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"I am no politician, and still less can I be said to be a party-man: but I have a hatred of tyranny, and a contempt for its tools; and this feeling I have expressed as often and as strongly as I could. I cannot sit quietly down under the claims of barefaced power, and I have tried to expose the little arts of sophistry by which they are defended."
William Hazlitt, *Political Essays*

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Socialist Voice

43 East Essex Street Dublin D02 XH96

(01) 6708707

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NEUTRALITY IS AT STAKE

Jimmy Corcoran on the threat to abandon what remains of Irish neutrality. *Page 2*

IRISH NEUTRALITY AT STAKE

**Cover image
Picasso's
La Colombe
de l'avenir
(The Dove
of the
future)
Poster
published
for the
World
Congress
for Peace
held in
Moscow in
1962**

THE RECENT INTERVENTION of President Higgins may have slowed down Micheál Martin's march to NATO, but the threat remains.

Rather than applying for NATO membership immediately, the ruling class have set their sights as an interim step on removing the "triple lock" on the deployment of Irish troops. The capitalist parties and media claim that the triple lock is no longer tenable, because both Russia and China have a veto in the Security Council, which they can use to stop military aggression by the United States and its satellites. This ignores the fact that three NATO members—

the United States, Britain, and France—also have a veto, which they use to protect imperialist aggression. The United States uses its veto against any condemnation of apartheid Israel's continued colonisation in Palestine.

The report of the Commission on the Defence Forces demonstrates the continuing EU threat to Irish neutrality and sovereignty. It cites the EU Commission's position that the rise of China must be seen as a threat to EU security.¹ This is reinforced regularly in the "news" media, to the extent that one would imagine that the Chinese military lie just over the horizon. The real political situation in Ireland consists of British (NATO) forces in the

Six Counties and a US (NATO) base in Shannon Airport.

The Atlanticist ideology is deeply ingrained in the political class, the media, the higher echelons of the civil service, and the officer corps of the Defence Forces. Irish politicians and "journalists" ape the NATO line that China, Russia, Cuba, North Korea, Nicaragua and Venezuela are a threat to the "rules-based order" upon which "our" economic, political and military security is based.

But exactly what are these rules, who drafted them, and who approved them? Despite what many people may believe, the aforementioned rules are not the UN Charter or the various

GETTING RAIL BACK ON TRACK



JIMMY DORAN

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

THE DRAFT ALL-IRELAND Strategic Rail Review is an excellent start to the changes that must be implemented if we are to reach our emissions targets and seriously tackle climate change. The review can only be published in draft form, as the Stormont Assembly is not sitting, and it will be held up until the relevant minister there agrees to it. It must be implemented in full, expanded on, and in a shorter time frame.

Can we afford it?

The cost would be €36 billion, shared between the Irish state (€27 billion) and the North (€9 billion). There is an additional €45 billion in "unexpected" corporation tax due to be collected over the next three years; so there are no excuses.

The question is, Can we afford not to do it

As this review was being published, wildfires, floods and other extreme weather conditions raged around the world. Not acting on climate change now is not an option, and would be very expensive indeed. Can it be done? Forty years ago the plan to build motorways seemed ambitious, and many people thought they were a fantasy. The Government gave priority to the needs of business, to get their merchandise transported quickly and

international agreements drafted under the aegis of the United Nations, or regional bodies such as the Council of Europe (not to be confused with the EU's European Council) and then agreed by individual member-states: the "rules-based order" amounts to no more than the United States assuming the right to determine the economic and political path of all countries.

Any country that seeks to break with imperialism is automatically held to be in breach of the rules; and the United States reserves the right to punish them by economic or military intervention, or both.

In the event of Sinn Féin becoming the major party in the next 26-County government they will be faced with this pro-imperialist bias. How will they react? Will they remain true to their anti-colonial and anti-imperialist tradition, or will they don the Atlanticist clothing of official Ireland? The realpolitik gurus within the party will no doubt urge them to accept the

efficiently around. Road transport was considered the best option. Little thought was given to the damage to the environment, or the effect of this policy on the climate. Business was the Government's only concern.

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland states that transport is by far the largest source of energy-related carbon dioxide emissions in Ireland. Before the covid-19 pandemic it was responsible for more than 40 per cent of energy-related CO₂ emissions in 2019.

By the middle of 2021, transport activity and energy use had mostly returned to pre-pandemic levels. Transport accounted for 34 per cent of energy-related CO₂ emissions in 2021. If we are to reduce those emissions we must get people onto public transport and goods out of trucks and onto freight trains.

The priority now must be the citizens and the environment. €29 billion is a small price compared with the €64 billion spent on private banking debt. This will benefit the whole of society, and the planet, not just elite bankers. The country has a legal requirement to cut emissions by half by 2030 and to be carbon-neutral by 2050. This review can be the starting-point to build on, to reach our targets, and needs to be completed and expanded well before 2050.

Implementation involves three periods: short-term interventions to be completed by 2030, medium-term interventions between 2030 and 2040, and long-term interventions between 2040 and 2050. This is not soon enough. There is no reason to delay

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Atlanticist position (they already have a welcome in the White House), as they will need the tax from American corporations to implement their social policies.

However, they need to look beyond the world of US, EU and British imperialism towards the developing world. The Chinese share of the world economy is growing, while that of the United States is in relative decline. China is the main trading partner of more than 150 countries. Unlike Ireland, when China embarked on its path of modernising its economy the state remained in control, and it lifted 800 million people out of absolute poverty.² It has an internal economy of 1.4 billion people, and government policies are concentrated on increasing the purchasing power of the poorest sections over the next decade. China spends far less on its military than the United States does; and China has not been at war for more than forty years.

completion to 2050; it could and should be completed in half that time. We have no choice: these are forced, necessary changes to reach our required legal commitments and to avert climate disaster.

It is an achievable goal. Ireland has 2,300 km of railway lines. The review recommends increasing this to 2,950 km, and electrifying 80 per cent of it. Indian Railways electrified 30,446 km of track in the last eight years, up from 3,874 km between 2007 and 2014. Up to March 2022 India had electrified 52,247 km, which was approximately 80 per cent of its total network of 65,141 km, and is on target to complete the electrification process by December 2023. This demonstrates how achievable the task is.

The review also considered whether developing a new, fully segregated 300 km/h high-speed railway network could be a viable option for Ireland. Analysis undertaken for the review found that the benefits of this would be significantly outweighed by the costs. But the benefits should not be measured in monetary terms but in social well-being and the environmental and time-saving benefits it will provide to the people. Speed and interconnectivity will be the key to getting people out of cars, and goods out of lorries.

Some of the benefits of the proposals

- The railway network will be decarbonised, including an electrified intercity network as well as hybrid (hydrogen and electric) rolling-stock.
- 700,000 more people will live within 5 km of a railway station.

One doesn't have to accept China's self-designation as a socialist society to recognise that its development strategy has produced far better results than that pursued by the Irish ruling class since the late 1950s. If a Sinn Féin-led government is to develop Irish political and economic sovereignty and tilt the balance of forces towards the working class, it will need to counter the arguments of the Atlanticists. It could start by sending a high-level delegation to the People's Republic of China to look at its path to modernisation and see what can be adapted to Irish conditions. They would also see that China has no material benefit to gain from war, but that on the contrary a war could set its development back decades. ★

1 Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces (2022), p. 6.

2 World Bank press statement, 1 April 2022.

- Journey times will be halved. The core intercity network (Dublin, Belfast, Cork, Limerick, Galway, and Waterford) will be upgraded to allow top speeds of at least 200 km/h and up to 300 km/h, ensuring that train journeys are much faster than car.

- Speeds on regional and rural lines will be increased to at least 120 km/h.

- The Western Rail Corridor between Clarendon and Athenry will be reinstated.

- The railway will be extended from Portadown to Dungannon, Omagh, Strabane, Derry, and on to Donegal and Letterkenny.

- The South Wexford Railway will be reinstated, connecting to Waterford.

- The railway will be developed to boost connectivity in the north

- midlands, from Mullingar to Cavan, Monaghan, Armagh, and Portadown.

- Services on the busiest intercity routes will run every 30 minutes.

- Passenger capacity will be doubled.

- Dublin, Belfast and Shannon Airports will be connected to the railway, thus connecting 90 per cent of air passengers by railway to an airport.

- Connectivity to the country's busiest ports will be strengthened, and track access charges for freight will be reduced. This will be a transformational benefit to the people, and should be the minimum in expectations for transport in 21st-century Ireland. It's time to make diesel history and publicly owned Iarnród Éireann the backbone of frequent, fast, efficient, sustainable, interconnected and affordable public transport. ★





Innovative tactics and a challenging rhetoric characterise today's climate activism.

Richard Mullen raises the political problem of the limits capitalism imposes on radical policy changes.

'CLIMATE LENINISM'

RICHARD MULLEN
ACTIVISM

ON 21 JUNE the French government dissolved the environmental group Les Soulèvements de la Terre. The immediate cause cited in the decision was a clash of the activists with the police while resisting the construction of a reservoir in the west of the country. The group was dissolved as a collective with "violent methods of operation." The decision also cites Andreas Malm's bestseller *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* as a source of inspiration for the collective's direct action and "material destruction."

If the tactics of Les Soulèvements de la Terre and similar organisations are the opening, what is the endgame—or, more importantly, what is the middle game?

The endgame is, in broad and blunt strokes, a post-capitalist society that survives the climate emergency. Mileage may vary in terms of this society's hypothetical organisation, but that is a topic for another article. This one is about the middle game: how do we get to a system capable of survival?

As rational, literate people we first recognise that the climate crisis exists, coupled with centuries of ever-advancing capitalist networks of exploitation. As

IN JULY, AN TAISCE hosted Kevin Anderson's talk "A Velvet or Violent Climate Revolution: Which Will We Choose?" in the Tailors' Hall, Dublin. Anderson was introduced as a climate scientist "telling it as it is"—a tagline reinforced by his opening slide, in which he warned the audience that his presentation is not for the faint of heart. It is "red-pilled," Anderson explained, using a reference to *The Matrix*; he would not hold back, no matter how uncomfortable the truth was.

Anderson made it clear that his presentation was aimed at those who already acknowledged the human-made climate change, and that it would reveal how governments and corporations are not doing enough to address it. He did so—with no mentions of the word "capitalism" and no understanding of the concept of revolution.

This curious approach, certainly tailored to the audience in the Tailors' Hall, could not maintain a coherent flow throughout the ninety minutes of the talk and Q&A.

Throughout the presentation Anderson correctly observed that the climate emergency is not to be observed disentangled from housing, public health and labour issues. He also recognises the rampant inequality in the ownership of the means of production and pollution; he calls for "moving resources and labour from the private luxury of a relative few to public wellbeing for all." If the top 10 per cent, he explained, cut their emissions to the EU mean, and the rest did

people who read the news and live through unprecedented climate change, we recognise that the climate emergency is a class issue. The capitalists will not concede anything in the climate crisis if not forced to do so; the receding horizon of the ecosystem's breakdown is not the horizon of their profits.

There is a political, activist and entrepreneurial movement that expects change to come through the ballot box, legislation, and grand strategies, both in timescale and area or population, encompassed as in the example of the Green Deals. On the other hand there is the approach of local solutions, communal practices and community organising on principles of ecology and visions of transition into post-capitalist societies.

WORKING CLASS?

nothing, that alone would produce a cut of one third in global CO₂.

Those who set the green agenda, as Anderson put it, are in the top 1 per cent of emitters, “or clamouring to get there”: the politicians, the academics, the financiers, the CEOs . . . and the list goes on. They, naturally, prefer to maintain the status quo, refuse conversations about a redistribution of power, and look for an economic repackaging of the crisis in the form of carbon taxes, offsetting, and technological products.

The analysis so far maps important components, but it does not really ask the question why they are connected, and it most certainly does not mention the word “capitalism.” In failing to do so it sets the stage for never touching the production relations and not recognising the class struggle anywhere beyond “poor” and “rich” individuals or countries.

Where does that take us in the alternative futures in Anderson’s view?

“It’s too late for non-radical futures,” Anderson spelt out, recognising how excited his audience is for “radical” and “progressive” as alternative to the status quo would be, at least verbally. The choice, he continued, is between a “velvet revolution” of a “deep, rapid, fair and organised decarbonisation of modern society” and “a violent revolution” with “ongoing lies, rhetoric and delay as temperatures rise.”

He acknowledged that some consider revolution a dirty word, and invited the audience to replace it with a

These might be motivated by raising consciousness, or showcasing sustainable small-scale visions. Many engage in these activities to see the results of their activities and to put their time and skill towards a different future from that to which the community at large is going, pushed and pulled by the contradictory sociopolitical forces. Different in tactics but similar in expectations might be the collectives that take direct action against new nature-destroying developments, or that raise awareness of the climate emergency, targeting public events. There is something in the idea of gaining visibility, and expecting more people to join in with similar or complementary activities—but it belongs to the opening rather than the middle game.

“Nous sommes les soulèvements de la terre en colère”

“We are the uprisings of the angry earth” on a wall in Nantes, France

If the tactics of Les Soulèvements de la Terre and similar organisations are the opening, what is the endgame—or, more importantly, what is the middle game?

word of their choice. Evoking the image of the Czechoslovak “velvet revolution,” Anderson proceeded with it as the preferred outcome to the violent revolution scenario (which was not elaborated at all but rather left as “anything could happen”).

This is where the slides of the presentation feature Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Michael D. Higgins, with a call for “Rooseveltian leadership for the 21st century” and “a new Marshall Plan.” Presumably this is the vision of the velvet revolution and the revolutionary leaders unrolling the large co-ordinated plan of addressing the climate crisis.

How does this happen? What does the Rooseveltian Michael D. Higgins do to convert the present state of affairs into the “velvet revolution” vision? It remains very much unclear. What sort of an economic change in ownership and management happens also remains unclear.

The lack of clarity was mirrored in the question-and-answers session that followed, with the added element of the audience looking for their agency. What is the role of activists in the velvet revolution, how are the industrial lobbies to be countered, and what can be learnt for organising in the series of Irish referendums on marriage, abortion, etc.? What is the role of social media, and what about degrowth? When is the climate emergency going to become really dangerous (sic!) for us?

When answering these, Anderson was conscious of the existing liberal

The lack of the mechanism needed to transform this process into a post-capitalist society and do away with the capitalist state is the major line in the eco-pessimist circles. The tactics ring hollow in their interpretation, and leave the dominant market forces in place while the clock is ticking. Jodi Dean and Kai Heron dubbed their vision of the middle game “climate Leninism.” The revolution is the middle game; the party is the agent; the working class is the revolutionary subject. It integrates the tactics of different groups we wrote about earlier, but with a vision that builds a bridge towards the endgame futures so many theorists are happy to imagine beyond the climate emergency horizon. It is also a bridge we know it is possible to build.

bias; he warned that social media activism is not enough, and that “when is it going to affect us?” is a question with very little sense, which only serves the purpose of revealing how relative is the meaning of “we” or “us.” When asked about degrowth, Anderson pointed out that basing the economy on something other than such metrics as GDP was crucial for the future, but yet again he failed to label capitalism, or its alternative (or alternatives). When speaking about climate activism of Just Stop Oil and similar organisations, Anderson admitted that he changed his opinion gradually: from being somewhat against it to recognising its role and how it complements the work of others in raising the alarm.

While some credit can be given to Anderson for going this far with the audience he attracted to the Tailors’ Hall that evening, the vision of the “velvet revolution” very much leaves them in the dark. Even leaving aside the ahistorical romanticising of the Czechoslovak events, there is no mechanism leading to the envisaged climate future without dismantling the capitalist system. In that sense Anderson is technically and literally correct: revolution is the only future.

However, the revolution is achieved neither by the ballot for the new Roosevelt nor with activist adventurism without organising the working class. In the core of the revolution is the party; and a lot of the questions raised in the discussion after Anderson’s talk would find answers in a framework of a revolutionary party organising. ★

The organising of the revolutionary party is undoubtedly hard; the dialectics of climate change, however, provide windows of opportunity. The crisis is accelerating fast, with sharp blows one after the other hitting the working class, and riding along other companion crises. The public health crisis, the food crisis, and wars—all of them are climate issues, and all of them are a source of spiralling profits for the capitalists and spiralling social murder for the rest.

The party in such a setting organises in and through communities. The post-revolutionary state will be the one in which the proletariat can bring the real “green deal” and intervene in the galloping pollution, exploitation and destruction cycles. ★



TECHNOLOGY

EXTREME MODERN FORMS OF SURPLUS VALUE



Freddy Anubis
EXPLOITATION

FOLLOWING MY previous article on ChatGPT and machine learning models, I would like to shed some further light on why those models should be heavily scrutinised and monitored. So I'm going to share with you a personal story to demonstrate how they can end up being used to expropriate free labour from the working class.

You see, I do photography artwork, and a long time ago I was deceived into believing the dream that I could actually make a living selling photography artwork on line. So I earnestly uploaded my best photos and rigorously tagged and labelled each one with all possible tedious details I could muster to make them "searchable," as the on-line web sites I uploaded them to claimed back in the time. Eventually I got nothing out of it and forgot all about it.

Recently, after realising after more than a decade and a half of photography that I've never made a penny out of it—and if anyone did make a profit on my photos it was the very same web sites that promised me a fortune but never delivered on their promises, which I'm going to explain how—I've decided to release those photos freely under creative commons licensing, hoping that someone may benefit from my work rather than seeing it going to waste.

Before committing myself to do it I went on spontaneously revising my old photography portfolio on one of the web sites to see if I did in fact sell any photos before releasing them, out of the worry that I might violate any agreement I could have unwittingly signed up to. And, lo and behold, for the first time in my photography career, it turns out that I had in fact achieved a positive income from my investment: the lordly sum of 6 cents!

PUTTING FARMING INTO THE HANDS OF THE ELITE

ANTHONY MAGUIRE
FARMING

THE FARMING and rural community is in uproar with the news of the latest assault on farmers: the proposed plan to cull 200,000 cows out of the national herd. This, we are told by the government and mainstream media, is to help Ireland meet its climate goals. From what I see, it's more of an own goal, disastrous in every aspect.

The basic premise of the plan, according to the London *Telegraph*, is to cull 65,000 cows per year for three years. This would help the agriculture industry in reducing emissions of

greenhouse gases by 2030. The cost of this mass slaughter for the taxpayer would be €640 million.

Elderly farmers would have the option of retiring early from the land, with the introduction of a new early retirement scheme. The vast majority of the country are over sixty years of age. The implementation of this retirement scheme would cause a considerable reduction in food production from privately owned farms.

Now, the question is, will young farmers take over? Well, no. Such a reduction in the national herd would dissuade any younger person from taking over a farm if they are not allowed to



It's no coincidence that there is the current dwindling state of affairs in the world of arts, given that now artists have to strain their creative work through formulaic processes designed with the bottom line in mind. Hence the ironic predicament of the entertainment industry, where you see films with millions in capital behind them yet they bomb at the box office!

I was intrigued, apart from the very low unanticipated royalties, to find out which photo did sell for this sum. So I investigated it, only to find that the sale was done under the peculiar new product name “dataset.” After further investigation, it turns out that they didn't just sell one photo: they sold the whole lot—for 6 cents!—along with all the work I put in to sorting and labelling the photos. Surely if I had put the same amount of effort into working at Subway I would have made much better returns.

It didn't mention who bought my data, or what they are going to use it for. But it was implied that they are going to be used for computer vision training, a common machine learning model. And it's of the utmost importance that datasets fed into those models be properly labelled and categorised.

For example, if you use a dataset of photos of dogs and cats to train a computer vision machine learning model to be able to distinguish between them and classify them into their proper classification (hence the term classification algorithms), it has to be tediously labelled. And mind you, it's not just to say it's a cat or a dog. The data labelling would go to the extent of describing the photo: lighting, background, items in the photo, and even metadata, such as camera model, lens, and settings, which they sometimes hire workers on full-time jobs just to do. And guess which datasets were labelled in such a manner as to become “searchable”?

That said, I won't be surprised to see my photos, along with many other artists' work, floating around the internet free of royalties, with the claim that they have been generated by one of those, by now ubiquitous, stable diffusion models which are known to, conveniently, fail their training and simply spit out the training data back to its users, with very little

modifications, if any at all! And good luck trying to build a case against the operators of those machine learning models they are using to infringe your copyright in such an obfuscated manner.

Actually, I was lucky that the web site told me that they sold my artwork for a measly 6 cents. In many cases, those web sites would consider the outcome of “processing” your data as their rightful proprietary data, according to a loophole in GDPR provisions, which basically states that if the data processor does some “processing” on the data to extract some “statistics,” for example, then the outcome of this processing is no longer yours and it's rightfully theirs. Here's the thing: machine learning models are nothing but statistical brute-forcing energy-hungry processes!

And, as you can imagine, this phenomenon is not limited to photography artwork. It's prevalent in many other fields, including—but not limited to—writing, programming, music, videography, content creation, and the entertainment industry in general. It's no wonder that writers and actors are striking in the face of this absurdity.

Whenever you hear that someone made it and became a millionaire on Youtube, Tiktok, Facebook, Spotify, or whatever on-line entertainment service expects artists to upload their work freely to, don't believe it! It's a marketing tactic similar to what they do with the lottery; but at least the lottery people are regulated.

It's well known, not to mention that I've confirmed it for a fact from internal sources, that those contributors make peanuts, if anything at all, out of their labour, no matter how many million views their work may get. While those on-line services would extract massive surplus value out of their free labour if not from the views and entailed advertisement, it would be from selling the data, or using

it to train machine learning models, which can be rented for a fee.

And by doing just this they force artists into a lose-lose game, where they are deprived of their livelihood, similar to the prisoner dilemma: either upload your work freely to the likes of Youtube and Tiktok and maybe, maybe, you would win the views lottery and get paid some peanuts or else get lost in oblivion, as, thanks to other free-content uploaders, content creators' work will never see the sun, as viewers will always have an infinite supply of free entertainment to watch on their web sites and apps. So good luck trying to compete with that.

It's no coincidence that there is the current dwindling state of affairs in the world of arts, given that now artists have to strain their creative work through formulaic processes designed with the bottom line in mind. Hence the ironic predicament of the entertainment industry, where you see films with millions in capital behind them yet they bomb at the box office!

In the end, the operators of those models won't just stop there but will also harvest petabytes of data and store this for indefinite amounts of time, thanks to their exclusive ownership of the new means of production, as in those on-line services, their machine learning models, and the massive, energy-hungry hardware in data centres that they run on, maintaining their entrenched oligopolist positions in the market while wasting critical resources and emitting tons of carbon dioxide, inching us nearer every day to a catastrophic global demise, an extinction event.

I know these propositions sound bleak, with very little agency on our part. So is there something we can do about this predicament? As a matter of fact, yes. I think we don't need to be fatalistic about this, which I will endeavour to cover thoroughly in my next article.

produce. How can you make a living in that situation?

I believe this cull is not primarily about climate change. I think the whole story is being withheld by means of smoke and mirrors. It is a campaign to take agriculture out of the hands of the farming community, leaving huge non-farmer moneyed interests able to buy vast areas of high-quality farmland at rock-bottom prices, leaving the food chain completely in the hands of the elite.

This was what happened in the United States, where entrepreneurs such as Jeff Bezos (Amazon) and Bill Gates (Microsoft) bought 420,000 acres and

270,000 acres, respectively.

This is where Irish agriculture is heading, with large chunks of the best land being swooped upon by wealthy foreign investors. With the inevitable increase in food prices, this will affect everyone, in particular urban and rural low-paid workers and those on state benefits, with the food chain controlled by a minority of the elite. Farmers and rural areas are being sold out to capitalist exploitation; but everyone believes it is to save the planet.

The minister for agriculture, Charlie McConalogue, was reportedly shocked by the protests against the mass cull by the IFA and ICMSA. Well, that's why we pay

membership fees to those organisations; so they do contribute significant opposition to such measures. However, not in this case. It seems the minister was shocked at the two organisations in question, because they are part of a Food Vision Dairy Group that recommended that the country should explore the option of a voluntary reduction scheme.

Seeing the general reaction of the farmers made them fear for their lofty wages; and so we now have the rather hollow howls of protest. To anyone who knows the IFA and similar farm organisations, this does not come as a big surprise. ★





TOMMY MCKEARNEY MEMORY

IT IS EXPECTED that by the time we go to press the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill will have been passed into law.

The new legislation will establish what is described as an Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery, under the leadership of the former lord chief justice for Northern Ireland, Sir Declan Morgan KC.¹ This body will have the power to grant immunity from prosecution for a Troubles-related death and prevent investigations into related incidents. The legislation will also end all new inquests or inquiries into deaths arising from the conflict, and prevent the bringing of new civil claims related to events of the period.

According to Britain's governing Tory party, this act of Parliament is designed to provide greater information, accountability and acknowledgement to victims and families. As with many claims made by British governments, this one needs to be treated with an enormous degree of scepticism. And not just because it has been condemned by every political party in the North, as well as the Dublin government, but because it attempts to steer the focus away from where it should be.

Knowing full well that offering immunity from prosecution would not only cause a storm of public anger but would also focus attention on individuals rather than the state, this was a subtle piece of dissembling. It repeated the long-promoted and misleading narrative that the "Irish Troubles" were caused by disaffected, unbalanced, almost

congenitally violent persons resorting to terrorism in what amounted to something akin to an aggravated crime wave.

The convenient corollary to this was the story routinely spun of a generous and patient British state, along with its northern Irish allies, struggling heroically to maintain law and order and keep the peace. Incidentally, this is an interpretation quietly supported by the southern Irish establishment, and is in part the reason for Dublin objecting to the new law.

In keeping with this "official" British narrative was a cleverly promoted line that this legacy legislation was actually designed to protect old soldiers. It was necessary, the law's authors claimed, to prevent what they described as vexatious claims and accusations against military veterans. This pitch was particularly popular with Britain's right-wing media and Tory MPs and their voters. Not surprisingly, the measure gained the approval of the Northern Ireland Veterans' Association. All very helpful too, don't forget, for this chaotic and embattled Tory government.

In practical terms, however, the Independent Commission will have little impact among former members of republican or loyalist armed organisations. What benefit would accrue to those men or women for publicising their actions? If sufficient evidence to secure a conviction hasn't been obtained in the quarter century since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, there is little prospect now of fresh information emerging to see charges being preferred.



MIRANDA LYNCH CELEBRITY

ON 22 JUNE, RTE announced that it had overpaid Ryan Tubridy of the "Late Late Show" by a figure of €345,000. This was done through secretive deals and barter accounts, and resulted in Tubridy earning more than €500,000 each year.

The following weeks saw wall-to-wall coverage of the scandal in the media, peaking on 11 July, the day that Ryan Tubridy appeared before the Oireachtas Public Accounts Committee. The

THE RYAN TUBRIDY SCANDAL: A MA

Government and media had their narratives ready: Tubridy and the higher leadership of RTE acted in secret. It became a prime opportunity for the taoiseach to appear strong by punishing them and possibly do an administrative change on RTE to pretend he's doing something.

It would seem a slow time for news if we have to hear about Ryan Tubridy constantly, over a relatively small sum of money. I will argue that this wasn't true, and would like to cover a few things that happened about the same time that you might have missed, concentrating on

the main dates of 22 June and 11 July.

On 19 June, President Michael D. Higgins shared in an interview with the *Business Post* his view that the Government is playing with fire by trying to meddle with Irish neutrality, and that the country is drifting dangerously close to NATO. On 22 June protesters from the Connolly Youth Movement disrupted the Government's sham "consultation on international security," which was stacked with pro-NATO voices.

On 11 July the Department of Housing delivered its second-quarter report. This showed that the

WITH THE SHADY ELEMENTS

Over the past decade or more there has emerged an increasing amount of evidence of the murky and often murderous activities of the British secret services in the Six Counties.

There would be, moreover, a real concern among former members of these organisations that meeting the commission's requirements for immunity might involve identifying fellow-participants, something that would risk incurring the wrath of former colleagues who still wish to remain anonymous.

What, therefore, is the rationale for a measure that has annoyed so many in Ireland, and even among those usually sympathetic to London's decrees? By introducing this legislation the British government is determined to achieve two connected objectives. The immediate intention is to halt a series of legal investigations into the lethal actions of former members of the British army during the course of the conflict. The second, and most important, albeit related, aim, is to ensure that there is no detailed analysis and examination of the decades-long involvement of Britain's clandestine secret services in Ireland.

Crucial from a British standpoint is the need to obscure how and from where these agencies derive their authorisation. Because if they are not officially and explicitly mandated by the Cabinet and, ultimately, Parliament they are in effect acting above and beyond the elected executive.

And therein lies a matter that has ramifications far beyond the dreary steeples of the Six Counties. If the actions of the Crown's security services in the North of Ireland were to be exposed there would inevitably follow a series of penetrating questions relating to the very nature of governance in Britain.

Over the past decade or more there has emerged an increasing amount of evidence of the murky and often murderous activities of the British secret services in the Six Counties. With their manipulation of the paedophile network operating from Kincora Boys' Home in Belfast,² colluding with the Glenanne gang, facilitating the import of loyalist arms from South Africa, and overseeing the actions of the IRA informer Freddie Scappaticci, the story is one of an incredibly powerful entity with a licence to operate beyond what is deemed to be the law.³

Were Troubles-related investigations to continue through inquests, civil cases, court hearings and other investigations there is no telling what might eventually emerge, if only by accident. Moreover, this would surely raise the question whether, if that intense level of covert manipulation can happen in Northern Ireland (constitutionally still an integral part of the United Kingdom), might the same not happen in Britain itself? There still remain, after all, a few journalists prepared to fearlessly tell the truth and who are unwilling to be intimidated.

The existence of a "deep state" in Britain is not mere idle or conspiratorial speculation. There is an inquiry going on at present into the role of undercover police infiltrating perfectly legal and relatively harmless protest groups. According to the *Guardian*, between 1968 and 2010 undercover police spied on more than a thousand (yes, one thousand) political groups in Britain.⁴ Left-wing and progressive organisations were, for the most part,

the target of these covert operations.

Indeed, might one of these more recent covert operations have been conducted against a more significant target than petty protest groups? Might the objective have been to ensure that the occupant of number 10 Downing Street would continue to turn a blind eye towards the "deep state"?⁵ Having experienced the lengths to which that underground network was prepared to go in Ireland, it is not altogether outlandish speculation.

Whether true or not, one thing is clear. We don't just need to get rid of the Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill: we need to break the connection with those shady elements promoting it and establish a genuinely independent Irish democracy. ★

1 "Secretary of State outlines next steps in NI Legacy Bill," 18 July 2023 (<https://tinyurl.com/4btj8mzv>).

2 Chris Moore, "How MI5 protected child sex abusers in the notorious Kincora Boys' Home," *Sunday World*, 4 December 2022 (<https://tinyurl.com/kurytum2>).

3 Jennifer O'Leary, "Army's IRA spy Freddie Scappaticci admitted killing suspected informer," *BBC News*, 30 May 2023 (<https://tinyurl.com/y7ju97n3>).

4 Rob Evans, "'Spy cops' scandal: what is it and why was public inquiry set up?" *Guardian*, 29 June 2023 (<https://tinyurl.com/b3khwan6>).

5 Andrew Murray, "Is the 'deep state' trying to undermine Corbyn?" *New Statesman*, 19 September 2018 (<https://tinyurl.com/b8uku34t>).

STERCLASS IN DISTRACTION

Government again missed their targets for the provision of social homes, affordable-purchase homes, and cost-rental homes. The awkward timing of this report, in the middle of the RTE hype, was only reported on by Ireland's most serious news medium, *Waterford Whispers News*.

On 12 July the Oireachtas health committee was told that the cost of building the new National Children's Hospital will probably rise to €2.2 billion. The Dutch contractor Royal BAM Group has claimed another €756 million, citing delays. Including money

already spent and other costs, this would bring the total cost of the hospital to more than €3.6 billion.

On 13 July the Environmental Protection Agency issued its annual report. This shows that, while greenhouse gas emissions decreased by 1.9 per cent in 2022 compared with 2021, this reduction is well short of target. A reduction of 12.4 per cent per year will be required until 2025; and Ireland is very likely to miss the targeted 51 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030.

The capitalist ruling class uses the

media circus as a way to distract the masses from painful news that shows their failings in such areas as peace, housing, health care, and the climate. This is not surprising, as large media publications are owned by the capitalist class, or indeed the state itself.

Additionally, it became more important for modern media to report on what gets clicks, views, and advertising revenue, instead of what the public needs to know. It remains vitally important to read independent and working-class publications to cut through the distractions. ★





IRISH COMMUNISTS' VISIT TO CHINA

In this first part of a two-part report, **Gearóid Ó Machail**, member of the CPI National Political Committee, who travelled to China accompanied by the CPI general secretary, Jimmy Corcoran, provides an account of the delegation's time spent in China and makes some observations based on his experience there.



THE COMMUNIST PARTY of Ireland recently accepted an invitation from the International Department of the Communist Party of China to attend the 3rd Communist Party Leaders' Delegation of North American, Oceanian and Nordic Countries at three venues in Guangdong Province, Guizhou Province, and Beijing City.

CPI representatives were joined by delegates from the Communist Parties of Britain, Finland, Sweden, Norway, the United States, Canada (including the Parti Communiste du Québec), Denmark, and Australia, as well as representatives from the Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist), the New Communist Party of Britain, and the London-based Friends of Socialist China.

The purpose of the ten-day visit was to develop our understanding of China's path to modernisation, the "socialist market economy," and the nature and

trajectory of "socialism with Chinese characteristics." The well-organised itinerary included meetings with academics, visits to communities and enterprises, multi-cultural events, and discussions with the International Department of the Communist Party of China, the Communist Youth League of China, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, and the Party School of the CPC Central Committee.

The delegation was welcomed upon arrival at Guangzhou Airport by International Department officials and embarked on a busy schedule of activities, beginning with a visit on day 2 to Guangdong Local Chronicles Museum and Guangdong Academy of Social Science. President Wang Tinghui and Professor Deng Zhiping of the academy provided a comprehensive presentation on the "economic and technological miracle" experienced by Guangdong



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Economic activity in the province is increasingly oriented towards renewable energy and electric vehicles, and major efforts are under way to improve public transport and protect biodiversity. In response to questioning from the delegation, the professor stressed that there are moves to improve general living standards for workers throughout the region, including migrant workers, and to address the wealth and services gaps between urban and rural areas.

Province since the initiation of the “opening up” reforms in 1978. They presented an overview of China’s approach to modernisation, characterised by common prosperity for all, harmony between humanity and nature, material and cultural-ethical advancement, and peaceful international development and co-operation.

The aforementioned themes were prevalent throughout our visit, and the Chinese officials and party representatives that we met were at pains to juxtapose China’s peaceful path to development and modernisation with that of the imperialist west. It was stressed that China had no interest in war or imperialist rivalry but preferred to seek peaceful co-operation and interaction with developing and developed countries in order to promote and to plan for “common prosperity” around the globe.

The deployment of outside foreign capital and investment to build up the productive capacity of the local economy in Guangdong and in other “Special Economic Zones” under the supervision of the CPC was explained in terms of the need to bring Chinese living standards into line with neighbouring countries in South-East Asia. Capital and outside investment is being welcomed as a tool for developing “common prosperity,” and there is no potential for capitalist interests to organise politically or gain influence within the media or education sectors. The explosion of financial wealth generated by the “socialist market economy” is being socially invested to the benefit of the entire population of the “South Gate of China” and is also being invested in neighbouring regions to improve general living standards throughout south-east China.

Professor Deng emphasised that “the colour of our further modernisation is green.” Economic activity in the province is increasingly oriented towards renewable energy and electric vehicles, and major efforts are under way to improve public transport and protect

biodiversity. In response to questioning from the delegation, the professor stressed that there are moves to improve general living standards for workers throughout the region, including migrant workers, and to address the wealth and services gaps between urban and rural areas.

Delegates later visited a leading medical diagnostic firm, King Med Diagnosis. Founded in 2003 in Guangzhou, King Med Diagnostics is a third-party medical laboratory group, engaging in four major businesses, including medical testing, clinical trials, food and hygiene testing and scientific research service in 31 cities, providing medical test outsourcing services for over 16,000 medical institutions in 27 provinces. The CPC has direct representation on the company’s board of directors, and delegates met CPC officials within the company, who informed us that there are over 1,300 CPC comrades organised within the 14,000 work force. We saw evidence of party organisation within the building, with many employees flying the hammer and sickle from their desks and wearing party badges. Party members have their own space for meetings and gatherings within the work-place.

A further visit was arranged to the state-owned Guangzhou Automobile Group (GAC Motors). The impressive company was ranked 189th among the world’s top 500 enterprises in 2019. Adhering to the enterprise concept of “Humanity, Credibility, Creativity,” GAC had manufactured 18.3 million cars and 16.8 million motorcycles by 2020. In 2022 GAC’s production and sales both exceeded 2.4 million vehicles.

Walking around Guangzhou, a megacity of 18 million residents, delegates were struck by the fact that there are no slums and there is no homelessness. Trees line every road, and there are ample parks and green spaces, along with huge numbers of low-cost apartment blocks. In that sense, China’s cities stand in stark contrast to the

megacities elsewhere in the developing world, which are so often characterised by intense poverty, squalor, and homelessness.

During their visit to Guangdong province, international Communist Party delegates also met and questioned Comrade Wang Ruijun, member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Guangdong Committee, accompanied by party officials from the Guangdong Foreign Affairs Office, the Communist Youth League Guangdong Community, and Guangdong Academy of Social Sciences.

Delegates were transferred by air to the Communist Party of China Guizhou Provincial Party School, where they were to be based for the following three days. The school is a specialist and well-equipped training academy for emerging talent and cadres within the CPC. The school was founded in 1950 and provides education on Marxist theory, leadership skills, organisational skills, and community-building. The college facilities are extensive and impressive: it can currently accommodate up to 2,000 students at any given time.

To round off our first day in Guizhou, the international delegation of communists experienced a spectacular and rich cultural performance at Guiyang Theatre and were invited onto the stage to meet a performing cast from many of Guizhou province’s ethnic minority communities. The International Department was keen to counter “western” propaganda concerning China’s supposed intolerance for ethnic and cultural diversity. The packed theatre comprised mainly family groups, who evidently were relishing the diverse performances of song, dance, drama and cabaret acts from the various ethnic regions of Guizhou province. ★

In part 2 of his report in the next issue of *Socialist Voice*, Gearóid Ó Machail will outline details of the international delegation’s visit to Jinyuan, Zunyi, Qingyan, and Beijing.

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SOCIALIST MORALITY

The 1975 Soviet film *Бонус* (Bonus) directed by Sergey Mikaelyan and based on the novel by Alexander Gelman deals with challenges to socialist morality in the workplace.

At Communist Party committee meeting on a construction site one of the supervisors, Potapov, makes a surprise announcement.

He and his team refuse to accept the bonus for overfulfilment of plan targets. According to Potapov, the management of the trust artificially lowers targets so that the trust can easily exceed its targets.

Potapov proves his words with compelling economic data.

The director of the trust, Batarcev, dismisses his allegations. He tries to disparage Potapov as a 'troublemaker' and attempts to cover up the scandal.

However, the Party Secretary backs Potapov's initiative ...



INNOVATIVE ACTIVISM LEARNING WITH THE PEOPLE

**BARRY MURRAY
MORALITY**

TO MY ETERNAL embarrassment, it's only in very recent times that I realised that, in the scale of human existence, capitalism was actually a very young system of living—or existing. For some reason, I never thought to see it in terms of age.

It would seem obvious now, but it would appear that my concentration was on the destructive force of capitalism and how it destroys

people's lives. Also, trying to grapple with a knowledge of Marxist theory and practice, trying to map out a new way forward, in my own thinking at least, seems to have hidden the noticing of the relatively young age of capitalism, or its age at all.

Now, it's not a critical piece of information, but it dispels the notion that is, almost certainly, held by the vast majority of people: that capitalism has always been there; and this in turn feeds the notion that it always will be there; therefore struggle against it is futile. And the idea is promoted that

there is no alternative.

The point is that "obvious" things, to those who know, are not always that obvious to everyone else.

Too often activists and communists, trying to create change, miss this. Indeed we often become frustrated by the lack of basic understanding on the part of the wider population of how they are being exploited, and why they will not listen to or act on what we are saying.

Armies of political scientists, psychologists and many other "gurus," right across the political spectrum, have written zillions of words about every conceivable angle on this topic. Nothing I say here is going to be revealing or provide the breakthrough strategy for starting a revolution, but it might result in getting our message heard better.

There are ways of saying or explaining things about the reality of how the world works that can inform people in very simple ways. And the case in point, about the age of capitalism, is one such. When you say to people, as I now want to do, that capitalism is only approximately three hundred years old, they look at you in a funny way, and it surprises them, because they assumed it had always been there.

Then when you mention that before capitalism there was feudalism, and before that slavery, and so on, they begin to get curious. They have heard of slavery, but mostly not of feudalism. The concept of the duration of any of these epochs never really features. However, the question of what is feudalism, or how did it work, begins to be asked. Why is it, or was it, different from capitalism?

The point of all of this is that it demonstrates to people that, contrary to what they believed, change is possible, and actually happened. You could further point out that in fact humans create that very change; but there is always the danger of "eyes glazing over" from the over-exuberance of the activist trying to get everything in life explained in twenty minutes or so.

It's easy to forget that people have work they must go to, bills to be paid, shopping to be done, and children to be minded. And that's often another factor that we overlook too: that people are in fact trapped in the cycle of a capitalist-imposed life, which includes the element of fear of the very system that oppresses them. That's going to be a tough one to circumvent.



Another interesting thing that can be done is, when people talk about their work, as they do, to point out or to ask them if they know that the first two (or three) days of their work pays all their wages and their employer's expenses for the entire week, and that the next three days are virtually clear profit for the employer.

Many are astounded at this simple fact, and never thought of it in those terms. They often know they were being exploited but not the mechanics of it. Now, it is tempting to tell them that they are in fact working the rest of the week for nothing and go into the virtues of Marx's surplus value; but enough is enough. The seed has been planted by the "two-day revelation theory"; so let's see where it goes.

Not very scientific, but it does make people think. What will they do with this new knowledge? Well, that's a whole other debate.

"I own my own house." Do you? The reality is that you do not, nor will you for at least twenty-five years, if not thirty-five. The bank, mortgage company or vulture fund owns it. You only have the use of it and its upkeep until you make your final payment. If you default, you're out.

The psychological lure of the "property ladder" is in fact "snakes and ladders." As long as you pay the rent you have a house, but you don't really have a home yet—not to mention the stress of two parents working to make the mortgage repayments alone. This too can be developed into the public housing concept, lifetime rent according to means, and so on. Do we explain this public housing concept clearly enough to the wider populace? What are and should be the nuts and bolts of it for people?

There are, without doubt, many simple ways to get people to think about their situation without appearing like a know-all or making people feel inadequate. With justification, we would be more inclined to infer that people need to learn about, say, socialism, Marxism-Leninism, or even communism, when in fact it might be tactically smarter to say, "Well, let's study capitalism and its culture first." It's less alien to them, and they are living it.

Just on the issue of socialism or communism: often these words inspire loathing and fear, fuelled by the black propaganda of capitalism and imperialism, through schooling, church, and media. Even those who are active in these areas have been driven to not openly show their true political leanings, mainly because of rampant McCarthyism

or the like. There has been a very successful campaign, certainly in Ireland, to drive socialism, and more so communism, into the shadows. That's a serious indictment. We need to break that, if we can.

You constantly hear the refrain "Ah sure, socialism doesn't work." Yes, it does, and you can point out the reality and acceptability of what has been called "corporate socialism." Government grants, cheap bank loans and tax reliefs are all part of the socialism-for-business cycle. There are so many angles from which we could come at this that I think it deserves lots of consideration. There are many other iterations of socialism (except social democracy) that could also be pointed to that fly under the radar unnoticed. Again, not many people would have heard the term "corporate socialism," or how it actually affects their lives. Could that too be developed into basic learning pamphlets?

So what is the point of this article for activists in general? Is anything being said that hasn't been said a thousand times before? Almost certainly not.

But it might be useful to remind ourselves that we can become blinded by what we know and often frustrated that people don't get it. There are always new ideas and ways of getting our message out. We also know that we need people and communities on our side. It is vital that we talk to people at their level but without diluting what we know is necessary for change and a new radical revolutionary society. For this we probably need to constantly look at innovative ways to "myth-bust" and educate both ourselves and the wider public.

Capitalism has done a good job on the worldwide population of hiding its reality. It has fooled people into believing that there is no other way. People are fooled by the bourgeois parliamentary representative "democracy" system. Capitalist cultural influences are inculcated into the very DNA of people. It is a very powerful force. But clearly not unbreakable.

Another topic that the great majority of people think is "natural" and "normal" is profit. Sadly, to most people it is sacred, or at least all right—no harm in it. He or she is a "great entrepreneur." How do we change that narrative? Do we point out the basic fact and often enough, that without workers there would be no "entrepreneurs"? How can we point out in very basic language how and why profit is not sacred at all and even from where it is derived? Surely this can open up a discussion on

inequality and exploitation, at the very least?

Maybe if this article does anything to start a conversation on ideas of how to be innovative, and maybe build a very basic activists' template for simple explanations to the wider population, then that might be progress.

So now, calling on all comrades to think about contributing, developing and expanding this type of potentially innovative activism. And strive to keep it basic, because we need our communities with us, not in awe of us or intimidated by what we say. ★

FREE EVENT

IRISH NEUTRALITY: A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF NATIONAL UNITY AND INDEPENDENCE

CHAIRPERSON

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM

JIMMY CORCORAN
CPI General Secretary

PATRICIA MCKENNA
Barrister & former MEP

VIJAY PRASHAD
Marxist Historian

FEARGHAL MAC BHELOSCAIDH
Historian & Author

- Can Irish neutrality survive the Irish ruling class' attempts to increasingly integrate the country into EU and NATO military structures?
- What does "independence" mean without an independent foreign policy?
- How can Irish anti-imperialist forces build on existing public support for neutrality to create an all-Ireland movement to defend and deepen it?

FRIDAY 11TH AUGUST @ 5pm
ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
FALLS ROAD, BELFAST

COMMUNIST PARTY OF IRELAND

Féile 35
an Phobail
WELCOMING THE WORLD

SADR in aise

NEODRACHT NA HÉIREANN: CUID THÁBHACHTACH D'ATHAONTÚ AGUS DE NEAMHSPLEÁCHAS NAISIÚNTA

CATHAIDHEACH

LE RANNÓCAOCHTAL Ó

JIMMY CORCORAN
CPI General Secretary

PATRICIA MCKENNA
Barrister & former MEP

VIJAY PRASHAD
Marxist Historian

FEARGHAL MAC BHELOSCAIDH
Historian & Author

- An dtiocfaidh neodracht na héireann slán amach as na hiarrachtaí leanúnacha neamhdhaonlathacha ó scothaiome an deiscirt leis an tír a thiomáint isteach i struchtúir míleata an AE agus ECAT?
- Cad is ciall le "neamhspleáchas" gan polasaí eachtrach dár gcuid féin?
- Cad é mar is féidir le fórsaí frith-impiúla na héireann teacht i dtír ar an tacaíocht fhóirleathan ar son neodracht na tíre a mhaireann go fóill i measc fhorhóir a muintire?
- Cad é mar a thógfaidh gluaiseacht uile-Éireann lenár neodracht a chosaint, ár gcóir idirnáisiúnta a tharrtháil agus ár n-oidhreacht frith-impiúla a dhainiú?

DÉ HAoine 11th DE MÍ LÚNasa @ 5pm
COLAISTE OLLSCOILE NAOMH MHUIRE
BÓTHAR NA BHFÁIL, Béal Feirste

PÁIRTÍ CUMANNACH NA HÉIREANN

Féile 35
an Phobail
WELCOMING THE WORLD



BOOKS

ONE OF THE FIRST GREAT CLASS STRUGGLES IN IRELAND



JENNY FARRELL

**James Plunkett, *Strumpet City*
(London: Hutchinson, 1969)**

THE YEARS FROM 1907 to 1914 are the subject of James Plunkett's book *Strumpet City*. Set in this period before Irish independence, the collective hero of the novel is the working class, as it enters a new phase of its class struggle.

As a colonial subject, the bourgeoisie at that time was also directly dependent on Britain. Both the bourgeoisie and the clergy, who are represented in a variety of characters, take different positions on independence, although this was in their interest. Regardless, they broadly agree that they are in a class struggle against the workers and are themselves profiting from their misery.

Following the outcome of the War of Independence, this class, now in power, would confront the working class in a civil war. When it came to defeating the working class, the national question was of secondary importance to the bourgeoisie.

One important representative of the bourgeoisie in this novel is Mr Bradshaw, who owns some of the tenements and treats tenants and employees mercilessly. The police and the clergy support him in this. Although some elements within the bourgeoisie understand the absolute misery of the working class, they do not openly side with the workers, or question property relations. These characters include the Protestant company director Yearling and Mrs. Bradshaw, who is unable to stand up to her husband. The clergy hand out alms, unless the poor are in revolt, in which case alms are withheld. Yearling and Father Giffley can only endure the conflict between

SINÉAD O'CONNOR (1966–2023)



CLOVER CARROLL

SINÉAD O'CONNOR, who died on 26 July, was well known for her music career but was also a committed activist and republican. At one of her concerts in 1990 in the United States she approached officials to demand that the US national anthem not be played. This resulted in several radio stations boycotting her music. She wrote in her memoir of it that Frank Sinatra "weighs in and opines I should have my a** kicked, which is worrying because I'm staying in the same hotel as him. We might happen across each other in the lift, and I'm thinking my father back in Dublin isn't gonna be too pleased if I tell him I had to, in self-defence, beat the crap out of Ol' Blue Eyes."

In 1991 she boycotted the Grammy Awards, saying that she didn't want "to be part of a world that measures artistic ability by material success." In October 1992, on the American television programme "Saturday Night



In the novel, the history and aftermath of the events are presented from the point of view of representatives of these different social classes. Although no individual “heroes” dominate, the characters are treated in a differentiated and sensitive manner. Each individual character reveals their class affiliation in their individual circumstances and viewpoints.

Sinéad O’Connor’s rendition of “Báidín Fheilimí” was surrealism at its best, recorded at a time when other Irish luminaries of the musical world shunned the Irish language. May her fragile boat sail safely to the far shore.

Gabriel Rosenstock

their compassion for the workers’ misery and their social position through excessive alcohol consumption.

On the side of the working class are Bob and Mary Fitzpatrick, Bernard Mulhall, the Hennessys, the Farrells, and Rashers Tierney, who vividly and authentically embody a comprehensive panorama of different stages of consciousness, ages, and circumstances. During the months of lockout, a new class solidarity develops among them. Their determined resistance against the employers brings them unimaginable destitution.

In the novel, the history and aftermath of the events are presented from the point of view of representatives of these different social classes. Although no individual “heroes” dominate, the characters are treated in a differentiated and sensitive manner. Each individual character reveals their class affiliation in their individual circumstances and viewpoints. The majority of workers arrive at a class standpoint through the strike. Pat Bannister expresses a broader socialist point of view. James Connolly, however, is mentioned only once in passing in the whole novel, by Bannister.

The lumpenproletariat includes Rashers Tierney, street musician and beggar, who occasionally finds work as an unskilled labourer. The Hennessys represent those who, concerned for their children, cannot withstand the pressure. But the majority of the dispossessed demonstrate a humanity and solidarity diametrically opposed to the values of the bourgeoisie.

When the ITGWU accepts the offer of solidarity from English workers to send Dublin children to England for the duration of the strike, the conflict among the clergy between Giffley and O’Connor comes to a head. O’Connor wants to stop this action at all costs, while Giffley sides with the workers’ families, understanding fully the relief this would bring. In 1913 this very plan was indeed prevented by the Catholic Church, on the pretext that Catholic children in England would be exposed to Protestant or atheist influences.

Plunkett creates crowd scenes in which readers experience the mood among the Dublin workers. An example of this is the scene in which the workers, led by Larkin, shut down Dublin Port in protest against the more than 160 strikebreakers brought in by a steamer from Liverpool. In this scene the Dublin proletariat is depicted at a crucial moment, where their leader, Larkin, emerges.

Live,” she sang an *a cappella* version of Bob Marley’s song “War,” and followed the performance by tearing a picture of Pope John Paul II while telling those watching to “fight the real enemy.”

This was met with a hugely negative response, with the American actor Joe Pesci claiming he would “have given her such a smack,” as well as two men pelting her with eggs after she left the building and NBC banning her for life. This was before there was widespread knowledge of the cover-ups by the Catholic Church of the abuse of children.

The Catholic Church in Ireland has a history of abuse of women, including the Magdalen laundries. O’Connor risked her career in music to push for people to confront the abuse that had been happening for years.

When it came to occupied Palestine she was outspoken on her stance, saying, “Nobody with any sanity, including myself, would have anything but sympathy for the Palestinian plight. There’s not a sane person on earth who in any way sanctions what the Israeli authorities are doing.” She cancelled a concert she was to perform at in occupied Palestine to show her opposition to the occupation. O’Connor’s outspokenness on the

The power of the class is beautifully captured in the image of the stationary cranes and the ship bringing Larkin. Plunkett shows the masses at a moment of strength and confidence. This awareness and determination, despite all the setbacks, despite hunger and hardship, permeates the whole novel.

Readers get to know the Fitzpatrick family best. Bob was promoted to foreman through the influence of Mrs Bradshaw at his work-place. Yet, like Mary, he remains unwavering in his solidarity with the strikers.

Because Plunkett is unequivocally on the side of the working class in this novel, it is surprising that the conscious trade unionists at the centre of the plot have no connection with the Marxist Connolly, his political as well as his trade union work. Connolly is almost entirely left out. And although Larkin and some of the working-class characters are clearly socialists, there is also no mention of Connolly’s Irish Socialist Republican Party. The focus is on unionised struggle, without a theory that encompasses and goes beyond it.

In this way the novel obscures the fact that there were also political struggles for national independence and socialist liberation going on at that time. Thus, apart from the old housekeeper Miss Gilchrist, there are no nationalist voices among the workers. Plunkett’s workers show no obvious interest in national self-determination. And so the lockout appears to be purely a trade union struggle, at the expense of its role in the development of Irish revolutionary consciousness.

And while the founding of the Irish Citizen Army is mentioned, its further development and important role in the Easter Rising that followed only three years later is clear only to initiated readers.

Nevertheless, the book bears eloquent and inspiring witness to the strength of the Irish proletariat in one of their first great class struggles. It reveals to readers a class-consciousness that had yet to prove itself in the political liberation struggles that were then imminent—in the Rising, in the War of Independence, as well as in the Civil War, and which is still crucial today.

To the present day, many Irish people count *Strumpet City* among the most important and best books in Irish literature. ★

Palestinian cause mirrors how many Irish people feel about it.

She also stood with Ireland’s refugee community. After receiving the inaugural award for Classic Irish Album at the RTE Choice Music Awards earlier this year she received a standing ovation as she dedicated the award for the album *I Do Not Want What I Haven’t Got* to “each and every member of Ireland’s refugee community.” She applied to join Sinn Féin, but on meeting members of the party she withdrew her application, as she believed they weren’t serious enough about ending partition.

With a life of activism putting her career at risk, with many of her peers and other famous actors threatening physical violence, and a public backlash in full force, it’s no wonder Connolly’s statement that “apostles of freedom are ever idolised when dead, but crucified when alive,” could be said of her. She stood up to oppressors and stood up for oppressed communities in Ireland and internationally, and faced harsh criticism. Like most women in history who have done the same, she was labelled crazy by those who refused to believe her, and was forgotten when proved to be right. ★



PROMETHEUS AND THE FIRE



The motive of McCarthyism was to keep people away from alternative politics and to strangle the trade union movement so that the working class could be freely exploited by capitalists. The creation of internal enemies was essential to the creation of a fear psychosis among people to keep them away from communism. Trade union leaders and socialists were branded security threats to the United States.

**SAJEEV KUMAR
OPPENHEIMER**

THE FILM *Oppenheimer* begins with a mention of Prometheus, the Greek god who is cursed by Zeus for not abiding by the law, stealing fire and giving it to humans in the form of knowledge.

Oppenheimer is portrayed as a present-day Prometheus who is applauded for using his knowledge of particle physics to produce an atomic bomb to save the world from fascism and is targeted by McCarthyism for standing up against the creation of the hydrogen bomb. The Irish actor Cillian Murphy *above*, who portrays Oppenheimer, handles a range of emotions—despair, self-doubt, arrogance, anger, ecstasy, fear, guilt—with ease.

It is not in our interest to discuss quantum physics, or the aesthetics of the film: we can stick to the politics of it. Martin Luther King is credited with the saying “We live in a world of guided missiles and misguided men.” The film shows how the knowledge that ends up in the hands of misguided men creates a catastrophe.

Necessity is the mother of invention. People cannot just use things from nature, as animals do. Humans have to alter nature through labour to transform things to make it suitable for their purpose. In the transforming of nature through labour, knowledge is gained, and humans are themselves transformed. The necessity to invent new things and to use nature in new ways led to science.

Two billion dollars was allotted to the “Manhattan Project,” the secret laboratory at Los Alamos in New Mexico. The uranium-235 used to make the two atomic bombs, nicknamed *Little Boy* (Hiroshima) and *Fat Man* (Nagasaki), was extracted from the mines of Shinkolobwe in Congo, which was a Belgian colony. Germany had surrendered by then, and the atomic bomb was used on Japan, which would have surrendered even if the bomb had not been used. Japan’s delay in surrendering was because of the conditions of surrender, which it wanted altered.

The Soviet Union sacrificed a lot of human lives and had already defeated Germany and wanted to attack Japan to end the war. The United States acted quickly to attack Japan before the Soviet Union did, and Hiroshima and Nagasaki were chosen to create maximum damage and send a direct warning to the USSR. In one of the scenes, the scientist Edward Teller says, “The bomb was created to end the world war but it only initiated a cold war.”

During the Great depression (1929–1930) there was a huge drive to join unions, because of large-scale unemployment and price increases. Eric Hobsbawm, in *The Age of Extremes* (1994), says that a typical British scientist of the 1930s was a member of the left wing. In the United States the left were demonised and portrayed as a national security threat. Oppenheimer’s fellow-academics advised him to keep away from trade union activities and stick to science.

Oppenheimer was radicalised by his association with Jean Tatlock and helped to raise funds for the Spanish Civil War and anti-fascist struggles. He is asked, after the Manhattan Project, “What will you do with Los Alamos?” With guilt he answers, “Give it back to the Indians.”

It’s not surprising for a scientist, whose job is to find solutions to problems, to find socialism as a solution to the misery (in spite of abundance) of capitalist society. Oppenheimer was never a Communist Party member but was a victim of the anti-communist propaganda of Senator Joseph McCarthy during the Cold War. Albert Einstein, Charlie Chaplin, Langston Hughes (poet) and Linus Pauling (Nobel prizewinner) were victims of anti-communist hysteria. The motive of McCarthyism was to keep people away from alternative politics and to strangle the trade union movement so that the working class could be freely exploited by capitalists.

The creation of internal enemies was essential to the creation of a fear psychosis among people to keep them away from communism. Trade union leaders and socialists were branded security threats to the United States.

Greg Mitchell, who wrote *The Beginning or the End* (2020), in an interview with Amy Goodman makes three important criticisms of the film.

- It doesn’t say anything about the radioactive contamination and the effect the Manhattan Project had on the people of Los Alamos.
- It doesn’t say anything about the 85 per cent civilian casualties caused in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- It is misleading in that it shows Oppenheimer feeling guilty about using the bomb, whereas in reality he defended using the bomb till the end of his life.

The film exposes how communism was stigmatised during the Cold War years, the hypocrisy of US democracy during the McCarthy era, and the kick-starting of the nuclear arms race after the Second World War.

Pandora’s box was opened, and the world would never be the same. ★