

TRÁCHT NÁISIÚNTA

Bulletin

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THE NEW LEFT-RIGHT DIVIDE

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose?

Since the foundation of the Irish State in 1922, the Left has bemoaned the lack of a clear Left-Right divide in Irish politics and every government since then has been led by the Right, either Cumann na nGaedheal/Fine Gael or Fianna Fáil.

There were originally some differences between the two. Fine Gael tended to be upper bourgeois and Fianna Fáil petty bourgeois. The first appealed to big industry, big farmers and higher professionals (large earners such as leading barristers etc). The second appealed to smaller manufacturers, small farmers and lower professionals (teachers etc). FF also had a populist dimension which involved making social welfare, cheap housing and other like concessions to the rural and urban working classes in order to keep them on board as far as possible. (In the former instance, this initially referred to the farm labourer, a class that has by now been largely superseded by technology.) Thus FF was characterised as a kind of populist party. In time, however, FF also became as wedded to upper bourgeois interests as FG. The Leftist dream then was that FG and FF would eventually merge and leave the way open for a genuine Left-Right realignment in Irish politics in place of a tweedledum-tweedledee setup.

Following the crash of 2008, this seemed to be

gradually coming about. The combined vote of FF-FG slumped from 69% in the 2007 general election to 54% in 2011. In 2016, it went down further to 50%; in 2020, it declined again to 43% and was just below that in 2024. In other words, by the mid-2020s, it was clear that the major Right-wing parties, as combined, had ceased to have majority support. Nonetheless, in alliance with some Independents, they were capable of together holding onto government. At the same time, the combined Left-wing party support did not exceed 35% and the opposition is now otherwise made up of non-government Independents and smaller Rightist parties.

Still, there was finally a Left-Right scenario in Irish politics. But this came about in a situation characterised by a consolidation of the Right and a fragmentation of the Left. FG and FF may not have actually merged, but a nexus has been created which has been hardened through the formation of two governments and looks likely to last into the foreseeable future, while there is no equivalent nexus on the Left. Rather are there significant divisions there which show little immediate signs of being overcome.

In the Dáil, there are five parties which can be considered to be on the Left, to one degree or another - Sinn Féin, Social Democrats, Labour, PBP, and the Greens. The Social Democrats and Labour are vying with each other for centre Left support and both seem wary of collaboration with Sinn Féin given its militant past. PBP of course is above all the rest in its Marxist purity. And what remains of the Greens seems somewhat superfluous in that they represent what could just as adequately be a policy of a Leftist party.

Therefore, unless something shifts on the Left in the context of the new Left-Right divide in our

polity, the consolidated Right and its fellow travellers appear set to continue ruling the roost for some years to come! As the French say, *plus ça change* ...

So, is anything possible to prevent the perpetuation of untrammelled bourgeois ascendancy?

For a start, the ridiculous competition within the centre Left needs to be superseded. It has frequently been observed that there is not much fundamental policy difference between the SD and the LP. Thus, there have been calls for a merger. Is it envisaged by some that there should be an SDLP south of the border as well as north of it? One can just imagine the badge of failure that that would entail.

Yet, there is detectable in Labour a certain arrogance on this question through being by far the older of the two parties, having existed since 1912. But, so what? Down through the years, it has distinguished itself, not as the vanguard of the workers, but as the mudguard of FG or FF in power. It became particularly tarnished by its last sojourn in government, being adherent to decisions that were contrary to the interests of the less well off. In short, it is seen as damaged goods. Not surprisingly therefore, it has not been given the hoped for Bacik boost but rather is languishing in the Bacik basement along with PBP, Aontú, and the Greens - crypto-Trotskyists, Catholic nationalists, and tree huggers. While it was lucky seat wise at the last general election, given the vagaries of our PR system, the enduring fact is that its support in opinion polls hovers around 3% along with the other basement dwellers, i.e. the margin of error. It may have previously sucked in Democratic Left and might hope to do likewise with the Social Democrats, but those big brother days have gone.

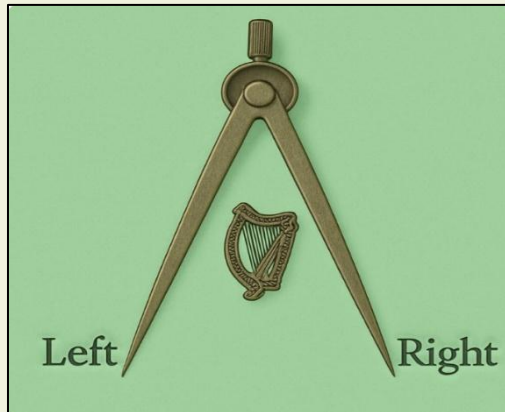
If the Social Democrats have any sense, they will stand firm and simply say to Labourites come and join us and dissolve what remains of your party while you're at it. After all, the SD is getting

double the support of LP in opinion polls and clearly has a stronger and fresher appeal to the electorate. Moreover, it has a clean bill of health unlike a discredited and tarnished LP. While it has not been given the opportunity to coalesce with anybody, there is no reason to suspect that in future it will not remain true to its principles and only combine with those of like mind or on a platform that securely delivers on its policies.

It may be said that SD does not have Labour's links with the trade unions, but those are overrated. Of the 55 members of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, only 7 are affiliated to the Labour Party. Moreover, the individuals in these unions are not given the opportunity of approving Labour Party affiliation through a collective vote and it is well known that many, if not most, of them do not support Labour. And there is no reason to think that what trade union backup there is for labourite politics could not relocate to another single, centre Left party.

If the centre left sorts itself out, there will then persist the question of the relationship with the largest Left party in the shape of Sinn Féin which could be classified as radical Left. What needs to be overcome is disdain arising from that party's prior association with the IRA. However, it is over 25 years now since the IRA called a final ceasefire, i.e. before the lifetime of many young voters. Besides, putting the violence of the past behind considerations in the present has ample precedent in Irish politics. Fine Gael was never held accountable for its predecessor's extrajudicial execution of republican prisoners nor its 1930s flirtation with fascism. Fianna Fáil was not held to account for its leaders and prominent members having started a civil war. Why then should Sinn Féin be ostracised because a section of northern nationalists previously rose in revolt against a neocolonial rump of the UK?

The realistic and necessary task for the radical and centre Left will be to work out a Left alternative platform and avoid competing



candidates in general election constituencies. The far Left Trotskyites, will of course not formally participate in such an initiative, but the signs are that they will not seek to obstruct its progress and just reserve the right to vote on issues as they arise. And an important component of a Left alternative platform must be a full blooded green policy, thus rendering a separate Green Party unnecessary. In fact, one suspects that much of the Green vote hitherto was not so much environmentalist as a protest at the inadequacies of what was presented to the electorate by way of choice otherwise. As for nomenclature, the actual Left alternative does not have to be so expressed in ideological terms; it might more positively be promoted as Alternative for Fairness and Progress (AFP).

The more the Left abandons internal competitiveness and coheres as well as appearing as a realistic alternative to the Right, the more it

is likely to Hoover up votes that may have previously been scattered across Independents either on the basis of their personal Leftism or local relevance. Also, there is the extent to which Left inclined elements in the electorate may have opted out of voting altogether before now in disenchantment with what was on offer or not on offer to them in representation. One thinks here of the low turnout at the last general election of under 60% - the lowest since 1923!

The Irish Left now has a clear choice - is it going to let the new Left-Right divide just produce essentially *la même chose* as before or is it going to get its act together and provide a realistic option for meaningful and progressive change? The Left-Right divide long hoped for has at last been realised; if the Right now continues nonetheless to rule, the Left has only itself to blame.

SMASH AND GRAB

Fresh from threatening to seize Greenland and bullying the Government of Ukraine into handing over its natural resources to the United States (in return for not abandoning them totally, like some superpower sized protection racket), on 4th February 2025 'Mafia Don' Trump next turned his attention to the Middle East. there he suggested that the USA would 'take over' Gaza and remove its 2.2 million people to Egypt and Jordan (threatening to withhold aid if they did not cooperate). Then they would be replaced by others who would turn Gaza into the 'Rivera of the Middle East', no doubt including numerous Trump hotels and tower blocks. This proposal, which is a flagrant violation of the 4th Geneva protocol against the forced transfer of populations, was warmly welcomed by the Israeli Prime Minister and indicted war criminal, Benjamin Netanyahu. Trump justified this ethnic cleansing plan behind a fig leaf of humanitarianism, calling Gaza a 'demolition site' with 'not a building standing'. He however failed to point out that the war criminal often sitting

beside him in the White House was responsible for this 'demolition' using weapons supplied by his own Administration along with a \$4 billion per year subsidy to prop up the 'cuckoo state'.

This recent White House meeting between the first US President to be convicted of 34 felonies (along with more than 40 more indictments dropped following his election) and a Prime Minister indicted as a war criminal by the International Court of Justice (also charged with genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and also facing charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust at home) was bizarre. It resembled a meeting of the five families in *The Godfather* where the crime lords were planning a smash and grab robbery on a colossal scale rather than a meeting of world leaders.

Of course, at this meeting the issue of genocide was not raised at this meeting with Netanyahu on 4th February nor at a later meeting in April. However, on 21st May 2025 Trump accused President Cyril Ramaphosa of 'white genocide' in South Africa in an attempt to humiliate the

country which led the prosecution case against Israel in the International Court of Justice. In an apparent payback for South African billionaire Elon Musk's €288 million 2024 election donation, President Trump tried to publicly humiliate President Ramaphosa by repeating the unsubstantiated accusations of the Transvaal Agricultural Union of South Africa that the murder of 1544 white farmers between 1990 and 2012 (the extremist Freedom Front Party claimed that 3811 farmers were killed up to 2011) and 806 murders and 4308 attacks on farms between 2010 and 2023 amounted to 'white genocide'.

Despite double counting and the fact that, from 1990 to 1995, South Africa was ruled by the white Apartheid regime, if we take the maximum figure of 4617 farm murders, this needs to be put in context. South Africa is a very violent society with a very high crime rate. Whites make up 7.3% of the South African population. In 2019, there were 21,325 murders in South Africa, 49 (23%) of which were white farmers. In the USA, Blacks make up 13.7% of the population. In 2023, there were 17,713 murder victims, 9284 (52.4%) were black. This does not controvert that some farm killings have political overtones. The leader of the neo-Nazi AWB, Eugene Terre Blanche, was murdered in a farm invasion on 3rd April 2010 (one of his black farm workers was later convicted of his murder). However, the accusation of white genocide in South Africa is really a case of fake news.

In contrast, the case against Israel is overwhelming. An attempt was made on two occasions to list all the specific breaches of international law carried out by Israel, but the exercise had to be given up as the task was so overwhelming. However, let us present edited highlights of their most recent crimes against humanity.

On 23rd May 2025, Benjamin Netanyahu tried to publicly berate President Macron of France, Prime minister Kerr Starmer of Britain and Prime Minister Mark Carney of Canada for anti-Semitism in their criticism of Israel. "When mass murderers, rapists, baby killers and kidnappers thank you, you are on the wrong side of justice, you are on the wrong side of humanity and you

are on the wrong side of history."

In a gold medal winning display of 'hutzpah' and without a flicker of irony, hypocrisy or even shame, this indicted war criminal accused of genocide, persecution and crimes against humanity had the audacity to proceed to lecture other world leaders on human rights. In this, he was joined by Minister Gideon Saar who said accusations of genocide were a "blood libel". Never in world history has there been a more brazen and diabolical perversion of the truth by a Prime Minister.

Since 7th October 2023, Israel has imposed a total blockade on Gaza cutting off all power, fuel, medicine, food and water bringing the the entire 2.2 million population time and time again to the brink of all out famine. Sadistically and only after massive international pressure, do they allow the barest trickle of aid to enter - not enough to provide relief, but just enough to perpetuate their agony. This of course is totally illegal in international law and a clear violation of article 3 of the Geneva Convention and article 6 of Protocol II which forbids collective punishment.

As part of this collective punishment, Israel has deliberately targeted bakeries, food stores, electric generators, solar panels, water and gas pipes, all of which is a breach of Article 51 of the Berlin Rules that outlaw causing death or forced movement of a population through starvation. Israel has repeatedly attacked crowds waiting for humanitarian assistance as well as aid workers. On 1st April 2024, they killed 7 international aid workers from the World Central Kitchen.

Israel also routinely breaches the Geneva convention by violating medical neutrality. Since the war began, 50 % of hospitals have been destroyed and 1400 health workers killed including 15 aid workers. Eight Red Crescent personnel in 5 ambulances, a UN vehicle and fire truck were massacred by the IDF on 23 March 2025 in Rafah. As usual, Israel claimed they were acting "suspiciously" only when their mass grave and the wreckage of their crushed vehicles were found along with video footage of the massacre in a shallow grave, did Israel admit involvement. They provided no explanation for their initial lies and attempted a cover up, saying only that it

“made mistakes”. On 24th May 2025, Dr Alaa and Dr Hamdi Al Najja watched their nine children being incinerated by an Israeli bomb in Khan Younis.

Israel has actively tried to cover up its crimes and genocide in Gaza. International media organisations are banned and 222 local journalists have been killed covering the conflict, far more than in any other conflict in world history. Israeli media wilfully collude in this cover up, broadcasting state propaganda and ignoring all allegations of genocide and the humanitarian catastrophe facing the Gazan civilian population. However, like the German neighbours who lived next to death camps, such as Belsen and Dachau, the Israeli public cannot claim 'we did not know what was going on' This is the first live streamed genocide in world history. The internet and satellite media organisations are literally drowning in proof that genocide and crimes against humanity are taking place on a daily basis. When Russia invaded Ukraine it was immediately made a pariah state by Western states and excluded from many global institutions, including the Eurovision song contest. Bizarrely, not only was Israel not excluded from the event in 2025, its contestant came second.

From 7th October 2023 to 23rd May 2025, Israel has killed at least 53,762 people in Gaza, 70% of whom are women and children; 14,222 are missing presumed dead And 17,492 of the dead are children (31%); 9710 were babies under 1 year, 1793 were aged 1-3, 1205 aged 4-5 year,s and 4205 aged 6-12 years. Altogether, 1410 entire families have been wiped out. A total of 122,382 persons have been injured. Gaza has the most child amputees per capita in the world; 10 children a day loose at least one limb, with amputations taking place without anaesthesia. by “Evacuation orders” (65) have displaced 80% of the population, also illegal under the 4th Geneva convention which forbids the forced transfer of populations. Nearly all homes have been

damaged and refugees sheltering in tents among the rubble have also been bombed; 88% of schools and higher education establishments (including 12 universities}, 68% of roads, 80% of commercial premises, 68% of arable land have been bombed. Moreover, 814 mosques and 3 churches have been destroyed which is illegal under the Rome Statute. The sum of 9619 Palestinians have been placed in detention, including 153 women from Gaza, some pregnant, others with babies. Detainees are routinely stripped naked and humiliated; nine members of the IDF were arrested in July 2024 after a video of a gang rape of prisoners emerged in the Sde Terman prison. Prisoners, men and women, have been threatened, rape or, sodomised. Adnan al Bursh, a respected surgeon from Gaza, was tortured and murdered in detention. The Israeli army has set up 'extermination zones' where they shoot to kill anyone found there. IDF snipers deliberately target children, run over people with bulldozers, kill people waving white flags (including Israeli hostages) Mentally disabled people have been torn apart with



dogs.

Israel has indiscriminately bombed Gaza, dropping 100,000 tonnes of bombs on one of the most densely populated regions on earth; in contrast, the Allies dropped 3900 tons of bombs on Dresden in World War II. The IDF illegally used white phosphorus munitions against civilians in the Lebanese town of Dhayra on 16th October 2023 – part of an established pattern which the IDF initially denied its use until forced to admit it following overwhelming evidence. Israel has accepted a kill rate of 100 civilians per senior Hamas commander. The IDF shot at European diplomats in Jenin in the West Bank on 17th May 2025 in breach of the 1961 Vienna convention protecting diplomats.

Nor is this genocide the work of a small group of fanatical political zealots. Tens of thousands of Israeli soldiers have participated in these atrocities and have even posted social media clips

bragging about and humiliating their victims. Israeli public opinion is volatile and often contradictory. In December 2023, 67% supported a ceasefire and hostage release, while in February 2024 two thirds of the population opposed allowing aid into Gaza. Yet many thousands of Israelis from groups like B'tselem, Bring them home Now, and Standing Together have valiantly protested against the genocide and marched for its end risking arrest and attack in the process. In addition, hundreds of 'Refusenicks' who have been jailed for refusing to serve in the army in Gaza. However, the best barometer of public opinion is the ballot box. After the 2022 election, right wing parties were able to form a government with 67 out of 120 members of the Knesset, getting 56% support. The government was formed by Right wing parties led by Likud which won 23.4%, Shas got 8.25%, Otzma Yehudit (a supremacist far right descendant of the outlawed Kach party) won 10.84%, along with various other exudations of the Israeli body politic. Just as there are many courageous Israelis who oppose this genocide, there are many others who act as its cheerleaders. The Order 9 Movement has blocked humanitarian aid shipments into Gaza.

Nearly as incomprehensible as the Israeli and International indifference to this holocaust has been the response of the Irish government. In May 2025, the Taoiseach admitted that the conflict in Gaza was a "genocide". The government is therefore obliged by the Genocide Convention to do "everything [it] can" to stop it. Frances Black's Occupied Territories Bill was first proposed in 2018. FG's Simon Coveney boasted in 2019 that they had effectively blocked the bill. However, an International Court of Justice ruling forced the government to act on this issue. But the Bill was dropped in 2024 on the verge of passing into law so that a general election could be called. Solemn promises were given that it would be passed immediately after the general election. However, due to Israeli and American pressure, FG have significantly watered it down to ban only the trade in goods and not services (which account for 70%) of our trade. FG tried to justify this dilution saying that if we interfered with trade we could be fined by the EU. While

this is hardly a principled reason for inaction in the face of genocide it fits into a pattern of supine capitulation to EU dictates. Also, before the General election in the face of massive public opposition the government dropped their proposed 'hate speech' legislation which could have been used to ban criticism of Israel as anti Semitic. Following the election EU President Ursula Van der Leyen demanded that this legislation be revived and the vassals in the Irish government have not controverted this.

Another and perhaps more plausible reason for diluting the Occupied territories Bill is the existence of anti-boycott legislation in many US states which specifically withhold government contracts from companies that boycott Israel. This leads some Irish politicians to fear a massive pull out of US Foreign Investment if one falls foul of these state laws. The American Israeli Public affairs committee (AIPAC) lobbies and finances US politicians at national and local levels. Since 1990, €56.8 million has been contributed to federal candidates and party committees. In 2005, its members were investigated by the FBI for espionage.

The Green Party leader, Roderic O'Gorman accused FG of using delaying tactics to hold up the Occupied territories Bill. The government has been accused of turning a blind eye to the transport of weapons used in genocide through Irish airspace to Israel. The *Ditch* web site identified one El AL flight where a shipment of handguns was supplied to Israel, as its manifest contained a spelling mistake which identified that its cargo contained 1500 kg of "weapons". A dossier of similar cases has been supplied to Foreign Minister Simon Harris who promised a robust investigation.

However, in addition to this, on 29th May 2025 the Irish government defeated an opposition Bill to prevent the Irish Central Bank's role in approving the sale of Israeli bonds in the EU as it would be "inconsistent with EU law". While the Irish government has recognised the State of Palestine and condemned Israeli genocide, when it comes to taking firm and decisive action such as the Occupied Territories Bill or preventing transshipment of weapons, its attitude could be viewed as being 'all mouth and no trousers' risking making Ireland, along with our EU partners, accessories after the fact in genocide.