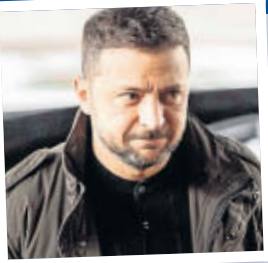


Damien.Lane@the-sun.ie

@Damienlanesun

Damien Lane



RESOLVE... Ukraine's Zelenskyy

IT'S NOT TIME FOR PEACE

VLADIMIR Putin is running scared. Almost three years after he invaded Ukraine to topple its government, install a Russian puppet regime and divide the West, by any metric his war has failed.

More than 700,000 of his troops are dead or injured. The Russian economy is on its knees, battling rampant inflation. Russia's status in the world is crushingly diminished.

It is now a pariah state, its citizens unwelcome throughout the world.

The only hope Putin has of emerging from the catastrophic military adventure in Ukraine is if the incoming US President, Donald Trump, does what he has repeatedly said he will do — end military aid to Kyiv and force the warring parties around the negotiating table.

Such a scenario would be a victory for Putin and his murderous aggression. It would be an affront to Ukraine and the incredible resolve it has shown in fighting Russia.

Ukraine is the only thing that stands in the way of Russia moving further west.

Abandoning Zelenskyy now would be the greatest error.

Putin would paint an imposed peace, whereby Russia gains the 20 per cent of Ukraine it currently controls, as a victory.

Russian forces would regroup and plans for the expansion of Imperial Russia into the Baltics and possibly Poland and Moldova would be drawn up.

Peace now would be a betrayal of Ukraine. It must not be allowed to happen.

INSURERS PROFIT

HAS your insurance policy premium dropped recently?

Nope, is the honest answer.

A few businesses have reported tiny price cuts but, by and large, premiums across the board continue to be the same or more expensive.

That's despite personal injury claims falling by around 40 per cent in recent years.

So premiums should be falling, not rising, surely?

They should, but they're not. For example, motor insurance premiums are rising at more than TEN times the rate of inflation.

Chief Executive of The Alliance For Insurance Reform Vincent Jennings, *above*, said: "The only thing increasing faster than public liability premiums has been the profits of insurers."



Lowry in government is like being given a tin of Spam to eat... and no can opener

A GOVERNMENT with Michael Lowry — who'd have thought that possible, EVER?

Well, that's what we've being served up. Deep, depressing sigh.

It's like sitting down to dinner starving and being given a tin of out-of-date spam to eat — and no can opener.

The Moriarty Tribunal found Michael Lowry's behaviour in awarding the State's second mobile phone licence to businessman Denis O'Brien in 1995 to have been "profoundly corrupt".

Findings he and O'Brien have consistently denied.

Fourteen years on, it's now been revealed the Criminal Assets Bureau has given the DPP a file to consider.

More mud in the political waters.

Square-circling

Despite the damning condemnation that saw Lowry forced out from Fine Gael and excoriated by all and sundry in the Dail at the time, he has been re-elected on each occasion by the people of Tipperary.

Ah, Ireland. Don't you just love how we stand by our own, no matter their sins?

The "damn those up in the Big Smoke" view of the world is alive and well. It's a bit cut your nose off to spite your face, no?

Now, at this important moment in our nation's history, it should surely dig into the ribs and gnaw at the moral conscience to even contemplate Lowry's involvement in government, let alone make it a reality.

A poll in last weekend's Sunday Independent found that two in three people are against Fianna Fail and Fine Gael even negotiating with Lowry.

It's clear the people of Ireland don't want him anywhere near the reins of

power. But, our politicians don't have a problem with it.

A disconnect, if ever there was one. One our leaders seem blind to.

Simon "New Energy" Harris brushed off his party's expulsion of Lowry and the view of ex-leader Enda Kenny, who said in 2016: "I will not have any dealings with Michael Lowry."

Harris said he "fully accepted" the findings of the Moriarty Tribunal, but would continue to chinwag with Lowry to form a government. That's some square-circling right there.

Similarly, soon-to-be Taoiseach, Tanaiste Michael Martin, who when the Moriarty Report was published in 2011, told the Dail that Lowry should resign as a politician, reasoned about current government formation talks:

"Micheal Lowry has been elected by the people of Tipperary three times since 2016, and he has supported governments in every Dail since then."

"In that light, in the interests of forming a stable government, we will meet with Michael Lowry about support for a potential coalition agreement."

In other words, let bygones be bygones. Nothing to see here. Is this good enough? Right-thinking people should be up in arms, spitting feathers, protesting in the streets against a Lowry-infused government.

We're not. We don't do that in Ireland. We just shrug our shoulders and mumble: "Ah sure, look it. What can ya do?" Puerrile.

But our "not giving a feck" has empowered Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. It implicitly gave them the nod to sit

down with a guy like Michael Lowry, without a prick of conscience.

Just to sum up where we stand (neck-deep in a murky swamp, if we're honest): In 2011, after many years of investigation and a spend of more than €70million of taxpayers' money (on lawyers mainly), Lowry was found to have acted corruptly in the awarding of the mobile phone licence.

Both Fine Gael and Fianna Fail immediately climbed to the moral high ground to roundly condemn him and urge his excision from the body politic.

Fine Gael said he could not stand for the party. And Lowry became a political pariah.

But he continued to be re-elected as an independent to the Dail — a two-fingers by the people of Tipperary to the political establishment.

Fourteen years on, he's still there.

As for him, his "conscience is clear".

The question to Simon Harris and Micheal Martin now is a simple one: If Lowry was unfit to be even a member of the Dail in 2011, how is he now suddenly fit to be in government?

What has changed?

Nothing has changed. The same sleeveen politics of the past pertains; the nod and the wink, the behind-closed-doors deals, the secret cabals of power.

The same politics that failed so many people in past generations passes for politics in 2025, too. It will continue to fail us long into the future until it's turfed out, exiled, banished, forbidden.

A government founded on such morally rocky ground can't be a government worthy of anyone's confidence.

And that's putting it bloody mildly.



UNDER FIRE... Lowry



SHOW BLOW... host Jean

FOLLOW SPAIN ON HOUSING

WELL, that's A Place In The Sun goosed.

You know, the hugely popular TV show hosted by Jean Johansson that helps mainly retiring UK couples buy their dream house in Spain (mostly).

The programme's producers will be a bit perturbed by news from Spain that the government there plans to slap a 100 per cent tax on any gaffs bought by non-EU residents.

Gulp. So, that spiffing holiday home with pool in Andalusia on the market for £142,000, will now cost prospective UK buyers double that.

If it weren't for Brexit... Socialist Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has acted after waves of protests across the country about the spiralling costs of housing and a lack of supply.

It's an EU-wide problem. Over the past decade, housing prices have risen across the bloc by a staggering 48 per cent.

PM Sanchez, *below*, spoke for many when he said: "The West faces a decisive challenge: To not become a society divided into two

classes, the rich landlords and poor tenants."

Hence the raft of new proposals to help ordinary folk who can't afford that flat

or house.

The proposed measures include expanding the supply of social housing, offering incentives to those who renovate and rent out empty properties at affordable prices and cracking down on seasonal rentals.

He also revealed that holiday home sales to non-EU buyers — mainly Brits and Yanks — amounted to 27,000 last year alone.

Sanchez added: "And they didn't (buy them) to live in them, they didn't do it for their families to have a place to live, they did it to speculate, to make money from them, which we — in the context of the shortage that we are in — obviously cannot allow."

A bold plan. And one that our new government should examine closely.

The biggest problem in Ireland, apart from houses not being built quickly enough, are Airbnb short-term lets, which dramatically reduce the housing stock available to long-term renters.

Sanchez is prepared to tackle them.

Will our lot take them head-on, too?

They will in their ar**.



THE devastating fires in Los Angeles will have surely forced the climate change sceptics to re-evaluate their idiotic views.

It's the world's biggest challenge. And our inaction thus far means it may already be too late.

Let's see if our new government puts climate TOP of the agenda. They won't, by the way, in case you were wondering.