first African American president but also an America where a racist killer like George Zimmerman can walk free and Black unemployment is almost twice that of whites.

The speech is rightly regarded as one of the greatest speeches of all time but as Younge points out, the speech only assumed its historical legacy after King's death. The response of white mainstream America varied from the racist Clarion Ledger newspaper which omitted to mention the speech and headlined its coverage of the March with 'Washington is clean again with Negro trash removed to no mention in the Washington Post and the New York Times headline 'I have a dream'. (All quoted in Younge p.5) The more radical sections of the Civil Rights movement considered it wishful thinking on King's part to dream of racial harmony when they were experiencing the brutal reality of every-day racism in America. Anne Moody, an activist from rural Mississippi who attended the March, recalled: 'Martin Luther King went on and on talking about his dream. I sat there thinking that in Canton we never had time to sleep, much less dream'. (Quoted in Younge, p. 5). Malcolm X told Bayard Rustin, one of the main organizers and a legendary Civil Rights activist and socialist, 'You know this dream of Kings is going to be a nightmare before it's over'. (Quoted in Younge, p.5)

Today the speech resonates with people fighting for justice and freedom all over the globe. 'I Have a Dream' was emblazoned on placards carried by protestors in Tiananmen Square. Graffiti on the West Bank wall states: 'I have a dream. This is not part of that dream' (quoted in Younge, p.6). 68% of Americans still think the speech is relevant including 76% of blacks and 68% of whites. (Younge, p.6)

As Younge argues, the speech was both

relevant for its time and also timeless. The aspiration for racial equality that the speech so eloquently articulated was in the same year when the racist Democratic Governor of Alabama, George Wallace, stood in a college doorway to block Black students going to college. Only 2 weeks after the March, four black girls were killed by a bomb in Birmingham, Alabama.

However, while it's the 'I Have a Dream' refrain and the call for racial harmony that is mostly remembered today, the speech contained radical phrases that are not widely quoted. King was demanding immediate change instead of gradual progress; that Blacks could not wait anymore. As he put it: 'We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism'. (Quoted in Younge, p.111) Arguably, in this respect, King was insisting on a revolutionary process unlike a reformist strategy that expects us to wait until the ruling class is ready to grant us our rights and freedoms. Until the end, King was opposed to violence not just as a tactic but as a matter of principle and condemned violent methods elsewhere in the speech. Nevertheless, the speech was a rallying call for people to mobilise and take to the streets. Likewise, another refrain 'We cannot be satisfied' is also conveniently forgotten though King was clearly insisting on nothing less than full equality and wouldn't compromise on that principle.

Younge also argues that another important aspect of the speech that is conveniently forgotten was King's use of the metaphor of the bad cheque. As King put it: 'In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a checka promissory notefor life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' and 'We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check, a check that will give us, upon demand, the riches of freedom and the security of justice'. (Quoted in Younge, p.10) In this sense, King was com-

ing to realize that legal reforms were insufficient if African Americans didn't simultaneously experience a material improvement in their lives. To acknowledge this aspect of the speech would, as Younge puts it: 'demand an engagement with both the material reality of racism and the material remedy of antiracism - a challenge the country has barely begun to address.' (Younge, p.12)

John F Kennedy has been mythologized as a great liberal crusading President who was assassinated before he could withdraw America from Vietnam and initiate more substantial Civil Rights reforms. The fact that he was a militant Cold Warrior and brought the world to the brink of nuclear annihilation is more often overlooked. Kennedy could speak in West Berlin about democracy while the notorious police chief, Bull O'Connor, was setting dogs loose on non-violent civil rights protestors in Birmingham. Only the fact that the images were broadcast around the world and the Civil Rights movement was becoming more militant forced JFK to address the issue. His brother Robert displayed the contempt that his administration held for the Civil Rights movement and Black people in general when he said: 'Negroes are now just antagonistic and mad and they're going to be mad at everything. You can't talk to them... My friends all say even the Negro maids and servants are getting antagonistic' (Younge, p.21). In addition, Kennedy, who relied on Black votes to get elected, was equally dependent on another key constituency, white racist Southern Democrats such as George Wallace and his own Vice President, Lyndon Johnson. Younge shows that it was only with great reluctance that Kennedy and the Democrats conceded Civil Rights.

King would eventually break with the Democratic Party in 1967 when he openly opposed the Vietnam War. The Democrats, of course, turned on him and accused him of betrayal. At the time of his death, King's popularity was quite low. An opinion poll in 1966 showed that twice as many Americans held an unfavourable opinion of him as those who held a favourable one. Life Maga-

zine accused King of 'demagogic slander' after his anti-war speech at the Riverside Church (Younge, p.147).

In the decades since his death, King's popularity has soared. In a 1999 poll, King rivalled JFK and Albert Einstein; only Mother Teresa was more popular (Younge p.148). Even so, Younge argues a struggle had to be won before King's legacy was officially recognized or at least that part of it that America was comfortable with. Even in 1983, the notorious racist Republican senator, Jesse Helms, could baldly state 'The conclusion must be that Martin Luther King Jr. was either an irresponsible individualor that he knowingly cooperated and sympathised with subversive and totalitarian elements of a hostile foreign power.' (quoted in Younge, p. 149).

The dreams and aspirations contained within the speech are all the more powerful and poignant for the very fact that America still remains a deeply racist society. As Younge states:

> But to the extent that the speech was about ending racism, one can say with equal confidence that its realization is not even close. Black unemployment is almost double that of whites. Black male life expectancy in Washington DC is lower than in the Gaza Strip. One in three Black boys born in 2001 stands a lifetime risk of going to prison; more Black men were disenfranchised in 2004 because they were felons than in 1870, the year the Fifteenth Amendment ostensibly guaranteed the Black male franchise. (Younge p. 154).

While the legal barriers to racial equality have been largely removed, institutional racism is still a fact of life as the above figures demonstrate.

Indeed, African Americans have suffered disproportionately more than whites during the current recession which has largely coincided with Obama's presidency. While Obama has acknowledged that his election was made possible by the gains of the Civil Rights movement, it is unlikely that King would recognize the realization of his Dream if he were alive today. Also, while King opposed American foreign military intervention, Obama authorizes drone attacks on innocent Pakistanis and Yemenis. Under successive Democratic and Republican presidencies the majority of working class Americans have seen their real income decline while the richest 1% has amassed more wealth than ever.

According to a recent Oxford University Press study: 'Around four out of every five people in the U.S. will endure unemployment, receive food stamps and other forms of government aid, and/or have an income below 150 percent of the official poverty line for at least one year of their lives before age 60'. And while poverty is highest in percentage terms among African Americans, contrary to racist myths, the majority of Americans on welfare are white. However, while America has experienced its deepest recession since the Great Depression, the rich have continued to get richer. The 400 richest Americans have a combined total wealth of $1.7 trillion. While racist attitudes still prevail among white Americans, it's this tiny elite who has been the main beneficiary of racial inequality.

Younge concludes his book by making a passionate defense of King's Dream. As he argues, if we only allow cynical 'realists' to determine the parameters of our political horizons we will never change anything.

I strongly urge everyone to read this book. Gary Younge provides a useful analysis of the speech and its wider historical context. In addition people should take the time and listen to the speech on the internet and be inspired.

I would like to acknowledge the help of my partner Lucien Senna in writing this review. Lucien grew up in 1970s Boston and experienced racism first hand when she was 'bused' to a mixed school and the bus was regularly stoned by racists in Irish-American South Boston. Her father, Carl, spent part of his childhood in a Catholic orphanage in New Orleans where the nuns frequently had to hide the children when the Klan attacked the orphanage.