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FORCING WORKERS TO PAY

For months the media have been full of stories about the **cost-of-living crisis**, the climate crisis, the housing crisis, and the crisis in the health service. Analysis from **Jimmy Cocoran** >P2



"The world has never seen greater devotion, determination and self-sacrifice than have been displayed by the Russian people . . . With a nation that in saving itself is thereby helping to save all the world from the Nazi menace, this country of ours should always be glad to be a good neighbour and a sincere friend to the world of the future."

Franklin Roosevelt (president of the United States), 28 July 1943.

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CAPITALISM

JIMMY COCORAN

CRISIS

The Government has laid the blame on the world economy, or on supply-line issues, either as a result of the pandemic or of the war in Ukraine (take your pick). They have blamed the public for using too much electricity, too much water, too much petrol. The opposition parties blame the Government.

The prevailing consensus, articulated by the political establishment, is that such crises, while regrettable, are perfectly normal. Best hunker down, buy candles in case of power cuts, and hope for the best. The media act as an echo chamber, and there is a constant loop of analysis and solutions to the various crises without ever mentioning the real cause:

capitalism!

We are living through a crisis of capitalism for which it, and its government, will try to force the working class to pay. Capitalism by its very nature seeks to increase its profitability: that is its *raison d'être*. It is not an issue of good or bad capitalists: the drive to increase profits will lead them to try to force down wages, increase rents, use more and more non-renewable resources. The drive to increase profits forces capitalism to risk exterminating all life on the planet.

Working-class communities throughout the country are beginning to organise to resist further attacks on their standard of living. Under pressure from the rank and file, trade unions have begun to ballot their members for industrial action, with the example of the British transport workers

demonstrating the strength of organised labour. Already the Government is sounding out the ICTU to see if they can forestall any militancy by tying the trade unions into a below-inflation pay deal.

Coalitions are being formed to protest against increases in the cost of living and to demand action by the Government. Tenants are beginning to organise against exorbitant rents, and the CPI's demand for public housing for all as the only solution to the housing crisis is gaining more and more support. Opposition to plans for more data centres—heavy users of electricity and water (see *Socialist Voice*, August 2022)—is growing.

These campaigns deal with specific issues; and were they to achieve their aims they would bring real benefits to working-class communities. They demonstrate that only by being

PUBLIC HOUSING IS THE SOLUTION



JIMMY DORAN

HOUSING

THE HOUSING crisis will not be solved by treating the symptoms.

The root cause—the Government's political strategy of transferring the provision of homes to the private sector—is the problem that has to be tackled if we are to solve this crisis permanently.

This requires a sustained national building campaign by the state for publicly owned housing, as was done from the 1930s to the 70s. Homes must be universally accessible, for rents linked to income, with a new public housing service—similar to health, education, or transport—and on an all-Ireland basis, as British colonialism in the North has also failed to meet the needs of the citizens.

The common denominator north and south is capitalism.

The housing crisis is used by many

politicians as a tactic for getting elected. They are not necessarily trying to solve the problem—some of course are, but most have no intention and no interest in solving it. The proof of this is that the housing problem for citizens has not improved over the last decade—in fact it's getting worse, as the interests of capital are the priority of the politicians.

Once in the Dáil or Stormont they become part of what Connolly called the "committee of the rich" and set about confusing, distracting and watering down demands to protect the interests of the capitalist class.

An example of watering down demands is the "cost-rental model" for public housing. This is a system whereby the tenant pays the full cost of building and maintaining the house over a period of thirty years, even up to and including the provision of a sinking fund that would provide for any unplanned costs, such as re-roofing, plumbing, rewiring, etc.

So to receive a reduction in rent of about 25 per cent of the exorbitant rack-rents demanded by the market without ever owning the home, ownership would be in the hands of finance capital. If the rent is still unaffordable the state will subsidise it, thus using the low-paid worker as a vehicle for transferring more wealth by way of rent subsidies back to the propertied classes, who in many cases are one and the same as those paying the poverty wages to workers that make rents unaffordable in the first place.

There is no crisis that capitalism cannot solve so long as the working class are willing to pay for it.

Income-linked differential rent is the proven system that worked for generations of public-housing tenants who lived comfortably in many thousands of homes built and owned by the state.

Ownership is always a class issue; and whoever owns the homes controls the cost, rent, availability, and design; that is, what the market considers a suitable home for the working class. Once the state owns the property the private sector is excluded and denied access to the massive income stream and the power attained through the provision of shelter.

Differential rents in Ireland are 10–15 per cent of income. Today some people spend as much as 70 per cent of their income on rent, with no security of tenure. They can be evicted at the



organised as a class can the working class make advances or defend their communities.

However, even if workers get pay increases in excess of inflation, even if rents are reduced, and public housing becomes the norm, unless capitalism is overthrown and replaced by socialism all those gains are at risk of being reversed.

After the Second World War the creation of the National Health Service was one of the greatest achievements of the British labour movement; but, because Britain remained a capitalist country, the NHS has been under attack almost since its inception—and, as those in the Six Counties can attest, it is now but a pale shadow of what it was.

Compare this with Cuba, which is a much poorer country than Britain but has a health service that is the envy of the world and, despite the illegal US embargo, was still able to send medical

teams to many countries—including EU countries—to help combat covid-19. Cuba has a socialist economy, which is geared towards the needs of society and not the quest for profit; and that one fact underpins the difference between the two health systems.

That is not to say that communists believe that these struggles are futile and destined to end in failure. These struggles are necessary to improve the living standard of the working class; in many cases they are necessary to prevent wholesale pauperisation. However, while organisation is a central element of working-class advance, of equal importance is the politics of the movement. As Marx and Engels wrote in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), “*In short, the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things. In all these movements, they bring to the front, as the leading question in each, the property question,*

Working-class communities throughout the country are beginning to organise to resist further attacks on their standard of living.

no matter what its degree of development at the time.”

This means putting forward a Marxist analysis and trying to win the majority to a socialist position. The extreme right will put forward left-sounding slogans, blaming the “elite” without ever mentioning capitalism. There is also the danger of being incorporated in the electoral system. Time and again “leftist” parties have taken over campaigns and argued that if they were elected they would take the fight to the Dáil. Any possibility of developing a radical viewpoint was then safely channelled into electoral politics.

With parliamentary elections due within the next few years, north and south of the border, the task for revolutionaries is to fight for socialist ideas and oppose the cul-de-sac of electoralism.

Organisation and socialist politics are the key to resisting the capitalist offensive, which is intensifying. ★

whim of the landlord. All this money denied to the economy goes straight into the pockets of the elite.

Others spend forty years skimming and saving to pay off a mortgage on a home they will only ever own for a few years before their death. This money goes directly to the propertied classes also.

We must break with the idea of private property and land-ownership. We need to reverse the policy of selling public housing to tenants. An essential strand in public housing would be the purchasing by the state, particularly from older people or those nearing retirement, of the family home, while allowing them to live in it until they depart this life. This would end pension poverty for many people and also add to the public housing stock of the state.

With a state-owned building company, building workers will have well-paid union jobs and continuity of work, with an end to the boom and bust in the building industry, unemployment, and the emigrant ship.

With the state now building enough homes each year to house the people, property prices will stabilise and then fall. The private rented accommodation used by landlords to suck the blood from citizens through excessive rents will now be worth only a small fraction of their previous value. The state should have no hesitation in buying these properties for knock-down prices and adding them to the public housing stock.

With differential rents, citizens are freed from the burden of massive debt, or excessive rents, at the behest of

landlords and banks.

More disposable income in the citizen’s pocket as a result of reduced rents in turn puts more money into the local economy, providing more jobs and security for society as a whole. This is



“I personally will not apologise for being a landlord.”—Robert Troy (Fianna Fáil).

the ultimate transformative demand which can free citizens from poverty and insecurity of shelter and be a foundation-stone for ending inequality.

Social wellbeing and health will improve, with the burden of debt, uncertainty and unaffordable rents becoming a thing of the past. As free time grows, quality of life will improve, and emboldened workers can reach their full potential and achieve new goals only ever dreamed of in the past.

Public housing is the solution to the housing crisis.

Can it be done?

In 2006, 93,419 homes were built in Ireland. The narrative has been

created by the state that there is a shortage of construction workers. There is no such shortage; but construction workers are building for the needs of capital, not society. Most of them are building hotels, data centres, and office blocks, which should not be the priority in the middle of a housing crisis. Of course the housing crisis is a crisis only for the citizen, not for the developers, speculators, and bankers.

There is a housing emergency, caused by the Government’s housing policy.

In times of emergency the state needs to act. It’s ironic that any time there is an economic or social emergency socialist policies are enacted, whether nationalising the banks in 2008, or taking over the private hospitals during the pandemic, or building public housing in 1930–1970.

The capitalist class only allows this as a temporary measure, a short-term compromise with the working class.

Who would complain if we were to keep the Beacon Hospital, AIB Bank or all the council houses in public ownership in perpetuity as state assets, to benefit society as a whole?

Instead of socialising debt and subsidising landlords, it’s time to nationalise the building of homes, with a state-owned construction company to build and maintain universally accessible public housing for the common good.

For that matter, why stop at housing? There is certainly a case for nationalising all industry and starting to build an economy for the common good. ★



IMPERIALISM AND TAIWAN



GRAHAM HARRINGTON
COLD WAR/HOT WAR

THE RECENT VISIT of the speaker of the US House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, to Taiwan has sharply increased the prospect of war in the region. The Chinese government and people strongly believe Taiwan to be their territory; and the no. 3 official in the US government visiting Taiwan is a clear provocation.

Taiwan was invaded by Dutch colonists in 1624, only to be repulsed in 1662 by the Chinese national hero Zheng Chenggong. Taiwan became a full province in Qing Dynasty China in 1885. Ten years later the then Qing government lost Taiwan in a war with imperialist Japan. The Japanese were sold weapons by the United States with which to do this.

After the surrender of the Japanese following the Second World War, the

Republic of China continued its war against the Chinese communists, who would go on to defeat the nationalist KMT and proclaim the People's Republic in 1949, thus bringing to an end the Chinese Civil War.

Efforts to defeat the remaining KMT forces on Taiwan were delayed by the US aggression in Korea, with hundreds of thousands of Chinese soldiers engaging American and other troops; and by the time the Korean War ended the United States had deployed forces to prevent the communists entering Taiwan. This would later increase to tens of thousands of US soldiers, and nuclear weapons, on the territory.

The present entity known as the "Republic of China" had China's seat at the United Nations until 1971, when the People's Republic was recognised by the international community as the true representatives of the Chinese people, with even the United States opening

THERE IS ALWAYS PROFIT IN WAR



CLOVER CARROLL
PROFITEERING

THERE IS ALWAYS profit to be made in war; and the war in Ukraine is no different.

The warmongering weapons manufacturers, such as Lockheed Martin, Rheinmetall, Raytheon, and BAE Systems, will not spare any casualties if there is a profit to be made. The blood of war fuels the profits of the bourgeoisie, so much so that they will push the propaganda that "Ukraine can win" and ignore all questions raised about peace talks.

Even in Ukraine the national bourgeoisie takes advantage of the war and the predicament of their working-class citizens. In March, wartime legislation was passed that gave the capitalist class of Ukraine all the advantages to begin removing rights for workers throughout the country. This legislation severely curtails the ability of trade unions to represent their members and introduces the "suspension of employment," meaning that employees are not fired but their work and wages are suspended. This



diplomatic relations with the PRC in 1979—and, in the process, abandoning its military presence in Taiwan.

It was clear that the Taiwan authorities could not seriously claim to represent the Chinese people. Their case only weakened further after China's "Reform and Opening Up" led to its economic boom and corresponding improvement in the PRC's global standing. Taiwan remained a dictatorship under the KMT until the late 1980s, with underlying tensions between the mainland KMT elite who arrived in 1949 and those who had emigrated from Fujian province over the centuries. During its rule the KMT brutally suppressed communists and leftists.

After so-called "democratisation" a variety of political forces emerged in Taiwan. These included, for the first time, pro-independence forces, and even some who wanted Taiwan to become the 51st state of the United States! Chief among these was the Democratic Progressive Party, the present ruling party in Taiwan, which is pro-secession.

In recent decades the Taiwan authorities have promoted a distinct "Taiwanese" identity, and political leaders have endorsed abandoning the One China principle.

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Of course Taiwan will never be an independent state. Firstly, the PRC has stated that a declaration of independence would force it into military action to retake the territory. Secondly, a hypothetical "independent" Taiwan would essentially be a colony of the United States: its fate would be much the same as US military colonies in Guam, Hawaii, and Okinawa.

Hawaii was a sovereign state until the United States invaded and annexed it in 1895. It is now the site of the US army's Pacific Command. Okinawa, a part of the Ryukyu Islands, was independent until invaded by Japan in 1879 and then occupied by the United States after Japan's defeat in the Second World War. Today, while Okinawa only makes up 1 per cent of Japan's territory, it has 70 per cent of the US military presence in Japan.

In Okinawa alone, more than 576 American military personnel have been arrested for serious crimes, such as murder and rape. No wonder that these bases are sites of regular protests.

The People's Republic and Taiwan enjoyed developing relations up to very recently, with students from both travelling to attend university, and tourists going on holiday. Taiwan is dependent on the mainland's economy

for its own economic development.

The PRC has offered reunification under the "One Country, Two Systems" model, similar to Hong Kong and Macau. This would bring Taiwan into the People's Republic as an autonomous region, keeping its own political-economic system for now.

China's recent military exercises, which surrounded the territory of Taiwan, show that the United States cannot prevent China taking military action should the situation continue to deteriorate. The United States has given Taiwan \$70 billion in military aid since 1979. It is clear that US imperialism is intent on provoking the Chinese leadership, despite the Chinese having the military advantage when it comes to the region around Taiwan.

The desire of China's people to reunify with Taiwan needs no justification for an Irish audience, given our own situation in a country partitioned by external forces. The United States is making a mistake in not concentrating on its own problems rather than meddling in China's internal affairs, as a defeat against China—coming so soon after the war in Ukraine and the withdrawal from Afghanistan—would show US imperialism to be just a paper tiger. ★

leaves workers in a limbo of not knowing when they will be working again.

Under Ukraine's wartime suspension of certain labour rights the management of New Post—Ukraine's largest private postal service and once a flagship for good working relations between unions and management—revoked thirty points of the collective agreement with the union. These included providing workers with uniforms, the availability of a first-aid kit in the work-place, and regular working hours, among others.

This is part of a plan among Ukrainian members of parliament to "de-Sovietise" the country. While the term is blatant propaganda, what the new law seeks to do is to set workers' rights back to before the socialist revolution. Under a draft law, people who work in firms up to those classed as medium-sized—those with up to 250 employees—would be removed from the country's existing labour laws and covered by individual contracts negotiated with their employer.

More than 70 per cent of the Ukrainian work force would be affected by this change. It is entirely in favour of the bourgeois class, and in effect it would allow employers to set any terms with employees. This is something that the members of parliament have been waiting for, and the war with Russia has given them the ability to do so, with

**IMAGE LEFT
War and
corpses
by John
Heartfield
1932**

many workers and union members on the front lines of the war, unable to protest.

According to Vitalyi Dudin, a representative of the Social Movement organisation and an expert on labour law, Ukraine's civil law is based on the idea that employers and employees are equal. This is not the case, however, as the employer has the advantage. These new laws have introduced the possibility of millions of people being forced into unemployment or temporarily losing their job for an unknown length of time, which results in essentially the same.

While the Ukrainian government attempts to profit from the war with anti-worker legislation, NATO governments have also begun raising military expenditure, fuelling the corporations that profit most during war times. For example, America's military expenditure last year amounted to \$782 billion, having been \$778 billion in 2020. The United States accounts for 39 per cent of global military expenditure—more than three times that of China and more than twelve times that of Russia.

NATO was excessively over-armed during the Cold War, and it continues to be today. Germany has increased its expenditure to 2 per cent of the country's GDP, up from 1.4 per cent in 2020, as well as a one-off payment of €100 billion. This has made Germany

NATO's second-biggest spender, overtaking Britain.

The military industry has produced a boom in profits from this mass expenditure, with Lockheed and Raytheon shares up by 16 per cent and those of BAE Systems up 26 per cent. These profits will only grow as the American war machine has begun turning our heads away from Ukraine and Russia to China and Taiwan.

The United States has a history of waging a cold war against China and is now agitating against China by showing support for Taiwan's independence. America's official attitude on Taiwan is the one-China policy, which states, "The PRC is the sole legitimate government, and Taiwan is part of China." With military bases in Japan and South Korea, the United States has an advantage against China if a war were to break out.

But even with this information, and with rising tensions around the world caused by imperialism, we must not despair. Antonio Gramsci said: "I'm a pessimist because of intelligence, but an optimist because of will." We must understand the issues and problems of the world, but we must also have the will to change them.

The workers have the power, and they have the means, to bring real change to the world. ★





VARADKAR-MARTIN ALLIANCE DESPERATE TO MAINTAIN PARTITION

▲ PARTITION AND EMPIRE
Liam Neelson plays Michael Collins

TOMMY MCKEARNEY
PARTITION

THE RECENT exhaustive celebrations of Michael Collins's life were selective and tendentious. There was very little mention of his campaign against Dublin Castle's G men and British intelligence but heavy emphasis on his role in negotiating the Treaty and founding the Free State.

In reality, the centenary events were an attempt by the Southern establishment to cement the present neoliberal status quo. It was almost as if the fallen general was reaching out posthumously to endorse a hundred years of fight-wing governance by Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael.

All the while, a century of so-called Irish independence was being heralded by the Dublin government as if British interference in Irish affairs had ended with the establishment of the Free State. Nowhere was there any reference to when Collins had lamented that too

few in Irish political circles understood how the British state really operated in Ireland. While the same critique might well have eventually applied to the Big Fella himself, his observation was and remains accurate and relevant.

This is an important factor when analysing the present situation, and not only in the Six Counties but throughout the country. Because no matter how much talk there is of independence, or, nowadays, of a new relationship between the two countries, English imperialism still exerts a huge influence on this side of the Irish Sea—a fact that still makes breaking the connection essential if we are to build a fair and progressive society in this country.

Regardless of what structures happen to be in place here, the British ruling class continues to look upon Ireland as somewhere to be kept within its immediate region of influence, if not as an actual colony. This was the underlying rationale behind the imposed Treaty. This too was the thinking

underpinning Britain's response to the most recent Northern conflict, when it employed bloody counter-insurgency measures to deal with what at first had been identified as a democratic deficit.

And so it remains, as evidenced by the recent Tory leadership debate, both candidates eager to override an international treaty in relation to the Six Counties and casually dismiss investigation of British state criminality in Ireland.

Britain's exercise of sovereignty over the Six Counties gives it a direct say in affairs in the northern part of Ireland. By extension, this also affords an opportunity to have an influence on matters south of the border. On the one hand this occurs through official channels, such as the North–South ministerial arrangement and the British–Irish Intergovernmental Conference, both established under the Belfast Agreement.

There is nevertheless a less visible but equally strong element at work. That



is, the Southern establishment's deeply rooted fear of the type of transformational change that might emerge in a post-partition environment. This means in practice that Britain has disguised leverage over political decision-making in Dublin. All that is required is to merely intimate that London may consider making constitutional change north of the border.

Indeed, desperation to maintain partition has accelerated a de facto merger between Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, a pact that has been further sealed by the Varadkar-Martin double act at the Bealnablagh centenary commemoration. Ironically, this consolidation of ultra-conservative forces has been responsible for the rapid expansion of anti-partitionist Sinn Féin.

Undoubtedly, official Britain is keeping a watchful eye on these developments. London always has a keen interest in what is happening in a country a few miles off its western shores—not that Ireland is any military or financial threat to British interests. Moreover, the old Empire's decline as a global superpower has actually reduced the risk of Ireland being used as a springboard for invasion.

London's strategic priorities vis-à-vis this country have therefore changed over recent decades. No longer required as a vital military "asset," or indeed as important a source of cheap agricultural produce as before, the emphasis is now on ensuring that Ireland does not set a "bad example" for the English working class, that a new Irish Republic would not, in the words of James Connolly, become "a word to conjure with—a rallying point for the disaffected, a haven for the oppressed, a point of departure for the socialist, enthusiastic in the cause of human freedom."¹

Over the past four decades Britain's welfare state has been subjected to a relentless neoliberal assault. The once-proud National Health Service is faltering in all sectors.² Council housing is a thing of the past. Less-well-off third-level students are having to take out government loans that often require a lifetime to repay. An astonishing 13 per cent of the population are living in absolute poverty, according to a report by the House of Commons library.³ More recently, the threat of inflation is exacerbating the hardship experienced by working-class communities in Britain.

The blame for this grave situation lies primarily with the Thatcherite Conservative Party and its wealthy backers. At the moment Liz Truss, the favourite to become leader of the Conservative Party and therefore prime

minister, is proposing to cut taxes on the rich and smash the unions. Her merciless political code is shared by Rishi Sunak, her challenger for 10 Downing Street.

Unfortunately, the leader of Britain's Labour Party, Keir Starmer, is offering little alternative to the free-marketeers as he remains wedded to right-of-centre Blairite economic policies.

Significantly, though, opposition to this cosy neoliberal consensus is now emerging from within Britain's organised labour movement. Indeed the most prominent spokesperson from within the trade union movement is Mick Lynch of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, son of Irish parents and, incidentally, an avowed admirer of James Connolly.

In the light of the present "condition of the working class in England" it is hardly surprising that Britain's privileged ruling caste would view a move towards socialism in Ireland as inimical to its self-interest. Unlike China or Cuba, we are a close neighbour, with a substantial and regular exchange of tourists and visitors, not to mention the historically large Irish diaspora living in Britain (one of whom is the aforementioned Mick Lynch).

Imagine how difficult it would be for Britain's neoliberal establishment to justify or even explain why a newly socialist Ireland could provide a comprehensive health service, public housing and an end to poverty while they preside over a deprived society. Better from their point of view to use all available leverage to reinforce the position of their right-wing bedfellows in the Republic.

A presence in the Six Counties affords many opportunities, direct and indirect, to do so. The Orange card was played before to foil the "freedom to achieve freedom" by providing "stepping-stones" to the Republic. A modern version would be used again but this time to prevent socialism.

Challenging the carnival of reaction, north and south, must now mean leaving the Big Fella to rest in peace. Focus instead on working to achieve Connolly's vision of a workers' republic, with the working class in control of everything from the Plough to the stars. ★

NOTES

1 James Connolly, *Socialism and Nationalism* (1897).

2 See "Britain is 'sleepwalking' into the death of the NHS," *Morning Star*, 19 August 2022.

3 House of Commons Library, "Poverty in the UK: Statistics," 13 April 2022 (<https://bit.ly/3pAFFUo>).



"SHOOTING BY ROSTER"

DÓNALL Ó BRIAIN

The British and Irish media have been singing the praises of Field-Marshal (retired) Henry Wilson, assassinated outside his home in London on 22 June 1922 by two members of the IRA, seemingly on the orders of the IRB (i.e. Michael Collins).

Wilson was a former chief of staff of British forces, then a Unionist member of Parliament and military adviser to the Ulster Unionists.

What the Irish media are not so keen for you to know is that in May 1920, during the War of Independence, Wilson had advocated shooting five hostages for every member of the RIC killed (which at that point included the Black and Tans) and "a clean-cut policy on shooting by roster." He it was who, in keeping with this policy, instigated what are known as the "Curfew Murders," carried out by Auxiliaries with the collaboration of British soldiers.

On 6 March 1921 the mayor of Limerick, George Clancy, the previous mayor, Michael O'Callaghan, and another man were victims of this murder policy.

A successful campaign was launched by Ian Paisley Junior to have a memorial plaque erected in the House of Commons to add to those honouring members of Parliament who were "killed in action or by terrorists." It's hardly necessary to say that the Dublin political class and their servile media gave it their full support, asserting, with their customary clichés, that the Irish people have "matured" (whatever that means) and now support "reconciliation"—i.e. reconciling us to our subordinate status as junior (very junior) partners of imperialism, so putting the finishing touches to Redmondism, now the accepted if not admitted ideology of all the political parties.



TIME FOR LEADERSHIP AND CLEAR DEMANDS

A call to action for communist and progressive trade unionists

NICOLA LAWLOR
INFLATION

The cost-of-living crisis—or, as the CPI more accurately describes it, the cost of greed—is now hitting working people hard throughout the country. It is time for clear demands from the trade union movement, and the leadership to win. But rest assured that no-one will present us with this as a gift.

The role of a union is very simple—and sometimes it feels that this has been forgotten. Listen to members. Clarify and crystallise that feedback into concrete demands. Place those demands as claims on employers or the Government. Communicate and mobilise on those claims, both internally, with members, and externally,

with the class more generally. Agree appropriate tactics for trying to win an acceptable outcome of the claims; and, above all else, as the late and wonderful Tom Redmond always reminded me, come out of the struggle structurally a stronger union.

That strength could mean workers more educated in class politics, or with more workers as members of the union, or with more activists involved—preferably all three!

This is the simple method that all progressive shop stewards or union staff should apply. Maybe I could be accused of “gas and water” socialism; but this is not a prescription for a communist party but for communist trade unionists.

Only if we engage workers actively in the struggle over wages and profits are unions a school of socialism. Otherwise they are mere yellow unions, staff associations, or communication forums for employers.

We now have a combination of rising costs, rising profits, rising inflation, and below-inflation pay increases. This is a transfer of wealth from working people to the already rich and the investor class of financiers and their functionaries. It is clear, just as in 2009, that once again working people are

LITHIUM: THE OIL OF THE FUTURE



SAJEEV KUMAR
LITHIUM

LITHIUM IS the lightest known metal, for which the heaviest competition for possession may occur in the future.

In the capitalist mode of production, human wants and necessities are converted into commodities: that is, use values are made to go through an exchange value system, through markets, with profit as the motive. Improvements in technology create new opportunities for capitalism to discover new uses for the elements of nature and convert them into commodities.

Since the Industrial Revolution, imperialism has plundered the earth for oil, creating wars and destroying ecosystems. The carbon emission that was 200 parts per million in the nineteenth century increased alarmingly to 410 ppm in 2010, and we are now tending towards the “planet boundary”

(450 ppm), beyond which it is impossible to reverse the damage caused by climate change, no matter what we try.

Even the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which scientists criticise as very conservative, says that if the Antarctic glaciers of Thwaites and Pine Island melt because of global warming, the sea level may go up by 3.35 metres, or 11 feet.

An increase in temperature of 2°C may raise the sea level by 1 metre, which would displace a billion people from their habitat, causing a mass exodus and a refugee crisis as a result of climate change catastrophe.

As the oil reserves are exhaustible and polluting, technology has to find alternatives and reduce carbon emissions. One of the solutions is to prevent emissions using electric vehicles.

Lithium is a main element in the manufacture of batteries for electric

Listening to union members in meetings and work-places, listening to friends and neighbours in our estates, communities, and GAA clubs, the twofold nature of the crisis is very clear: wages aren't going up enough, and prices are spiralling out of control.

robbed to increase the wealth of the rich. These are moments of great robbery. A Great Theft is occurring right now.

Inflation in the Republic has remained, two months in a row, at 9½ per cent. Inflation throughout the EU is at 9 per cent. Inflation in Britain is now at 10 per cent. Globally, energy prices were expected to rise by 50 per cent this year, but more recent estimates suggest it could be over 80 per cent. Bord Gáis electricity has been rising by 72 per cent since October 2020 and gas by 82 per cent.

Let us remember that the privatisation and sale of An Bord Gáis was a condition of the EU-IMF bail-out of the banking system (by way of the state, finally completed in 2014) in the last Great Theft. The profit of Centrica, the British owners of An Bord Gáis, increased from £262 million in the first half of 2022!

The annual earnings of BHP, the world's largest mining company, jumped by 26 per cent, to \$21.3 billion, its highest since 2011. Last year the ESB Group had a 10 per cent increase in its operating profits, to €679 million, while its dividend to the state rose by more than half, to €126 million. Thankfully, as an enterprise with a majority state ownership, it at least is paying a significant dividend to the state—unlike An Bord Gáis (as opposed to Gas Networks, the retained pipe infrastructure, which paid €70 million in

dividend). Unfortunately, however, the ESB is forced to artificially raise its prices to allow for “competition,” so that other providers can make a profit off us in an oligopoly cartel-style market.

The complete dysfunction of EU market regulations (or deregulation) is fully on display here, failing both workers and customers but rewarding profiteers through price-fixed oligopoly conditions.

BP's profits rose to \$8.45 billion. The world's five largest oil companies achieved a total of more than £50 billion in profit! The two largest Irish banks acquired nearly €1 billion in half-year profits for the first six months of 2022, with little or no “competition.” Tesco had a surge of 36 per cent in profit, to £2.6 billion. The list of statistics could go on.

Yet union-negotiated pay deals for twelve months have been in the region of 3 and 3½ per cent and the better ones between 4 and 5 per cent. In effect this is, bluntly, pay cuts and record profits.

Listening to union members in meetings and work-places, listening to friends and neighbours in our estates, communities, and GAA clubs, the twofold nature of the crisis is very clear: wages aren't going up enough, and prices are spiralling out of control. Our job as trade unionists is to concretise this into the twofold demand for (1) significant pay increases and specific cost-of-living payments from employers and (2) price controls on all major

expenses (utilities, transport, food, accommodation) from the Government.

This requires a co-ordinated campaign both in work-places and at the political level. But we appear to be very far from this in the trade union movement at this moment.

The job of communists in unions is to put forward at every opportunity this strategy of what our unions should be doing. No-one will make a gift of this strategy: we have to actively fight for it. Nor can, or should, we import approaches from Britain or elsewhere, whether through British unions here in Ireland or just through internet fads. While the struggle, and class, is international, our structures and strategies have to be based on our national conditions first and then reaching out further afield.

Just now, in our class conditions, we don't need vanity “political” projects, failed industrial action, or narcissistic leaders inflating their ego. Nor do we need people begging for white knights or saviours from afar. We need communists active in their unions putting forward these clear demands for better pay increases and cost-of-living payment in high-profit sectors as well as demands of the Government to implement price controls.

We need to build our unions' and workers' confidence in success, always raising expectations, ambitions, class confidence, and the organised structures of workers. ★

Imperialism promotes uneven development throughout the world, making the undeveloped countries just providers of raw materials by exploiting the land and labour of the indigenous people.

vehicles. Like the rush for gold and then for oil, there could be a lot of geopolitical tension in the acquisition of lithium. Elon Musk, who plans to set up a Tesla electric-vehicle factory in Brazil, is eyeing the deposits in the “lithium triangle” of Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile, which has half the world's lithium deposits, or about 5.4 million tonnes.

After Evo Morales was ousted from the presidency of Bolivia in 2019, Elon Musk tweeted: “We will coup whoever we want. Deal with it.” The reason for this message was the policy of “resource nationalism” followed by Morales, who was opposed to the surrender of resources to transnational mining companies and in favour of using the income for government expenditure on the education, health and public welfare of the Bolivian people. Bolivia under Morales had even started a project of producing electric vehicles with quantum motors with its own lithium batteries.

Musk deleted the tweet after public outrage. But the attitude of oligarchs like Musk is “Why are those indigenous people living over my lithium?” That is the same attitude the United Fruit

Company had when it said, “What is good for United Fruit is good for the United States, and vice versa.” In Guatemala, Jacobo Árbenz, who confiscated unused agricultural land from the United Fruit Company, was overthrown in 1954 by a CIA operation.

Imperialism promotes uneven development throughout the world, making the undeveloped countries just providers of raw materials by exploiting the land and labour of the indigenous people. The so-called “development” always comes at the cost of the environment, and indigenous people are the ones who have to live with the consequences, such as deforestation and the contamination of air and water.

A distinction between extraction (mining with minimum impact on the environment) and extractivism (mining for profits alone, with no commitment to the environment or social impact) is gaining popularity.

Controlling the emission of carbon is very important, and fossil fuels have to be replaced with renewable sources of energy. But the question arises: From where do we produce electricity to charge those electric vehicles? Without answering that question, the

attempt to produce electric vehicles is only to capitalise the market for making profits on the pretence of being eco-friendly. Capitalism can never go “green.”

This is where the elected government, accountable to the people in a democracy, has to step in and make investments with the aim of sustainable development goals and developing public transport systems to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. On the contrary, what is evident in Britain is a systematic destruction of the public transport system by the Tory government. When the cost-of-living crisis forced 50,000 members of the RMT Union to go on strike, the general secretary, Mick Lynch, was castigated by the media for “holding the country to ransom.”

The goal of achieving net zero emission (carbon emission by human activities is within the limit absorbed by nature and by the use of technology) is a global issue and needs global co-operation. But if it is going to be left to the mining companies and car monopolies, the contest to capture lithium deposits will further heat up the warming planet. ★



OUR EARTH IS IN PERIL

PAUL DORAN
CLIMATE

THE SEVERE DROUGHT affecting many regions of Europe since the beginning of the year has been further expanding and worsening.

Dry conditions are related to a wide and persistent lack of precipitation—rain and snow—combined with a sequence of heat waves from May onwards. The severe precipitation deficit has affected river discharges widely throughout Europe. The reduced volume of stored water has had severe effects on the energy industry, for both hydro-power generation and the cooling systems of other power plants. Recent precipitation (mid-August) may have alleviated drought conditions in some regions of Europe; in some areas, however, associated thunderstorms caused damage and losses and may have limited the beneficial effects of precipitation.

Warmer and drier conditions than usual are likely to occur in the western Euro-Mediterranean region in the coming months. In some areas of the Iberian Peninsula, drier than usual conditions are forecast for the next three months.

The latest update of the combined drought indicator, including the first ten days of August 2022, points to 47 per cent of Europe being in warning conditions and 17 per cent in alert conditions. Soil moisture and vegetation stress are both severely affected. Drought hazard has been increasing in Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Romania, Hungary, northern Serbia, Ukraine, Moldova, Ireland, and Britain. The rest of Europe, already affected by drought, maintains stable, severely dry conditions.

Meanwhile, after a decade of financial austerity, is Europe now on the brink of a new age of energy austerity? The city of Hannover has recently introduced strict energy-saving rules, which include cutting off the hot water in public buildings, swimming-pools, sports halls, and gyms, banning mobile air-conditioners, fan heaters, and radiators, switching off public fountains, and ending the illuminating of public buildings at night.

Several countries in Europe are considering dimming or switching off public lights and even adopting “energy curfews,” with early closures for businesses and public offices. And more drastic measures are under consideration, including gas rationing for energy-intensive industries, such as steel and agriculture.

While humanity knows the reasons for this collapse in the Earth System, governments globally ignore what they must do. Capitalism is causing nature to collapse, and thousands of people are dying each year because of the inaction of the major powers. Today it would be hard to find any person of education who would deny the facts of our changing Earth System—yet they do deny it.

The American biologist and environmentalist Barry Commoner wrote the four informal laws of ecology: (1) Everything is connected to everything else. (2) Everything must go somewhere. (3) Nature knows best. (4) Nothing comes from nothing.

Capitalism is playing with fire. The system contains no braking mechanisms other than periodic economic breakdowns. It does not lend itself to, and is not compatible with, long-range planning of a kind that would be essential to implementing effective ecological policies. It has alienated itself from nature, and nature is calling out for help, as with this catastrophic report on the weather in Europe.

We urgently need to organise our people, from whatever background, to build a resistance that will truly defend nature and the well-being of our people. We don't have much time. Without mass struggle we are doomed, and are handing a death sentence to our children and our children's children.

What is needed in order to save our planet is a revolution. Writing in the 1890s, William Morris outlined what he felt the word meant, and I think it is worth repeating. It means a change in the basis of society; it may frighten people, but it will at least warn them that there is something to be frightened about, which will be no less dangerous for being ignored; and also it may encourage some people and will mean, to them at least, not a fear but a hope.★

VACANCIES AND MOBILITY

MIRANDA LYNCH
HOUSING CRISIS

NOT TOO LONG Ago I found myself in Rathdrum, a beautiful town in Co. Wicklow. While I had a lovely time, I noticed that a lot of buildings were vacant, with areas of the town centre feeling deserted at times.

Unfortunately, Rathdrum is not unique in this regard. Ireland has 166,000 vacant properties, according to the latest statistics, with many of these being outside the cities and bigger towns. It seems absurd to have such a huge amount of unused buildings during a housing crisis, as these properties would be enough to house the country's homeless population ten times over!

A lot has been said about Ireland's vacant properties. Dr Lorcan Sirr of the Technological University of Dublin recently called the vacant property policy a “blind spot,” remarking that only three local authorities have full-time staff in charge of vacancies. Dr Rory Hearne of Maynooth University called vacant homes “an opportunity we are ignoring.”

Dr Cian O'Callaghan of Trinity College, Dublin, while agreeing that using vacant housing can alleviate the housing crisis, noted that vacancy rates are higher where housing demand is lower. Specifically, in the west and the midlands the vacancy rates are high, with Cos. Donegal, Roscommon, Mayo and Leitrim all having vacancy rates of over 10 per cent. It is a common criticism that these properties are vacant simply because no-one wants to live in them.

I think one important aspect in this discussion is overlooked, and this is the role of public transport links throughout Ireland, or more accurately the lack of them. To go back to Rathdrum, this town has a direct railway connection to Wexford and Dublin. However, this slow diesel train takes more than 90 minutes to complete the 60 km journey to Connolly Station, and has a frequency of 5 times per day (3 times at weekends). By comparison, a similar distance in the Netherlands can be travelled in less than an hour, with rural stations having a half-hourly service. Such speeds and frequencies are not uncommon throughout continental Europe and Asia.

Maybe the critics are right and no-one wants to live in the houses that are now vacant. This is something that will not change if it continues to be difficult to reach large parts of the country.

With an eye on the climate crisis, good public transport will become even more important—not to mention the high fuel prices making it expensive to get anywhere by car. We need a public transport strategy that is not limited to the few bigger urban areas. A good start would be electrifying the railway lines that already span the country, and running high-frequency trains and connecting buses to towns and villages. This, combined with a focus on the local authorities redeveloping vacant properties, can provide relief to the housing crisis and decrease the threat of isolation of rural communities and smaller towns.★





DUTCH FARMERS REVOLT

▲ Picture and story from *Manifest*, newspaper of the Dutch communists

The European Union's Common Agricultural Policy has driven the concentration of land and capital in agriculture to an immense scale. The goal is to strengthen European capital by exporting food and competing with foreign farmers.

ROSE VOLKER
RURAL RISING

FARM VEHICLES blockading motorways, burning haystacks on hard shoulders, and heaps of manure at the house of parliament—these images from the farmers' protests in the Netherlands have been broadcast around the world.

The recent reports of nitrogen excesses, and the magnitude by which it needs to be reduced, have struck a chord with many farmers. Listening to the plenitude of interviews with, especially, cattle farmers, it is clear that they feel their business and way of life are under threat. Farms that have been handed from parent to child may need to scale down or close to meet emission targets. They do not trust the political elite and their directives. Above all, they are seeking respect for the role they play in food production, innovation, and the national economy, rather than being seen as the ravagers of nature.

Reactionary political parties have recognised an opportunity in the discontent and make every effort to shape it to fit their conservative nationalistic agenda. They preach to willing ears that the nitrogen crisis is made up, that it is a ruse to disown farmers and turn their green pastures into concrete towns and cities to facilitate an endless stream of migrants and refugees.

In response, calls are raised from centrist parties for a laissez-faire approach and leaving nature to the farmers, not ensnaring them in a web of government regulation.

This is a dangerous development that provides no solution for the reality of the problems and ignores the harsh truth that the farmers have been left to fend for themselves in a capitalist market economy.

The European Union's Common Agricultural Policy has driven the concentration of land and capital in agriculture to an immense scale. The goal is to strengthen European capital by

exporting food and competing with foreign farmers. By this policy, the majority of agrarian production now takes place in large capitalist agricultural corporations. The immediate victims are the small-scale family farms, which, with diminishing profit margins, have the choice between bankruptcy and intensifying their production, for which banks are more than happy to issue yet another loan.

This development can clearly be seen in statistics. Over the past twenty years the number of cattle and pigs in the Netherlands has remained relatively stable, at 3.9 million and 12 million, respectively. The number of cattle farms, however, has halved, from 45,800 to 22,930, while the number of pig farms has been decimated, from 14,520 to 3,290. This process has taken root in Ireland as well.

The greater part of this production, however, is not for the domestic market. Fed with imported fodder, the intensification has allowed the Netherlands to become the world's second-largest exporter of agricultural goods, topping €100 billion in 2021. A fifth of this is accounted for by animal products, their waste being the main source of nitrogen pollution. The effects of excess nitrogen in nature have resulted in a diminished biodiversity, where only flora that tolerates elevated levels, such as nettles and blackberries, can thrive. The resulting acidification poses a problem for snails, insects, and eggs, which struggle to maintain their calcium-based skeletons and shells. While this was foreseen as early as the 1990s, Dutch liberal politicians have opted to ignore it in favour of votes and profit.

At the end of this development the farmers are now presented with the bill for the everlasting drive towards industrialisation and intensification that they are coerced into by a government that fails to recognise their role. As the Netherlands is a front-runner in agricultural development, it is there that we see the cracks in the system most

evidently form. Let it serve as a warning for us to avoid and learn from.

Should it not be our goal to commonly find a solution, to reach for a sustainable and livable world that seeks to strike a balance with what we require to sustain ourselves and what the world can provide without lasting damage? We must end ruthless competition with farmers abroad and reduce pollution in transport; and therefore production and consumption cannot be continents and oceans apart.

Most farmers recognise the damage done to the world and the very ground they till by over-exploitation but see no way out. They must be helped to escape the endless cycle of diminishing profit margins and a single-minded focus on industrialisation.

To achieve this we require a revolutionary change in the political-economic system, for we cannot entrust a solution to the short-sighted profit-driven decisions of a few entrepreneurs. We require a society that does not revolve around the profits of a few mega-corporations but where the agrarian industry can work to meet the needs of the people. Such a world can only exist with communism.★

Notes

★ Communistische Jongerenbeweging [Communist Youth Movement of the Netherlands], "Boerenverzet of reactionaire beweging?" (<https://tinyurl.com/4jy3ksb5>).

★ Statline, "Landbouw; gewassen, dieren, grondgebruik en arbeid op nationaal niveau" (<https://tinyurl.com/y4tp8mbc>).

★ Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [Central Statistics Bureau], "Landbouwexport in 2021 voor het eerst boven de 100 miljard euro" (<https://tinyurl.com/44m52u8>).

★ Kevin O'Sullivan, "Census confirms record numbers of cattle on Irish dairy farms," *Irish Times*, 10 December 2021 (<https://tinyurl.com/yt7ke3vy>).



SOME CAUSE FOR OPTIMISM

BÁRBARA RODRIGUES GERVÁSIO
BRAZIL

BRAZIL WILL FACE Its first round of federal elections on 2 October, after being ruled by the far right for four years. The event is characterised by a huge polarisation that is widely discussed by people and poorly discussed by the candidates (at least those who were chosen to appear on television for the debates).

Brazil has been crushed by liberals for about two decades after the civil-military dictatorship, sometimes ruled by left-liberal policies, sometimes by right-wing ones, but never abandoning class conciliation and the protection of

the bourgeoisie.

However, this year the radical left decided to put forward their own candidates: Sofia Manzano of the Brazilian Communist Party and Léo Péricles of Popular Unity for Socialism. They are travelling to every state in Brazil, discussing such themes as a thirty-hour working week, the decriminalisation of abortion, the revoking of counter-reforms from the previous right-wing governments, the expansion of the railway network, the demarcation of indigenous lands, investing in different sources of energy, and agrarian reform; the latter is even discussed by the Workers' Party candidate, the former president Luiz

Inácio (Lula) da Silva.

Up to today Lula is in first place in surveys as a pre-candidate (as his candidature was not yet official when those surveys took place). Besides his coalition programme with other reformist parties he has brought some vital points to his campaign, such as the national sovereignty of Brazil, job creation, and many proposals about environmental preservation.

Unfortunately, Lula has not given up his well-known policy of class conciliation and decided to have Geraldo Alckmin, a liberal who was governor of the state of São Paulo and is known for his repressive and truculent police, as his vice-president.

PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

BARRY MURRAY
DEMOCRACY

ELECTIONS CAUSE even the most docile of people to become excited. It really is a circus. But the human reality is that it is deadly serious for those who are trying to survive in life. And this is true in 95 per cent of the world.

Worse than that, there is very little chance of the votes that all those people cast being translated into a working parliament that actually makes life better for the 98 per cent anywhere in the world of capitalism.

In the case of the North of Ireland, once again paid elected politicians will not even be in attendance, while the people, in the midst of what's euphemistically called a "cost-of-living

crisis," struggle to work and pay bills, just to exist. The politicians and their advisers will not, nor are they bothered to, run what might pass for a democracy, even by their own poor standards. And, like the litany of Stormont collapses, it could last years.

The lack of what is termed "democracy" is highlighted further (not only in the North) by the increasing proportion of people who do not even bother to vote. When you talk to them they simply say, "What's the point?" And all the evidence points to the inescapable fact that they are right. When people cop on that they have no power and are ignored, they will retreat into survival mode. And quite often they drift into conspiracy groups and right-wing

politics, or at least adopt their rhetoric.

And it's more widespread than we like to admit—even among those who do vote. The establishment, north, south, east, and west, are happy with this, as it conveniently allows them to perpetuate division, inequality, and exploitation.

It is my belief that the time has come for the developing of a people-powered participatory democracy—a new way of managing our affairs. And if covid had anything good about it it proved that governments were totally incapable of dealing effectively with the pandemic. They failed the people on every level. The big boys made big bucks on the backs of everyone else, and were aided and abetted by politicians in doing so.

CUBAN TREATMENT LEADS THE WAY

FROM GRANMA (HAVANA)
CANCER

CIMAVAX-EGF, a Cuban therapeutic vaccine for the treatment of lung cancer, conquers the scientific community and the population of the United States on the basis of the achievements compiled in studies carried out.

The vaccine was obtained after

more than twenty years of research and has shown satisfactory results in patients in advanced stages of lung cancer.

The Cuban Centre for Molecular Immunology and Roswell Park Cancer Research Center in the United States joined forces a few years ago to facilitate access to equipment and reagents in order to promote the development of the drug.

The creation of the only joint venture between Cuba and the United States, the Innovative Immunotherapy Alliance, facilitated Cuba's access to equipment and reagents that are difficult to obtain because of the limitations of the economic, financial and commercial blockade imposed by the United States on socialist Cuba, while the United States can have access to a drug with excellent results and prospects.



Conector Agribusiness is a huge issue in Brazil. In the name of profits and of their god, the Market, they have been promoting the destruction of every biome in Brazil, and also the destruction of indigenous lives, day by day.

But at this point nobody was expecting that he would support class struggle or provide conditions for doing so.

The serving president, Jair Bolsonaro of the Liberal Party, keeps himself aligned with the evangelical and ruralist wings, which gives him some strength. He also denies, in every interview, that Brazil is in crisis and all the devastation caused by his liberal government, destroying the environment and people's lives. Nevertheless he enforces the idea of arming the population as a self-defence method, trivialises all the deaths from the covid pandemic, and discredits the vaccines.

Since the beginning of his government he keeps bringing up the threat of a military coup, and putting questions about the credibility of the Brazilian voting system, which has already been proved trustworthy—exactly like Donald Trump in the United States.

The electoral surveys after the

candidatures are confirmed by the superior electoral court will be announced on 2 September.

Conector Agribusiness is a huge issue in Brazil. In the name of profits and of their god, the Market, they have been promoting the destruction of every biome in Brazil, and also the destruction of indigenous lives, day by day. As if this was not enough, they have been promoting the country's deindustrialisation and poor working conditions and wages (being known for using slave-like working conditions), with the exporting of raw grain, to be processed in other countries, so avoiding the payment of taxes.

Agribusiness and the financial market rule the political situation in Brazil, and clearly all their profits don't go to the working class in the form of services provided by taxes but are kept by them, with the crumbs given to their lackeys in the government as an exchange, although the majority of candidates do not want to break up the

relationship with them.

Since the coup against Dilma Rousseff of the Workers' Party in 2016 the country has been in crisis, with the quality of life decreasing and 33 million people hungry, though Bolsonaro denies the hunger and keeps saying that agrobusiness is the shining star of Brazil. At the same time, while people are queuing for bones in order not to starve, huge propaganda is put out by big television companies about "the Agro" feeding the world!

These elections are not only for the presidency but also for the governors of all twenty-six Brazilian states, the Senate, and the Congress. But, because many people are traumatised from these last years of rule by a neo-fascist president, it gives the impression that the emphasis is mostly on the presidential campaign, even though several candidates are bringing up the discussions of their parties' agenda, but concentrating on their own states.★

'the time has come for the developing of a people-powered participatory democracy'

But, despite the odds stacked against them, the people managed their own lives themselves perfectly well throughout the pandemic. Front-line workers kept the country working. Were they properly rewarded for it? No. Will they ever be? No, certainly not. And who, only politicians, will steal their credit.

There is an urgent need for a system of "People's Dálaí or Assemblies" to be the backbone of, as a first step, the Councils level of political representation. There is no gain whatsoever in electing councillors within the bourgeois "democratic" straitjacket without having a people's participatory system. Everyone must be facilitated to have a say on the issues that affect us all, and at all times.

Coming out to a voting circus every five years just to exercise your "right" to cast a vote is no longer justifiable, and after which the elected

politicians ignore us and do the opposite of what they said they would do. Indeed they do everything to destroy any semblance of a decent life for those who foolishly elected them, by supporting the side of power and neoliberal capitalism. We need to be in a position of power as communities, to call all elected representatives to account, and we need to be telling them what we need, as opposed to them telling us what they decide we need.

But that cannot be the end of our political development. The People's Dálaí or Assemblies need to be the engine that resists the effects of the messages of power, whoever relays them on behalf of that power.

They need to inculcate in the people the belief that they—the people—have the power of change, contrary to what they are told and believe, and that these People's Councils be a source of learning and

empowerment, that they assist the people in confronting every angle of the state's capitalist propaganda, that they work with people and communities to assist in the building of a new, 32-county socialist or workers' republic, where the people are in control of the means of production and distribution of wealth that they generated.

Time for change has always been. And maybe, just maybe, the present state of the decline of capitalism might create favourable conditions for the beginning of real, revolutionary change, allowing that socialists and communists are prepared. But that change must be cultivated in our local areas and communities, where the People's Dálaí or Assemblies call the shots. Why would we bother with activism or agitation at all if we are not focused on fatally undermining all aspects of capitalism and, in this case, taking power in Ireland?★

Dr Elia Neninger, who participated in the clinical trials of the therapeutic vaccine from the beginning, stated that the drug has two great advantages: few adverse reactions, and a solution to lung cancer, which is a serious health problem in Cuba and around the world.

The deputy director of the Molecular Immunology Center, Kalet León Monzón, said that the patients who have received the vaccine are recovering from advanced tumour cancer and could have the prospect of survival in normal conditions,

according to RT.

One of the beneficiaries of the vaccine, Miguel Creus, a patient who began to receive Cimavax fifteen years ago, when the disease was in stage 4 and the vaccine was in clinical trials, confirms that the drug has prolonged his life, with a satisfactory state of health, and that at present he has no traces of tumours or symptoms of the disease.

Despite the detrimental effect of the economic blockade against socialist Cuba, the collaboration between the two institutions

continues, and Cimavax overcomes the challenges. At present there are clinical trials that combine this Cuban vaccine with other successful cancer treatments, and their effects in high-risk people or patients in the initial stages of the disease are being studied.

According to some studies, lung cancer is the third most frequent cancer in the United States, and the deadliest. This Cuban drug could be a promising relief, a good example of the benefits both countries would obtain if they had a normal relationship.★



UNMANAGEABLE REVOLUTIONARIES



Jenny Farrell on Margaret Ward's groundbreaking book on revolutionary women in Ireland. *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism, 1880–1980* (1983), was republished in an updated, revised and richly illustrated new edition by Arlen House in late 2021.

THE BOOK is a superb introduction to some of the great women in Irish history since Anna Parnell and an excellent detailed biography of women's movements in Ireland. It provides readers with well-informed portraits of Anna Parnell, Constance Markievicz, Maude Gonne, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, and others. It gives a detailed historical context for the work of the Ladies' Land League, Inghinidhe na Éireann, and Cumann na mBan, and it furnishes readers with, among many further things, the significant and later airbrushed participation of women during the Easter Rising.

Ward sheds light on women's participation in the First and Second Dáil and emphasises their political stance in that body. Interestingly, for example, all six women in the Second Dáil opposed the Anglo-Irish Treaty, as did Cumann na mBan. Muriel MacSwiney, Linda Kearns and Kathleen Barry stayed on the front lines in the Battle of Dublin after all other women combatants were sent home.

Ward points out that only Constance Markievicz, as minister for labour, along with Liam Mellows, spoke for working-class interest. Connolly's words in the 1916 Proclamation that an Irish Republic would guarantee "equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens" was important to the women in struggle and was often quoted by them. In this regard it is regrettable that Connolly's and Francis Sheehy Skeffington's complete understanding of the need for women's emancipation as integral to the liberation movement is not emphasised a little more in the book.

Ward shows the Irish women's movement as being aware of international developments, especially in relation to the USSR. She points out that Constance Markievicz was "the second woman in the world to enter government, following Alexandra Kollontai in the Soviet Union." She also states that "De Valera was once again elected President of the Irish Republic and Countess Markievicz reappointed Minister for Labour, but this time her position did not carry cabinet status. Both she and the labour movement were effectively demoted." She also describes the progressive betrayal of women in the Irish constitutions; and readers will not grow fonder of Éamon de Valera in this regard.

Although the main emphasis of the book is on the more famous women, Ward has done a magnificent job in reclaiming the names of the lesser-known, indeed unknown, activists, such as Eithne Coyle, or Mary Colum. The author addresses this difficulty in her introduction, "Unmanageable Revolutionaries Revisited," where she describes how more recently available archives, sources and indeed the internet have

opened up new possibilities for research, such as the opening of the Bureau of Military History archives in 2003, access to information relating to applications made for military pensions (1,619 made by women) and for service medals (4,612 made by women). These figures alone demonstrate the significant number of women involved in the struggle for Irish freedom.

Research into these women has fallen to more recent historians, especially now that working-class history is beginning to become an acceptable field of exploration in universities. In this regard it would also be of interest to know if any research has been done into the Gaeltacht women's involvement in the struggle. These women have been even more marginalised in mainstream history than their English-speaking counterparts.

On the other hand, the left-wing political group Saor Éire, open to both genders, is given attention in this book and put into a class context: "Sighle Humphreys was elected joint treasurer while the other women on the executive consisted of Helena Moloney, Sheila Dowling (who had been in jail during the Civil War and was now a member of Friends of Soviet Russia and organiser for the Irish Women Workers' Union) and May Laverty of Belfast, a Cumann na mBan organiser." Ward goes on to quote Humphreys, and to give an insight into the limitations of Cumann na mBan:

I used to feel that a lot of our activities were leading nowhere and the first time I felt that we could have some impact on the ordinary people and show them what freedom really meant was when I joined Saor Eire. We were, at last, doing something worthwhile . . . Cumann na mBan . . . did not formally endorse the actions of those who joined. To have done so would have precipitated a disastrous internal crisis as many completely disapproved of this "socialistic trend."

Speaking at a Sinn Fein meeting in Dublin, Mary MacSwiney forcefully declared her opposition to the organisation because it "sought to divide the people of Ireland on a class basis." Old-style nationalists could countenance any number of divisions over Republican principles, but they regarded with abhorrence the "artificial" division between economic classes.

Women in the labour movement do not feature in this book, which concentrates, as the title suggests, on women and nationalism in a narrow sense. This means that Betty Sinclair receives only a passing comment; Edwina Stewart and Madge Davison, prominent leaders of the civil rights movement, are not mentioned at all. Omissions such as these are regrettable, as this book would have been well positioned to expand on the fact that nationalism, as indeed the term republican, surely must embrace all striving for anti-colonial and later anti-imperialist liberation in Ireland, including socialist and communist movements.

Margaret Ward has done much to retrieve Herstory from the claws of History, a truly important achievement. The book has lost nothing of its interest and has now become accessible for a new generation. There is still much research to be done before we can truly say that Ourstory, from the viewpoint of class, of women and of men with insight into the need for all-encompassing emancipation, such as Connolly and Francis Sheehy Skeffington, can be written.



MICK HEALY MUSIC

THE SINGER-SONGWRITER Sive got a surprise at the 2018 James Connolly Festival when Christy Moore took to the stage at the concert Sive was headlining to give an impromptu performance of four songs, including "Viva la Quince Brigada."

Sive played an amazing acoustic set at "Live at the Local" in Lawlor's Hotel, Naas, in July that demonstrated how she has grown as an entertainer since her performance at the James Connolly Festival. It's worth noting that she released her third studio album, *We Begin in Darkness*, to critical acclaim. It's a beautiful, crafted album with the most haunting lyrics. The stand-out tracks are "Beira," "Winter," and "Inside Out."

"Though I may not have known it to begin with," Sive declares, "the process of writing this album was a sort of casting-to-the-light of all the ways in which I resist the cyclical nature of the world I am part of. I hope you enjoy taking this expedition with me and find something that has meaning for you along the way!"

The album *We Begin in Darkness* has been well received in Ireland and elsewhere.



'We Begin in Darkness' is a collection of 11 songs written by Sadhbh O'Sullivan.

Produced by Matt Harris & Sadhbh O'Sullivan.

Sadbh O'Sullivan - vocals, acoustic & electric guitars, ukulele, cavaquinho, piano, percussion & glock
Matt Harris - keys, bass & electric guitars

Patrick Hopkins - drums

Éna Brennan - violin

Niamh Roche - viola

Mary Barnecutt - cello

Graham Heaney - double bass

Recorded at home by Sadhbh & Matt during lockdown, except:

Drums recorded by Thomas Donohue at Sun Studios & Stephen Lovatt at The Clinic Dublin.

Piano recorded at Start Together Belfast.

Mastered by Stephen Lovatt.



PARTY AND CLASS

NATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF IRELAND



IN MID-SEPTEMBER the Communist Party of Ireland will hold its 26th National Congress in Dublin. Delegates from around the country will discuss, debate and vote upon a political resolution and a new constitution for the CPI.

The highest authority of the CPI is its national congress, which takes place every three years. Because of covid restrictions, we delayed holding it to ensure that comrades could gather safely, and that no-one would be excluded.

Both the draft political resolution and the draft constitution have been discussed in the various branches over the last six months. Amendments to both documents

have been submitted by the branches, which will go before the congress for debate and to be voted on.

The congress will bring together members from around Ireland, from Donegal to Cork. Congresses are the highest authority and democratic policy-making body within the CPI. Delegates are nominated by their branches to attend the congress.

We decide our policy at the congress, and it then becomes the policy for the whole party and is binding upon all members. The draft political resolution has been discussed democratically in the branches, which are able to submit proposed amendments, which then

go to the congress for debate and to be voted on. When adopted, the political resolution becomes the ultimate policy of the CPI and will guide the work of the party until our next congress.

Equally, the new constitution to be discussed and voted on at the congress will determine the working and the democratic structure and procedures of the CPI.

The congress will also elect the new National Executive Committee by a secret ballot of all the delegates attending. The NEC will oversee the implementation of the strategy endorsed by the congress. The NEC cannot change policy without convening a special congress.

Over the last few months there have been many discussions in the branches, allowing all members the opportunity to speak and put forward their opinions and to propose amendments to both the draft political resolution and the draft constitution.

A full report on the congress will be published in the October issue of *Socialist Voice*.

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