



Address by Workers Party President, Councillor Ted Tynan, to public meeting of Cork Neutrality League on the issue of the Consultative Forum on International Security Policy

Tánaiste Micheal Martin, speaking in the Dail on May 18, introduced the Consultative Forum on International Security Policy. It is clear from his speech that he is using the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine to justify succumbing to pressure to move closer to NATO and ditch neutrality.

According to Micheal Martin, 'This unprovoked and illegal act ...brought home to many across Europe and beyond, a hard reality...that there are those in the world who...through all possible means, including the use of force, are ready to challenge the rules-based international order and the universally accepted principle of respect for the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of states.'

Violation of International Law

Where has Micheal Martin been in recent decades? Has he heard of the Chilcot Iraq Inquiry which declared, 'The actions of the US and the UK have undermined the authority of the United Nations.' Or Kofi Annan who declared explicitly that the US led war on Iraq was illegal. Or the Dutch inquiry finding that the war was a violation of international law.

The same disturbing breaches of international law apply to the attacks on countries such as Libya. All of this destruction has resulted in a continuing humanitarian crisis which is largely ignored by the countries that created it.

There is also the seriously worrying use of extraordinary rendition, the use of torture and the holding of innocent people for years without even a semblance of justice or trial.

Shannon

Worse! Ireland in allowing the country responsible - the US - landing rights at Shannon facilitating this barbarism has sullied Ireland's good standing won by countless of army personnel who have served with the United Nations.

Irish people are well aware of the on-going efforts by powerful war mongering nations to destroy and side-line the United Nations and render it powerless.

Of course, Mr Martin is well aware of all this and the reality is that he has taken sides - he has taken the humble role of lapdog to the Euro-Atlantic imperialist bloc and its warmongering. There is now no dissenting voice allowed and anyone brave enough to speak up for peace is quickly hushed by a compliant media.

One-sided debate

Here I would point to the welcome voice of President Higgins recent intervention in this very one-sided debate. This is a voice of sanity in the midst of the hysterical and dangerous route we are being led into.

President Higgins pointed to the constructive role Ireland could take in seeking to restore 'vigorous responsible international institutions' for example. However, as the President noted in directing Ireland towards military alignments we disqualify 'ourselves as an open-minded participant in relation to the real issues that matter.' We need to reclaim our neutrality and sovereignty and play a positive and desperately needed role in the increasingly dangerous world we are being led into. This is a most important role.

Instead, Ireland is being led closer to military alignments. We see this process over the years. In 1999 Ireland joined NATO's 'Partnership for Peace' (PfP). This organisation is seen by NATO as playing an important role in the 'enlargement of NATO'.

Major cause for concern

The issue of neutrality became a major cause for concern for the EU during the national referendum on the Nice Treaty. The concern focused on the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

This led to Ireland making a national declaration that swore allegiance to the EU's Security and Defence Policy, conditioned on a triple lock approval that involves a UN Mandate along with the approval of both the cabinet and Dail Eireann.

In 2017 the European Council established the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) to create its own war machine which the Irish government signed up to. This was yet another step towards the abandonment of neutrality by stealth and the creation of a European army - however much Mr Martin denies it.

Undermining Neutrality

Every trick has been used by successive governments to undermine neutrality. The Consultative Forum is a giant step along the way. 'Experts' and 'stakeholders' will be heard in a totally one-sided drive to confuse and weaken the commitment of Irish people to neutrality. Will these 'experts' and 'stakeholders' be putting their lives at risk in any of the wars they would like Ireland to join in tomorrows' Iraqs, Libyas, Afghanistans etc. When these advisors go home Ireland will be left with the depressing reality of working-class children fighting and dying in their imperialist wars.

I would say loudly and clearly to Mr Martin the only stakeholder when it comes to Irish neutrality is the Irish people. There is no other stakeholder no matter what army or what rank they hold or whatever ideologically motivated think-tank they represent. The vast majority of Irish people want peace and are sick of war-mongering. This is true of people in many countries but sadly their voices are not heard. They want negotiations to end conflict no matter what Washington orders.

It is high time the main political parties listened to the people rather than try to manipulate them. There are many problems that need urgent attention. Widespread poverty, for example, the housing crisis, the many thousands of homeless including children and the underfunding and privatisation of public services. In all of this, workers bear the brunt of the crisis-ridden capitalist system.

The Workers' Party will defend Irish neutrality and will oppose every attempt to drag the country into imperialist alliances. The only role that is meaningful and worthwhile for Ireland is that of strengthening international organisations such as the United Nations and urging negotiated peaceful resolution to conflict.

As a neutral country Ireland can be an independent voice for peace, de-escalation of hostilities and above all seeking ways to make nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction obsolete. This is meaningful and what is needed more than anything at this dangerous time.

20th June 2023