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THE LEFT

Afloat But Adrift

It's all over. It's done and dusted. We have the 34th Dáil and all the seats filled. Whatever about opinion polls, exit polls, and percentages of first preference votes, at the end of the day, it is the number of seats that you get that counts.

That means, as was predicted, that Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil are set to combine and lead the next government with supplementary support - as yet to be determined. The only things that were unclear before the election were who would be the first Taoiseach and who would be 'The Third Man'. In short, the Right has won yet again and the Left has lost.

OPPOSITION

The opposition will continue to be led for the next five years by Sinn Féin with rag, tag and bobtail behind them. The result has been most disappointing for Sinn Féin. Not only does it fail to be the government or leading government, it is in no way going to be part of government. It has thus not rendered unto us the first Sinn Féin Taoiseach, never mind the first female Taoiseach. Of course, as with all losing parties, a bold face was put on the outcome. But the forced grin on the face of Sinn Féin spokespersons in the light of initial returns (given that the prospect

could have been worse) was rather, as Daniel O'Connell said about the smile of Robert Peel, like the silver plate on a coffin. The coffin for Sinn Féin is the new Dáil and the dead occupant the possibility of an SF-led administration. However, while election night bravado is only to be expected, if it becomes post-election self-deception the party is in serious trouble.

SINN FÉIN DECLINE

There is no getting away from the data. At 19%, Sinn Féin got 6% less of the vote than in 2020 and around 18% less than the support indicated by its highest rating in opinion polls since then. While securing two extra TDs (giving 39), this still means in the enlarged Dáil one less seat than it should have got (i.e. 40) had it simply maintained the same proportion of TDs as in the previous, smaller Dáil. It is also well short of the 50 or more seats envisaged after the 2020 underestimation in Dáil nominations. Further, it is not going to be the largest single party in the new Dáil, despite that unwise prediction by its representatives while the votes were coming in. Facts speak for themselves and the basic truth they spell out for SF is not one of progress but of decline. Another way of looking at it is that, for the first time in 35 years, the SF

vote has not increased from one election to the next, but rather gone down, and significantly.

THE OTHERS

Of course, the deflation of political hope did not only affect SF. The Left in general was fragmented and various elements of it ended up competing against each other in the same electoral pool. The consequence was that, yet again, no credible alternative government to the FF-FG+ amalgam was provided. The gleeful reactions in LP and SD to their gains were akin to the sigh of relief when granted a stay of execution. More of that anon.

SINN FÉIN REVIEW

What the situation urgently requires for SF is a searching self-examination with regard to policy and leadership. If this is carried out honestly and correctly, semi-permanent opposition is by no means inevitable, and half a decade until the next election is not a huge period in history. The challenge is not impossible resurrection but feasible resuscitation. The time is to start now in preparing for a new electoral challenge five years hence. In other words, it has to be first ascertained what went wrong during the period of the last Dáil?

There is no doubt that Sinn Féin has been a great blast of fresh air in Irish politics. It is the only all-Ireland party and is genuine about the national question and a united Ireland in contrast to the 'verbal republicanism' of others. It is uniquely and firmly committed to the Irish language. Also, it is a decidedly radical party on crucial economic, social, and cultural issues. Its emergence has at last forced a truly Left-Right alignment in the political landscape. So, how does one explain the fall?

The roots go back to no less than twenty years.

ROOTS

In the referendum of that year, 2004, a reasonable proposal was put to the people about obtaining citizenship, whereby it would not just be automatic for the children being born to foreigners recently arrived in and thus attracted to Ireland. Instead of backing this, SF not only opposed it, but pseudo-progressively depicted it as xenophobic. Its supporters then voted massively against the party line. The next referendum misstep in 2013 concerned the future of the Seanad. Initially, SF endorsed reform, but when FG went for abolition the party u-turned and opted for abolition as well. The final stance of SF this time was not a misjudgement but plain opportunism and, once more, its base overwhelmingly voted the other way. Fast forward to this year and the referenda on the family and personal relationships. An incisive and critical examination of the proposed amendments showed the first to be neo-liberal in shifting domestic responsibilities, not away from the woman to the State but just to the wider family; the second referred to "other durable relationships" on a ridiculously undefined basis. In virtually wokish fashion, the official SF line was one of affirmation in both cases, belatedly accompanied by the absurd advice that, if the vote was not in fact 'yes, yes' but 'no, no', the party would fix it later. Yet again, supporters among others crushingly threw out the proposals.

IMMIGRATION

Then there is the matter of immigration. There are, as elsewhere in Europe, the manifestations of racism and xenophobia which are repugnant to any decent person. But there is also reasonable concern that many more people are being taken into Ireland than can be employed and are thus absorbing resources required to meet the needs of Irish citizens. Instead

of being up front in articulating this concern, SF dilly dallied just saying how the government had mishandled the issue rather than stating how it should be handled. The party seemed to be afraid of the commentariat dubbing it as xenophobic. Then, it belatedly tried to meaningfully address the issue, in the process suggesting that reception centres should be located more in middle class areas with an effect on votes there that is obvious.

HOUSING

The number one issue in Irish politics today is housing, and SF eventually produced a definitive document on the subject. The initial problem was that, with its 100+ pages, it was meticulous to the point of being fully understood only by a number of academics who were quite positive about it. At the same time, it included proposals to abolish first time and new house buyers' grants and also would leave many people with ownership of a home but not the land under it. The argument was that, when taken as a whole, there were two birds in the bush better than the one in the hand; but people think rather about the bird in the hand rather than the two in the bush. On land ownership, it is deeply embedded in the Irish psyche from the 19th century onwards that one should get back the land, not have it taken away, right up to the ground rents campaign of the last century. When the SF document is coolly and rationally analysed, perhaps there ought to be no worries on these fronts, as net benefits were promised at the end of the day. But it should have been realised that the general public were just not going to see it that way, and such should have been taken into account so



as to accommodate the inevitable optics and anxieties. Here, deficiency lay, not in 'political correctness' or opportunism, but in simply losing touch with the people.

FOREIGN POLICY

In respect of foreign policy, the two major issues of the day are Palestine and Ukraine.

On the first, SF has rightly stood shoulder to shoulder with the Palestinians. However, ever since the Gaza crisis arose, the party has called for a ceasefire and denounced the genocidal behaviour of Israel, but has remained silent on what makes that behaviour possible: that is the

massive supply of bombs and bullets by the United States. Of course, there is the consideration that America has been important in the past in the Irish national struggle by way of material, financial and diplomatic support. However, it is not possible to maintain a progressive stance on this and other international issues without criticising the United States. At the same time, SF is no longer reliant on American material and financial backing and may just have to accept that the price for retaining diplomatic sympathy is too much to pay in moral and principled terms.

UKRAINE

Turning to Ukraine, SF rightly condemned the "Special Military Operation" of Putin in February 2022. The democratic rights of the Ukrainian nation were at stake. However, since then, the scenario has changed drastically. The United States in particular and NATO in general jumped on the band wagon with the aim of weakening Russia, as the US Defense Secretary put it. Moreover, Zelensky's attitude to ethnically Russian provinces became that of internal colonialism, which

Ireland should well understand when one thinks of the 'United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland' up to 1922. We have pointed out elsewhere that those provinces should never have been included in a Ukrainian state and only ended up there due to the dictatorial diktats of Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, and Yeltsin at various stages. But SF has shown no signs of appreciating what is now really going on and has adopted a position that is indistinguishable from that of the Pentagon. Not only is this wrong, it is dangerous. If a European war broke out, there is no doubt that the stance of the Irish state, as backed by SF, would leave it open to missile attack, at Shannon and possibly Dublin Port, to begin with. Therefore, not alone has the SF policy been erroneous in principle, it is endorsing a position that could put the Irish people at risk. Its recent call by it for a moratorium on weapons supply to Ukraine has come late in the day.

SF PRESIDENCY

As for the President of Sinn Féin, Deputy McDonald has in the first place to consider her personal situation and the party has in the second to reflect on that position politically. In her own constituency alone, victory was dimmed with a fall of just under 13% in the SF vote and failure to bring in her running mate. However, it has to be stated that she has much to her credit. The Deputy is highly intelligent, very articulate and a good, if sometimes verbose, media performer. She is also a person of social principle, although often poor in political judgement on crucial domestic and foreign policy issues, as reflected above. The question, then, is firstly whether, following the recent electoral setbacks, she wishes to remain in post and face into another election near retirement age at 60. Apart from that, the party has to contemplate



whether a new, younger leader with a fresh record could psychologically as well as politically reinvigorate SF on a more solid and consistently progressive platform, in tandem with thus also appealing more significantly to the electorate. Anybody who has been talking to several of the grass roots in SF will know that not a little disillusionment and disaffection exist beneath the public shell of strained confidence emanating from party spokespersons.

FUTURE OF THE LEFT

More generally, the overall scene of the Left has also to be reviewed if total TD statistics are not to perpetually add up to less than a Dáil majority. Of course, it is too much to expect the emergence of a single left-wing party, but example could be taken from the approach in France at the last Assembly election. An alliance of the left-wing parties there was put together whereby they did not compete in constituencies, along with a shared perspective for change. That is what has to be considered in the Irish Republic.

Sinn Féin could take the lead in inviting the other Left parties to a discussion on a Common Programme and an arrangement whereby there is no longer competition among them in constituencies where only one or perhaps two candidates can be elected. This could then be marketed, as in France, under a brand umbrella, say 'CÓIR' * - subtitled 'Social, Economic, Cultural', the latter being elaborated on as significantly including the Gaelic. *[Justice]

The sad picture of the Left at present is one of a mother-hen in the shape of SF followed by a clatter of headless, even if some plumper than before, chicks, all wandering around in futile opposition. ♦

THE RABID STATE

On the 7th October 2024, Israel once again demonstrated its utter contempt for the United Nations, its peacekeepers and international law when the Israeli Defence Forces took up firing positions right beside a Unifil base in Southern Lebanon where 381 Irish UN peacekeeping troops have been stationed since 1978, exposing them to incoming fire. In effect, the IDF were using Irish UN troops as human shields, an act they repeatedly accuse Hamas and Hezbollah of, in order to justify their extremely high infliction of civilian fatalities. Three days later, the IDF went even further and opened fire on a Unifil base in South-West Lebanon injuring two Indonesian troops. Later, they again fired on a UN base and wounded two more Sri Lankan UN troops; a fifth UN peacekeeper was later injured. Israeli Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has called on the UN to withdraw its peacekeepers.

Taoiseach Simon Harris, along with 40 other nations, condemned the IDF's actions. He said: "I think we have seen yet another line crossed by Israel. Peacekeepers and peacekeeping are protected by international law. In my view, we have already seen Israel flout international law on many occasions, particularly in terms of their disproportionate actions, and the impact that that has had on children and on civilians in Gaza. Now we're seeing international law being flouted in relation to peacekeepers and peacekeeping." ¹



Israel has treated the UN's charter and the UN's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights as little better than toilet paper.

This latest outburst of violence was precipitated by the Hamas attack on Israel on 7th October 2023. In that attack, 1,139 people were killed, including 36 children; 373 of those killed were members of the security forces. Initially, Israel claimed that 1,400 had been killed, but this figure included members of Hamas who had been killed in their attack. Israel has rightly pointed out that Hamas is a terrorist organisation which is illegal in many Western countries, that some of the victims had been sexually assaulted and some bodies were desecrated. 251

hostages were also taken back to Gaza; some were released while others were killed (some in Israeli air strikes); 97 hostages are still missing; however, 34 are suspected to be dead.

In addition, in Israel's ground war in Gaza, 346 IDF have been killed, some in 'friendly fire' incidents. Also, 54 Israelis have been killed by Hezbollah rocket attacks from Lebanon. half of which were members of the security forces; 10 other members of the IDF have been killed in the West Bank.

In response, up to 13th of October 2023, Israel has dropped 75,000 tonnes of bombs on Gaza, causing \$33 billion worth of damage and killing 42,126 people. Israel claims, without any evidence, that 17,000 of these were 'Hamas terrorists'.

Even in the highly unlikely event that this figure is true, this highly professional, well disciplined and highly trained army would have killed only a slightly higher proportion of combatants (40.3%) than members of the ruthless and murderous terrorist gang of the 7th October 2023, 32.7% of whose victims were members of the security forces. A similar number of those killed by Israel are children (16,756) or 39.77%, which is a much higher proportion than the 3.16% of children killed by Hamas on 7th October.ⁱⁱ Israel accused Hamas of sexually abusing Israelis, yet in August it was revealed that 10 Israeli soldiers were arrested for sexual assaults, including sodomy on Palestinian prisoners in Sde Telman prison.ⁱⁱⁱ

In January 2024, Israel was indicted in the the International Court of Justice in the Hague for Genocide. 1000 Israeli soldiers have been charged in the International Criminal Court for war crimes, while a recent UN report has accused Israel of Crimes Against Humanity including extermination and torture.^{iv}

Israel's attack on Gaza was an intentional and premeditated war crime; the entire Gaza strip was sealed off and vital humanitarian aid, including food, water and medicines, was cut off. This amounts to collective punishment of Gaza's 2.3 million people, leading to a situation where 495,000 people face starvation. Under the Rome statute of the International Criminal Court, intentionally starving a population is a war crime when committed in international armed conflict. The entire population was, time and

again, uprooted and forced to flee indiscriminate and totally disproportionate Israeli bombing. Gaza now resembles a post-atomic wasteland; its civilian population has been denied basic shelter; 150,000, or 60%, of homes have been destroyed; 10,000 people are missing, with their bodies suspected of being buried under the rubble. Israel has, repeatedly and deliberately, targeted health facilities and workers; 114 medical facilities have been bombed and 131 ambulances attacked; 165 doctors and 280 nurses have been killed; 68% of roads have been destroyed; 123 or 87% of schools have been razed, as have 611 mosques.^v



War Criminal Benjamin Netanyahu

In addition to this, Israel has, since 7th October 2023, killed another 742 Palestinians (including at least 163 children) in the West Bank. It has also bombed the sovereign, independent states of Syria, Iran and Yemen and invaded and bombed the sovereign, independent state of Lebanon, killing 2,255 people, mostly civilians, while 22 IDF have been killed in fighting with Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. Israel's October 2024 invasion of Lebanon was followed by thousands of indiscriminate Mossad terrorist bombings against Hezbollah across Lebanon with explosive devices hidden in pagers and walkie talkies, which killed 30 people and wounded thousands more - many innocent civilians.

Nor is Israel's behaviour uncharacteristic or unprecedented. In the second Palestinian intifada, between September 2000 and 4th July 2023, 1,432 Israelis and 10,327 Palestinians were killed. In

1978, Israel invaded Lebanon killing 2000 people, leaving behind Phalangist allies who massacred 3,500 Palestinians in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila on 16-18 September 1982.^{vi}

In Israel's most recent invasion of Lebanon, from 12th July to 14th August in 2006, 1109 Lebanese civilians, 46 Hezbollah, 26 Lebanese army, 119 IDF and 43 Israeli civilians were killed.

The IDF have paid a comparability high price for their most recent invasion of Gaza, losing 346 troops in their ground offensive, in contrast to the 179 troops they lost during their occupation of Gaza from 1967 to 2005.

Although Israel has heaped inhumanity upon inhumanity, stacked atrocity upon atrocity, piled obscenity upon obscenity and abomination upon abomination, the 'civilized western world' and Israeli public opinion have looked on, largely impassively, as the human virtues of mercy, compassion and empathy are day after day remorselessly violated and the concept of humanity itself is shamefully dragged into the abyss.

The United States of America, time and time again, provides diplomatic cover for Israel (between 1978 and 1987, the USA voted against 38 UN resolutions criticising Israel)^{vii}

In the 1980s, the Israeli economy was on its knees and had to be subsidised by overseas aid, particularly from the USA. Today, while Israel's economy may have improved, it is still highly dependent on foreign weapons.

Between 1953 and 1965, Germany paid €70 billion in reparations for the holocaust to Israel. Germany still pays €1.44 billion in pensions to victims of the Nazis. Apart from obstructing the EU in taking a harder line against Israeli atrocities, Germany is

the second biggest arms supplier in the world to Israel, supplying them with €3.3 billion in arms from 2003-2023 including submarines. Germany's past war guilt seems to blind it to present war crimes. Rather than learning lessons from the past, its tradition of genocide seems to doom it to repeat it. In 1905, Germany carried out one of the first genocides of the 20th Century, against the Nama and Herero people of Namibia. By 1911, half or 9,800 out of 20,000 Nama had been killed, while three quarters of the Herero were also killed.^{viii} Germany then Facilitated Turkey in its genocide of the Armenian people in 1915, before pivoting back to commit its own genocide of 6 million Jews from 1941-45. Today, they are facilitating Israeli genocide in Gaza under the false flag of guilt and remorse for the holocaust

The United States of America is by far the biggest donor of military aid to Israel. Up to 2022, the USA gave Israel \$150 billion in aid, amounting to \$3.8 billion per year. In 2024, this was increased to \$12.5 billion, 15% of its defence budget.

The field of international conflict is filled with cliches, but they carry more than a grain of truth. They say that, when you set out on the path to revenge, dig two graves. It is also said that those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad. And a sure sign of madness is repeating the same action and expecting a different outcome. Time and again, Israel has charged down the futile and counterproductive road of totally disproportionate and indiscriminate revenge against Palestinian civilians for the actions of Islamic terrorists, actions they chillingly term 'asymmetric response'. In the first Intifada 1987-93, Israel responded to stone throwing Palestinian youths with gas, rubber bullets and live ammunition, killing 1,603 Palestinians,

with 200 Israeli's killed in response. The second intifada of 2000-2005, saw violence escalate further with 1,611 Israelis killed by Palestinians who used suicide bombs, and 3,200 Palestinians killed by Israel using Apache helicopter gunships.

Israel has assassinated a long line of Hamas leaders, from Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and Abdel Aziz al Rantisi to Ismail Haniyeh and Yahya Sinwar in 2024. But the outcome is not security but greater escalation, not accommodation but greater polarisation. Today, their actions are not burying Hamas, but sowing the dragons' teeth of bitterness, which will be reaped in a future bitter harvest of revenge.

It is said that one of the first casualties of war is the truth. Apart from banning independent media access to Gaza, Israel has sought to carry out its atrocities in secret by also killing 130 journalists in Gaza. Israel has invented an obscene Orwellian language of distortion. When hundreds of thousands of men, women and children are repeatedly forced from their homes and then from their refuge camps and bombed along the way, we are told that this is not blatant ethnic cleansing but just 'moving civilians to a place of safety'. Dropping 75,000 tonnes of bombs on one of the most densely populated places on earth, causing gigantic civilian casualties they describe as 'precision surgical strikes'. The only circumstance where this could be true is if the surgeon referred to was Dr Joseph Mengele.

Every time one hears the endless torrent of lies, falsehoods and evasions

streaming from the mouths of IDF military spokesmen, one can't help but see that grimacing sneer on the face of Adolf Eichmann in the dock in Jerusalem. The author Elia Maxwell claimed that "you ultimately become what you most hate". This seems particularly true of the Israeli state today. Opinion polls show the electorate cannot claim that these atrocities were only the works a rejectionist front of ultra hard-line



War Criminal Yoav Gallant

extremist zealots led by Netanyahu, Itamar Ben Gvir and Yoav Gallant, who since 1995 have sought every opportunity to sabotage a two state solution. The *Times of Israel* on 7 October 2024 found that only 11.5% thought Gaza should be controlled by Palestinians after the conflict ends, 34% thought Israel should control it, 83% believed the IDF carried out an ethical war.

Although 53% believed the war in Gaza should end, 36% believed it shouldn't. On 30th May 2024, an opinion poll found 19% of Israelis believed the war had gone too far, 39% that it was about right and 34% that they hadn't gone far enough.

This conflict has been an existential struggle for the Israeli state, but perhaps not in the way they think. It has been a struggle between barbarity and humanity. Let the death of Mohammad Bhar (aged 24), a Palestinian, with Downs syndrome and autism who was torn apart by IDF search dogs and left to die alone in the bombed ruins of his home in Gaza, be the immortal monument to the achievements of the Israeli state.^{ix}

If Israel continues to reject the two state

solution and if (as seems likely) she will be found guilty of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, these are not insignificant infractions that the international community can just ignore. In the 1980s, Gaddafi was accused of being the 'mad dog' of the Middle East, yet Israel's crimes are of a magnitude much greater than his. If Israel chooses to act like a nuclear armed, rabid, racist, renegade state, shamefully abusing the holocaust as a form of immunity from international law, it must be treated as such by the entire international community.

The people of Europe, and increasingly America, have had enough of Israel's blood lust and inhumanity. They are ready to stare them in the face and tell them that they are liars and that being the victim of genocide and being surrounded by enemies does not grant anyone immunity from observing human rights and accepting the rule of international law. If, by continuing her disproportionate wars of aggression, Israel proves itself unfit for self-government and incapable of peace and full coexistence with her

neighbours, the world will be forced to conclude that the Zionist experiment of an Israeli state has been a failure and implement a Marshall plan for Palestine and a Morgenthau plan for Israel, treating it like an international pariah state and subjecting it to a perpetual global arms embargo and crippling economic sanctions.

Israel need not fear 'annihilation' by Iran, because, as a member of the international community, it is already dead; its heart and soul lie putrefying under the ruins of Gaza and Beirut. The undead may no longer fear death and the soulless have no dread of damnation; the only thing that terrifies this diplomatic Nosferatu is a mirror to reflect what it really has become.

Ireland has never been diplomatically neutral and, when faced with the irrefutable evidence of inhumanity on this scale, it is the solemn duty of our leaders to hold up that mirror and lead the international community in a crusade for peace and justice in the Middle East.

ⁱ *The Irish Independent*, Israeli PM Netanyahu tells UN to evacuate peacekeepers from combat areas in Lebanon (msn.com).

ⁱⁱ *Al Jazeera*, One year of Israel's war on Gaza - by the numbers | Infographic News .|

ⁱⁱⁱ *The Irish Independent*, 8th August 2024.

^{iv} *The Irish Times*, UN inquiry accuses Israel of crime of 'extermination' in destruction of Gaza health system.

^v *Al Jazeera*, One year of Israel's war on Gaza - by the numbers | Infographic News |.

^{vi} *Al Jazeera*, Sabra and Shatila massacre: What happened in Lebanon in 1982? | Explainer News |.

^{vii} *Rogue State*, William Blum, Zed Books, 2003, pp 184-198.

^{viii} *The Scramble for Africa*, Thomas Pakenham, Abacus, 1992, p 615.

^{ix} www.bbc.com 16th July 2024.