

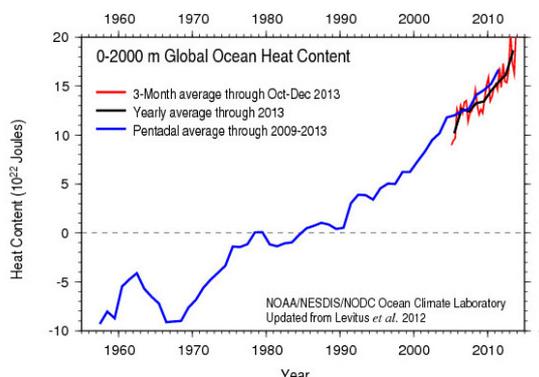
Editorial

Climate change gets real

On a global scale the most important political development over the last year, indeed over the last couple of years, has been the transformation of climate change from a well-grounded scientific prognosis to a palpable present reality.

This has included not only the familiar, but rapidly increasing, melting of the arctic ice but also a heat wave in Alaska in June, ferocious temperatures of over 50°C in Australia, the terrible Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, and the combination of heat wave and drought in California with the Polar Vortex across middle America down to the South. Now climate change has come to Ireland and Britain with the exceptional storms and floods of recent weeks.

Meanwhile the scientific evidence accumulates. Here is a graph which shows what is happening to ocean temperatures:



As the oceans heat up so storms become more frequent and more intense. The trajectory shown above guarantees that in the coming years (and not just later in the 21st century) we will see many repetitions, and worse, of the extreme weather that has ravaged Cork, Limerick, Somerset and the Thames Valley in the last month. In many cases the places affected will be enormously more vulnerable than modern Ireland or Britain and the human consequences will be immensely more tragic. One has only to think of a country

like Bangladesh where many millions of people live on the banks of the countries three great rivers and where a one metre rise in sea levels would permanently flood one fifth of the land, home to 15 million people. All this will hit a country where people already live in extreme poverty and many literally starve on the streets. Its neighbour, India, is presently constructing the Indo-Bangladeshi barrier, a 3,406 kilometres (2,116 mi) fence of barbed wire and concrete nearly 3 metres high, allegedly to prevent smuggling of narcotics and already operates a shoot to kill border policy that has claimed 1000 lives.

While this kind of scenario is becoming an imminent prospect around the globe, the long term prospects are, of course, even more catastrophic. What will make it so deadly is not the change to the climate in itself, though that will be extremely serious, but the combination of this with a class divided capitalist system that ruthlessly subordinates people to profit. Vast areas of land will become infertile or uninhabitable, water and food supplies will be hit and the price of both forced up, generating conflicts, wars and refugee flows in the tens of millions which will be met with, at the least, callous indifference and, more likely, vicious repression.

Those who rule our planet, both the owners of the giant corporations and the governments of the major powers, are well aware of all this and have been so for many years if not decades. They have access to all the scientific data we do and much more besides. They have been repeatedly warned by their own (very cautious) expert committee, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and indeed politicians such as Barack Obama, Tony Blair, David Cameron and Chinese President, Xi Jinping, have all acknowledged the reality of humanly generated climate change.

Yet they have done and are doing nothing about it; or to be more precise they are doing nothing effective. The essence of what needs

to be done is simple and well understood: the world economy, not you, not your community, not Ireland but the **world** economy, which means its major players - USA, China, India, the EU, Russia etc - have to switch from being driven by greenhouse gas emitting fossil fuels (oil, coal and gas) to using renewable and sustainable sources of energy such as wind power, solar power and tidal power. This has to happen on a huge scale and it has to happen quickly. Nothing else and nothing less will do, but this is precisely what is NOT happening. Despite all the talk of sustainability and environmental awareness global carbon emissions, far from falling drastically, are rapidly rising. All of us, all of humanity, are being walked towards utter disaster.

It is of vital importance to understand clearly why this is happening. It is not ignorance, it is not even lack of compassion. Compassion for ordinary people is clearly not a characteristic that distinguishes our planet's rulers but its absence is not the main reason for their inaction. It is that, without exception, they are locked into capitalism, not only ideologically but politically and economically and capitalism is locked, by its very nature, into competitive capital accumulation.

This means that faced with even a small downturn in economic activity, say negative production of a couple of percent in a year (a recession) they are obliged to try to restore economic growth. It means that faced with a threat to the interests of their major companies - like Exxon Mobile, BP, Shell, Toyota, General Motors etc. all of whom are completely wrapped up in and committed to fossil fuels - they are compelled to defend them. Not one of the significant governments in the world is prepared to buck this iron logic. So for all the talk, for all the scientific reports, conferences and climate summits at Kyoto, Copenhagen, Rio and so on, nothing real happens.

Socialists have to face up to this reality, difficult as it is. We have to grasp the grim fact that both to prevent catastrophic runaway climate change in the future and to deal with the very damaging consequences of the

climate change already built into the ecological system by past emissions, it will be necessary to break capitalism.

This is regardless of whether there is a mass movement against climate change. Obviously such a movement is desirable and should it emerge we will be an enthusiastic part of it, but it will not be a question of persuading or enlightening our rulers. It will be necessary, on pain of fascism and barbarism, to overthrow them and replace production for profit with planned production for human need which can only be done through working class struggle internationally.

The rise of racism

The picture is mixed but overall the last year or so has not been a good one for that global class struggle. Certainly the stunning momentum of 2011, with the Arab Spring and the general Occupy movements has been beaten back, most obviously in Egypt, and one consequence of this is that in a number of countries such as Thailand, Ukraine, and France it is the right that have been able to seize the initiative on the streets. With this has come an inevitable rise of racism, though it has taken different forms in different countries.

Ireland, though it has not experienced the dramatic political swings of some parts of the world is not immune to this process. The fact that over 5 years the working class movement, crippled by its Labour and reformist leadership, has not been able to offer a successful challenge to austerity has meant a predictable tendency to look for scapegoats, most obviously in the shape of 'foreigners' and immigrants.

The fact that this is predictable does not mean, however, that socialists can passively accept it or just shrug their shoulders. Because racism is such a mortal foe for the workers' movement we have an absolute duty to combat racism and wage an ideological and political battle against it. For this reason the question of racism dominates this issue of IMR.

We lead with an eloquent and powerful denunciation of the racism of the Irish state by Memet Uludag. The issue is of great importance because racism is widely portrayed as a phenomenon deriving from ‘lack of education’ and, by implication, from the lower working class. Uludag demonstrates clearly that racism in Ireland, which possesses a strong anti-racist popular tradition, comes from the top and is embedded in many of the practices of the state.

This is complemented by an equally powerful analysis of the rise (and decline) of the nazi Golden Dawn party in Greece by Nikos Loudos from SEK. Ireland is very fortunate in not having (yet!) a serious fascist party or movement. Loudos article, as he himself says, serves as a warning against the complacent idea that ‘it couldn’t happen here’ as well as a guide as to how we can fight back.

These two major articles are complemented by book reviews by Conor Kennelly of Gary Younge’s excellent analysis of Martin Luther King’s famous ‘I have a dream’ speech and by Jim O’Connell of Marek Edelman’s classic account the Warsaw ghetto uprising and John Molyneux’s extended review of Sabby Sagall’s newly published *Final Solutions* which offers a new approach to understanding the phenomenon of genocide.

Sectarianism in Northern Ireland is not the same as racism but it is clearly related and so it is highly appropriate that we also feature Seán Mitchell’s outstanding analysis of how the recent rise of sectarianism in the six counties is a product of the combined crises of the economy and unionism. This is a long article but will repay reading and deals with a subject of crucial importance for socialism in Ireland. The perceptive reader will notice that Uludag, Loudos and Mitchell share a common underlying Marxist approach.

That same approach underpins Kieran Allen’s discussion of the idea of a ‘precariat’ and Karl Gill’s critique of ‘intersectionality’ and ‘privilege theory’. As Allen points out the academic world resembles the clothing industry in its penchant for new and fashionable

concepts. Both Allen and Gill understand why these concepts have a certain purchase in the present situation and do not reject them out of hand, but they also show how - like so many academic trends - they point away from a perspective of class struggle and working class self emancipation.

History

IMR is also committed to an ongoing engagement with Irish history and in this context we have Ruairi Gallagher’s study of ‘Irish Tories and social bandits of the 17th century’, which follows on the work on the Whiteboys by Sean Moraghan in IMR 6 and Roy Johnston’s review essay about the Larne/Howth gun runnings of 1914 partly based on the book *Hidden History: the Secret Origins of the First World War* by Gerry Docherty & Jim Macgregor. The latter requires a word of explanation.

Roy Johnston is a veteran Marxist and we are pleased to publish his contribution but we have reservations regarding the extent of the British Government’s involvement in these events, which is his central claim. However we agree with Roy Johnston that this subject is worth further research as is the wider machinations of the secret state in the events that led to the outbreak of the war. So in the best tradition of debate we have published this article and hope it stimulates the interest of writers and historians of the period. We shall, of course, be returning to the question of the First World War in this anniversary year.

If the First World War was dominated by the horrors of trenches, today’s technology permits the different horror of imperialist slaughter by remote control by means of drones. Mike Youlton reviews US anti-war activist, Medea Benjamin’s recent book on ‘Drone Warfare’.

Finally we have Stewart Smyth’s welcoming review of Brian Roper’s Marxist history of democracy which develops on themes explored by Tina MacVeigh in her IMR 8 article on ‘Their democracy and ours’.