

Message of solidarity from Francis Makeys from 32CSM on the occasion of the July 26th Celebration in Toronto

CUBA

On behalf of the 32 County Sovereignty Movement I would like to thank those who have invited us to address you here today. I wish to send revolutionary greetings to the people of Cuba and South Africa and through them greetings to all oppressed peoples struggling for freedom and human dignity.

I particularly want to send solidarity greetings to the people of Gaza whose criminal blockade and military persecution by the Israeli government continues unabated. We are with you.

Like Ireland, Cuba has lived in the shadow of an imperial power. That shadow has cast a nefarious influence on the well being of the Cuban people for decades. And like Ireland also South Africa has endured institutionalised discrimination as a means to attain and retain political power in the hands of a minority.

But just like Ireland, the Cuban and South African people have developed resilience to oppression and isolation and have given the world great leadership and hope to other peoples currently struggling against imperialism and discrimination.

Cuba is a beacon. Having overthrown the criminal dictator Batista through armed struggle between 1953 and 1959 the great socialist revolution could begin.

Putting the people first a wide range of progressive social reforms were put in place. Laws were introduced to provide equality of citizens and greater rights for women. Improvements in communications, medical facilities, health, housing, and education followed. By the end of the 1960s, all Cuban children were receiving some education (compared with less than half before 1959), unemployment and corruption were reduced, and great improvements were made in hygiene and sanitation.

A policy of agrarian reform saw the nationalisation of large ranches and plantations whilst similar nationalisation programmes saw business and properties owned by foreign interests and the church seized for the well being of the Cuban people.

The victory of the Cuban Revolution had world wide repercussions. The concept of a people determining their own future with a system of government based on socialist principles was so alarming to imperial powers that it set in train some of the most horrific foreign policy decisions to emanate from Washington.

Not content with blockading Cuba and funding criminal military attacks against the Cuban people, Washington has given its full support to tyrants throughout the region in a desperate bid to deny freedom and justice to these nations.

But the Cuban Revolution was an inspiration to other countries in Latin and South America and they in turn have inspired other peoples throughout the world.

Capitalism is a pariah in the world. It is the ideology of the despot and the dictator. The slaughter in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Gaza and Syria are as a direct result of capitalist influences in banking and oil seeking to impose puppet regimes so as to control the natural resources of those countries.

In Europe social control is now maintained through enforced and crippling debt. Financial debt is the new poverty. In Ireland the massive debts of bankers and property speculators have been foisted onto the Irish people for generations to come.

In our struggle to end the violation of our national sovereignty by the British Parliament the 32 County Sovereignty Movement have argued that the ending of partition offers the only realistic catalyst to break the political hegemony that exists in Ireland currently.

Partition was Britain's answer to protecting their interests by affording privilege to their planted loyalists in Ireland. But Partition was a disaster for all the people of Ireland and continues to be so.

The violation of Irish national sovereignty is the root cause of armed conflict in Ireland and must be resolved if a true peace is to prevail. This is why the current so called peace process is failing.

The Good Friday Agreement is a counter revolutionary treaty. It has cemented the partition of Ireland. It has institutionalised sectarianism in the occupied Six Counties and it has more firmly secured the influence of right wing economic and political forces in the Twenty Six Counties.

But it also represents a deeply flawed model that imperial powers would like to see implemented in other regions. The entry fee into the negotiations which led to this treaty was a prior recognition that the British government was the lawful sovereign authority in occupied Ireland. The resulting negotiations were thus based on not removing British interests in Ireland but administering them.

The then British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who along with US President George Bush, instigated the slaughter in Iraq on the deliberately falsified lie that that country possessed weapons of mass destruction. The death toll from that conflict has run into the scores of thousands, and rising, and that country is now engulfed in sectarian turmoil.

But inspite of that, and the appalling legacy it has left in its wake, the capitalist mindset has appointed Tony Blair as 'Middle East Peace Envoy' which would be similar to appointing a member of the Ku Klux Klan as a racial harmony ambassador.

And great caution is required when we make political assessments of what is happening in these countries and why. Revolution is not about replacing one dictator with another or one extreme religious faith with another.

The great Irish political thinker and revolutionary James Fintan Lalor observed in the mid-nineteenth century that the struggle between tenant farmer and landlord was a microcosm of the struggle between Ireland and the British Empire.

Revolution which does not benefit the common good of the people is an insidious assault on the sovereign integrity of the people. So when we look at the current conflicts in regions dominated by foreign interference and manipulation we need to take the templates of struggles like Cuba and Ireland so that objectivity and clarity can be brought to bear.

We must also be on our guard when it comes to the language right wing governments employ as a mask for their true intentions. The emotive and dubious phrase 'The Peace Process' allows the coloniser to present themselves as peacemakers with benign intentions where their true aim is to politically undermine local resistance to their presence and install puppet regimes to do their bidding.

For revolutionary socialists peace cannot be separated from justice nor justice from self-determination. The 32 County Sovereignty Movement sought a peaceful resolution to the Anglo-Irish conflict by petitioning the United Nations to recognise Ireland's claim to national sovereignty and the right to self determination. The British response was to petition the US Government to have our organisation designated as a terrorist group which prevents us from travelling to the UN HQ in New York. British intentions were thus exposed.

The Anglo-Irish conflict has not been resolved and we are not terrorists for pointing this out.

South Africa

According to Margaret Thatcher both Nelson Mandela and Bobby Sands were terrorists. Speaking in 1987, six years after presiding over the deaths of Sands and nine of his fellow republican hunger strikers Thatcher opined:

'The ANC is a typical terrorist organisation ... Anyone who thinks it is going to run the government in South Africa is living in cloud-cuckoo land'.

In April, 1963, when the South African minister of justice, Belthazar Johannes Vorster was introducing some new apartheid laws (The Coercion Bill) he publicly stated that he:

“would be willing to exchange all the legislation of this sort for one clause of the Northern Ireland Special Powers Act”.

The great parallel between the struggle of the ANC and the struggle of Irish republicanism is the intense level of deliberate and strategic discrimination the oppressor employed to maintain their stranglehold on power.

But equally we observe the common bond between oppressors when we see them label the people of no property who rose against these injustices as ‘terrorists’. This is why it is essential that struggles of similar vein communicate in as many ways as possible to derive whatever mutual knowledge and insights we can glean to ensure our mutual success.

And for this gathering here today we are immeasurably thankful. We have travelled here to learn as much as we have come to teach and hopefully our experiences as Irish republicans and the Irish struggle can fulfil this role.

The struggle against apartheid has yielded an instrument designed to address the legacies of conflict particularly conflicts where discrimination was a deliberate policy. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established after the abolition of apartheid and the election of a democratically representative government of national unity.

According to Mr Dullah Omar, former Minister of Justice:

"... a commission is a necessary exercise to enable South Africans to come to terms with their past on a morally accepted basis and to advance the cause of reconciliation."

At present there are confused and restrained calls in Ireland for the establishment of a similar body to address the legacy of the conflict there. But the immense difference between the two, and what is essential that I relate to you here today, is that the conflict in Ireland is not over, nor resolved, and that the establishment of such a body in such circumstances is merely a mechanism to continue the conflict by different means.

The cause of the Anglo-Irish conflict is the violation of national sovereignty by the British Parliament. The means by which that is maintained is through discrimination and it is a pointless exercise in treating the symptom but not the cause.

Apartheid had to end before reconciliation could commence just as the violation of Irish sovereignty must end before similar happens in Ireland. We need your clear support on this crucial reality. We need you to challenge the cosy narrative of those who sold short and would tell you the conflict is over.

The Good Friday Agreement is not a template for conflict resolution but rather a political deflection to temporarily paint over the rust of continued failures to bring the core cause of the conflict to the negotiations table. Would the conflict in South Africa be over if apartheid was deemed to be outside the remit of any negotiations process?

Currently there are incarcerated in British and Irish gaols scores of republican prisoners who's very existence defies the logic that conflict is over. In the occupied Six Counties the British carry out a campaign of 'Internment by Remand' wherein Irish republicans are held in custody for a minimum of eighteen months before trial often on the most flimsiest of 'evidence'.

Indeed many of these cases have collapsed when they go to trial, not as a testament to British justice, but as an abuse of justice to secure strategic and punitive imprisonment.

Whilst incarcerated these prisoners are subject to the violent degradation of strip searches, not as a security measure, but as an instrument to dehumanise and break their spirits. They will fail. Just as they failed to criminalise Bobby Sands and his many comrades.

At the height of the negotiations which led to the Good Friday Agreement the 32 County Sovereignty Movement petitioned the United Nations to have the violation of Irish sovereignty recognised as illegal under International Law and by default a cause of conflict.

The salient precondition for entry into negotiations with the British was the prior acceptance of the legitimacy of their sovereign claim over part of Ireland and the removal of all Irish claims to the contrary.

As a result of our peaceful tactic the British government petitioned the US government to have our organisation declared as a terrorist entity. This was duly granted and our ability to pursue our peaceful strategy was seriously curtailed. We remain fully committed to it however.

The British government declared that it:

".....had no selfish, strategic or economic reasons to remain in Ireland"

This was the great fallacy which was designed to ensnare the participants into the inevitable conclusion. Perfidious Albion once again.

True British intentions regarding Ireland were spelled out by British House of Commons leader Jack Straw when he declared:

"Historically, England called the shots to achieve a union because the union was seen as a way, among others things, of amplifying England's power worldwide.

And the reverse would certainly be true. A broken-up United Kingdom would not be in the interests of Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, but especially not England. Our voting power in the European Union would diminish. We'd slip down in the world league GDP tables. Our case for staying in the G8 would diminish and there could easily be an assault on our permanent seat in the UN Security Council.”

These are the sentiments which are prolonging the conflict in Ireland. They represent the clarity of thought in any imperial power. They are the sentiments behind the so called West's involvement in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya.

They are the reasons behind the deafening silence on the continued bombardment of the Palestinian people in Gaza by those ardent supporters and financial backers of Israel.

The 32 County Sovereignty Movement will continue to be inspired by the struggle of the people of South Africa to overcome the obscenity that was apartheid and to deal robustly and justly with its legacy.

We call to mind the efforts of the late Dr Kader Asmal who headed the Irish Anti Apartheid Movement. We remember the Dunnes Stores Strikers who refused to handle South African produce and remained on strike for two and a half years in solidarity with oppressed.

We draw great inspiration from these people as we now urge your inspiration and support for the struggle for Irish sovereignty and freedom.

Beir Bua