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IN THIS ISSUE

harrassment of women Page 2
RAF unwelcome Page 3
Union issues Page 4
Economy & sovereignty Page 6
Capitalist illusions Page 8
Automation and work Page 10
Laos | Warfare Page 10
Seán Joseph Clancy Page 12
John Heartfield Page 11
Letters | Marx | Connolly Page 16

For equality and democracy Vote Repeal

On the 25th of May the Irish people will face a major democratic challenge: to vote for the repeal of the 8th Amendment to the Constitution and remove, once and for all, the constitutional restrictions placed on women seeking to avail of essential medical treatment.

Safe and legal access to abortion is an absolute necessity.

What is really at stake are the democratic rights of women: the right to decide the steps they need to take to protect their lives, the right to decide which medical procedures and treatment to have, and the right to have access to them; the right to decide if, and when, to have a child.

Eugene McCartan reports p2

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The 8th Amendment has gravely restricted these rights and continues to endanger the lives of women.

For too long in this state women have been treated as second-class citizens. Historically women have been subjected to discriminatory laws in relation to employment, wages, family planning, and now medical access to abortion.

This is a legacy of the alliance of a reactionary state, a state created by the victory of counter-revolutionary forces, with the Catholic Church. Women, who played such an important role in the revolutionary decade from 1913 to 1922, had to be driven back, repressed, and controlled—just as the state had to drive the working class and revolutionary forces back so as to cement its victory.

This state imposed repressive laws, and continues to practise both economic pressure and discrimination, against all those who opposed the birth of this confessional state.

The Irish establishment was quick to consolidate its power and influence by giving a free hand to the Catholic Church. The Church was used as one of the bulwarks in creating the ideological base of this failed state. Those in power were happy to have "a Catholic state for a Catholic people"—a complete anathema to their supposed republican principles—as long as they continued to hold authority.

As James Connolly predicted, the partitioning of Ireland led to a "carnival of reaction." That carnival of reaction helped to consolidate two sectarian political institutions in this country, resulting from British-imposed partition. In the two jurisdictions the nationalism of Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil and the deeply reactionary ideology of unionism were scared by, and deeply hostile to, women and women's equality.

On the 25th of May we will have the opportunity to repeal one of the main pieces of discriminatory legislation within the legal and constitutional system of this state. The 8th Amendment attempted to control and to penalise women for being women. For far too long women have been told what to do, where to go, what to wear or not wear. In particular, women's sexuality has been a central point of control. Women have been told to wait patiently for their rights to be given to them (or taken away, as the case may be).

The repeal of the 8th Amendment will end thirty-five years of a refusal to recognise women and their lived experience. It will mean no longer turning a blind eye to the fact that at least nine women leave this state every day seeking an abortion. That's at least 3,285 women a year, women ignored and stigmatised.

Over the last thirty-five years more than 100,000 women have been forced to travel abroad, at a huge mental, physical and monetary cost. And this number does not include the thousands of women from the Six Counties who also have to travel to obtain safe, secure abortion.

While the right of access to safe and secure abortion is an issue for all women, it is also one that tells the story of a class-divided society. As women make up the majority of low-paid workers, it is working women who mainly experience precarious employment, zero-hour contracts, and "we'll call you when we need you" jobs. For them to gather the necessary funds both for travel and to have a termination in Britain, and also to secure the necessary time to do so, has an inordinately discriminatory effect on working-class women.

Repealing the 8th Amendment is about democracy for women, for medical equality, for giving women a choice in what they need to do, what is in their best interests. No-one else can or should decide what is in a woman's best interest. It's up to her. None so fit to decide what is a fetter as those who wear them.

Ní saoirse go saoirse na mban! Vote Repeal!

The harassment of women is no joke

Capitalism exploits the working class, and in particular women. This is done through the devaluation of women's labour in the home—that is, the necessary work of reproducing and maintaining workers for the capitalist machine—and the devaluation of work done by women outside the home: the pay gap.* Neither of these forms of oppression can be removed from the other, or from the capitalist system. Marxists should know and understand this connection argues **Laura Duggan**

What is less discussed in Marxist circles is the feminist understanding of advertising. Advertising is pervasive: it is the air that capitalism breathes and is part of our everyday lives. It would be foolish to deny it has an impact on us; and many studies show that it has, no matter how clear-headed we think we are. By virtue of how ever-present advertising is and the power it has to shape our views of the world, it too affects how women are viewed by men.

Compounding the economic oppression of women, women's bodies are used as a marketing tool for selling products. Women are photoshopped into ridiculous idealised forms of beauty, depersonified and sexualised for the consumer market. Women are commodified alongside the product being sold: beer, food, men's and women's fashion, cars, cameras, web-site hosting—almost everything.

This simply does not happen to the same extreme for men. When it does, more often than not it's played for laughs—like the comedy edition of GQ with Sacha Baron Cohen posed naked on the cover. This issue was sold in many places with a paper slip over the cover, as some shopkeepers viewed it as vulgar. Regular GQ covers with Jennifer Aniston, Jessica Fox and Lindsay Lohan suffered no such fate. A naked woman on a magazine cover, or in an ad, is acceptable.

These advertisements, and the messages they reinforce, are not isolated from the world they exist in: they both reflect and mould a perception of women as lesser.

The Whatsapp messages from the Ulster rugby rape trial show how far this level of consumption of women can go. In the players' eyes the women referred to are not entirely human, with minds or wants of their own, but things to be possessed and used. This attitude isn't unusual, and it isn't confined to rugby-playing men either. Working-class men perpetuate the same odious attitudes without rebuke, an attitude that is often mirrored in advertising.

This is the deep-seated misogyny and sexism that most women encounter daily, and why the #IBelieveHer demonstrations were so large. Women could immediately identify with the woman in the case: most women have an experience of being catcalled at, of being blamed for their own harassment or assault, or having their experience and hurt played off as a joke: "no big deal" or just "lads being lads."

As a result, women's entry into politics will often be through a gendered lens. This is not to imply that women aren't class-conscious, only that their political view is shaped by the first form of oppression they face daily. This will be because of their gender, and their activism will come from that sphere. Much like LGBT, black or ethnic minority activists will have their politics shaped by the first form of oppression they face. It is easy to see the root of oppression as class when it's the only form of oppression you face.

One of the aims of the CPI in getting involved in repeal of the 8th, having a presence on International Working Women's Day and all other "women's causes" is to inject working-class politics into feminism. But it is not a one-way street: we must educate ourselves and understand the feminist politics of the day as well, to be able to critique it but also to see where the women's movement is, what the issues are, and how they relate back to class and where we are failing.

The young women involved in #IBelieveHer, Cop On, Comrades, Strike4Repeal and many more one-off campaigns or stunts are trying to find a way to articulate their rage, to understand their oppression and to change the world. They are not middle-class feminists alone but many angry working-class women who feel they have no voice in working-class organisations. Engagement with working-class women is essential for our own development and growth as well as offering a space to these feminist activists for developing their own politics.

We cannot work on the assumption that young women know that, by virtue of our politics, our political tradition and ideology, we are fighting against the same evils of capitalism that they are. We must be forthright in our analysis and speak to them in terms they understand, and link their feminist understanding to our class one. We must not play down or sideline feminist understanding but meld it with our own. Unity is our strength; and if we cannot speak to the women of our class, who are we speaking to?

• Pay Gap: see "Capitalism knows a good thing when it sees it," *Socialist Voice,* April 2018.

Polluting the skies over Bray

The British military's recruiting squadron

The Bray War Show has gleefully announced that the British air force Red Arrows will strut their stuff over the skies of Bray, and probably Dublin, this July.

The organisers of this war show forgot to mention that only last month, on 19 March, a Red Arrows jet crashed, killing one of the plane's occupants. What sort of carnage could we expect if such an incident occurred over densely populated Bray?

The history of the Red Arrows and the history of war shows have been littered with terrible mishaps. Let's face it: the Bray War Show is an accident waiting to happen.

But there is also another dangerous element to this war show. The British Ministry of Defence does not pay for the RAF's aerobatic team out of the kindness of its dark heart. There is an ulterior motive. A glance at the Red Arrows' web site reveals the real aim behind these displays: "to carry out defence diplomacy overseas"—in other words, propaganda—and "to aid recruitment into the Armed Forces."

So, by sending its Red Arrows to Bray the intention is to recruit gullible young Irish men and women to sign up to the British armed forces and put their lives at risk by going to occupy foreign lands, to oppress and kill the "natives" on behalf of the British empire.

Of course, for the would-be recruit a visit to the Bray War Show is meant to be an exhilarating experience as these machines of death scream overhead. There'll be no bombs dropped or heavy gunfire, just red, white and blue smoke. These war displays are a means to sanitise and therefore glorify war.

However, in the war zones of the Middle East the sound of these warplanes generates terror, not titillation, for the people below.

They are weapons of mass destruction: they indiscriminately kill, maim, and terrorise. To have these on show as a form of light entertainment not only glorifies war but also presents the Irish people as supporters of the horrendous acts of violence carried out by these warplanes.

That is why we must urge the organisers to remove this weaponry from the event, and for Wicklow County Council to stop subsidising this obscenity. With a little imagination the air show could continue with the same level of success as before but without these unwelcome weapons of mass destruction.

The question that must be asked is, Should planes that kill other people's children be fun for ours?

Mayday, mayday!

Jimmy Doran

If the workers take a notion
They can stop all speeding trains;
Every ship upon the ocean
They can tie with mighty chains.
Every wheel in the creation,
Every mine and every mill,
Fleets and armies of the nation,
Will at their command stand still.
—Joe Hill

THE TRADE union movement is in deep distress and needs to be rebuilt, re-energised, and reinvigorated. Union membership is at a record low point, with no signs of recovery.

There are many reasons for this, but the task is to rebuild the unions and increase membership and to bring back pride among members in being a union member.

Since "social partnership" and the facilitation of the Industrial Relations Act (1990), power has tipped towards capital and away from organised labour. This has to change if the unions are to have any chance of getting back to the position where a majority of workers are union members. We have to change the mentality within unions: instead of providing a service, unions need to be seen to have workers' backs, and not just in the work-place but in their daily lives as well.

Some think that the introduction of the legal minimum wage was a great victory for low-paid workers; others chase the "living wage" as the silver bullet that will solve all workers' problems. Of course others on the left—in the battle to appear more radical than everyone else—will always set the demand for an even higher rate as the way to end wage slavery and give workers power.

Important as wages are, whether it is a minimum wage, a living wage, or something higher, the question we must ask is, Does this tip power back towards the worker and away from the ruling class, or does it help appease and dilute workers' demands?

The answer is quite clear. It may ease the burden on workers, but it does not give them or their unions any more power.

So what is to be done? What will give the unions power? Instead of saying that "this is the best we can achieve at this time" we have to get back to the stage of saying, "No, that's not enough. We demand more."

Workers must fight to get the Industrial Relations Act repealed in the South and the equivalent anti-union legislation in the North overthrown. This will give workers power by regaining the main weapon of the trade union movement, the right to strike—wherever, for whatever, and whenever workers choose.

This will tip the balance back in

Building for the future

Mandate conference

AT THE END of April, Mandate held its biennial conference, with more than three hundred delegates from the retail and bar sectors in attendance, under the theme "Organise! Organise!! Organise!!!"

The conference was opened by the general secretary, John Douglas. His remarks were not "grandstanding" or throwing shapes but instead he spoke of how proud he was to represent Mandate. He outlined how far the union had come from the last conference, and where they needed to go and to be at the next conference in two years' time.

Mandate is aware of the need to build its density in every work-place to counter the growing pressure from increasingly aggressive employers, such as Tesco. It was clear from the delegates, coming, as they did, from the shop floor, that they needed little encouragement. It was also clear that the members are proud of the leading role played by their union in the Right2Water struggle.

The union has accumulated a lot of experience and learnt a lot of valuable lessons from the many struggles that its members have been involved in. It has been involved in grim battles with Dunne's Stores, Tesco, and Lloyd's Pharmacy, to name a few.

The assistant general secretary of the union, Gerry Light, put it clearly when he condemned the anti-union behaviour of such employers as Dunne's, Tesco, Paddy Power, Lloyd's Pharmacy, IKEA, TK Maxx, Lidl, and Aldi. He called for statutory collective bargaining rights for workers, commenting that "in recent years employers have decided, probably

Joe Hill was a union organiser and member of the militant Industrial Workers of the World. His most famous songs include "The Preacher and the Slave" (in which he coined the phrase 'pie in the sky), "The Tramp", "There is Power in a Union", "The Rebel Girl", and "Casey Jones—the Union Scab".

favour of the worker over capital. It will give workers back not only the power to strike for better pay and conditions in the work-place but better rights for citizens, whether it be in housing, education, health, or other essential services. As it would give back the right to have strikes for political reasons it would build solidarity among unions and workers by allowing supportive strikes.

During the recent Bus Éireann dispute what pushed the company to the negotiating table was when Dublin Bus and Irish Rail workers walked off the job and staged solidarity pickets at their depots, bringing the national transport system to a standstill. They threatened to repeat this until such time as the management entered negotiations.

This support strike was illegal under the 1990 act, and it was only through the bravery of fellow-workers that it went ahead. Workers and their unions could have faced huge fines over this action. This support action also reawakened among transport workers the bond of solidarity between workers that capitalism has been trying to extinguish for decades.

Unions have to get back to their roots: not just defending workers' rights but fighting for more. This cannot be done without union power.

Low pay, precarious work, the gig economy and bogus self-employment are rampant today. These are all inextricably linked to the decline in union membership and to the anti-union legislation. Workers need their unions to be fighting for them tooth and nail, not just for better pay and conditions but for all the other necessities of life, whether it be public housing, health, or transport.

Until unions go back to basics and are seen to be in the forefront of workers' struggle, membership will continue to decline, and twenty years from now children will be asking, "Daddy, what's a trade union?" And those children will all be on poverty wages, living from hand to mouth and struggling to survive.

It is the nature of capitalism to constantly keep costs down in the pursuit of higher profits. This has not changed. So why have unions? As Joe Hill once said, "Don't waste any time mourning. Organise!"

Let's start at the basics. Raise the repeal of anti-union laws in union branches, and lobby union executive committees to campaign with like-minded unions to do the same.

How can any union worth its salt not fight for the right to strike to protect, maintain and improve members' lives? We can stand and fight or risk losing everything.

As we go to print, Mandate has just passed a motion at its biennial delegate conference that states: "Conference calls on the incoming National Executive Council of Mandate trade union through the ICTU to lobby the Irish government to repeal the 1990 Industrial Relations Act and to replace it with legislation that allows the right to trade union recognition and the right for trade unions to use any form of industrial action as a legitimate tool in industrial relations without fear of any repercussions."

Once again Mandate has set the bar for other unions to follow.

in collaboration with each other, to hide behind an extreme interpretation of the voluntarist industrial relations model of engagement.

"They believe that voluntarism means an absolute right of not having to engage with workers' representatives when requested to do so. Such an approach also has the effect of relegating the value of a worker's constitutional right to association to that of junk status. The balance as it now exists is totally skewed in favour of the employer."

Top of the the union's agenda is the need to secure legislation regarding "banded-hours" contracts. Mandate has been involved in an intense lobbying of politicians of all political parties and independents to secure legislation on such contracts that would give workers in the retail industry and other industries protection against precarious work, flexible hours, and "we'll call you when we need you." This has had a positive effect, giving members a sense of their potential political power if organised and focused.

A number of progressive resolutions were adopted during of the two-day conference, dealing with pensions, public housing as the only way to solve the housing crisis, workers' rights on the shop floor, and solidarity with workers in Colombia and with the Palestinian people.

One of the most important resolutions, moved by the Arklow Council, called on Mandate to campaign along with the ICTU for the repeal of the Industrial Relations Act (1990) and for its replacement with legislation that would allow workers the right to be represented by a union, to allow workers to effectively defend themselves. The existing act, in particular part 2, is deeply anti-worker and imposes grave restrictions on the capacity of trade unions to defend their members and advance their interests.

There is a constant refrain from non-unionised workers that unions do nothing, when in fact it is not that unions won't do anything but that the laws make it very difficult. If we want more effective trade unions then we need to mount a more effective resistance to these anti-union and anti-worker laws.

If you are shackled by rules and regulations, this creates huge difficulties. So joining a trade union will give workers strength and in the long run give us the necessary muscle for advancing our interests.

As Mandate's national co-ordinator, Brian Forbes, put it, "unions are an untapped sledgehammer for the Irish working class. Since 1913, bosses have engaged in relentless class struggle as they continuously seek to wring concessions from workers for meagre returns. The union movement has in some ways allowed that imbalance to be perpetuated; but enough is enough."

The conference was a solid display of workers ready and willing to defend themselves and their trade union. It was a solid expression of working-class solidarity, not grandstanding and over-the-top speeches, just working, planning and understanding the tasks ahead, aware of the forces ranged against them but nevertheless not intimidated by the challenges.

Time to examine the American connection

Tommy McKearney

SOME YEARS ago an American friend had a nasty accident while visiting Belfast. Looking to his left, he stepped into the roadway, was struck by a car, and suffered a broken leg. This man was a responsible adult, but his lived experience in New York had caused him to look in the wrong direction.

Something similar is happening at the moment to the Irish economy. With an over-dependence for income on American transnationals, the Republic's economy finds itself focused on the wrong field as economic power gradually shifts away from America and towards China in particular.

According to the *Irish Independent's* technology editor, Adrian Weckler, Apple, Google, Intel, Dell and Facebook now employ about a tenth of the Republic's work force. That is more than those engaged in farming. When the local businesses that supply these technology companies with a range of services are also taken into account, those five American tech giants are now crucial for as much as a fifth of the southern economy.[1]

The Republic's vulnerability to this narrow band of transnationals was emphasised recently by an estimate by the International Monetary Fund that a quarter of the state's economic growth in 2017 was due to Apple's iPhone.

There may be some doubt about how this figure was calculated, but the pattern is clear: if American high-tech transnationals were to leave, for any reason, southern Ireland's economy, as at present constructed, would suffer as grievous a downturn as that experienced following the financial crisis of 2010.

For long the received wisdom in relation to predominantly American transnationals has been to view them not only as beneficial but as essential to the country's prosperity. This in turn has led to an emphasis on maintaining their presence through offering tax concessions, contributing grants, providing infrastructure, and enacting corporate-friendly legislation.

Moreover, these virtually unchallenged assumptions are constantly reinforced through an incestuous relationship between state and transnationals. Government or state officials are frequently headhunted to fill positions of influence in these corporations and thereafter given the task of lobbying on behalf of their new employers.

Those among us who question the long-

European integration versus democracy

THE EUROPEAN Union continues to push forward with deeper integration, as that is the economic and political imperative of European big business.

The EU Commission continues to promote its strategy of deepening integration. It has proposed a finance minister for the euro zone and transforming the European Stability Mechanism, which was established in September 2012 as an inter-governmental body for members of the euro zone, into the European Monetary Fund.

One of its chief roles would be to ensure an "orderly sovereign debt restructuring" in the event of unsustainable debt levels. It would be a kind of embryonic treasury for the euro zone, having even greater control and enforcement of member-states and their budgets and fiscal policies.

Germany favours this strategy and outcome, as it would further strengthen German monopoly control.

The Irish government endorsed this proposal on the 6th of March this year, along with Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Sweden. As well as endorsing an EMF the ministers said they were committed to the process of completing the banking union. This has been the usual method by which the member-states appear to be driving the process when in fact the EU Commission does the driving, at the behest of German monopoly interests. Every crisis presents an opportunity to push strategic goals and interests.

The EMF would act like the International Monetary Fund, one of the components of the Troika that took charge when the EU forced the Irish people to take on 42 per cent of total European banking debt. The new EMU would be for imposing greater market "discipline" on member-states and making the EU more "competitive," that is, able to compete economically, and also geopolitically, with other regions in the world.

If we think back to the discussions about debt relief for crisis-hit countries, we may remember how the EU Commission was often even more unyielding than the IMF. The EU has pulverised the Greek people— a far cry from the EU of "solidarity" so often trumpeted

term wisdom or morality of providing a tax haven for the world's richest technology companies have our objections brushed aside. However dubious the situation might be, we are told, economic reality dictates that Ireland must work within the system, and the middle classes condescendingly nod agreement.

Now, however, the outcome is not within the power of the Irish elite and, more significantly, also out of the control of the American technology companies.

Social media and social networking services, such as Facebook, Google, and Twitter, are subject to consumer whims. Until a short few weeks ago Facebook appeared to be all-powerful and all-conquering. Yet within days of a whistleblower revealing details of the company's questionable relationship with the English company Cambridge Analytica, its share price plummeted and the chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, found himself testifying before a joint session of the US Congress, and facing similar demands for answers from other jurisdictions.

Only time will tell how damaging this particular scandal will be for the company, but it indicates a potential vulnerability in a fickle and cut-throat market, where the life span of a product can be remarkably short. How many people, for example, now remember the former technology giants MySpace, Friendster, or Altavista?

Compounding their problems in Europe is the promised General Data Protection Regulation, which will challenge their unhindered and profitable access to individuals' personal data.

Moreover, a more defined threat is becoming a reality. China's technological skill base is not only rapidly catching up with that of Silicon Valley but also has the capacity to undercut American companies' pricing model, and therefore profitability, on a global scale.[2]

The implications are obvious. As the Irish government and business elite concentrate on the American connection, there is no obvious plan B. The result is an economy as precariously positioned as at any time in the past.

So what can we do to prevent either a financial crisis or market forces producing yet another recession in Ireland, with all the dire consequences this would inevitably have for working people?

We can rule out, from the outset, any practical or helpful intervention from the overwhelming majority of the present members of Dáil Éireann. The two largest parties, as well as a number of independents, are committed to maintaining the status quo at all costs. Moreover, unless progressive elements can bring about a significant change in the political climate, one or other of the two conservative parties, or both, will be part of the next Government, or indeed Governments.

It is vital, therefore, that working people through their representative organisations take the initiative to identify an alternative programme and work to build the structures that can implement viable pro-worker policies. There needs to be a realisation that a permanent solution will not be found within a capitalist economy nor a new era created by those political interests determined to maintain acquired privilege.

It was encouraging, therefore, to learn that the general secretary of the ICTU, Patricia King, drew attention to the need for a major programme of public house-building when she addressed the recent biennial conference of Mandate. More heart-warming still was to read the address of the general secretary of Mandate, John Douglas, to the conference. Speaking under the slogan Organise! Organise!! Organise!!! he told delegates of "the importance of and the relationship between the industrial struggle and the political struggle," emphasising his commitment to "building a strong industrial movement and a strong political movement."

These are encouraging sentiments from senior people within organised labour. But while we can recognise this important contribution, the burden cannot be placed on trade unionists alone. All progressive elements in Irish society have to unite to meet the inevitable challenges ahead. We are not only faced with the likelihood of another economic downturn but there is also the serious matter of preserving and reasserting Irish neutrality. There is then that most important issue of the North, where rapidly changing demographics will undoubtedly force the question of reunification onto the political agenda in the Republic in the not-too-distant future.

In the light of this, it is important that the serious left continues to emphasise the holistic nature of the situation and the need for a definitive solution. Capitalism and imperialism lie at the heart of a problem that will only be overcome through socialism built within a workers' republic.

One hundred and fifty years after James Connolly's birth we have no excuse for looking in the wrong direction, because we know where we need to go and what is to be done.

1 Adrian Weckler, "How multinational IT firms are influencing on-line safety, housing and taxation," *Sunday Independent*, 28 January 2018.
2 See Martin Wolf, "Let knowledge spread around the world," *Financial Times*, 25 April 2018
Left: The aftermath of a driverless car crash in the United States

by the pro-EU pro-integration lobby here in Ireland. This is part of the working out of the Maastricht Treaty.

Workers know from experience that when their boss tells them they must be more competitive this means that they lose benefits and overtime payments etc., must work harder, and accept a reduction in the work force. If we apply this at the EU level it can only mean one thing: the further hollowing out of the much-lauded "European social model" that our trade union leaders, social democrats and other pro-integrationists have argued for, to stay in the EU to protect this "model." The prison becomes the slaughterhouse.

The political representative of German monopoly capital, i.e. the German government, wants to launch a massive assault on the welfare state. As Angela Merkel has put it, Europe has 7 per cent of the world's population, 25 per cent of its GDP, and 50 per cent of its social spending; and "it cannot continue to be so generous."

The former Greek minister of finance Yannis Varoufakis has said that in their first meeting the German minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, stated that "the 'overgenerous' European social model was no longer sustainable and had to be ditched" in order to make Europe "competitive." So the much-touted "social market economy" has become a central target of the hard-line integrationists.

The non-class understanding of EU integration, of the nature of the European Union itself and what it stands for and whose interests it serves, leads to these dangerous illusions about what deepening European integration is.

The growing opposition to the European Union, as manifested by the rise of the right in EU member-states, is a product of this continuing integration. With elements of the "left" supporting integration, they have put themselves on the same side as the dominant economic forces, which wish to step up the attacks on workers' rights and living standards, leaving the working class leaderless and falling prey to the right.

We know from long experience that the right has no interest in protecting or defending workers' rights but is in fact a tool of monopoly capitalism, used to sow confusion and division, thereby allowing the monopolies to divide and rule workers, pitching them against each other.

What working people are demanding is greater control and accountability from institutions that they have been told are elected to represent them. But when a new government is elected they get the same policies; they get multiple parties but a single transferable manifesto throughout the whole of the EU.

National democracy and sovereignty are not optional but are the essential tools required if we are to defend the gains already won through struggle by the working class. The EU and its institutions, treaties and strategy are for removing the capacity of workers at the national level to effect change at home or even to defend the gains they have already made.

Unless the left champions democracy and sovereignty it surrenders the vital terrain of struggle to the right. National democracy and sovereignty are are key to opening up a path for real social change.

CAPITALIST ILLUSIONS PART 3

Poverty thriving

Eoghan O'Neill continues the *Socialist Voice* series that explains the capitalist illusions that perpetuate the class division in society.

A GREAT DECEPTION has allowed a tiny minority of the world's population to own and control the vast majority of wealth that is created, while billions of people live in misery, squalor, and sprawling poverty. To maintain the illusion, the perpetrators create a belief system that has at its core the acceptance of privileged wealth, which comes in the form of profits, rents, and interest, deriving from a so-called "natural law" of private ownership of industry, land, and property, i.e. the private ownership of the means of production.

This commonly held belief has been maintained within the present era, that of the capitalist (i.e. private) mode of production, where primary (raw materials), secondary (industry) and tertiary (services) production are predominantly owned, run and controlled by private individuals or corporations.

This mode is antagonistic, in that one part of society, the owners, has separate and conflicting interests from the rest of society, those who earn their living and maintain a household through their labour, because within capitalism the wealth that is accumulated by either capital or labour is at the expense of the other. Capitalists can increase profits only by extracting and exploiting more from labour, while labour, within capitalism, can increase its wealth only at the expense of capital.

The previous two articles explained this in detail. This article will deal more with the whole process at the international level, because quite often left and so-called Marxist thinkers, parties and movements confine themselves to the national view and so often echo imperialist propaganda.

Social-democratic and ultra-left movements often have good intentions, agreeable national programmes, and sizeable numbers; but one of their biggest weaknesses lies in foreign policy, where the dominant developed countries dictate the fate of the underdeveloped countries. Ultimately, social democrats and reformists lack the analysis that would provide for a lasting and fundamental shift in the mode of production, i.e. from capitalist (private) to socialist (public) ownership of the means of production, because they lack a complete analysis of capitalism at its highest stage: imperialism.

Having looked previously at the exchange of non-equivalents that takes place between a worker and their employer, I think it would be well to remember that the exchange of equivalents must not be confined to the relationship between the labourer and the capitalist in a particular country but must be extended to exchanges between countries, between developed and underdeveloped countries, core and periphery, or the global north and global south.

In other words, it is hypocritical to fight for justice, equality, democracy or a fairer distribution of wealth at home if we are happy to exploit, plunder and ravage the peoples of other nations.

Ignoring the uneven and maldevelopment of nations is just another element of the capitalist illusion, one that hides the cruelty of the barbaric capitalist system.

Take, for example, three raw products: the cocoa bean, the coffee bean, and the banana. The most labour-intensive process in the supply chain of these commodities, where millions of people are employed, is the actual growing, harvesting, collecting and packaging for export.

This whole process repeats itself, generation after generation, as the hundreds of millions of global agricultural labourers are kept at subsistence pay levels, where their national production facilities and techniques, their pay, terms and conditions are never given the space or the capacity to develop. The agricultural workers of the world are totally at the mercy of the large manufacturers and retail monopolies, which not only want but must keep them impoverished!

The injustice is most striking when we see developed countries receiving more in the form of the VAT paid on the goods than the total agricultural work force of the underdeveloped countries receives for the commodity itself. However, these transnational corporations, big and powerful though they are, still operate under national and international rules and regulations that are agreed and negotiated by individual states.

The post-war construction of capitalist welfare states after 1945, despite the gains for the working class of those countries, developed against the backdrop of aggressive and ruthless foreign policies for maintaining access, extraction and control of global resources.

Free education, health services, housing, welfare, access to credit, and cheap commodities, such as clothes, readily available imported foods and energy resources, were able to keep these problems at bay for the working class of the global north but at the expense of our fellow-humans who have suffered the cruel fate of being born into a system where poverty must be reproduced.

John Smith, author of *Imperialism in the 21st Century,* writes in a recent article: *"When in 2018 the British state collects, in VAT and other taxes, up to half the final sale price of a shirt made in Bangladesh (while the woman who made the shirt is paid a tiny fraction of this amount) and uses these tax receipts to finance the National Health Service and workers' pensions (neither of which are*

available to our Bangladeshi sisters, nor to the 260 million migrant workers from China's countryside who toil in that country's export-oriented factories), is it acceptable for Marxists to ignore such inconvenient 'realities on the ground'?"

This is sometimes a hard pill to swallow, especially for those on the left: to think that through all the struggles and sacrifices the working class has gone through, and all the gains that have been won over the past century, they have been won at the expense of other peoples, so maintaining the continued impoverishment and underdevelopment of countries of the global south.

To deny or to ignore this fact is to prolong the misery of our fellow-humans who languish under the diktats of foreign policy makers and their capitalist paymasters. So long as the capitalist relations of production and distribution exist, no matter how social-democratic a government might be, the gross exploitation of man by man will continue.

If we return to the cocoa, coffee and banana industries, which have a multi-billion annual income, the agricultural labourer performs the productive processing task of turning the raw seed, pod or fruit into an exportable product. Every other task, such as roasting the coffee, for example, is more capital-intensive (more mechanised), and so generally takes place in the factories of Europe and North America. With a higher ratio of capital to labour, therefore, and higher rates of pay, lower rates of profit will be available, so the super-profits are extracted from the bulk of the workers in the global south.

This is because all wealth is created by labour at the point of production: it takes its money form at the point of exchange, at which stage the capitalists' exploitation of the labourer has already taken place through the wage payment system.

To maintain their dominance, foreign policy and trade deals ensure that the country where the product is grown does not reap the large rewards available for the finished product. This would be against capitalist interests, because only by keeping other countries down are they able to stay up.

This is the capitalist system: it is driven and expanded by exploitation. If countries such as Ivory Coast, which grows approximately 38 per cent of the world's chocolate, were able to develop thriving indigenous industries around the cocoa bean, they would be a direct threat to the big monopoly firms and the chocolate-making plants of the west.

If you extend this to every other raw material or resource, such as oil, gold, copper, and wood, that is extracted from regions of the global south and profited by in the global north, and add to this the loss of jobs that could result, you begin to realise the implications this would have not only for the corporations, the monopolies and capitalists but also for the working class and its organisations—trade unions, political parties, lobbying groups, etc.—in the global north.

The contradictions of capitalism throw up huge challenges to the working class of all nations; but we must always keep in mind that in order to maintain a system whose working dynamics include one part being the exploiters and the other the exploited, the inevitable conclusion is that in order for the capitalist system to survive, mass poverty has to thrive.

A case in point is how the European Union makes it impossible for African countries to trade their way out of poverty. The EU's common agricultural policy facilitates the dumping of subsidised EU agricultural products in African markets at a price lower than the African country's farmers can sell it at. This means that the local farmers frequently operate at a loss, forcing them to go out of business.

Compounded with this are the high tariffs on African agricultural products that are imported, which strangles trade.

This cycle then forces those countries to seek loans from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, compelling them to remove their own tariffs and subsidies and to favour foreign direct investment, instead of building indigenous industry, as part of the imposed free-trade rules, thus reinforcing the inability of underdeveloped countries to enter into a stage of development, continuing the cycle of poverty.

The final word on how ruthless this system is requires looking at the countries that have tried to break free of the yoke of this imperialist domination. Any state or movement that has sought an independent path—not necessarily a socialist path—that was not in line with the imperialist agenda has suffered major consequences. The invasion or overthrow of governments in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya and the failed (so far) attempt in Syria are the most recent chapters of a strategy of destabilisation of global regions.

In the post-war era and its anti-colonial and independence movements, it wasn't the United States, Britain or France that promoted and supported them: on the contrary, they propped up or put into power despots and dictators while at the same time sabotaging and murdering the leaders and followers of liberation movements, on all continents, including their perceived enemies within.

Against the backdrop of the Cold War and beyond, the United States, with the help of its British and European allies in many instances, intervened in areas all around the globe. The list includes:

China, 1945–46
Syria, 1949
Korea, 1950–53
China again, 1950–53
Iran, 1953
Guatemala, 1954
Tibet, 1955–1970s
Indonesia, 1958
Cuba, 1959
Democratic Republic of Congo, 1960–65
Iraq, 1960–63
Dominican Republic, 1961
Viet Nam, 1961–1973
Brazil, 1964
Belgian Congo, 1964
Guatemala again, 1964
Laos, 1964–1973
Dominican Republic again, 1965–66
Peru, 1965
Greece, 1967
Guatemala again, 1967–69
Cambodia, 1969–1970
Chile, 1970–73
Argentina, 1976
Turkey, 1980
Poland, 1980–81
El Salvador, 1981–1992
Nicaragua, 1981–1990
Cambodia again, 1980–1995
Angola, 1980
Lebanon, 1982–84
Grenada, 1983–84
Philippines, 1986
Libya, 1986
Iran, 1987–88
Libya again, 1989
Panama, 1989–1990
Iraq again, 1991
Kuwait, 1991
Somalia, 1992–94
Iraq again, 1992–96
Bosnia, 1995
Iran again, 1998
Sudan, 1998
Afghanistan, 1998
Serbia, 1999
Afghanistan again, 2001
Iraq again, 2002–03
Somalia, 2006–07
Iran again, 2005 to the present
Libya again, 2011
Syria again, 2013 to the present

This is not to mention the continuing British occupation of Ireland, support for the nationalist-fascist coup in Ukraine, the constant threats and coup attempts in Venezuela, the war on Yemen by the imperialists' ally Saudi Arabia, the 58-year blockade of socialist Cuba, or the support and subsidising of the Israeli apartheid regime.

It is a legacy of brutality that prevails to this day, which is why we cannot ignore it any further.

Foreign policy and foreign trade are not a partisan issue but a class issue. The dominant capitalist class drives and directs state policies in the interests of imperialism, which stunts countries and prevents them from developing. They economically punish non-compliance, and they bomb and invade outright defiance. The human cost of these policies matters not if the reward can be reaped.

It is a vulgar time we live in, and so many people, including leftist and anti-capitalist movements, have been duped by imperialist propaganda, some even going so far as to echo the propaganda of imperialism.

We cannot allow these organisations, whether they be labelled left or right, to perpetuate the capitalist illusion and imperialist plunder. Our analysis and message must be clear: capitalism survives so long as mass poverty thrives.

Capitalist automation and job loss Don't believe the hype!

Niall Cullinane

THE CURRENT narrative about automation is well known. Weekly, if not daily, commentaries and reports emerge that forecast the potential for the mass displacement of workers as a result of impending automation.

To a degree this is new wine in old bottles. Automation manias have been a regular feature of life in capitalist society. Of course contemporary believers retort by acknowledging this long-standing tendency but emphasise that this time it is different: the technology is completely unlike what has come before and is unprecedented in scale and scope, potential and possibilities.

Yet it is hardly a surprise that adherents of the current bout of automation mania would claim this. Their narrative is not being produced in a vacuum: it is being manufactured by individuals and organisations with a product to peddle, whether this is American academics with books to sell (and lucrative speaker fees to attract), consultancy or software firms like Deloitte and Adobe with "expert" knowledge and products to push, or newspapers with dramatic headlines ("click bait") to profit from.

Of course, just because some people profit from a message does not mean the message itself is inherently wrong. Maybe a robot is coming to take your job ten, fifteen or twenty years from now. Yet think about the following: whether a robot is about to take your job or not depends entirely on the investment decisions of privately owned capitalist firms. When you read a report claiming that 48 per cent of existing jobs in the north-east of England will be eliminated in twenty years because of new technology,* such analysis implicitly assumes that we can reliably project what the investment decisions of privately owned capitalist firms are going to be twenty years from now.

If this is so, such commentators have tapped into a hitherto unknown form of insight on the workings of the capitalist market. A regular reader of the financial and business press will know that it is difficult to determine what the investment decisions of privately owned firms are going to be six months from now, never mind two or three decades!

Whatever doubts we might have about the validity of forecasting, analysis of this type also misunderstands the context in which technology is developed. For example, if we accept the notion, common in some Marxian circles, that major branches of contemporary capitalism are subject to the logic of "financialisation," then there are strict limits to the incentives for capitalist investors to develop and adopt new forms of technology.

Under conditions where firms are subject to the pressures of making quick, short-term returns for mobile shareholders, investments in technologies, which are significant immediate expenditures and take time to realise, may end up being delayed or thwarted. Indeed the financialisation of IBM is one of the reasons why the company has struggled to compete in its traditional field of activity.[2]

The incentive structure of financialised capitalism works for the stock market in terms of dividend pay-outs but chokes investment in the real economy (such as investing in new technology), which partly explains why capitalist economies have been mired in low-productivity stagnation. It is also why many employers favour cheap and disposable labour (of which there is a lot around right now) rather than risking long-term investments in technology.

Ultimately, the evolution of technology in a capitalist economy is not unbounded or unlimited. If a technology jeopardises profitable accumulation by the owners of capital, then it gets blocked by capital.

Here again the celebration of the marvels of new technology and the technical possibilities such developments entail is entirely disconnected from the realities of the capitalist economy. What is possible at the level of technical engineering is not necessarily translatable to the realm of economics, capitalist-style. Undoubtedly Apple could engineer phones that are longer-lasting and more easily repairable, but the logic of Apple shareholders dictates that such engineering would damage dividends, and therefore such phones don't get made. As Marx would put it, the social relations of production act as a fetter on the forces of production in capitalism.

Leaving aside doubts about the potential for automation, let's assume for the moment that a robot is really coming to take your job, as newspaper editors would like us to believe (or more probably, for reasons of social control perhaps, to fear). It implies, as does much of the wider narrative, that whether or not your job will be lost to a robot is simply an act of nature. It is "inevitable," it is just going to happen, and we (workers) just have to "adapt."

A simple example. Assume some workers in a factory working 38 hours a week. A new machine is introduced by their employer, allowing the workers to be twice as productive as before, i.e. that in 19 hours they can produce the same amount of stuff that previously took 38 hours. Two options are presented. The first: the employer can fire half the workers, because they are now

surplus to his requirements. With the remaining work force and the new machine he gets the same output, for which he can charge the same price and bring in the same income. The difference is that there is now one half of the work force to whom the employer does not need to pay wages any more, because they have just been fired. Money saved on wages goes to profits.

But whether or not a robot takes your job is not the same as asking whether or not Dublin will be hit by a tsunami. The adoption of technology in the work-place is not an uncontrollable act of nature: it is purely a political question that depends on the balance of power between capitalists and workers. It is not technology that threatens jobs: it is employers who control and use technological change to increase profits.

However, a second option with the new machine could theoretically occur. This is where, upon the introduction of the machinery, all the workers who work 38 hours a week are immediately told they can now work 19 hours. So the employer gets the same number of workers working 19 hours with the new machine, producing exactly as much as before. Working 19 hours with the new machine, the workers produce the same amount of stuff as before, for the same price, with the same wages, bringing in the same income and making the same profits.

Option 2 will not improve the employer's profits, but it won't lessen them either. In effect, option 1 bring the benefits of technological change to the capitalist (increased profit), while option 2 brings the benefits of technological change to the workers (increased non-labour time, with no decline in wages). Technology permits this choice, but the social structure of capitalism tends to deny it.

And so it is the social relations of capitalist production, not automation *per se,* that should be worrying people.

1 See "UK's poorest to fare worst in age of automation, think-tank warns," *Guardian* (London), 28 December 2017.
2 See "Why IBM is in decline," *Forbes Online*, May 2014.

Robbing Peter to pay Paul

THE SLEEK Intercity train connecting Amsterdam to Rotterdam zips between the two cities in a mere forty minutes and, with a fare of only €15.40 (£13.50), puts our fares to shame.

The Dutch railways are still nationally owned, operated by Nederlandse Spoorwegen, and the route between the two cities claims a punctuality record of 100 per cent. But Dutch people have been in uproar over what may be another record, one of the most shameful tax deals in Europe and one that throws the spotlight once again on Ireland's dubious corporate tax policy.

In recent years the Dutch people have been horrified to discover that while they buy their train tickets from a state-owned company, a significant chunk of the money has been funnelled through Ireland. This is because NS Financial Services, 100 per owned by Nederlandse Spoorwegen, bought the trains, then leased them back to NS, while being incorporated in Ireland. In doing so it has arranged that its profits come under Ireland's 12½ per cent company tax rate, rather than the 25 per cent prevailing in the Netherlands.

The result? Since 1998 a state-owned Dutch company has paid approximately €177 million in tax to Ireland rather than to the Dutch ministry of finance, even though that ministry is the 100 per cent shareholder of NS and the trains are operating entirely in the Netherlands. A further €1 billion in accumulated profits is understood to be held in Ireland.

Furious Dutch members of parliament have roundly condemned the Dublin structure as unfair tax planning and tax avoidance.

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Laos
Building the foundations of socialism

THE LAO People's Democratic Republic is a country of less than 7 million people in south-east Asia. It has been officially under the leadership of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party since 1975.

Article 13 of the country's constitution states that "all types of enterprises are equal before the law and operate according to the principle of the market economy, competing and co-operating with each other to expand production and business while regulated by the State in the direction of socialism."

Laos has the disadvantage of being the most-bombed country on Earth. During the Viet Nam war the United States dropped more than 2½ million tons of bombs on Laos: this small rural country had 30 per cent more bombs dropped on it than did industrial Germany during the Second World War.

The Vietnamese liberation movement made use of parts of Laos that came to be called the "Ho Chi Minh Trail," assisted by the revolutionary Pathet Lao movement, while the CIA encouraged ethnic tensions within Laos and financed such groups as the "Secret Army" led by Vang Pao.

Laos has sixty-seven different ethnic communities, with the main group, the Lao, making up less than a third of the total population.

French colonialism left the country devoid of industry and without even a modest working class or intelligentsia. As a result, the class and national aspects of the anti-imperialist struggle were understood by the People's Revolutionary Party as necessitating a national-democratic struggle against imperialism and the feudal structure of society.

The first five-year plan did not reach its objectives, and economic growth slowed. As a

Seán Joseph Clancy

***Socialist Voice* Editorial Board**

WE REGRET to inform readers of *Socialist Voice* of the death of one of our regular contributors, Seán Joseph Clancy, who wrote regularly on events in his adopted homeland, Cuba.

Seán was born and raised in the suburb of Raheny in Dublin. He first went to Cuba in 1999 on holiday, falling in love with all things Cuban, its political and economic system, its people and its culture. He eventually married a Cuban *compañera*. He also leaves an eight-year-old son and a stepdaughter.

When Seán moved to Cuba he worked as a collaborator with the news agency Prensa Latina and made regular appearances on Radio Havana International, speaking

Bombs away!

Robert Navan

IN 1985 A delegation of women from the United States held a press conference in Managua, Nicaragua. This was at a time when Nicaragua was suffering a terrorist campaign, waged by the United States. The women assumed—correctly—that the site of the conference would attract more attention to their plight.

All of them were the wives, partners or relatives of men who had died or were dying from the effects of Agent Orange. Interestingly, hardly any of these men had ever set foot in Viet Nam, and nearly all of them were non-combatants. Among them were handlers and loaders in the bases where the deadly chemical was loaded onto planes that then deposited it on the unlucky people of Viet Nam.

It was not that barrels or containers of the chemical had been inadvertently damaged or burst while being handled or loaded: the agent is so toxic that even the proximity of the men to it in the loading area resulted in their exposure to cancer.

To this day Agent Orange is present in the water table of Viet Nam and is still causing birth defects. Its use must rank as one of the most heinous crimes against humanity. In some

result, in 1986 the state launched the New Economic Mechanism, modelled on the New Economic Policy in the early years of Soviet Russia. The aim was to attract foreign capital investment while introducing aspects of a market economy into the country.

Laos cannot be labelled as socialist but rather as a socialist state that is building the material basis for socialism. The country still has significant problems, mainly arising from the unexploded bombs dropped on it in the 1960s and 70s. Every year more than three hundred people are killed or injured by the unexploded bombs that litter the countryside. Only 1 per cent of these bombs have been cleared, which makes about a third of the country's land unsafe for the people trying to earn a living from it. The United States has given some aid towards making the countryside safe from bombs, but nowhere near the amount it cost to actually drop the bombs.

The effects of the counter-revolutions in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union forced the country to open up further to penetration by external capital. However, the state still maintains a good deal of control over the market. The system of political economy can be said to be similar in some respects to the "people's democracy" models in Poland and Hungary, with some modifications to suit much more backward conditions in Laos. Because of this, the Lao economy has never experienced a recession, unlike the much larger capitalist states, and it was spared most of the problems affecting other Asian economies after the Asian financial crisis of 1997.

In 1992 the poverty rate stood at 46 per cent, but by 2008 this had dropped to 28 per cent, showing the success of the state's economic policies. Land is nationalised by law, and may not be privately owned. Land management authorities make sure the state has the say in how land is used, and by whom.

Laos cannot be labelled as socialist but rather as a socialist state that is building the material basis for socialism.

Under the Labour Law of 2006 all labour units must have an affiliated trade union to represent the workers. The Lao Federation of Trade Unions has nearly 100,000 members. This is impressive when we consider the very small working class in the country, with more than 70 per cent of the population engaged in agriculture. Work is typically for eight hours a day and not more than forty-eight hours a week, with overtime having to be decided beforehand in consultation with the trade unions.

The law makes it difficult for workers to be dismissed, but if they are the employer must first find them alternative employment. Workers who are pregnant, are undergoing medical treatment or have given birth less than a year previously cannot be dismissed. Health services are also provided for by the state, under the constitution.

Laos is a country with much value for those eager to understand the complexities involved in the building of socialism in very difficult conditions. The priority for the country now is not to nationalise every economic unit in the country but rather to use foreign capital to develop strategic industries, such as mining and hydro-electric power, while providing for the people's needs, developing the working class as a force in the country, and allowing the country to build the foundations of socialism.

about current events in Cuba to its listeners abroad. He ran a *casa particular* (bed and breakfast) in the city of Trinidad in Sancti Spíritus for the last ten years, a welcoming home for its many visitors.

Seán was active in the campaign to free the Cuban Five and of the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five and was part of the international delegation that went to Washington to lobby the Congress for the release of the Cuban anti-terrorist heroes. He was also active in the international campaign for the release of Ana Belén Montes, an American citizen of Puerto Rican origin now serving a 25-year prison sentence on espionage charges.

As well as *Socialist Voice*, Seán was a regular contributor to *Dawn News* and *Counterpunch*. His articles in *Socialist Voice* were always informative and insightful, giving an Irish audience first-hand knowledge of current and topical events in Cuba. They were an essential antidote to the bile churned out daily by the establishment media about all things relating to the Cuban Revolution.

When back in Ireland visiting his family Seán would drop into Connolly House to catch up on current political developments. He had a high degree of knowledge of Irish history and the long struggle against British imperialism in his homeland.

Seán was true to the traditions of his people, an internationalist and anti-imperialist. We are all the richer to have been able to read his articles. We salute his contribution and his memory.

respects, the US war against Viet Nam continues.

Gas and chemical warfare is not new in the history of humanity. As early as 590 BC there are records of the Athenian military tainting the water supply of the besieged city of Kirrha with poisonous hellebore plants.

The first major use of chemical weapons on an industrial scale appeared during the First World War, when sulphur gas was used by the German army against British and Canadian soldiers. In 1917 British forces used gas against their Turkish counterparts in the battle for Gaza. Again in Gaza, but this time in 2009, the Israeli army used white-phosphorus shells over densely populated areas.

Poison gas was used by Italy against Libya as early as January 1928. In 1935 the Italian army used mustard gas against the Ethiopians during the Second Italo-Abyssinian War.

The United States and its allies used depleted uranium and white phosphorus in both the Gulf War and Iraq War. The rate of birth defects and congenital malformations in Fallujah, Iraq, after the attack on that city by US forces is said to exceed that of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki after the nuclear bomb attacks near the end of the Second World War.

Napalm, developed in 1942 in a secret laboratory by Harvard University, was another chemical delight brought to the table by the United States in the Second World War and the Korean and Viet Nam Wars. American napalm was used in 1948 and 1949 in the Greek civil war against the anti-fascist resistance fighters, who had been instrumental in the Allied defeat of German forces in Greece.

This is but a short summary of this kind of warfare; many more examples are available. All bombs are, by their nature, appalling, especially if you happen to be within range of one, in which case it probably doesn't matter much which type it is.

Since they were invented, chemical weapons have been in regular use by all the major powers; but now, suddenly, they have been noticed by our media. The resulting clamour led to the United States, Britain and France carrying out air strikes against Syrian sites for that country's alleged use of gas weapons. These strikes were carried out before the sites could be inspected for evidence of chemical weapons.

Without being an apologist for the Assad regime, one cannot help but be cognisant of the hypocrisy of the Western media and the NATO allies as far as chemical weapons are concerned.

Celebrate the creator of political photomontage

Jenny Farrell on the life, art and politics of John Heartfield who died fifty years ago, on 26 April 1968. He was the creator of political photomontage, a fearless communist and activist.

HELMUT HERZFELD was born on 19 June 1891 in Berlin. In 1899 his parents abandoned Herzfeld, his brother and two sisters at a very young age. The children lived with relatives after that. After finishing school in 1905, the brothers moved first to Wiesbaden and from there to Munich in 1909, where Heartfield studied art. First he worked as a commercial artist and later continued his studies in Berlin.

In protest against chauvinist war propaganda and the greeting "May God punish England," Herzfeld translated his surname to English, calling himself thenceforth John Heartfield.

Heartfield's brother Wieland and he worked closely together throughout their lives. Together they published the magazine *Neue Jugend* in Berlin in 1917–18, where John Heartfield pioneered a new typography. They founded the Malik-Verlag publishing house in 1917. When the Communist Party of Germany was founded, in December 1918, Heartfield joined immediately. He produced stage sets for proletarian theatres and posters for the Communist Party and contributed artwork for magazines and pamphlets.

Over the following years he began experimenting with new ways of working with photographs. These photomontages were used for the book covers of the Malik-Verlag and other progressive publishing houses. He also collaborated with other anti-fascist artists, such as George Grosz, especially in creating collages in the early post-war years.

Photomontage became Heartfield's specific artistic weapon. He made photomontages commenting on contemporary politics, beginning with the famous image *Fathers and Sons* in 1924. After 1930 he contributed frequently to the weeklies *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung (AIZ)* and *Volks-Illustrierte,* often collaborating with Wieland in creating montages.

The photomontages on the covers of the widely sold AIZ appeared at news stands throughout Germany. He used the rotogravure process, which engraved pictures, words and designs into the printing plate, to design montages on posters, which were distributed in the streets of Berlin in 1932 and 1933.

The spirit of class struggle and in particular of the October Revolution imbues the book covers he created for the works of revolutionary German, American and Soviet writers, for the collected editions of Tolstoy, Gorky, Ehrenburg and Sinclair. He responded directly to world events: the British general strike in 1926, the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti in the United States in 1927, and the planned framing of the eight Scottsboro Boys in Alabama in 1931.

When fascism took over in Germany, the Nazis targeted him immediately. A dramatic flight brought him to Prague, where he resumed his work for the emigrated *AIZ* and Malik-Verlag. An entire series of photomontages was dedicated to the trial of Dimitrov in 1933 and later, in 1936-37, to the battles of the Spanish Republic and the International Brigades.

In 1938 Hitler demanded the extradition of Heartfield and other anti-fascists. This demand was rejected by the Czechoslovak government.

In December 1938, shortly before the Nazis marched into Prague, Heartfield fled to London. At first he was interned as an enemy alien. Following his release, he received permission to stay in Britain, while Wieland did not and had to flee to the United States. In London Heartfield was one of the founders of the Free German League of Culture, took part in many activities, and worked for British publishing houses as typographer and designer.

Returning in 1950 from emigration in Britain, Heartfield settled in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). Despite serious heart trouble, he kept on working in the interests of socialism and world peace.

"Today the people of peace of all countries must work together even more closely, and mobilise all resources to strengthen and save world peace, since warlike rulers are rallying for war. The Civil War in Spain was the fascist manoeuvre field for the Second World War; in the same way today's wars endanger world peace.

"With his famous painting Guernica Picasso supported the heroic anti-fascist fighters in Spain. He succeeded his compatriot Goya in the struggle against war. He also created the wonderful lithograph of the world-famous flying dove of peace. That the dove shall never again be impaled upon a bayonet (as shown in one of my photomontages), all advocates of peace, whatever their political opinions, must close the ranks in the fight to maintain peace.

"And to work for this great triumph has been the aim of . . . my artistic work since . . . earliest youth."

—John Heartfield, Berlin, 9 June 1967.

Far left: *War and Death: the last hope of the rich.*
Above left: Fathers and Sons, 1924
Top right: *Never Again*
Bottom left: *This is the Good that they bring*
Lower middle: *The meaning of the Hitler salute (Millions stand behind me)*
Bottom right: *If you want armament deals, finance peace conferences*

LETTERS

Will the circle be unbroken?

Comrades,
So far, the issue of the fodder shortage does not seem to have troubled the pages of SV, and I'm hoping that this letter may be a first.

Briefly, for those of you who have not been following the "crisis," it seems that the prolonged wet winter has meant that Irish farmers have not been able to allow their cattle outdoors to graze. This means that farmers have been forced to feed fodder instead of grass to their cattle.

Due to the prolonged bad weather conditions, supplies of fodder are dangerously low. In some cases they have completely run out.

Now here's where my issues begin. Most of these farmers are private operators and are not noted for their revolutionary Marxist politics, but one of the first demands of their leaders was for the government (i.e. the taxpayer) to foot the bill for imported fodder.

Many commentators have mentioned that gases emitted from cattle are a major contributing factor to climate change. One of the results of this change is the long wet winters which Ireland is now experiencing. So, will the taxpayers' money be spent on a climate-damaging exercise?

Worst of all, the state (i.e. the taxpayer) is facing EU fines of up to €450 million in 2020 for missing legally binding targets on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The dairy industry is one of the culprits, if not the major culprit.

My second question is whether the unsuspecting taxpayer will pay twice, firstly for the fodder and secondly for the ensuing fine.

I'm hoping, through the good offices of the *SV* letters page, to clear up some of my questions, as I'm sure that there's a vast bank of agricultural knowledge among our readers. Who knows, this may lead to a SV farming column.

Robert Navan,
Dublin

James Connolly Festival 2018

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

2018 James Connolly Commemoration
Sunday 13 May, 3 pm
Oration by Gearóid Ó Machail
(member of the Peadar O'Donnell Socialist Republican Forum, Armagh)
Alex Homits (general secretary, Connolly Youth Movement).
Arbour Hill Military Cemetery,
Dublin 7

Coming in June new edition of
The Life and Times of James Connolly
www.manifestopress.org.uk
www.connollyassociation.org.uk
www.connollybooks.org