



Get out while you can — this is just the start, yelled protesters

Anti-immigrant riot in Coolock last week reflects the rapid growth of far-right extremism, says *John Mooney*

The violence started with a TikTok posted at 3.41am last Monday. “The camp is gone,” read one post under an online pseudonym used by one of the anti-immigrant protesters who had spent the last few months camped outside the former Crown Paints factory on the Malahide Road in Dublin to stop its redevelopment as a refugee accommodation centre. That ramshackle camp of small huts

had been dismantled, much to his fury. A little over an hour later, another protester uploaded a video to TikTok. It showed protesters verbally abusing the security guards at the site. “Get out of the country. You’re not Irish,” shouted one. Hours later, the area was swarmed by even more angry people, all responding to the online appeals. The sense of foreboding was palpable. The protesters filmed themselves shouting and hurling abuse at the security staff. Workmen leaving the site

were physically accosted and harassed. “Back down the road with yis. I can’t afford bread and milk for me kids over you,” one woman screamed at four workmen as they left that morning. “We’ll see you, don’t worry. We have your face on camera.” In the midst of the shouting, one man who could be heard on TikTok but not seen, issued a threat of what was to come. “Get out while you can. You have been warned. This is just the beginning.” An hour or so later, a mob attacked.

One of them hit a security guard on the head with a steel bar, causing him to collapse. A digger was set on fire while the protesters dismantled steel fencing, which the developers had erected to keep intruders out. This was used to block off the Malahide Road and cause traffic chaos, a strategic act designed to stop the emergency services reaching the scene as flames engulfed the machinery. The few gardai at the scene were quickly overwhelmed. They were pushed, threatened, abused and intimidated. One TikTok showed a garda being taunted and jeered by a young man, who waved his hands in the air as he jumped around, goading the officer. What happened next was entirely predictable. Rioting then broke out across the working-class suburb. It descended into chaos, prompting Garda Headquarters to deploy public order units to contain the violence, which drew crowds of far-right activists, feral teenagers and young men from across the city.

The rioting was partly born on social media as the protesters encouraged others to travel to Coolock to take a stand. TikTok, Instagram, Telegram and Twitter/X were flooded with calls for people to come to the area. #CoolockSaysNo began to trend. Hundreds responded to the online call to arms. The far-right agitators encouraging the violence were indistinguishable from the concerned locals, who had joined the protest complaining about a lack of consultation by the statutory agencies. At times, the gardai appeared to be overwhelmed by the sheer scale of the trouble, forcing them to use pepper spray to disperse the crowds as they moved from one housing estate to another. Local politicians such as Gavin Pepper arrived, broadcasting monologues across social media, blaming the government for escalating the disturbances. “In the city centre, they spend €100,000 to put up barriers to keep illegal male migrants out but they want to push them into communities that are deprived,” Pepper told TikTok. “The rich areas never suffer, it’s the working class that suffers. What do you think is going to happen when you ignore working-class communities? I blame you, Helen McEntee, and everybody in the Dail. Look at the end result,” shouted Pepper, recently elected to Dublin city council.

response has been misguided, with ministers, their advisers and political analysts failing to recognise it as a violent political movement. Instead the government views such protests as the outworkings of poor communications by state agencies tasked with providing accommodation to refugees in socially deprived areas, forgetting that arson attacks are occurring in rural communities too. The authorities have also failed to recognise how the movement has been inspired by Donald Trump’s first presidency, the language he used to describe migrants and his tolerance of political violence. “We can’t say we didn’t see this coming,” John Horgan, an expert on extremism at Georgia State University, said. “Analysts have warned the Irish government about this for several years, and were dismissed as cranks or fear-mongers. Now the far right has a growing presence across the country and they are getting more popular by the day. The Irish government is completely lacking in any kind of response. It lacks clear communication and policies around migration and has no strategy to counter the ongoing rise of the far right.”

“Trump’s re-election, if it happens, will only validate Ireland’s far-right agitators and further spur them on,” said Horgan, who noted how Trump at his nomination speech described immigrants as murderers and rapists, and warned they were already stealing American jobs. “Trump presents complex issues in very simple ways. He explains to people just who exactly is to blame for their grievances, frustrations and failures. He’s a master of scapegoating. This simple talk makes ordinary people feel emboldened and valued. It makes them feel smart. “These same strategies, so effective for Trump, are widely used now by Irish far-right influencers. They see opportunities to exploit, and when they see just how much support is there for them, they thrive. People live online. I think most governments still struggle to understand that,” Horgan added.

“This is turning into class war. There is no real consultation with the local people



Drew Harris, the Garda commissioner, condemned the violence in Coolock

People are entitled to oppose something but they cannot engage in criminal activity

Gardai used pepper spray in an effort to quell the violence in the working-class suburb of Coolock, as far-right agitators, feral teenagers and young men from across the city pelted officers with masonry and other objects and set fire to cars

Ireland is uniquely vulnerable to political violence. The anti-migrant protests and arson attacks bear striking similarities to those carried out by the Whiteboys, the name given to secretive and violent groups which sought to redress local grievances in 18th-century Ireland. What began as local vigilantism in Co Limerick in 1760, Whiteboyism quickly spread across the island and continued for decades. Like the alt-right, they saw themselves as champions of economic justice, avengers of the oppressed and protectors of those who defied the authority of the state and were officially regarded as criminals. There are now grave concerns a new paramilitary-style organisation may yet emerge from the alt-right’s Irish ranks. Calls for a new IRA to protect Ireland from migrants are being made on alt-right Telegram channels. Daniel HoSang, a professor of ethnicity, race and migration at Yale University, said the violence spreading across Ireland was far more intense than what unfolded in the early days of Trumpism in the United States. He pointed to the riots which broke out in Dublin last November after a mob of Algerian origin stabbed children and a carer outside a play school. Dublin city centre was engulfed by unprecedented scenes of violence as mobs looted shops

and set fire to cars and buses as the gardai struggled to keep control. Much of the violence was instigated and organised on Telegram and X, according to the security services and military. But it was amplified by American accounts and some Irish voices, inspiring similar riots in parts of France. What is likely to happen now? While Ireland is not about to be overrun by extremists, the new far right presents a big challenge. If the government fails to confront extremism, the movement will continue to toxify politics, disenfranchise a large share of voters and continue to pose a serious security threat. Inaction will inevitably spurn more as champions of economic justice, avengers of the oppressed and protectors of those who defied the authority of the state and were officially regarded as criminals. There are now grave concerns a new paramilitary-style organisation may yet emerge from the alt-right’s Irish ranks. Calls for a new IRA to protect Ireland from migrants are being made on alt-right Telegram channels. Daniel HoSang, a professor of ethnicity, race and migration at Yale University, said the violence spreading across Ireland was far more intense than what unfolded in the early days of Trumpism in the United States. He pointed to the riots which broke out in Dublin last November after a mob of Algerian origin stabbed children and a carer outside a play school. Dublin city centre was engulfed by unprecedented scenes of violence as mobs looted shops

Gary Murphy, page 15

Ukrainian refugees ‘frustrated’ to be moved after integrating into communities

Patrick O’Donoghue

A Ukrainian mother who was evicted and moved across the country to new government accommodation has said she is “frustrated” that she and her son must now integrate into another community. As the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth continues its drive to consolidate the supply of accommodation for Ukrainian refugees and international protection applicants by winding up a number of contracts with existing providers, high volumes of residents are being relocated to new centres or left facing eviction. Olena Vozheva and her 13-year-old son, Kyrlo, had lived in a hotel in Westport in Co Mayo since arriving two years ago after fleeing the Lugansk region of Ukraine. However, they recently received a government letter informing them that they would be moved to a new place near the sea in Carnemore, a small village. There is a problem with transport, lack of jobs,” she said. She said the move had been disorientating and had created uncertainty for her and her son. “Where is a school for my son, how to get there? Where to find the uniform? How to find new friends, and will I be moved again soon? My son and I are thankful to the support which Ireland gives us, but so often I feel helpless,” she said. Vozheva added that she was not optimistic about finding an affordable place to

pick up her and Kyrlo. “I am absolutely frustrated at the moment. I am very upset and worried about my son because it took him a while to adjust to a new country, learn language and find friends in the school. Now we have to start from the beginning,” Vozheva said. She added that it had taken time to adapt to life in Westport. She had attended English classes and planned to begin a full-time course. “We live in a beautiful place near the sea in Carnemore. Management of the hotel is helpful but still I have lots of questions with no answers. Carnemore is a small village. There is a problem with transport, lack of jobs,” she said. She said the move had been disorientating and had created uncertainty for her and her son. “Where is a school for my son, how to get there? Where to find the uniform? How to find new friends, and will I be moved again soon? My son and I are thankful to the support which Ireland gives us, but so often I feel helpless,” she said. Vozheva added that she was not optimistic about finding an affordable place to

rent in the private sector as a refugee and single mother. “Not every landlord wants to go with ARP [accommodation recognition payment],” she said. John Lannon, chief executive of Doras, a human rights and migrant support group, said that being moved from one community to another after an extended period of integration was “distressing” for refugees. “The [Department of Integration] unit responsible for the Ukraine accommodation is going through a process of ensuring that providers are compliant with the regulations. They’re also looking at consolidation and trying to reduce the number of contracts that they have,” Lannon said. Olga Iamsum, who is involved with Wexford Local Development, said families had been uprooted from the communities in which they had been welcomed and become embedded since arriving in Ireland after fleeing the war with Russia. “There are some families with children – children have to change school. It’s stressful. We are trying to integrate people here [in Wexford] to make them feel comfortable but your life is not something you can pack up in a suitcase and bring to another place,” she said. The Department of Integration said it was reducing the number of contracts for accommodation for Ukrainian refugees for reasons including compliance concerns. These arise when a provider is not meeting the required, contracted standards of service, and include everything from the health, safety and wellbeing of beneficiaries of temporary protection in state-funded



Olena Vozheva and Kyrlo were moved from Co Mayo

facilities to overcharging by providers for the use of their accommodation. “The department is also reducing the number of contracts to ensure value for money and greater oversight. This will result in people being moved to other locations,” a spokesman said. To date this year, 2,522 relocations of Ukrainians have taken place. The department acknowledged that it is “not easy” for people being moved but that state-funded accommodation is subject to change. “Given the number of moves that will take place over the next few months, it is unlikely that this accommodation will be in the same area. People affected who wish to stay in the area are welcome to make their own arrangements, including through pledged accommodation. Due to the scale involved, the only factors that can be considered when allocating follow-on accommodation are HSE-assessed medical needs,” the spokesman added.

Our asylum seeker campaign will be peaceful, villagers vow

Patrick O’Donoghue

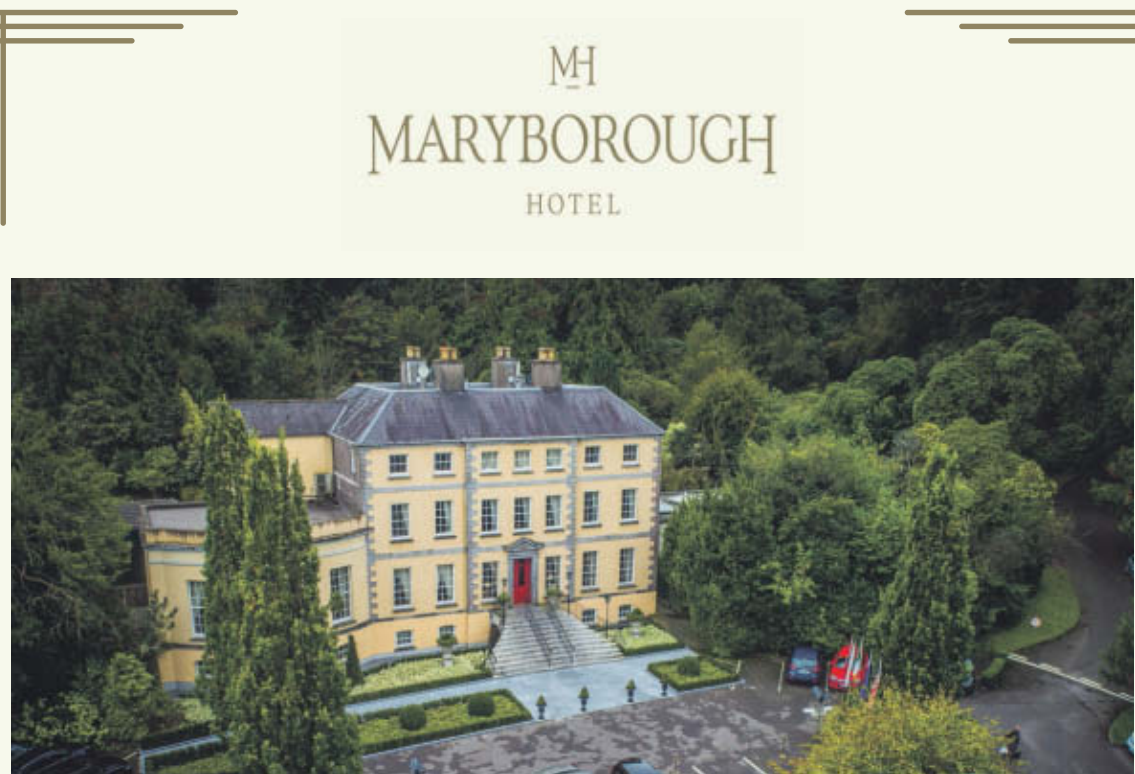
Locals protesting at the proposed accommodation of asylum seekers in a village in Tipperary have said their campaign will be peaceful. A sign beside the road into Dundrum makes clear the protesters’ feelings. It reads: “Dundrum don’t need or want IPAs [international protection applicants]. Show support: stand at Dundrum hotel gates.” The village has a population of 220 but in 2022 Dundrum House hotel, an

18th-century country estate, was used by the integration department to house 277 refugees from Ukraine. Many Ukrainians have since left but their places may be taken by asylum seekers. The hotel has not accepted guests since its ballroom was damaged by fire in 2015. Before then it was regarded as the economic heart of the village. The grounds are still a golf course but locals had hoped the building would be renovated and used to rejuvenate Dundrum. A protest at the gates has

been in place for 52 days and locals are there around the clock. Anthony Feery, a tradesman, was adamant that they would not resort to violence, as protesters in Coolock did last week. “You will not have something like that from the people of Dundrum. We got together as a community. We want the hotel back, we want the facilities back. That was the promise,” Feery told The Sunday Times. He said lack of engagement from the integration

department had sown distrust but the village protesters were not influenced by any political agenda or outside agitators. “I think since they [outside actors] realised what it meant to the community, we’ve been left alone,” Feery said. He added that the events in Coolock had made him and others feel scared. Helen Loneragan, who lives opposite the golf course, also said she could not envisage any “aggro” from protesters. Golden Vale house, a prominent building in

another part of the village and which is now derelict, once drew in visitors for concerts by singers such as Meatloaf and Johnny Cash. The premises are a symbol of how the village feels neglected. Nora O’Dwyer, a business owner, said the uncertainty had divided locals: “It’s such a lovely village [but this] has split the community already.” The integration department said talks about the hotel were taking place. It said it would tell village leaders and the media of any confirmed changes.



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