

Editorial

This issue of *IMR* contains a number of extremely timely articles.

First and foremost there is Owen McCormack's forensic examination of whether capitalism is in fact saving the planet, which not only follows a summer of extreme weather events (flooding in Bangladesh, Donegal, four hurricanes in the Caribbean and the US South, Hurricane Ophelia, forest fires in California and Portugal and much else) but also comes at a time when it is announced that the concentration of CO_2 in the atmosphere has reached record levels, that Ireland is nowhere near on course to meet its carbon emission targets and the Citizen's Assembly is making recommendations about Ireland needs to do to meet its climate obligations. What McCormack's article demonstrates is that for all the environmentalist spin and 'green' talk the notion that capitalism or 'the market' is going stop climate chaos is an illusion - on the contrary it is precisely capitalism and the market that are the problem.

Equally appropriate, after the banks' tracker mortgage scandal, the gardai scandals, and the Paradise Papers revelations, is Brian O'Boyle's historical reminder about the 'glory' days of Charlie Haughey and Bertie Aherne. The truth is that the Irish capitalist class and its political hangers on have long been buried up to their necks in scams, strokes, and dodgy deals. They have turned corruption and tax evasion into a way life for themselves as a class. It is in short their central strategy for the system 'going forward' as they like to say.

We also review, in the article by Seamus O'Kane, the trajectory of Sinn Féin, just as it is moving more decisively in the

direction of coalition with Fianna Fáil and simultaneously exhibiting signs of disaffection in its own famously disciplined ranks. And we are delighted to be able to cover in major articles from people on the ground, two hugely important international crises: the inter-imperialist conflict over Korea, expertly surveyed by Kim Young-ik from Workers' Solidarity in South Korea; and the truly horrific persecution and ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya people in Myanmar, graphically documented by Md. Mahmudul Hasan. Both these articles provide background information and detailed coverage not readily available anywhere in Ireland.

One important question we have not covered here is Catalonia but fortunately we did see this issue coming and *IMR* 8 in 2013 was a special issue devoted to 'The National Question' and included both a statement of general principles on national self-determination and a specific article by Andy Durgan on 'Catalonia: Towards Independence'¹. But because there has been some debate about the Catalan question on the left it is worthwhile making a few comments here.

First, socialists should in general support the right of nations to self-determination. This is not because we are nationalists or support nationalism, but because we are internationalists and understand that international unity, the unity of the workers of the world, has to be a free voluntary unity. It cannot be based on any element of coercion from above. Failing to support national self-determination means lining up, whether we mean to or not, with reactionary imperialist nationalism. There are some exceptions of course - there are usually ex-

¹irishmarxistreview.net/index.php/imr/issue/view/8

ceptions to any general rule - where the issue of national independence is being used or manipulated by another imperialist power. Katangan separatism in the Congo back in the sixties is an example for those who want historical precedents, but this is clearly not the case in Catalonia. Therefore socialists should support the right of Catalans to self determination. The alternative is to provide cover for the nationalism of Rajoy and the Spanish state.

Three counter-arguments are worth considering.

1) Catalonia is a privileged wealthy region of Spain; this is a selfish revolt of the rich. Catalonia is not an oppressed nation, It is true that Catalonia is a relatively prosperous area compared to the poorer areas such as Andalusia and Extremadura but it is not especially wealthy compared to Madrid, or the Basque country for that matter. Catalonia, like everywhere else, is a class divided society; the Catalan big bourgeoisie, the corporations etc., are not pro-independence as they have made very clear by threatening to relocate. The mass movement for independence has come from 'the people', from below. Catalonia was very oppressed - nationally and culturally - during the fascist Franco era, which lasted till 1975. For example the Catalan language was banned in public life. Catalonia is also being oppressed right now. The very act, by the Spanish state, of denying the right to self-determination involves oppressing Catalonia - witness the behaviour of the Spanish police on 1 October and the current arrest of the Catalan government.

2) This nationalism and separatism, as with Brexit and Scottish independence, is reactionary: it fragments the unity of the working class. In fact the EU, the British state and the Spanish state are not internationalist institutions facilitat-

ing the unity of the working class; they are instruments of capitalist imperialism designed to promote the international exploitation of the working class and what used to be called 'the third world'. International working class unity will be forged in struggle AGAINST these institutions of capitalist rule.

3) How can socialists support Puigdemont and the Catalan government - they are right wing, pro-capitalist, pro-neoliberal etc ? This is just a quarrel between two wings of the ruling class; socialists should be neutral. But socialist support for self-determination does NOT involve political support for the government or leaders of the affected nation in this or other cases. Support for Indian independence from Britain, did not involve supporting Indian capitalism or its leaders from Nehru onwards. Support for Iraq against US invasion did not involve support for the vile dictator, Saddam Hussein. Support for Scottish independence does not involve political support for Sturgeon and the SNP. On the contrary we should criticise Puigdemont and co. for the failure, precisely because they are bourgeois nationalists, to mobilise the people and mount effective resistance to Rajoy's coup.

As with all rapidly evolving situations the situation on the ground will be different by the time anyone reads this article. But some things are already clear. Rajoy and the PP (Popular Party- Spanish Tories) are determined to prevent Catalan independence and they are strongly backed in this by the EU and by international capital and its various governments, including the Irish government. The EU in particular has shown its true brutal colours and this point needs to be stressed to counter the damaging illusion that it is some kind of liberal progressive force.

Only a serious mobilisation of people power in the streets and workplaces of Catalonia - mass strikes, occupations, popular assemblies and so on - combined with international solidarity, will defeat Rajoy's offensive. The more the resistance, the greater will be the level of international solidarity.

Finally, what the whole episode

demonstrates - regardless of its immediate outcome - is that crisis ridden, decaying capitalism will provoke, along with working class struggle against austerity, all sorts of revolts by small nations which will disrupt the international order so carefully built up by capital. We will see more of this kind of thing.

- John Molyneux