Socialist Voice

SV

Communist Party of Ireland
Páirtí Cumannach na hÉireann
Partisan Patriotic Internationalist
Number 158 April 2018 €1.50
www.communistpartyofireland.ie

IN THIS ISSUE

Monopoly capitalist fraud Page 2
Housing | Drugs | Profits Page 3
Wormen's pay Page 4
War threat Page 6
Communist Party strategy Page 8
Revolutionary media? Page 8
Party Life Page 10
Cuba's democracy resists Page 12
Culture Page 11
Letters Page 16

Universal basic fraud

"Universal basic income" is being suggested by many on the left, as well as the right, as a solution to inequality and poverty. It's been doing the rounds for a number of years as a way of creating a fairer and more equal society.

It has been tested in some countries for limited numbers, typically between 1,000 and 5,000. Most trials were on people who were unemployed or on very low incomes. **Jimmy Doran** reports on a scheme to privatise benefits. **>>**

"There is no United Nations. There is an international community that occasionally can be led by the only real power left in the world, and that's the United States, when it suits our interests and when we can get others to go along."—**John Bolton** (author of *The legal case for striking North Korea first* and *How to defund the UN*, newly appointed US national security adviser), 1994.
See page 12

International Working Women's Day celebrated in Dublin *Page 4*

Basic fraud

The idea is that every citizen would get the payment whether they were employed or unemployed. For the unemployed it would replace unemployment benefit, the difference being that this payment would continue after getting a job. The intention is that this would improve the living standards of these very low-income earners; in reality it facilitates the payment of poverty wages. It actually subsidises rogue employers and encourages them to boost profits on the back of low wages.

It also abandons the social contract between the state and the citizen, as now the state would give all its citizens UBI instead of providing a health service, a proper education system, public transport, etc.

This is the ultimate plan. All these services would be done on a pay-as-you-go basis and would be fully privatised and run for profit, instead of a service for looking after the health of our citizens. Instead of paying for all these services in the annual state budget there would be just one sum allowed to each citizen: one amount to replace all the socially beneficial departments of the state as they stand today.

UBI is basically the privatisation of all state services under the guise of a cash payment for all citizens. In the past, a similar choice was made with universal child benefit, whereby the state makes a payment for the benefit of every child in the country. It sounds good, and fair, but in doing this it abandons the care of children to the private sector, which makes massive profits from it and leaves some people working for little else than the payment of the extortionate rates demanded.

The alternative could have been the state providing universal, safe child care, where every child had a good standard of care available to them as a right, instead of subsidising private child care through children's allowances.

Who does UBI benefit? The answer is quite clear: the capitalist class, in that it would put all the state services into private hands, so that they could make profit from people's health, education, etc.

The wealthy already pay for private health and education; so now they would get a payment, by way of UBI, to subsidise their fees.

Universal basic income? More like a universal basic con-job, as it would mean a smaller share for ordinary working people and a bonanza for the capitalist class. Instead of removing inequality it would have the opposite effect. Like the policy of "austerity," the aim of UBI is the transfer of wealth from the poorest to the wealthiest.

In trials, the average payments varied around the €500 per month mark. There has been no suggestion of what it might be in Ireland.

Would it be possible to introduce UBI in a fair way? Maybe. If all the wealth created by the people of Ireland could be divided by the number of people in the country, that would certainly see an end to inequality, as that wealth is created by all our people and should be shared by them.

But even if this was done, would it pay all the debts and repair the damage done by capitalism in the accumulation of this wealth? The answer is No, because it ignores the slave wages paid in the global south in the production of most of the products bought and sold here. It could not repair the damage being done to the environment, which capitalism plunders and on which it wreaks havoc in its pursuit of profit.

If there was a fair way of introducing UBI it would be by equal distribution of all the global wealth among the whole of humanity—because it's humanity, and the natural resources provided by this planet, that have produced all this wealth. Of course all the environmental damage would have to be repaired as well.

This will only be done when the means of production are publicly owned and under democratic control so that they are used for the benefit of all humanity; otherwise it would be temporary, as private ownership will only compromise in its pursuit of increasing profits temporarily, and when forced to.

We must always remember that the ruling class always rule in their own interests. When suggestions are made by them as an answer or a cure for poverty, inequality, homelessness, or any of the social catastrophes that the world faces, it will always serve their interests first.

It's called capitalism.★

Monopoly capitalism protects cheating corporations

Nicola Lawlor

THE CENTRALISATION and concentration of both capital and power means that corporations can withstand scandals and continue to retain the support of both the state and shareholders. It takes something really massive and rare for an Arthur Andersen, Enron or Lehman Brothers to happen. Here are a few recent scandals that are unlikely to break the corporations.

Share prices drop, certainly, but they tend to recover over time, with little long-term impact on profits. Credit Suisse looked at this in detail and found that for 5,400 instances of a drop of more than 10 per cent in share price, two-thirds of that value was regained over the next ninety days.

The most recent scandal is, of course, that of Facebook and Cambridge Analytica. According to a whistleblower, Cambridge Analytica used illegally obtained data from the Facebook accounts of about 50 million users to influence the Brexit referendum result. They have also been implicated in illegal connections between Donald Trump's election campaign and his super-PACs, "political action committees" that raise funds for campaigning and propaganda, with no limit, from individuals and corporations but are not supposed to make contributions directly to candidates or parties.

The fall-out for Facebook is unfolding, but such is its dominant position in social media that it is unlikely to sound the death knell of this corporation.

In 2010, and not for the first time, BP was embroiled in an environmental disaster when its rig Deepwater Horizon exploded in the Gulf of Mexico, creating an environmental catastrophe. BP apologised, took an immediate hit in share price, but remains the sixth-largest oil and gas company, and remains part of the seven oil and gas monopolies.

In 2015 the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States found that Volkswagen had been systematically cheating in emissions tests on its diesel cars since 2008. The company has been fined close to $4.3 billion, and six executives are facing charges, while 30,000 workers will pay with their jobs. Volkswagen suffered a fall of 37 per cent in its share price, but it remains the world's largest car manufacturer.

Earlier this year the Federal Reserve System (the US central bank) imposed fines and also a cap on growth against Wells Fargo for its systematic abuse of customers and mis-selling. With about $2 trillion in assets, Wells Fargo is the pride of the American banking industry. Yet while winning many awards for its innovative risk management it was systematically abusing customers, staff, and the rules, cheating to maximise profits.

These recent examples of corporate scandals—only the tip of the iceberg—are evidence that monopoly positions within capitalism mean that corporations can cheat and lie and still retain their position of power globally. ★

Profits before people, and the environment

THE PRIVATISATION of refuse collection is a complete failure. The CPI has called for all domestic refuse collection, including recyclable materials, to be brought back under public control and the responsibility of local authorities.

It has been reported by Panda, one of the largest waste companies, that they will begin charging for lifting domestic green (recyclable) bins from 19 April. This decision will be quickly followed by the other waste-collection companies, which will in turn lead to additional increases in charges as well as unofficial dumping.

The privatisation of refuse collection has been a complete disaster for the public and has only resulted in poor services for people, rising costs, and a deterioration in the working conditions of those employed by private refuse companies. There is a complete lack of transparency from these companies regarding their charges. And no effort has been made to control corporate waste, or excessive and wasteful packaging.

Charges have grown to become a very significant burden on working families around the country. The regulator, the Government and the state have all failed to protect the people's interests or the environment.

Their demand for greater profits is the primary motivation of these waste companies, not the common good, or the environment. ★

Housing is a right for all

UNIVERSAL PUBLIC housing available to all is the only lasting solution to the housing crisis.

The latest homelessness figures would be shocking and sickening for a civilised society. However, in modern Ireland they are just the latest in a long line of failures by this Government and its neo-liberal housing model.

The CPI is calling for a policy of universal public housing for all, a constitutional right to housing, and the declaration of a housing emergency.

Only by giving every citizen the right to a home, rented from the state for a percentage of their income, can we fight back against the intensifying forces of neo-liberal capitalism that have seen the number of homeless families surge to 1,739 this February, an increase of 222. There are now 3,755 children without a home, an increase of 40 per cent over the previous year. And this is after the Government declared solving the housing crisis as a priority and after the responsible minister, Simon Coveney, said that no families would be living in hotels by July 2017.

Some groups are saying that the housing system is broken; but in fact it is operating exactly as Fine Gael and their allies in the landlord and developer class intend. Within the next three years the state will subsidise landlords by a whopping €3 billion, through rent allowance, housing assistance payment, the rental accommodation scheme, and leasing.

When you consider that a house can be built for €150,000 by a local authority on public land and leased to a tenant for an affordable rate, you can see that this manufactured crisis is merely a transfer of public money to the hands of landlords and developers.

With the average increase in rents from 2011 to 2017 hitting 45 per cent and the average increase in wages a mere 5 per cent, working people are being squeezed for the well-being of the landlord class, and to reduce the cost to the exchequer of the bank bail-out through an increase in asset prices.

Imagine if the Luas drivers had asked for a 45 per cent increase in wages over six years! But where is the consternation from those sectors who attacked the working class over their strike action at the gangsterism of the landlord class? ★

Essential drugs for all

Paul Doran

WE ARE awash with pharmaceutical companies in Ireland. Some of the high-end jobs are well paid, and that should be welcomed.

But the global pharmaceutical industry provides one of the strongest illustrations of how the profit motive can misdirect humanity's creativity and badly miscalculate resources, something we are all familiar with in this failed state.

The costs of developing new drugs goes into the millions of dollars, and humans are needed in the trial period to ensure that safety is paramount (they say). When the drugs hit the market the pharma industry charges astronomical prices for their product and for the ever-present strict patent laws. These laws are very useful, as they limit the use of much-needed drugs in preventing death and easing human misery.

It is a bit like buying something expensive but not using it, as it cost you so much.

Globally, the most dangerous and deadly diseases most affect the poor, who cannot afford private medicine, so the global industry does not invest in new treatments; instead it allocates most research and development to less pressing but more profitable areas of medicine, such as coronary, cholesterol and arthritis medicines, for the obvious reason, i.e. for never-ending profits.

Drug-resistant bacteria pose an enormous public health threat to millions of people around the world. Why do the pharmaceutical companies not invest in new antibiotics, thereby helping humanity and relieving so much pain and misery? The answer is clearly profit-driven, as to do so would cause huge upheavals in the massive earnings of these companies.

The time has come for governments to take the lead and invest in drug research, allocating most attention to the most dangerous diseases, and then make these drugs available free to those who need them.

It is worth bearing in mind that pharmaceutical companies are of no use if they cannot get good graduates, decent roads, and access to fresh water—all of which are provided by the state. ★

CLASS AND LIBERATION

Laura Duggan

INTERNATIONAL Working Women's Day was celebrated on 8 March by the CPI and the CYM under the heading 'A Different Perspective'.

The night of celebration at the Dublin Liquor Rooms was kicked off by a brief introduction to the history of International Working Women's Day as well as our own wish to mark the courage of women who in the past struggled fearlessly against difficult conditions in domestic and industrial labour and who in the present continue to struggle in an era of increasing hatred, division, and exploitation.

As a small act of solidarity, we requested a donation of pads or tampons on entry for Homeless Period, which distributes them to women in need.

The first speaker of the night was Muireann Dalton, a Dunne's Stores worker and trade union activist with Mandate. She listed the accomplishments of the Decency for Dunne's campaign

Capitalism knows a good

WOMEN'S PAY

Laura Duggan

WHEN PEOPLE talk about the pay gap they often cite the generally accepted figures of 10–14 per cent difference in pay between men and women, this gap being more noticeable in the higher echelons of business.

Critics admit that the pay gap is real but explain away pay differences by stating that women earn less on average because they work fewer hours, and female-heavy sectors are paid less than male-dominated ones, so a pay gap should be expected and accepted as part of the way of things. This is often accompanied by a push to get more women into the higher-paying science, technology, engineering and mathematical fields.

But while it is true that women do on average work fewer hours, neither side is asking why this is the case, and why female-dominated industries are paid less. Do women just primarily engage in unimportant work?

To throw a spanner in the works, female plant and machine operators generally work more hours, on average, than their male counterparts (161 hours per month, as opposed to 160). When that's taken into account, the gender gap in that sector actually grows: from 8.6 per cent for monthly wages to 9.2 per cent for hourly wages, which shows there is something at play other than women's choices or work habits.

The pay gap is not directly caused by employers paying women less because they are women: to be that overt in discrimination is illegal. It is completely legal, however, to pay two workers in the same field different wages for other reasons. As long as it isn't a written company policy it is not illegal to set the initial wage offer much lower for women, Travellers, or non-white applicants.

Employers can make the argument that Susan simply did not negotiate as well as Mark and therefore ended up with a lower rate of pay, without ever revealing that Susan was offered €5,000 less in the first place.

Many work-places frown on sharing information about pay rates, so Susan may never find out that she is being paid less, or that her work-place has a pattern of female staff being paid less.

Blaming women for a lack of negotiation skill assumes that the problem of the pay gap is an individual one, which women can solve on a one-on-one basis, rather than recognising that it is endemic and affects almost every industry. Like pushing for more women in IT, it doesn't get to the root of the question why women earn less.

Even the most skilled wage negotiator cannot go into the female-dominated field of child care and expect to get much more than €10.50 an hour—a far cry from both the sectoral average of €9.81 and the aspirational living wage of €11.70. More than half the women in the work-place are earning €20,000 per annum or less, and most of these work in the services and caring industries. Child care, home help and special-needs assistants are often very expensive services to obtain privately, and difficult to qualify for publicly, but women in these jobs are universally paid very low wages.

Caring is an industry that most other workers rely on so that they can go to work themselves, and its importance cannot be stressed enough. So how is this consistently low pay justified?

This is where the diminishing of socially reproductive work rears its head. Socially reproductive work is maintenance of the home and family that is unpaid, often unthanked, and predominantly falls on the shoulders of women. It is this work that is essential in keeping the nuclear family producing future workers and maintaining current "human resources"—and it is all at no cost to the companies that profit from their use. Capitalism knows a good thing when it sees it.

International Working Women's Day

and the importance of union membership in winning gains for working women.

Rosa Jones followed and read a wonderful selection of her poetry, combining the personal and political. Laylah Beattie, a Trans rights activist, was up next, speaking about her own experience with an eating disorder and the role society's concept of femininity played in it.

Our second poet of the night, Sophie Meehan, took to the stage and shared her own collection of work as well as touching on the shared fear of never being good enough that keeps women silent—"But not tonight, and never again!" being the response.

Our last (and by no means least) speaker was Linda Kavanagh from the Abortion Rights Campaign. Linda highlighted that while abortion access is something we fight for for all women, it is working-class and migrant women who are hit hardest by its inaccessibility.

There was a short break, with a raffle for books and booze (kindly donated by Connolly Books) over excited, animated discussions on all aspects of feminism, class struggle, and the night so far.

The comedian Josephine McCaffrey, with her superb delivery and ribald humour, was able to pull the room back together and had everyone in stitches with her version of "My Favourite Things." October Fires closed the night with a set of original songs, never played before.

People were lined up in the hallway and seated on the floor for the duration of the event, which showed that there was a real appetite for the politics of the women's movement to come back to the forefront. The aim of the event was to showcase the endurance of contemporary socialist-feminist activism, in spite of the depoliticisation of the women's movement. The continued relevance of International Working Women's Day, given the reception, suggests that we aren't the only ones who think so. ★

thing when it sees it

The vast majority (98 per cent) of those who were looking after homes and families in 2016 were women. Even when both partners are working full-time outside the home, the responsibility for the home and children still falls on women. It is this presumed assumption of the"sacrificial Wife and Mother" roles that women are punished for in the work-place: they are the ones who are assumed to take time off for sick children or dental appointments or who need to leave early to cook the family dinner. As a direct result they are offered lower rates of pay before negotiating begins, and are less likely to be promoted once they have secured work. It is a bizarre circular logic, used to back up and reinforce outmoded gender roles and hierarchies.

It is the exact same line used to dismiss women's paid jobs in the essential caring sector: home help, child-minder, cleaner, etc. Women do these jobs free out of love and duty in the home, and are manipulated into providing the same services for a low wage outside the home. These jobs are deemed less demanding, not requiring the same level of skill or training as "male jobs," by virtue of the fact that women do them.

Why would men go into an underpaid, undervalued field, or stay at home or take time off for a sick child, when it makes no economic sense? Until socially reproductive work is properly appreciated and paid, the possibility of men and women sharing the role equally does not exist. Until pushing men into child care makes as much sense as pushing women into the higher-value science, technology, engineering and mathematical fields, we have a problem with how we value social and caring work.

Now that the vast majority of families are required to be dual-income homes to afford increased living costs, the playing down of women's work inside the home and out is increasingly destructive and keeps women and their families chasing ever-diminishing returns.

Lone mothers are doubly penalised for this. Already earning less by virtue of being women, they must also reduce their working hours to care for their child. This is the silent pay gap, and it is where we can see the culmination of the dismissal of women's labour and the capitalist promotion of the nuclear family: working to pay the child care to go to work to pay the child care.

The independence that women are promised by capitalism in the work-place is a cruel lie and at best has increased their work load for a small fraction of the pay of their male counterparts while ignoring and playing down their contribution to society in the home. The subjugation of women is an integral part of capitalism, and women can never be free under it.

The solution is not to get more women into higher-paying fields. A woman earning €50,000+ per annum and employing a cleaner and child-minder on the minimum wage is part of the problem, not an answer. We as a society must appreciate the necessary work of caring and provide solutions to the individualisation of caring responsibilities in the home. This cannot be done under a capitalist system but requires a huge economic, political and social shift.

We need a society that acknowledges that it takes a village to raise a child, and this is something that should be celebrated. We need state-run child care and care homes, with employees who are paid fairly. We need properly funded state-run hospitals with a staff that are not working 48-hour shifts; mandatory paternity leave and parental leave to be shared between parents; and state education to third level that is accessible to all and doesn't pigeonhole students according to gender, race, or class. We need public housing, and strong trade unions with good legislation behind them.

For the slave of a slave to be free, we need to break the shackles that hold us all. ★

Creating a Cold War bogeyman in the East

Tommy McKearney

FOUR DAYS before the British general election of October 1924 the *Daily Mail* published a letter purporting to have been written by the chairman of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, Grigory Zinoviev. The paper claimed that the correspondence revealed a Bolshevik plot to plunge Britain into civil war, and that the Communist Party of Great Britain was manipulating the Labour government led by Ramsay MacDonald.

It was a forgery created by Conservative Party supporters in British intelligence; but their ploy worked. The political middle ground collapsed, the Tories won the election, and so ended any prospect of détente with the Soviet Union.

Not, of course, that this was the only act of political sabotage ever conducted by British spooks. From Pigott's forged Parnell letter to Tony Blair's infamous dossier alleging Iraqi "weapons of mass destruction," England's secret services have never allowed the truth to get in the way of a reactionary political agenda.

With this in mind we can consider more recent circumstances and events. The leader of the British Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, has defied right-wing expectations that he would self-destruct and has instead reinvigorated left-wing social democracy by challenging Blairite and Tory-manufactured austerity.

Though far from revolutionary, his proposals if implemented would challenge neo-liberalism, and not only in Britain. Moreover, if Corbyn's party were to record a reasonable measure of success at the coming local government elections on 3 May his progress towards occupying No. 10 Downing Street might be unstoppable.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the right is doing all it can to prevent a Corbyn government, and will not feel restricted by legal niceties.

Earlier this year the tabloid *Sun* published an article insinuating that Corbyn had a questionable connection with a Cold War Czechoslovak spy. The claim was soon rubbished, but it was planted in the stratosphere all the same. Now we have the slanderous accusations of anti-semitism against him, something that is strongly contradicted by the man himself and the organisation Jewish Voice for Labour.[1] Nevertheless, this baseless accusation is gleefully repeated by embittered Blairites and given headline treatment by the BBC and other media.[2]

Surpassing even these tall tales is the sensational story of an attack on MI6's Russian agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter. While it is impossible from our standpoint to know exactly what happened in Salisbury, there is still no convincing proof that the poisoning was either carried out or sanctioned by the Russian state.

Even a former British ambassador to Uzbekistan, Craig Murray, is cautious about placing blame on Moscow. In a balanced observation he said, "There is no evidence it was Russia. I am not ruling out that it could be Russia . . . but I want to see where the evidence lies."

We have to ask, therefore, why Varadkar so enthusiastically supported the call by Theresa May to blame and sanction Russia. Keep in mind that Varadkar is a qualified doctor, trained to make assessments based on evidence rather than "highly likely" assertions from dubious sources. It would be easy to suggest a servile adherence to West-Britonism from the leader of a party that has long suffered from that affliction; the reason, however, is likely to be more complex, though just as unacceptable. Fine Gael is fulfilling its basic function as the parliamentary protector of capital and the ruling class.

Two recent publications offer an insight. Last month the *Financial Times* conducted an analysis that revealed that, globally, large transnational corporations are now paying significantly lower taxes than before the 2008 financial crisis.[3] This is a result of a decade when governments within the OECD adjusted corporate taxes to favour business, and have done so by cutting the social wage for working people—a practice better known here as "austerity."

A few days before this article appeared, Fine Gael members of the EU Parliament published a report, called "Ireland and the EU: Defending our common European home," calling for a review of this country's position on neutrality.[4] The document argued for (among other things) greater flexibility in how the Irish military might be deployed abroad, increasing spending on the Defence Forces to a damaging 2 per cent of GDP, and developing an Irish arms industry.

To get the full significance of this ominous report it is necessary to read the entire document, with its chilling references to central intelligence units and a national security council.

At first glance the issues of low corporate taxation and ending Ireland's neutrality may not appear linked. Nevertheless there is a strong connection, in that the latter is used to distract attention from the former. The *Financial Times* report only confirms what is well known to people in Ireland: income inequality is growing, in spite of a so-called recovery and increasing levels of employment.

The Republic has one of the world's highest relative numbers of billionaires, coupled with very profitable transnational corporations. But what do we see? Hospital waiting-lists at crisis levels, homelessness and widespread housing shortages, overcrowded classrooms, and downgraded public services.

Working people are understandably becoming increasingly disenchanted with this situation. They see an Irish government endeavouring not to collect $13 billion from Apple Inc. while indigenous and transnational companies are profiting greatly from a generous corporate tax regime.

And if this isn't enough, we now have the banks that caused the economic crash of 2010 selling domestic mortgages to vulture funds that are preparing to evict working families from their homes.

In the face of growing discontent from within working-class communities throughout Ireland and the European Union (and the United States) we are now seeing the emergence of what can only be described as the politics of distraction. The plan is as simple as it is old-fashioned. Create a bogeyman in the East, generate hysteria against left social democrats and socialists, and sew all together behind a blind advocacy of militarism. Defence of our "common European home" might just as well read "the defence of small nations," as all the powers of neo-liberal Europe have entered into an unholy alliance to protect their privilege.

So what should we do? Firstly, let's recognise that this onslaught by the ruling elite is the result of fundamental flaws in their socio-economic system: briefly, an actual or impending crisis in capitalism coupled with concern by the powerful that they are vulnerable to working-class fight-back.

Then we should do all we can to defend what remains of Ireland's neutrality. This is a crucial struggle, to prevent Fine Gael and fellow-travellers in Fianna Fáil chaining us to NATO's warmongers.

Thereafter we must continue to build a movement among working people that is capable of resisting the savagery that is capitalism and moving forward towards constructing socialism. ★

1 "Statement from Jews in the Labour Party," at www.jewishvoiceforlabour.org.uk/jvl/a-jvl-statement-on-the-current-attacks-on-jeremy-corbyn/
2 See Joseph de Burca, "The dark side of the media: Secret service penetration of British media (and attempts to infiltrate one Irish medium)," *Village*, 26 March 2018.
3 "Multinationals pay lower taxes than a decade ago," *Financial Times*, 11 March 2018.
4 "Ireland and the EU: Defending our common European home," at https://brianhayes.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Defense-Document.pdf

Positive and active neutrality versus NATO and the EU

Statement by the Communist Party of Ireland 29 March 2018

THE DECISION by the Government to expel a Russian diplomat as part of a co-ordinated response by EU and NATO member-countries is but another example of how far the Irish establishment has aligned this state with their military strategies.

The expulsion of the diplomat is justified by the unproven involvement in some type of chemical attack on a former Russian double agent and his daughter in England in early March, which the British have blamed on Moscow. The Russians have continually asked for a sample of the chemical toxins used for their own tests, which has been denied.

The British said that it would take the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons two weeks to confirm that the chemical agents are the same as what the British say they are; but the British could prove within twenty-four hours what type of chemical was used, and who made it, and who was responsible. The British claim is an extremely dubious assumption on which to base their actions, in the light of previous experience of British intelligence claims that were taken as fact, such as the "weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq and the claim that the Gibraltar victims were about to detonate explosives. These are but two examples of a very long list of false intelligence.

The outrage from the British government, leading EU member-states, the United States and Canada is overflowing with hypocrisy, straight out of the Cold War propaganda handbook. While Putin is not someone we would encourage working people in Ireland to look to as some form of role model, nevertheless it is clear that we are edging towards a possible confrontation with Russia, which could only have very serious global consequences, including the possible use of nuclear weapons.

The actions of the Irish government can only be seen as a further indication of how far the state's foreign, diplomatic, political and military policy has been aligned with the political and military strategy of the EU and NATO.

Neither the Soviet Union nor Russia under Putin have ever shown any hostile intent to the Irish people—on the contrary, the young Soviet Russia was one of the first states to recognise the Irish Republic and to support the struggle of the Irish people for freedom and independence.

Irish workers need only recall the many crimes and other illegal actions carried out by the British state and its agents against the Irish people over the last few decades, never mind the centuries of colonial domination. It is now known that the British state and its agents carried out the Dublin and Monaghan bombings in 1974 that resulted in the death of thirty-four people. The British still refuse to hand over evidence or to help the investigation of those horrific crimes.

The British state and its agents, in the form of the RUC, UDR, British army, and MI5, directed and used loyalist paramilitaries, as well as agents within the republican movement, to engage in acts of terrorism, and carried out hundreds of state-directed killings of civilians, legal professionals, and political opponents.

Just before the Government announced that it would be joining in this co-ordinated political assault on Russia the European Court of Human Rights rejected the challenge by the remaining fourteen torture victims known as the "hooded men" to designate what happened to them in 1971 as torture. It ruled in 1978 that these men had been subjected only to "inhumane and degrading treatment." The techniques used by the British state against these innocent men included hooding, being thrown out of a moving helicopter while hooded, stress positions, white noise, deprivation of sleep, and deprivation of food and water, combined with extreme physical assaults and death threats.

This Government has failed to stem the flow of American military flights through the Shannon war port. In 2017 alone, of the 451 military aircraft landings at Shannon, 402 were US military aircraft. Those flights were in addition to 334 military-contracted flights carrying the personal weapons of American soldiers who landed at Shannon last year. And this is apart from the "extraordinary rendition" flights through the airport, carrying prisoners brutally tortured under the direction of the CIA.

We know for certain that the US state and military used chemical weapons in Viet Nam, resulting in the deaths of thousands of Vietnamese people, chemical warfare that continues to have a major impact on the Vietnamese people, with children still being born with multiple abnormalities.

This expulsion is unprecedented and, if nothing else, is an infringement of our neutrality, as it is an action by Britain's NATO allies. The Irish state and the political establishment are using this crisis to advance their strategy of aligning this state with NATO and the military strategy of the EU. This action by the Government is nothing more than the action of a servile and dependent Irish establishment.

Clearly what is needed is to end this servile and collaborationist approach of the Irish establishment to both the EU and NATO.

Shannon Airport should be closed to the US war machine. All co-ordination and involvement in EU military strategies, including the battle groups and PESCO, should be ended. Irish soldiers should be withdrawn from NATO Headquarters in the Hague and from NATO military engagements around the world. And Irish military neutrality should be enshrined in the Constitution. ★

Creating revolutionary mass media in a social-media world

"The purpose of our meeting today is precisely to ensure that literature and art fit well into the whole revolutionary machine as a component part, that they operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy, and that they help the people fight the enemy with one heart and one mind."
—Mao Zedong.

Daithi Ó hAirtrí

THE POINT of this article is to start a discussion, to act as a jumping-off point, rather than to provide any definitive answers. What would "left-wing" mass media look like?

Many ideas have been proposed in Ireland in recent years. In his "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art" (*Selected Works of Mao Zedong)* in May 1942, Mao posed two main questions in attempting to answer this: Who are artists and writers dealing with? and How do writers and artists serve them?

In answering the first question, Mao looked at three groups: "the enemy, our allies in the united front, and our own people; the last are the masses and their vanguard." Mao argued that a different approach was needed for each group: the enemy needed to have their duplicity and cruelty and the "inevitability

What is the 'transformative strategy' the CPI talks about?

Nicola Lawlor

A FRIEND asked me recently what this transformative strategy is that the CPI talks about. So I tried to answer.

It is a strategy for advancing the struggle for socialism to replace capitalism. It is not a programme for alleviating the worst aspects of capitalism. It is not a ten-point reform plan. It has to be an evolving thought process and a way of looking at the crisis and formulating demands and struggles.

Firstly, it recognises that capitalism has unsolvable contradictions built in to the system, such as, for example, vast amounts of wealth and vast poverty, or a glut of housing followed by mass homelessness.

These are contradictions that arise from the built-in reproductive cycle of capitalism. They are not an accident, a mistake, the product of corruption, or bad policy. Capitalism reproduces itself through the creation of profit, which by definition requires workers to be paid less than the amount they really make, creating massive inequality. And capitalism's driving force is to produce maximum profit, so that if there is a commodity or asset that looks promising, it will be flooded with capital—like housing—creating a bubble, which ultimately bursts.

Secondly, workers are the agents of social change, because of the strategic position they occupy within capitalism. Great change does and will come about through working-class struggle. This is sometimes for a direct and immediate goal of self-interest and at other times for broader, long-term, more political goals.

of their defeat" pointed out; allies need both support and criticism; while all work should provide education and boost morale in the workers' class.

Lenin puts this idea succinctly in *Party Organisation and Party Literature* when he says that art should "serve . . . the millions and tens of millions of working people."

The second question, How do we serve our class? is the thornier issue and the one that requires some debate. Mao hits the heart of this debate when he asks, "Should we devote ourselves to raising standards, or should we devote ourselves to popularisation?"

He provides quite a dialectical answer to this question: the answer, of course, is both. We must provide direction to our class, but we must also learn from our class. To paraphrase Lenin in *What Is to Be Done?* we must go to where our class is.

This provides a good template with which to analyse the modern media. With issues regarding Facebook's increasing censorship of left-wing pages and platforms, it can be tempting to abandon social media or to grow defeatist. But this impulse must be resisted: the social media are where our class are, and, to quote Lenin again, we must "go among all classes of the population," as theoreticians, as propagandists, as agitators, and as organisers.

There is a constant tendency to defeatism on some aspects of the left. With the rise of the "alt-right" on line and the success of vulgar reactionaries, there are often calls such as "Why are there no left mass media in the on-line world?" But to ask such a question is to ignore the material realities that privilege such messages over ones that would necessarily bring our class into conflict with those who control the information sources.

We need to do more than just ape the style and vernacular of the right. Such a thing would not provide the revolutionary sustenance necessary for our class. We must instead create a new, revolutionary aesthetic by which to share our educational message—in a way that is accessible to our class.

The reason the "form" common to right-wing media works for a right-wing message is that those two things are sympathetic. We must create our own. If we ignore the forces of the ideological state apparatus or hegemony we fall into the trap that the right is setting for us: failing to provide the necessary analysis to our class. Remember that every media organisation, old or new, has a class character.

But this is no modern phenomenon. Mao wrote of the revanchist media in 1942: "Reactionaries have money, and though they can produce nothing good, they can go all out and produce in quantity." With the advent of the internet, I don't believe there has ever been a period in history when it was easier to gain access to Marxist analysis, nor has there ever been such a volume of it.

What may be missing, though, is a form of media that does what Mao said was necessary: simultaneously uplifts and popularises. Many of the left media on line do one or the other. We see great works of analysis that wither and die on obscure blogs, and similarly we see podcasts that earn millions of dollars a year but parrot the most superficial "horse-race" analysis of political talking heads.

We need to provide more than "This is good because it is socialist" or "This is bad because it is neo-liberal." We need to provide an education in the Marxist-Leninist mode of thinking, so that the workers' class can decide for themselves if something is good, or indeed if it is "socialist."

The second issue is that the message of Marxism-Leninism is, by its nature, less passive than the right wing. We cannot tell people to concentrate on self-improvement, to read more books and the world will be a better place by magic. To become active in the party, in the trade unions, to educate yourself on economics and social theory—those are the demands of Marxism-Leninism, and this will always be a harder sell than "twelve happy thoughts to get you through the day."

But these things are surmountable, as they have been in the past. What it requires is a level of ingenuity and communication that will bring the works of Marx, Lenin and Connolly alive in a 21st-century context. But that means using every tool at our disposal, and social media are a very large part of it.

Lenin, again in "Party Organisation and Party Literature," described the ideal characteristics of literature as "a free literature, because the idea of socialism and sympathy with the working people, and not greed or careerism, will bring ever new forces to its ranks. It will be a free literature, because it will serve not some satiated heroine, not the bored 'upper ten thousand' suffering from fatty degeneration, but the millions and tens of millions of working people—the flower of the country, its strength and its future.

"It will be a free literature, enriching the last word in the revolutionary thought of mankind with the experience and living work of the socialist proletariat, bringing about permanent interaction between the experience of the past (scientific socialism, the completion of the development of socialism from its primitive, utopian forms) and the experience of the present (the present struggle of the worker comrades)."

That should be the aspiration.★

Workers constitute the class that is both exploited directly by capital and also is strategically positioned within capitalism to disrupt its reproduction. Capital is dependent on workers.

Of course within the working class there are differences, like gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc., and all of these come with their own specific points of discrimination, depending on the legal and political structure capitalism has taken in a particular country. But it is exploitation, rather than discrimination, that is the crucial point of conflict and the defining antagonism within capitalism. It is this conflict that must be understood and harnessed for socialism to win over capitalism.

This strategy has to be related to the specific and current nature of capitalism in the region where it is applied. Here in Ireland our capitalism is of a neo-colonial nature, not that of a mature developed capitalist state. We exist between the domination of the European Union, the United States, and Britain. Our local ruling class are too weak to rule alone and so are intrinsically tied and allied to foreign interests.

Just look at how the Irish state reacted to the Apple ruling, or the alleged Russian spy affair. These examples demonstrate our lack of a national independent interest but also the complex contradictions between our position within the EU and our domination by both the United States and Britain.

Fundamental to this strategy is identifying the weak points of capitalism here and putting forward demands that bring about long-term change through the mobilising of working people and in so doing affecting the balance of power between labour and capital in a direction favourable to labour. So these are not quick fixes or superficial wins.

Examples of how this strategy plays out in a crisis situation are the mobilisation on water charges, where we have argued for a constitutional referendum to secure the future of publicly financed, publicly owned and publicly provided water, and the housing crisis, where we are arguing for the state to build public housing, to be universally available to all, not just "social housing" for the poor.

These examples may well bring the state into conflict with the EU. The EU has built a neo-liberal constitutional framework around the functioning of capitalism within its member-states. Our strategy will bring the state and working people into conflict with that framework. But that's fine. Building socialism, by definition, will bring us into conflict with the EU. It's unavoidable. So rather than hiding or ignoring it we say, Let's expose the nature of the EU and allow working people to see it for what it is.

We don't have everything worked out. We don't have every policy position put through this transformative strategy. But we are studying and developing this approach to strengthen the struggle for socialism in Ireland. The "left," so caught up in short-term electoralism, appears to have forgotten the long-term struggle for socialism and the strategies required to win.

We need to stop running round like headless chickens from one crisis to the next and start focusing on a real, tangible transformative strategy for socialism. ★

CULTURE AND POLITICS

THE JAMES CONNOLLY Festival (from Wednesday 9 May to Sunday 13 May 2018), now in its fourth year, is an annual community-centred celebration of music, films, theatre, and debate, with a radical twist.

Since its foundation in 2014 the festival has aimed to bring together friends and supporters, critics and all-comers in a conversation through words, music and performance about where our society is, and where it wants to go. Last year we marked the centenary of the October Revolution. This year we remember 150 years since the birth, in the Little Ireland district of Cowgate in Edinburgh, of James Connolly, trade unionist, socialist, and Irish republican.

Connolly was one of the founders of the Irish socialist movement, and one of our main goals is to highlight the importance of trade unions for workers, especially among the young. More broadly, the festival is also committed to promoting art, feminism, culture, and politics, embracing progressive Irish theatre and artists in a comfortable space for debate that promotes the exchange of ideas.

An extension of the James Connolly Weekend held in previous years, the festival has hosted the IFTA-award-winning actor-writer John Connors and the comedian, writer and star of the RTE series “Nowhere Fast,” Alison Spittle and Fiach.

For the debate strand, participants have included Clare Daly TD, Mick Wallace TD, and the trade unionist Brendan Ogle, among many others.

Acclaimed national and international figures, including the Catalan nun and activist Sister Teresa Forcades and the academics James Petras and Greg Godels, have all delivered the James Connolly Memorial Lecture.

Every year the lecture is followed by a wreath-laying ceremony at Arbour Hill on the Sunday, to mark the anniversary of Connolly’s execution and to pay tribute to him and to the other leaders of the 1916 rising.

James Connolly Festival, 2018
Wednesday 9 May to Sunday 13 May 2018
New Theatre, 43 East Essex Street, Dublin
(01) 6703361
info@jamesconnollyfestival.com
info@thenewtheatre.com
Booking on line at events.tickets.ie

Karl Marx Centenary

Belfast, Saturday 28 April, 1 p.m.
May Day solidarity meeting, marking the bicentenary of the birth of Karl Marx.
Guest speakers: Liz Payne
(national chairperson, Communist Party of Britain),
Navid Shomali (international secretary, Tudeh Party of Iran).
Venue: Ramada Encore Hotel (Talbot Street),

Dublin, Saturday 12 May, 2:30 p.m.
James Connolly Memorial Lecture, 2018
"The continued relevance of Karl Marx"
Speaker: Dr Stiofán Ó Nualláin
(trade union activist and tutor with Trade Mark, Belfast).
Venue: New Theatre (43 East Essex Street).

James Connolly Commemoration

Dublin, Sunday 13 May, 3 p.m.
Oration by Gearóid Ó Machail
member of the Peadar O'Donnell Socialist Republican Forum Armagh
Alex Homits
general secretary, Connolly Youth Movement
Venue: Arbour Hill Cemetery.

Dublin, Sunday 13 May, 12:00 (noon)
Commemoration of James Connolly on the 150th anniversary of his birth
Eugene McCartan
general secretary, Communist Party of Ireland
Jim Slaven (director, Connolly 150 Committee, Edinburgh)
Venue: Kilmainham Gaol (Inchicore Road)

Dublin, Sunday 13 May, from 4:30 p.m.
Social to mark the closing of the James Connolly Festival, 2018
Cobblestone (Smithfield)

CONNOLLY BOOKS

Dublin's oldest radical bookshop is named after James Connolly, Ireland's socialist pioneer and martyr

The place for ★ Irish history ★ politics ★ philosophy ★ feminism ★ Marxist classics ★ trade union affairs ★ environmental issues ★ progressive literature ★ radical periodicals

43 East Essex Street, Dublin,
between Temple Bar and Parliament Street (01) 6708707
www.connollybooks.org

Join the fight for socialism

Send me information on Communist Party membership

name _____

address _____

_____

_____ post code _____

email _____ phone _____

send to CPI 43 East Essex Street Dublin DO2 XH96
or CPI PO Box 85 Belfast BT1 1SR

2018 Election

A continuation of the Cuban revolutionary process

ON 11 MARCH last just short of 4.7 million people—or almost 86 per cent of the registered electorate here—turned out to vote in the second and final stage of Cuba's general election. Seán Joseph Clancy reports

IT IS NOTEWORTHY that, although well organised, supervised, and encouraged, voting is by no means obligatory.

This remarkably high rate of participation in the process was actually lower than what might have been hoped for by some, in an election where participation through presenting yourself at your local polling station is as much of a vote as marking a box to express a preference for any one candidate over another. Indeed the majority of Cubans vote for all the candidates on the ballot paper, as can legitimately be done.

Turn-out is understood to be an expression of confidence in the system of government itself; so even the slight slide in an election that will lead on 19 April to the selection of a Council of State (government) not presided over by a Castro for the first time in more than fifty years did not go unnoticed.

But with almost 95 per cent of the votes cast being valid, even a generous interpretation of the statistics for any opposition (which is by no means homogeneous or of a single or vaguely common vision) would mean that fewer than 8 per cent of those on the register indicated some degree of disaffection with Cuba's constitutional status quo.

THE NEWLY Appointed US national security adviser, John Bolton, is expected to take a hard line against the president of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro, and his government, it has been revealed.

Bolton, a former US ambassador to the United Nations, was described by one senior American official as someone who "always emphasised how Cuba and Venezuela and Nicaragua have undermined US interests throughout the region."

"He's a warmonger, and Latin Americans get nervous when American presidents tend to lean towards military versus diplomatic solutions," an official of the National Security Council under President Obama told the *Miami Herald*. "It's a militaristic style that won't go down well in Latin America."

During a hearing on Syria and Iran in 2013 Bolton claimed that Venezuela was protecting Iranian smugglers. "These are expert smugglers . . . The largest Iranian diplomatic facility in the world is in Caracas . . . They are laundering their money through the Venezuelan banks."

Bolton has also urged that stronger sanctions be imposed on Cuba. During his term as under-secretary of state he

‘Turn-out is understood to be an expression of confidence in the system of government itself’

What government would not have the right to celebrate this after almost sixty years in office? And what disheartened imperial enemy would not wearily wonder if it will ever succeed in making any inroads in its evil endeavours to subvert the will of such a stubborn bunch of radicals as their Cuban neighbours are?

They must painfully recall at moments like this that, of the more than 650 attempts documented, their only plan to assassinate Fidel that finally succeeded was the one to wait until he died naturally and peacefully at home, at the ripe old age of ninety.

More than half of Cuba’s new parliament members will be women, more than 40 per cent will be of African or mixed-race origin, and a similar percentage will be under fifty years of age, many of whom will be sitting for a first or second term.

So there will be a very real changing of the guard here in the very near future.

Raúl Castro will be first secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba for another two years; but there is no reason to think he will use his position for anything other than offering valuable and needed support and experience to the nation’s new leadership.

It is well known that Cuba’s next president will be Miguel Díaz-Canel, at present the country’s first (i.e. principal) vice-president. He fits the exact profile of what is to be expected in a political culture where personality is a far less important factor than a perceived ability to implement and develop policy and steer a steady course.

He has a sound establishment pedigree and is known as a pragmatic progressive, with certain generally welcomed “conservative” tendencies, with the possible addition of “almost nondescript” (no better term than “safe pair of hands”) to describe him in what will be a very real political and psychological period of transition and adjustment.

When Hugo Chávez realised he had no chance of beating the aggressive cancer he had been fatally poisoned with, he drafted his Plan Patria, a blueprint for the political advancement of his Bolivarian Revolutionary project, and gave Nicolás Maduro a selective and none-too-subtle tap on the shoulder to indicate his desire that Chavistas vote him in as president to implement the policy in his absence.

The political drama is not so intense here, but the plot is not that much different.

Díaz-Canel will oversee the continuation of the Martí-inspired, Fidel-led and Raúl-maintained revolutionary socialist project that almost 86 per cent of the electorate again voted overwhelmingly for on 11 March.

I’m very much a political punter in the cheap seats who limits his bets to a safe flutter on the Tote, but my two shillings are on Díaz-Canel holding the fort for one or two five-year terms, until Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, the most senior intelligence officer of the Cuban Five and the stuff of great leadership, is ready to take his rightful place as Fidel and Raúl’s legitimate heir, as spiritual Commander and President of all Cubans (and of an Irishman in self-imposed exile here). ★

named Cuba on his “axis of evil” list, claiming that the Cuban government was attempting to develop biological weapons. During a speech to members of the conservative Heritage Foundation he said: “The United States believes that Cuba has at least a limited offensive biological warfare research and development effort.”

Days before it was announced that Bolton would replace Herbert McMaster as President Trump’s national security adviser, the Venezuelan minister of defence, Vladimir Padrino López, warned the US secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, to avoid repeating his predecessor’s mistakes by instigating a coup in Venezuela.

“If Mike Pompeo comes with the same policy that Tillerson [a previous secretary of state] initiated, with the same line of attack—of aggression—against sovereignty, against a population and its armed forces, he will again be faced with a wall,” Padrino said. “There cannot be a military coup here: we are in the middle of the 21st century. I need to say this to whoever talks about a military coup, that we are in 2018 . . . A military coup? This is part of the past.”

A continuation of subversion

In late March 2018 the president of the United States, Donald Trump, authorised a $20 million fund to support subversive actions against Cuba.

The move, which is part of the permanent anti-Cuba policy, came after Trump himself had proposed eliminating such funds in May 2017. The money is specifically for subverting internal order in Cuba.

Despite large cuts made by the president in funds destined for the State Department and foreign assistance for this year, the government did not hesitate in allocating this large sum—as had previous US governments—to pay for subversive activities in Cuba, under the so-called “promotion of democracy” projects.

Since 1996, when the “Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act,” commonly called the Helms-Burton Act, was adopted, the United States has used public funds for anti-Cuba schemes. Between 2009 and 2016 the Obama government proposed at least $20 million annually for these aims.

These funds come on top of those provided for maintaining subversive radio and television transmissions into Cuba, as well as the money made available for penetration and intelligence actions. ★

King Lear today

Just before thousands of students agonise once again over the question of Lear's madness and other issues, **Jenny Farrell** presents a Marxist view, based on understanding Shakespeare's times.

SHAKESPEARE LIVED in early capitalist society, marked by an uninhibited pursuit of power on the one hand and a new, humanist image of humankind on the other.

The disappearance of old hierarchies not only made possible utopian thinking about a new and equal society, it simultaneously unleashed the potential for unrestrained, extreme self-interest.

Humanism and Machiavellianism are the inherent potentials in Renaissance society. Shakespeare warns against the Machiavellian, inhuman potential in all his tragedies and pitches it against the alternative: humanism. It is this warning that makes Shakespeare's plays so completely relevant for us today, who live four hundred years later yet in the same society of capitalism.

The main social forces in the play

Lear (doubled by Gloucester) is a feudal absolute monarch who has lost touch with his people and with his own understanding. His is the strictly ordered feudal world, where a person's place within the hierarchy was clearly defined and could not be changed.

No stone unturned?

Graham Harrington

NO STONE UNTURNED (2017) is a documentary film about the Loughinisland massacre, directed by Alex Gibney. For those unaware of what happened in Loughinisland or, like me, who were born after the events took place, the two-hour documentary is well worth watching; and for those who remember the events well it provides some new information that sheds light on the atrocity.

On 18 June 1994, in the small town of Loughinisland, Co. Down, a group of local people were in the Heights Bar watching the Irish soccer team beat Italy in a World Cup match on television. At 10:10 p.m. two men wearing boiler suits and balaclavas entered the bar; one of them brandished an automatic rifle and began shooting into the crowd after shouting "Fenian bastards!" They then left and escaped in a waiting car.

Six people were killed in the attack, including an 87-year-old man.

Lear is incapable of understanding the kind of disrespect shown to him by his elder daughters. Their disregard for him and for his dignity once he has handed over to them his power and his kingdom shatters his world completely. When he abandons the society he has known, ejected from it by his daughters, he goes out onto the heath as a man who has lost everything.

The raging tempest on the heath symbolises what is going on in Lear's head. In the middle of this violent storm, in the territory of the poor and "mad," Lear gains a profound understanding of the condition of the dispossessed. As he is exposed to the homeless he realises that this is happening in his own kingdom, and that he has ignored the wretched. This insight is not madness but the opposite of madness.

When Lear encounters Edgar, pretending to be a mad, naked beggar, he discovers essential humanity—"unaccommodated man." This is a crucial moment in Lear's development.

Later in the play the unhinged Lear meets the blinded Gloucester near Dover, commenting on social injustice. Lear's destruction means the loss of his appreciation of social inequity and the fundamental equality of human beings. This makes his death tragic.

Goneril, Regan, Edmund and Cornwall are the self-interested Machiavellians in this play. Their actions reveal just how inhuman they are. They seem frighteningly modern to us in their thinking and acting. Genuine affection, honesty and loyalty mean nothing to them; personal gain is everything, even if it costs the dignity and life of others.

Cordelia and Edgar are established as independent, loyal characters (Edgar is at first deceived by Edmund), willing to sacrifice their lives for justice. Cordelia and Edgar embody Renaissance humanism: they are wise, honest and loyal and have a sense of the common good. Although Cordelia dies as a result of Edmund's machinations, Edgar, who is proclaimed king by Albany, vows to rule in her spirit.

What is the play about?

The threat of a new Machiavellian order

A major theme in this play is the cataclysmic clash of social orders: Lear's elder daughters, the new Machiavellian generation, deprive the old feudal absolute monarch of his royal status and power, his dignity, his right to house and home. Alongside the murderous new power there are humanist forces that can lead society forward in an honest and humane way.

Good kingship or leadership

Shakespeare raises the question of what makes a good leader. Such leaders must be honest and wise and act in the interest of the common good. Good leaders must be willing to sacrifice their lives to defeat evil forces.

The fundamental equality of humankind

Lear is driven outside this new society. At that moment he shares his life with the naked wretches of his realm, recognises and affirms their common humanity. This in turn makes him realise the enormous social inequity and corruption in his kingdom, wrongs for which he is responsible. Ultimately his experience leads him to understand that only a fair distribution of wealth can remedy this.

Social injustice created by social hierarchy

All the outcasts on the heath arrive at an understanding that the way things are in England is wrong. They all describe corruption, the ignorance of the powerful, and the indifference towards the poor. They envisage the possibility of a different kind of society, in which the world will be put on its feet. This utopia—what might be—is inherent in the central themes of the play.

Shakespeare's relevance today

Shakespeare's plays are not about some hazy universal human condition, unchanging and unchangeable: his tragedies are about his times and thereby about our times. He reveals to us the nature of the times and alerts us to the dangers. He points to who is the enemy of humanity and who fights to preserve it.

In this sense Shakespeare is not simply of historical interest: he has something valuable to contribute when we think about the times we live in now, and our future. ★

■ Jenny Farrell is the author of *Fear Not Shakespeare's Tragedies: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Nuascéalta, 2016).

The attack was claimed by the Ulster Volunteer Force.

Up until the massacre the small rural community of Loughinisland had been relatively untouched by the conflict in the north-east of Ireland. As a family member of one of the victims says in the film, the conflict was "something that happened in Belfast."

After the atrocity the RUC assured the victims' families that they would "leave no stone unturned" in the search for the perpetrators. As the documentary shows, however, the RUC made little effort to bring the UVF gang responsible to justice.

The day after the massacre the getaway car was found abandoned in a field, and several weeks later the assault rifle used was discovered, along with a bag containing the boiler suits, gloves and balaclavas as well as pistols and ammunition. The RUC at this time had information on the UVF gang operating in the area, who were probably responsible for the massacre as well as previous sectarian murders. Yet despite all this, no-one was charged.

Furthermore, some of the evidence was "mislaid" or destroyed; the RUC even admitted to destroying the getaway car, the largest physical piece of evidence in the whole investigation.

The film goes on to make startling, though unfortunately not surprising, claims in regard to state-directed killings, with the state, through the RUC, using loyalist paramilitaries to carry out the attacks.

The continuing revelations surrounding collusion between the British forces and loyalist gangs have been documented in recent books by Anne Cadwallader and Margaret Urwin. Some of the revelations in the film relating to collusion regarding Loughinisland are so shocking that it is best to watch the documentary to fully get your head round it, especially the facts concerning the letter sent to an SDLP councillor that is revealed in the film.

What is clearly established is that the RUC had at least one informant in the three-man UVF gang that carried out the attack, and had prior knowledge of the attack, yet took no action to prevent it. Instead they destroyed evidence relating to the case. In 2011 an investigation by the police ombudsman concluded that, while there were failings in the investigation, there was no collusion. However, in 2016 a new investigation, prompted by complaints from the victims' families, concluded that collusion did indeed play a part.

The film-makers put so much effort into researching the case that they are even willing to name the leader of the UVF gang, and to film him. Indeed a former RUC member reveals that the RUC knew who carried it out but that when the man was arrested and interrogated they spent the interrogation trying to get him to kill an IRA member!

This type of revelation runs through the film and will obviously put the production team into legal trouble; but this is part of the reason why this film should be seen.

The documentary is certainly not perfect. Its explanation of the background to the conflict in the Six Counties, simplified for an intended American audience, rehashes the same old clichés. It does not give a satisfactory explanation of the role of British imperialism but rather suggests it was all a simple case of Catholics and Protestants not getting on. This is the standard British imperialist interpretation, put forward by the BBC and others, which presents the British as a sort of neutral peacekeeping force in Ireland, rather than the belligerent force they were in reality.

As a result, the film does not adequately explain why collusion between loyalist paramilitaries and the state forces was so common, or the role British intelligence played in the Loughinisland massacre. ★

LETTERS

Welcome debate

A chara,
The letter concerning electoral politics in last month's issue is a welcome contribution to a perennial debate among the Irish revolutionary left. For our purposes, the debate is more concerned with what is the role of parliamentary struggles in the broader transformative struggles for socialism. I would say that it is more a case of how can elections as a tactic best be utilised rather than an all or nothing choice between pure electoralism or an abstentionist approach to elections, both of which are cul-de-sacs. The relationship of Connolly's Irish Socialist Republican Party, formed in 1896, to elections is one with much educational value on this.

Elections have a role to play in revolutionary politics in terms of measuring support for revolutionary forces as well as being an opportunity to educate, agitate and organise in an environment of increased political awareness. The election of progressive voices to parliamentary benches can indeed be used to expose the powerful and undermine confidence in those institutions. Elections can also be used to highlight a certain issue, for example the ongoing campaign in Waterford for a cardiac care centre, which also further highlights the over-centralised nature of the political system in the 26 counties.

However, there are many glaring problems with elections, which we are unfortunately all too aware of. This became all too clear for activists involved in the water charges campaign as it went on. As elections came nearer, bitter fighting between the broad left and ridiculous short-term actions became more common as the more opportunist sought to protect and increase their electoral gains arising from the water struggle. Elections became seen as more than just the tactic or the means to an end, but the end itself. It echoed the basic definition of opportunism, in the famous words of Bernstein, that "the final goal, no matter what it is, is nothing; the movement is everything."

It is necessary for Marxists to always "politicise" things, to put them in a concrete and scientific way. Elections can indeed be used for our purposes, but this also means to understand them as a means to an end and be strategic in our use of them.

We should also take note of the growing numbers of people who have lost trust in the political system. In the last General Election in the 26 counties, over 35 per cent of the electorate did not vote at all, while in the previous General Election this was at 30 per cent. The growing mistrust in the electoral system as a vehicle for change should also be exploited. This can be done by direct political action in local communities, which may or may not involve standing in elections at some level, as well as standing for election to positions within our trade councils, ICTU and Union Committees—where the organised members of our class are—for the same reasons, but in doing so we have to be careful not to put ourselves in a situation where we can't see the wood for the trees.

Graham Harrington

A chara,
With reference to comrade Jimmy Corcoran's comments on my article "Time for change" in last month's *Socialist Voice,* there seems to be some confusion, so I'll try to clarify.

The point I was trying to make is that the battle for the hearts and minds of our people must be won before anything will change in parliaments—or anywhere else for that matter. Up until now this battle has not been won, but more progress in the political knowledge of the class nature of society was made during the Right2Water campaign than for many years previously and in countless election campaigns.

Unfortunately, once the issue left the streets and was transferred from the communities to the politicians in Dáil Éireann it was watered down, as is the nature of our parliament as it stands. This is its job: to preserve capitalism. Of course every means at our disposal (including elections) should be and is used to win the "battle of minds." Until this battle is won, nothing will change.

We are not looking for reforms, a nicer form of capitalism: our job is to smash it and build socialism. Our transformative strategy will build and increase class-consciousness and in doing so weaken our enemy, instead of compromising and actually strengthening capitalism, as is the case when the Right2Water demands entered the Dáil.

A weakened enemy is easier to defeat than a strengthened one. We must challenge capitalism to its core, not compete with it through reforms, as this only props it up. Our job is to tear it down.

In solidarity,

Jimmy Doran

International Women's Day security breach at Shannon Warport

The indomitable Raging Grannies outwitted the usual flank of steel at Shannon Airport by simply entering the terminal as travellers, complete with abundant luggage. First they sat down to enjoy a coffee, before springing into life, pulling their usual *No to war, US out of Shannon* placards from their suitcases, dancing and singing and clapping to "Ain't Gonna Study War No More."

Some of the passengers applauded and began to get into the performance. The authorities were thrown into confusion by the unexpected breach; they didn't know whether to concentrate on trying to stop passengers recording the scene or on the Raging Grannies themselves, or to remove the *Clare Champion* press photographer.

Order was eventually restored, the photographer was evicted from the terminal and had to finish his assignment outside, and the Raging Grannies were escorted to the car park.

One of the inspectors said, "I don't understand why you don't go to your usual place at the roundabout," while another said, "I hope there aren't going to be any other surprises today!"

The Raging Grannies went on to join the huge and diverse crowd on Bank Bridge in Ennis, organised by Clare Women's Network, with singing, planning, and speeches.

A good rumbustious time was had by all, while the Goddess bathed us in glorious sunshine. ★

Ppoetry

Connell Street
Francis Ledwidge

A Noble failure is not vain
But hath a victory of its own
A bright delectance from the slain
Is down the generations thrown.
And, more than Beauty understands
Has made her lovelier here, it seems;
I see white ships that crowd her strands,
For mine are all the dead men's dreams.

Sráid Uí Chonaill

An teip Uasal, ní raghaidh amú
A bua féin aici, is léir
Tagann aoibhneas ó ghlúin go glúin
Anuas chugainn ó ré go ré.
An Áilleacht féin gan tuiscint tá,
Is gleoite í anseo ba dhóigh leat:
Longa bána thíos cois trá
Na mairbh is a mbrionglóidí.

Translated by
Gabriel Rosenstock

Socialist Voice SV

Socialist Voice
43 East Essex Street
Dublin D02 XH96
(01) 6708707

ISSN 0791-5217