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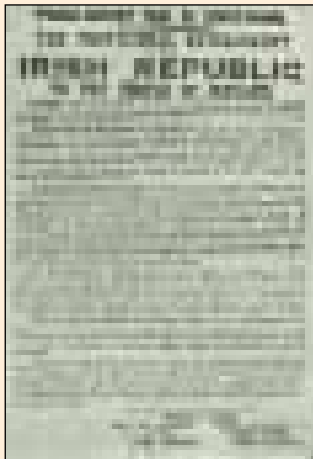
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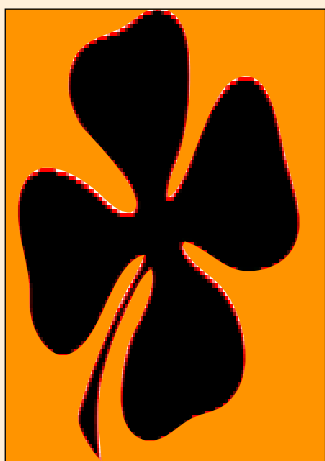
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THE NEXT WAR: BUSH PLANS ATTACK ON IRAN

George Bush's administration is planning a new war against Iran.

Recently, John Bolton, US ambassador to the United Nations (UN), went into explicit detail about what such an attack would entail when he talked to British Labour Party MPs who were visiting Washington.

"We can hit different points down the line. You only have to take out one part of their nuclear operation to take the whole thing down," one Labour MP reported Bolton as saying.

Bolton is a hardened neo-conservative who was installed as UN ambassador by Bush in May last year.

Bolton also spoke at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), an influential Zionist organisation that has been lobbying hard against Iran. "The longer we wait to confront the threat Iran poses, the harder and more intractable it will become to solve," he told the rally.

The US would use "all the tools" at its disposal to stop Iran's nuclear programme, he added, threatening "tangible and painful consequences" against the country if it continues to resist Bush's diktats. These threats come in the wake of a US state department announcement that it was putting



Condoleezza Rice and George Bush are planning war on Iran

together a special office to deal specifically with everything to do with Iran.

An Israeli intelligence source told the Sunday Times that Israeli special forces are already operating inside Iran to track down suspected nuclear sites.

The propaganda war currently being waged against Iran is identi-

cal to that conducted by the White House in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq.

Just like three years ago, lurid headlines, distorted intelligence, spurious allegations of weapons programmes and a diplomatic charade at the UN are being orchestrated to create the climate and excuses for a US-led attack on

an oil-rich Middle Eastern country.

According to Time magazine, Bush plans to present CIA-sourced "evidence" to the UN that Iran is designing a nuclear bomb – just like former US secretary of state Colin Powell presented "evidence" of Iraq's non-existent weapons of mass destruction to the UN in February 2003.

U.S. PLANS FOR THE DIVISION OF IRAN

Even more ominously, the US military has been studying ethnic and religious tensions in Iran as part of its preparations for war.

The study was commissioned by the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity (MCIA), which specialises in producing intelligence for low ranking soldiers.

This suggests that plans for war are advanced.

According to the Financial Times, the military wants to determine attitudes towards the central government and examine if Iran is prone to the same tensions that are tearing Iraq apart.

As with the planning for the war

in Iraq, the Pentagon has recruited exiles to help with its survey. A similar group of Iraqi exiles told the Bush administration that US soldiers would be welcome when they invaded, and fed them false information about weapons of mass destruction.

The US plans for Iraq involved dividing the country into semi autonomous regions dominated by ethnic groups, and distributing government ministries according to sect.

The result has been to drive Iraq towards civil war.

Now the White House has asked the US Congress to make available £43 million to fund a propaganda

campaign aimed at Iranians.

Among the exile groups surveyed by the military are the Kurdish Democratic Party, who support the occupation in Iraq, and the followers of the deposed Iranian royal family, who hope a US invasion will restore the monarchy.

Many groups representing Iran's minorities refused to cooperate with the study because they fear the US is planning to break up the country.

A similar study on Iraq by the MCIA produced "culture smart cards" that are handed out to US troops in Iraq.

The cards instruct soldiers how to distinguish between ethnic and

religious groups, and provide useful instructions in Arabic such as "surrender", "do not resist", and "lie on your stomach".

Iranian government has also been warning its population about the activities of US and British troops on its borders.

Several bombs have been set off in the southern province of Khuzestan, home to Iran's Arab minority. The Iranians have accused Britain and the US of being behind the bomb attacks.

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LYING TO START A WAR

The same lies that were used to start a war on Iraq are being used again. This time the claim is that Iran is making nuclear weapons which will endanger our safety.

But Iran offers no "nuclear threat". There is not the slightest evidence that it has the centrifuges necessary to enrich uranium to weapons-grade material.

The head of the IAEA, Mohammed El Baradei, has repeatedly said his inspectors have found nothing to support American and Israeli claims. Iran has done nothing illegal; it has demonstrated no territorial ambitions nor has it engaged in the occupation of a foreign country - unlike the United States, Britain and Israel.

It has complied with its obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty to allow inspectors to "go anywhere and see anything" - unlike the US and Israel.

The excuse that the Bush regime has seized upon is the suspension of purely voluntary "confidence-building" measures that Iran agreed with Britain, France and Germany in order to placate the US and show that it was "above suspicion".

Seals were placed on nuclear equipment following a concession given by Iranian negotiators and which had nothing to do with Iran's obligations under the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty

Only after the US rebuffed all attempts at diplomatic solution, did Iran claim back its "inalienable right" under the terms of the NPT to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes.

There is no doubt this decision reflects the ferment of political life in Tehran and the tension between radical and conciliatory forces, of which the bellicose new president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, is but one voice.

WHY THIS MADNESS?

By LEE SUSTAR, US International Socialist Organisation

WASHINGTON'S near-term aim isn't to pre-empt Iranian nukes, but something far more immediate: downgrade the occupation of Iraq to a low-intensity conflict by using troops from the Iraqi puppet regime, while at the same time preserving the core of the occupation force to consolidate U.S. control over Persian Gulf oil.



Bush: preparing to back Israel

The White House would retool the occupation of Iraq (and, for that matter, Afghanistan) by providing a new justification for the presence of U.S. troops—preventing Ahmadinejad from acquiring nuclear weapons and curbing Iran's influence on the Shiite Muslim parties that rule Iraq.

A full-scale invasion of Iran may not be on the agenda for the overstretched U.S. military, and key players in Washington would rather have the Iranian government capitulate without having to use force.

This is why Condoleezza Rice is pushing \$75 million to fund Iranian opposition groups to try to achieve "regime change" from within.

Alternatively, the job could also be subcontracted to Israel, where an election campaign has seen politicians promising to take a hard line with both the new Hamas administration of the Palestinian Authority and Ahmadinejad, who has said that Israel should be "wiped off the map."

The U.S. is already preparing to back Israel in a program of economic sanctions against Hamas, and Ahmadinejad's rhetoric—including denial of the Holocaust—is being used by the Bush administration as a pretext for a tougher line.

If Hamas makes good on its plan to get financial aid from Iran to bypass U.S.-Israeli sanctions, the

two crises could quickly fuse.

What's driving this confrontation isn't Hamas or the Iranian government, however, but the U.S. occupation of Iraq and Israel's attempts to strengthen its hold on Palestine.

Both efforts are increasingly portrayed as a struggle against "radical Islam"—and the crisis over the anti-Muslim Danish cartoon has been used to further this agenda.

Confronting Islam, in fact, is precisely the perspective put forward in the new the Quadrennial Defense Review—the Pentagon's strategic document that comes out for a "long war" against terrorism.

"The enemies in this war are not traditional conventional military forces, but rather dispersed, global terrorist networks that exploit Islam to advance radical political aims," the document declares.

"These enemies have the avowed aim of acquiring and using nuclear and biological weapons to murder hundreds of thousands of Americans and others around the world...Currently, Iraq and Afghanistan are crucial battlegrounds, but the struggle extends far beyond their borders.

"With its allies and partners, the United States must be prepared to wage this war in many locations simultaneously, and for some years to come."

The real nuclear threat in the Middle East



Israel is believed to have between 100 and 200 nuclear weapons, a stockpile of chemical weapons and a biological weapons program that may have developed several weapons agents.

It is only one of three nation states which have refused to sign or ratify the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The other two are India and Pakistan - two other US allies.

The BBC has revealed that the British government made hundreds of secret shipments of material to Israel in the 1960s so that it could develop nuclear weapons.

The first public revelation of Israel's nuclear capability came in the London-based Sunday Times on October 5, 1986, which printed information provided by Mordechai Vanunu, formerly employed at the Negev

Nuclear Research Center, a facility located in the Negev desert south of Dimona.

For publication of state secrets, he was sentenced to 18 years in prison for treason and espionage.

In 1998, former Prime Minister Shimon Peres acknowledged that Israel "built a nuclear option, not in order to have a Hiroshima".

Israel has signed but not ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). There are speculations that a chemical weapons program might be located at the Israel Institute for Biological Research (IIBR) in Ness Ziona.

In 1993, the U.S. Congress Office of Technology Assessment WMD proliferation assessment recorded Israel as a country generally reported as having undeclared offensive chemical warfare capabilities.

US CRIMES AGAINST IRAN

The US is the last country in the world which should be intervening in Iran because the history of its relation with that country are drowned in blood.

Amongst the war crimes the US has already committed against Iran are:

The instigation of a coup against the elected President of Iran in 1953, Dr Mohammad

Mosadeq.

Helped to install and support, Reza Pahlavi as the Shah of Iran. He stayed in power only through the support of the notorious SAVAK secret police who regularly tortured political opponents.

Supported an Iraqi invasion of Iran to curb the influence of the Islamic revolution of 1989.

One million Iranians died.

Shot down a civilian Iran flight Iranian Airbus, Flight No. 655 flying over the waters of Persian Gulf en route to Dubai on July 3rd, 1988. All 292 passengers perished

Froze all foreign Iranian government assets for more than two decades.

Stop the privatisation of Aer Lingus

DEFEND THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

Workers at Aer Lingus have voted unanimously to take strike action if the government goes ahead with plans to privatise the airline.

Aer Lingus is currently one of the world's most profitable airlines, making an operating profit of €107 million in 2004, mainly because workers have made many sacrifices. Since September 11th, 2,500 jobs have been cut.

But recent developments show that management intend to use these sacrifices only to prepare for privatisation.

The airline is currently valued at €600 million but the Irish state would lose vast sums in the privatisation process. In addition to fees paid to stockbrokers firms, it is estimated at the sale would cost it €90 million as discounts are traditionally offered to prospective shareholders.

The Heathrow slots which are Aer Lingus most valued possession would also be asset stripped.

The debacle at Eircom should be a warning about privatisation.

There a hugely successful company has been turned into a debt ridden, private monopoly after it was taken over by a conglomerate led by Tony O Reilly.

The conglomerate has refused to invest in the company and as a result its infra-structure has been run down.

One result is that Irish broadband facilities are among the worst in Europe. The government has had to hand out €300 million in grants to other companies to try to make up for the deficiency.

Contrary to impressions, there is nothing to stop the government investing in Aer Lingus – even under the harsh EU laws.

The move to privatise the company is driven solely by a desire to intensify a neo-liberal offensive.

The government's only response to the slow down in the Celtic Tiger is to speed up the race to the bottom. It believes that Ireland needs to emulate the US model in every aspect in order to attract greater investment in services.



Flashback: Aer Lingus workers take action in 2002

A key element in this is breaking up powerful centres of working class organisation by privatising firms. SIPTU should withdraw

immediately from the partnership talks over the issue. There should also be a high level co-ordination between all transport work-

ers because if Aer Lingus is picked off, Dublin Bus and Bus Eireann will be in the firing line shortly afterwards.

Evidence is growing that the Garda lack of intelligence over the Orange march in Dublin was part of an elaborate provocation.

One week later, Dublin City manager John Fitzgerald used the riots as a pretext to introduce proposals to curb marches in the city.

He claimed that 39 marches had taken place in Dublin City Centre last year and this was upsetting Dublin business people.

But why should the feelings of shop owners be more important than the democratic right to march?

The huge scale of the protest reflects the widespread discontent within the Celtic Tiger. Many have concluded, quite rightly, that 'people power' is the only way to get results. And so protests have mushroomed.

The growth of this sentiment is, in turn, frightening the political elite and they have responded with repression. They have already banned posters from the city centre in an unsuccessful attempt to break the protest movement.

A Waste Management Act, has removed powers from elected councillors in areas like bin charges and incinerators. Decisions are instead being made exclusively by unelected city managers like Fitzgerald

The Dublin Chamber of Commerce and right wing politicians have been trying to ban marches for some time. In 2001, they introduced a similar scheme whereby march organisers would be compelled to have public liability insurance and give a months notice beforehand.

The pretext was that O'Connell St was due for renovation and they did not want protestors soiling the view of the new plaza!

This time the pretext is the Orange march – but the argument is entirely spurious. The vast majority of marches pass off peacefully.

Using John Fitzgerald's logic, football matches should also be banned because trouble has flared outside one of two.

The previous proposals to ban marches were defeated after a major demonstration was held in front of the City Council.

We should get ready again to use people power to destroy new attempts to erode our democratic rights.

Parkinson's disease



Turkish Gama strikers join May Day parade. Parkinson wants to stop this unity

Outsourced" workers should be paid "significantly less" than permanent staff.

They shouldn't be allowed to work alongside "regular" staff.

They shouldn't be allowed to wear the same clothes as regulars, and never allowed to wear the company logo.

So says David Parkinson, former human resources chief at drinks firm Gilbeys. He was speaking at a Dublin conference organised by Industrial Relations News.

The Sunday Independent summed up Parkinson's other views.

"Keep them out of the loop at all costs—tell them nothing...Never give them a formal interview...If you want to give them the sack, get some minion to do it for you."

Parkinson warned that, "Outsourced production operatives, counter sales people and hotel workers can quickly gain the status of permanent employees—unless the employer or manager

takes the appropriate steps."

Parkinson was warning bosses that, while outsourcing is a key means of cutting costs and increasing profits, it can also bring new problems.

The Sunday Independent illustrated the story with a picture of a Guantanamo prisoner in an orange jump-suit with the caption, "Inspiration?"

A better illustration couldn't be imagined of the way the bosses view workers in general.

Blanket in bed with Empire

The Blanket website run by former IRA prisoner Anthony McIntyre and journalist Carrie Twomey has republished the Danish cartoons which sparked fierce reaction from many Muslims around the world.

McIntyre and Twomey say the publication is a protest against censorship and totalitarianism.

They are profoundly mistaken. Their action serves mainly to fuel anti-Muslim bigotry and legitimise the so-called "war on terror." It puts the Blanket on the wrong side of debate

about imperialism today.

Publication of the cartoons reflects the notion that "we" in the metropolitan world have a mission to bring enlightenment to masses living in thrall to despotism and superstition.

This notion has always been used to justify imperialism.

Caricature, both verbal and pictorial, has always been an important part in this process.

The writer Liz Curtis, in "Nothing But The Same Old Story," traced the way English ruling-

class publications used this technique to dehumanise the Irish in the 18th and 19th centuries. Africans were caricatured in the same way by all the European colonialist powers.

To make "freedom of speech" the focus of debate on the cartoons is to miss what's happening—the demonisation of Muslims for purposes of imperialism.

It is a shame and a scandal that the Blanket should have taken this action.

SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP: WILL THE UNIONS BLINK?

The talks on social partnership have run into a huge difficulty – mainly because of issues that arose during the Irish Ferries dispute.

SIPTU leader Jack O Connor argued that the employers' organisation, IBEC, had to show that they did not endorse a 'race to the bottom' and accept the need for proper labour standards. This had to be a pre-condition for partnership and so

there would have to be a separate strand of talks to resolve these issues before talks on pay could get underway.

Alongside fellow ICTU leaders, he has tried to get agreement for extra regulations. All contracts awarded by public bodies were to be governed by regulations which insisted on labour standards. The Irish government, it was argued, should drop its opposition inside the

EU to measures to protect agency workers.

However, the employers are totally opposed to any new regulations of any sort.

The SIPTU leaders now face a dilemma: they can either go back on their own arguments or turn up the pressure on employers. Rank and file activists should pressurise their leaders to stand firm.

Royal Mail boss spied on workers

By Eamonn McCann

Rank and file trade unionists would do well to look closely at some of the background to last month's Belfast postal strike.

Royal Mail's head of "human relations" in the North is Gary Crawford. He previously filled the same role at engineering firm Bombardier/Shorts, the North's biggest private-sector employer.

In February 2002, Bombardier fitter Gary Nicholl put his back out lifting an aircraft part measuring nine feet by seven from a six-foot-high shelf. For months, he was in and out of work until passed by the company doctor for light duties.

But managers, including Crawford, wouldn't accept that hoisting a lump of metal almost the size of a snooker table could seriously damage a man's back. Gary was taken off the sick scheme, and lost "good behaviour" points. As a result, he was sacked in a redundancy purge in 2003. He then took an unfair dismissals case.

Weeks later, Gary and a union rep. were summoned by Crawford to a meeting where it became clear that a camera team had been stalking the Nicholl family. They were shown film of Gary with his wife coming out from their home at Drumahoe outside Derry; of Gary tying his child's shoe-lace; of him holding his eight-week old daughter in his arms; and



Belfast Royal Mail picket line last month

of the family visiting McDonald's.

Says Gary: "They must have been stationed across the road at one point, hidden in a van or whatever, with a camera pointed at our home. You have to wonder what else they filmed."

Crawford's claim was that a man who could tie a shoe-lace or hold a two-month old baby must be malin-

gering if he said he couldn't lift heavy weights from above his head.

The film didn't work for Crawford and Bombardier. A tribunal ruled that Gary was disabled under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act and entitled to press his claim for wrongful dismissal.

This was among incidents which

led a remarkable range of political representatives to express disbelief at the approach of Bombardier and Crawford to industrial relations. The PUP's David Ervine referred to workers having "to get out of bed every morning and go to work with the notion that you are going to be humiliated."

In January this year, SDLP leader

Mark Durkan discovered at Westminster that there had been 474 unfair dismissal cases against Bombardier in the last five years—mostly in 2003, when Bombardier was intent on reducing the workforce by fair means or foul. Gary's case is one of 245 from that year which remain unresolved.

Astonishingly, Durkan has now felt compelled to write to Gary's union, Amicus, pleading with it to back him in resisting a High Court appeal by Bombardier against the tribunal ruling. Amicus says court action would be too costly. The fact that a MP has felt the need to intervene in this way exposes the extent to which failures by union officialdom have given belligerent managers the green light to put the boot in while demoralising rank and file trade union members.

Some commentators have wondered how a bullying lout who sent out a spy camera to trap a invalidated worker managed to land the top industrial relations job at Royal Mail. They miss the point.

It's precisely because he's a bullying lout that Gary Crawford was hired by Royal Mail. And it's only because hundreds of rank and file trade unionists took unofficial action that, in this instance, for the time being, he's been stopped in his tracks.

The lesson is obvious.

Water Charges: We're not paying!

By Goretta Horgan

The first of April – April Fool's Day – will see anti-water charges campaigners demonstrating across the North. They will remind direct rule ministers and local politicians that we are no fools and will not pay their water charges when they are introduced on 1st April next year.

A lot has happened in relation to the water charges over the last three months.

First, in December, Minister Shaun "two butlers" Woodward acknowledged that those on the lowest incomes

would pay over ten percent of their income on water.

So, an "affordability tariff" was introduced that would mean that none of the 200,000 poorest households would pay more than £90 for water in 2007, rising to £180 a year in 2009.

This "affordability tariff" is funded only for the first three years and there is no guarantee that after the first three years the poorest households will not be hit with the full whack.

Even those who are not in the poorest households will find it difficult to meet the water charges. Wages in the North are the lowest in these islands, 25% below the average in the EU, a

third below wages in the US and half of wages in Germany.

So few can afford another £400 or so to pay for water.

On February 9th, Woodward announced the appointment of Christopher Mellor as the Chair of the Water Service. Mellor is a former boss of Anglian Water and is set to be the first chair of the privatised Northern Ireland Water Limited.

He is to be paid £40,000 a year for 3 – 4 days work a month. That is almost £1,000 a day (plus expenses, of course).

The report of the Consortium appointed by the Government to con-

duct a Review of the Water Service has also appeared.

It makes plain that water is to be privatised. The only reason given for postponing full-scale privatisation when "reform" is instituted next April is that this "would not be practicable nor sufficiently acceptable in the short-term."

So the Consortium goes for the two-stage option. A Government-owned company (Go-Co) will take over the water service in April 2007. "This position," the report goes on, "will, however, be reviewed in 2008."

The "Go-Co" will be allocated an opening valuation of "not less than £1

billion with zero initial debt."

Then this billion-pound-plus public asset will be handed over to private interests between now and 2008.

While all the mainstream political parties say that they are opposed to water charges, none of them is in favour of a non-payment campaign. Instead they ask us to rely on them sorting it once Stormont is back up and running.

But the mass non-payment of water charges stopped them being introduced being introduced in the South. It also worked in Bolivia, in Chile, in Peru, in South Africa, in Ghana....And it will work in Northern Ireland too.

NEW LABOUR'S NEW ATTACKS ON DISABLED

New Labour's "welfare reform" proposals will hit the poorest people in the North of Ireland hard.

No one will argue about changing the insulting title of "Incapacity Benefit" (IB). But changing its name to "Employment and Support Allowance" does not guarantee either support or employment.

The New Labour mantra that indi-

viduals must "meet their responsibility to take the necessary steps to re-enter the labour market" shows how little they know of the reality of life for disabled people.

Every study has found that, in spite of the Disability Discrimination Act, employers openly discriminate against those with a history of long-term illness or disability.

Many people dependent on incapacity benefit are ill or disabled as a result of work-related injuries, or the 'wear and tear' of years of manual labour.

The particularly high levels of people claiming IB in the North is due to a combination of 30 years of war and generations of poverty.

The 2001 Census revealed that 41% of households have one or more people

with a limiting long-term illness or disability.. 8.7% of the total population receive Disability Living Allowance (DLA). This is more than twice the percentage in England (3.8%)

Research has shown that the stress of trying to live on low wages and lower benefits leads to mental ill-health, particularly depression.

So benefit cuts – and the threat of

them – are likely to make even more people ill.

What we really need is: a supply of decently paid jobs open to all; adequate benefits for those unable to find suitable employment; and sufficient support staff and services.

All of this can be paid for through higher income tax rates for anyone earning more than £100,000 a year.

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COMMENT

Alex Callinicos

Francis Fukuyama: Neo-con friendship comes to an end

The tide of public opinion is turning against the Iraq adventure more rapidly now in the US.

One sign of this was an article by Francis Fukuyama called "After Neo-conservatism" that appeared recently. The neo-conservatives are the group of right wing Republican intellectuals who campaigned for war with Iraq long before 11 September 2001.

Their think tank is the Project for the New American Century, their best-known figure Paul Wolfowitz, deputy defence secretary in George Bush's first administration.

The neo-cons share the belief of Woodrow Wilson, US president during the First World War, that spreading US-style liberal capitalism will bring peace and prosperity to the world.

But, unlike Wilson, the neo-cons have no faith in international institutions. They rely instead on the unilateral assertion of US military power to export "democratic" capitalism.

Conquering Iraq was meant to be the first step in transforming the Middle East along these lines.

For years Fukuyama was a neo-con. He belonged to the same networks connecting academia and the US national security establishment from which figures such as Wolfowitz emerged.

It was when he was serving as director of policy planning in the state department under George Bush senior in 1989 that Fukuyama came up with the famous thesis that the collapse of the Soviet Union marked the end of history.

Hegemony

There would be no more great social transformations, he argued, just endless years of liberal capitalism. This seemed like the height of neo-con triumphalism. But now Fukuyama wants to distance himself from neo-conservatism. He writes:

"The End of History' presented a kind of Marxist argument for the existence of a long-term process of social evolution, but one that terminates in liberal democracy rather than Communism. The neo-conservative position... was, by contrast, Leninist – they believed that history can be pushed along with the right application of power and will.

"Leninism was a tragedy in its Bolshevik version, and it has returned as farce when practised by the US. Neo-conservatism, as both a political symbol and a body of thought, has evolved into something I can no longer support."

What Fukuyama is trying to say is that he thinks that the triumph of liberal capitalism is historically inevitable. Never mind the distortion of Marxism involved, because hidden here is an important point.

The neo-cons of the Project for the New American Century were less confident than Fukuyama. Wolfowitz has stressed that the rise of powers such as China represents a threat to both the stability of capitalism and the hegemony of the US.

The implication the neo-cons drew was that the US needs to use its military power actively, waging preventive wars. This is not just to eliminate terrorists and rogue states, but to entrench a global balance of forces that underwrites US dominance.

But, as Fukuyama shows, this enterprise has backfired badly. The US is bogged down in Iraq, thanks in large part to the wildly optimistic planning of the neo-cons in the Pentagon. Its image as a "benevolent hegemon" has suffered severe damage.

Wolfowitz and most other leading neo-cons have left the administration. Bush continues to reaffirm his "forward strategy for freedom in the Middle East", but it is evidently in tatters.

Despite his break with the neo-cons, Fukuyama remains committed to the US as an imperial power. His chief fear is that the Iraq debacle will push it into isolationism.

That is very unlikely, but no doubt history has plenty more tricks up its sleeve to confound the US empire and its ideologues.

INTERNATIONAL

Will Silvio Berlusconi steal Italian election?



Berlusconi and his chums

Italy goes to the polls in on 9-10 April with many hoping to rid themselves of Silvio Berlusconi whose arrogance and corruption have become legendary.

According to Forbes magazine, Berlusconi's personal fortune has grown by \$ 4 billion since he took office. He has been found guilty of bribing a judge and contact with the Mafia – although he subsequently changed the law to wriggle out of these charges.

He governs with the National Alliance, which grew out of the fascist movement.

Berlusconi has managed even to offend the Catholic Church.

Having compared himself with Napoleon ("Only Napoleon has accomplished more than me, but I'm greater than him") and Winston Churchill ("I'll fight against the communists just as fiercely as Churchill did against the Nazis"), he finally compared himself to Jesus Christ ("I am the Jesus Christ of politics. Long suffering, I take everything upon my own shoulders. I sacrifice myself for every-

body").

This was considered by some bishops to have overstepped the mark.

He has suffered a number of defeats since it was elected in 2001. These include local and European elections.

There has been a wave of protests against its policies. These policies have plunged Italy into economic crisis. The government has attempted to censor dissenting voices.

A broad coalition of left parties was formed under the name Union to oppose the right at the general election due to take place on 9-10 April.

The Union includes the Democratic Left, similar to Britain's Labour party, and the radical left Rifondazione Comunista. The Union is led by former European Union president Romano Prodi.

The leadership of Rifondazione Comunista argued in favour of joining the Union, saying this could lead to a government able to implement radical reforms.

In the last few weeks, the election campaign has seen a

massive propaganda attack by the right against the Union.

The attack highlights the strong political divisions among the various parties in the Union and argues that the Union is too radical.

This is an attempt, by Berlusconi, who has struck deals with fascist parties, to regain the confidence of many unsatisfied "moderate" voters.

Recent polls shows that this attack has paid off with the right gaining ground on the Union.

The Union has put forward a wide ranging political and economic programme.

While the programme contains some positive proposals, it doesn't really present a concrete set of solutions on fundamental problems such as education and job security.

Rather it mediates between radically different positions – it talks about the withdrawal of Italian troops from Iraq as a priority, but also strongly supports the creation of a European army.

The current political strategy of the left coalition is based

upon the message, "Let's get rid of the Berlusconi government."

This means it is focusing on winning support from protest voters.

Because of this almost any coherent involvement in struggles has been abandoned.

Any voice of dissent within the coalition is considered counterproductive.

The recent successful industrial action by metal workers, which saw massive demonstrations and street blockades, obtained only a mild solidarity from the leadership of Rifondazione Comunista, although individual members and branches were directly involved.

When Marco Ferrando, a leading member of the internal opposition to the leadership of Rifondazione, expressed his strong views about the occupation of Iraq and the Israel-Palestine issue, he was removed from the list of election candidates, without the consultation of the party's national committee.

RIFONDAZIONE COMUNISTA: BRIEFING

The party grew out of the old Italian Communist Party which effectively collapsed after the fall of the USSR.

It drew in many far left supporters from groups like Il Manifesto and the social movements.

Its leader, Fausto Bertinotti, also came from a non-Stalinist background.

The PRC grew quickly but then entered the first Prodi coalition government and



Fausto Bertinotti

suffered a major crisis.

It left in 1998 over its refusal to legislate for a 35 hour week but 21 MPs split from the party.

The party recovered dramatically when it established close connections with the anti-capitalist movement after the Genoa riots – defending many activists from a brutal police attack.

At its last congress,

however, the PRC swung back to the right with Bertinotti embracing a pacifist rhetoric to 'reject an assault on the Winter Palace' – a reference to revolution. Instead he advocated entering coalition with Prodi again, claiming that they could become 'a party of government and struggle'.

Forty one percent of delegates, however, opposed this move.

STARDUST

48 died because profit put before people

Every night between twenty and forty people gather in the heart of Artane, on Dublin's Northside.

They come from all over the city to show their solidarity with the families of the Stardust victims. It is a remarkable tribute to the power of memory and solidarity. Twenty five years after a terrible scandal, you can sense a real feeling that this time - at last - there is an unstoppable movement for justice.

The protest began when Eamonn Butterly attempted to open a pub on the site where many young people lost their lives. Such was his arrogance that he tried to open the pub on the very anniversary of the fire.

There is a strong sense of outrage about a cover up

organised by the Irish state. The Tribunal which was set up after the fire and chaired by Ronan Keane was as flawed as the Widgery Tribunal in Derry. And just as families, kept organising for many years for justice - so too has the thread of anger and grief been maintained in Artane.

Twenty five years ago, this was the heart of Charlie Haughey's electoral base. He strode around the area king dispensing favours from his vast funds.

Only later, people found that he had been funded by bribes - and so he was giving back a few crumbs he gained from his corrupt activities.

Today the Fianna Fail empire is crumbling. Sean Haughey who is the local TD has turned up to one of the nightly pickets once



The night of the Stardust tragedy 25 years ago

but could not bring himself to hold a placard.

The disgraced junior minister Ivor Callely recently attended a local People Before Profit Alliance meeting but could say

nothing to the one hundred strong crowd.

The protestors know that only people power is going to bring justice.

The pickets already have

closed down the pub and there is now an attempt to transfer the licence to a new owner.

The families have objected and the case was adjourned for a re-hearing on March 29th.

THE FIRE THAT DEVASTATED SO MANY

The fire that engulfed Dublin's Stardust nightclub in the early hours of St Valentine's Day 1981 killed 48 young people and injured and disfigured many more. Countless others will continue to suffer the emotional scars of loss and grief for the remainder of their lives.

There were almost 850 people in the Stardust when the fire broke out on Valentine's night. In all, 25 men and 23 women died. Eleven others were badly disfigured or disabled and 214 people were injured. The average age of those who died was 19.

For such a vast night club to burn so quickly poses many questions. Normally the way fire burns in an open space leaves people with time to get out of it's path. Many people had seen fire burning on some seats, but within seconds of seeing these seats on fire,

the whole room was filled with smoke and flames. Within 11 minutes of people leaving the club after seeing the fire the building was completely engulfed.

One Survivor described how she heard the fire roaring even though she could not see it clearly at that stage. Fires roar when they are drawing large volumes of air. And the roar is made louder if the fire is drawing air in through the walls or ceiling. This noise is amplified by the vibrations of the walls or ceiling. It would be extremely unlikely that a small fire could enter the ceiling and/or wall space, so quickly, if it had not already started there.

The reason that there were hollow spaces between the ceiling and roof, is that before the stardust was a night club, it was a jam factory. The steel

girders which supported the roof were covered with a ceiling. Some survivors sustained hand injuries because of the falling jam. When jam is heated to very high temperatures it starts to burn, the sugars in the jam caramelize and adhere to skin making it act like Napalm.

The failure to ensure that this jam was cleaned, before the building was converted, further contributed to peoples pain and suffering.

Stardust Survivor Anthony McDonald described on the prime time documentary which aired on RTE on 14th February 2006, how he "picked up one of the chains on the fire exit doors, and it was locked to the door. It was not just draped over the push bar.

Many of the family members and survivors I have talked to described standing a long way back from the

building, and sweating from the heat. Many of them knew at this stage that anyone who was not out of the Stardust would never get out. It is impossible to imagine, the trauma that this realisation had. At this stage many people could not find any of their friends and family who they knew to be in the Stardust.

HOW DID THE FIRE START?

This description of the fire leads one to believe that something else beside the seats was burning. If something else beside the seats was on fire, the first question is what was on fire, and how did the fire start?

This question is crucial. If the fire started in the lamp room it would be extremely unlikely to be arson. If the

Tribunal, had come to this conclusion it would mean that Butterly business would have been wiped out as the families would have pursued them for compensation. Eamonn Butterly would have faced a possible prison sentence for the manslaughter of 48 people.

The owners of the Stardust when they put in their claim for damages listed the contents of the lamp room. Many of the items included extremely flammable substances such as floor polish. Experts who looked into the Stardust have said that these items would combust if exposed to heat.

Crucially they would not need a flame just heat would cause them to break down and combust. Tony Gillick, former Chief Fire Officer for Dublin, described the contents of the lamp room as a "bomb".



NO CHARGES AGAINST BUTTERLY

Despite the official inquiry into the disaster finding that the Stardust owners had acted with “reckless disregard” for the safety of their customers, and the Gardai sending a 633-page file to the Director of Public Prosecutions, no charges were ever brought against Eamonn Butterly.

The only charge from the disaster was against John Keegan, who lost two daughters Mary, aged 19, Martina aged 16 while a third daughter, Antoinette, was injured in the Stardust. He was charged for the assault on Eamonn Butterly.

It is absolutely outrageous that the only person the state could charge in connection with the Stardust disaster was the grieving father, of two of the victims of the fire. John Keegan died in 1986. His daughters and wife always say he died because of the Stardust, and the loss of his two daughters.

However I am incorrect in saying that the only person that the courts of the state could see fit to pursue in connection with the Stardust Fire was John Keegan.

The law on sub judice, in this state also meant that The Song

“The Fire In Artane”, was withdrawn from the shelves shortly after it was released due to a High Court decision. The song was written by and sung by Christy Moore. The reason given for the removal of the song, was it contains the Words “the fire exits were chained”.

According to the tribunal “Eamonn Butterly had misled Dublin Corporation about his fire safety practices and that he had been negligent in training his staff. Eamonn Butterly also failed to cooperate with the early stages of the inquiry and had locked or otherwise obstructed exit doors on the night of the fire.”

The tribunal also stated “The tribunal has been compelled to treat Mr Eamonn Butterly’s evidence with the greatest reserve.” This is a gentleman’s way of saying he might have been economical with the truth.

No charges were ever brought against the Butterly family. In fact they went on to win substantial damages for the loss of the nightclub complex. Eamonn Butterly was represented at the tribunal by Niall McCarthy, a future Supreme Court judge, and Peter Sutherland, the future attorney general.

WE WERE ALL FIANNA FAILERS

Who are the Butterly’s anyway?

Who the Butterly’s are can be clearly summed up in the following statement which Paddy Butterly wrote in his book From Radishes to Riches which he wrote with the assistance of Tony Canavan. He was speaking about politicians.

“What you had these people for was to help get things. I don’t mean by giving them money. But if you wanted to know something about your business or you wanted someone who could do something, you didn’t get the answers by writing into the papers. You asked these people.”

A very clear indication of the world which the Butterly’s lived in can be seen in the list of people they did business with.

Financier Greg Sparks, who would later become economic adviser to Tanaiste Dick Spring, worked with the Butterly’s for two years in the early 1980s.

Kevin Boland, the then Minister for Industry and Commerce, joined Butterly for a coffee and a chat nearly every morning.

Jack Lynch asked Butterly to join Taca, the Fianna Fail fundraising initiative for wealthy businessmen. “We were all Fianna Failers,” Butterly said in his memoirs.

Paddy Butterly, according to these same memoirs, sat on company boards with accountant Des Traynor who ran the Ansbacher bank. This bank was used by the wealthy in Ireland to hide money from the citizens of Ireland. One of his other associates was the architect Sam Stephenson who designed many



Above: The Stardust families are still campaigning

Government buildings such as the Central Bank.

Also according to the memoirs, he sold one farm in north Dublin, Scott’s Farm, to a London-based builder called Joe Murphy and his company JMSE. Years later, Murphy and the land deal were probed by the Planning Corruption Tribunal.

Patrick Butterly owned the Stardust nightclub in Artane in north Dublin. His son, Eamonn, was the general manager and leased the venue from his father through a separate company. Several Butterly family members worked at the nightclub.

The Butterly family have so many different names for their companies that it gets quite confusing to a member of the public, as to who actually owns what at this stage.

According to documents lodged with the Companies Registration Office in Dublin, Eamonn Butterly is a director of seven companies, most of which were established by his father. His brother Colm, is listed as a director of five of the seven companies.

The main company, Butterly Business Park, has assets worth more than €10.9 million and had retained profits of €5.5 million at the end of 2004. The company operates the busi-

ness park and owns another company, Butterly Enterprises, which in turn has two subsidiaries, Patrick Butterly & Sons and Patrick Butterly & Sons (Farms).

Eamonn and Madeline Butterly are also directors and shareholders of two non-group companies, Orchard Business Development and Newland Court Management. Both companies relate to the development of an apartment scheme at Newlands Cross on the Kilmore Road in Dublin 15.

AN INSULT TO THE MEMORY OF FIRE VICTIMS

Twenty five years after the terrible fire

Eamonn Butterly’s attitude can be seen in his own words, and actions after the fire. Within two weeks of the Stardust fire, Eamonn Butterly was quoted as saying that he saw no reason why the complex should not be reopened. “But if I were building it again I would build it in concrete which does not burn,” he said.

In 1988, a property development firm, Amadale Construction, applied for planning permission to build an entertainment complex on the site of the Stardust. At the time, Eamonn Butterly was reported in the Star newspaper as saying that, besides owning the land, he had nothing to do with the plans.

But an investigation into Amadale by Tony McCullagh and Neil Fetherstonhaugh, authors of They Never Came Home, a book on the Stardust fire, uncovered the directors of Amadale as Patrick Butterly, Eamonn Butterly and his brother Colm.

The family never managed to reopen a nightclub on the site of the Stardust. They did, however, open a large pub on the site in the mid-1980s. This Pub was recently extensively renovated and called the Silver Swan.

The naming of the pub “The Silver Swan” is extremely cruel as the original pub which was on the Stardust site was also called “the Silver Swan”.

When Butterly’s attempted to open the pub on the night of the 25th anniversary of the fire, it proved just too much, for the families of those who were injured or killed.

Due to the nightly pickets of anywhere between 20 and 40 people the pub has been forced to remain closed. Also the Maxol petrol station is being boycotted by the community now that they have become aware that it is also operated by the Butterly family.

The holding company which owns the petrol station is called Chopard International, it is directed by Andrea Butterly, Glen Butterly & David Farrell, who is the partner of Andrea Butterly

Twenty five years on the families of those who died are still asking why did we never get justice?

Brid McDermott, who lost three children - William (22) George (19) and Marcella (16) - in the fire, said a proper public inquiry into the blaze was well overdue. “I still have no answers as to why my children died.” She said this while holding a banner outside Mr Ahern’s constituency office, St Luke’s in Drumcondra on Saturday 4th March.

The Stardust families are still campaigning to have the inquests reopened and for a new public inquiry into the tragedy. Members say their grief has been compounded by the actions of the Butterly family, who have never apologised for the fire.

SUPPORT THIS PICKET

The families are calling on people to Support the picket The Silver Swan (opposite Artane castle) Join the picket when you can, and stay for what ever length of time you can. Monday to Friday 6 – 8pm Saturday 10am to 6pm Sunday 12:30 to 6:00pm

Commemorating the 1916 Rising



The bombed shell of the GPO after the 1916 rising

By Denis White

On April 16th, the Irish Army will hold a special commemoration for the 1916 Rising by parading down O'Connell St.

The pageant is an attempt by the Ahern government to take the green flag back from their republican rivals.

But the new display of militarism has little connection with many of the real motives for the rising.

The Rising was in the first instance an attempted insurrection. It discarded all the norms of conventional parliamentary politics which had been well established by then and was an attempted seizure of power.

Turning such a revolutionary act into a pageant conducted by officers and generals is deeply ironical.

Take, for example, the simple act of displaying the Proclamation which was posted onto the walls of the GPO.

Today, the authorities of Dublin City Council have decreed that no political poster of any sort can be displayed in the city.

Each morning teams of council officials tour the city and order council to tear down posters. Their aim is to prevent people from assembling at meetings – not to mind seizing the GPO.

The initiative of the imaginative anti-war group, Code Pink, in posterising the city with the Proclamation to highlight the suppression of free speech today is therefore most welcome. It is far more in tune with the spirit of the Rising than the military pageant.

The point of the pageant is to finally settle the argument about which army can claim the official line of descent to the Provisional Government, formed in 1916. For many decades, the Army Council of the IRA claimed the lineage – but with their recent retirement from arms, the Irish government wants to close the pass by asserting that its army

is indeed, the sole, legitimate inheritor.

All of this may appear obscure – but it raises an interesting point. If the present Irish Army is indeed the inheritor of the joint republican army formed by Pearse and Connolly, then what is its partaking in the EU Battle Groups?

The 1916 rising was, if nothing else, a profound anti-imperialist revolt.

It was a blow struck for Irish freedom – but the context was revulsion against an imperialist war. Connolly understood the global implications most clearly.

Acknowledging that Ireland was a small country, he nevertheless noted that its position closest to the heart of the greatest empire of the day meant that a blow struck in Dublin might be a hundred times more effective than elsewhere. By weakening the British empire, an Irish rebellion would set off world wide consequences.

Starting thus, Ireland may yet set a torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last throne and the last capitalist bond and debenture will be shrivelled on the funeral pyre of the last warlord'

Contrast this with current role of the Irish army. The government has ordered it to join one of the thirteen EU battle groups, which can go into theatres of operation that are 6,000 kilometres from the European continent.

Their purpose was explained by Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, the NATO Secretary General,

'Battle groups could be used to go to war. Why did the EU create the Battle Group? It is not just to help rebuild a country. The Battle Groups are not for building schools. We shouldn't think the EU is for soft power and NATO for tough power'.

Such is the explicit imperialist nature of the Battle Groups, that even the Danish Government felt compelled – under popular pressure, of course – to

stay out of them.

But the Irish elite had no problem. They already facilitate 300,000 US troops going through Shannon to maintain the conquest of Iraq. Their current ambition is to hollow out Irish neutrality and help the US stitch back its old imperialist alliance with EU countries.

The explosive nature of these connections between the 1916 Rising and the current pro-imperialist policies of the Irish government was illustrated neatly by an incident in Galway.

The local Fianna Fail cumman had advertised a special screening of *Mise Eire*, the passionate celebration of Ireland's revolt against Empire. The Galway Alliance Against War turned up with placards proclaiming 'Mise Eire- Mise Iraq' – which made the assembled Fianna Failers livid.

All of this illustrates how the revolutionary events of Irish history can still have a deep impact today. And our rulers know it.

In 1966, in a flush of confidence after the defeat of the IRA's border campaign, they promoted militant celebrations of the Rising.

A fourteen part series called *Insurrection* was screened on RTE which exonerated the revolutionary message of Pearse and Connolly.

But then when the Northern Troubles broke out in 1969, they ran away in terror from subsequent celebrations.

For thirty years various forms of revisionism were encouraged in Irish schools and universities. Roy Foster's *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, became the standard history of modern Ireland.

Foster's main argument is that the Easter Rising was an exercise in irrationality, and its legacy was the Northern Ireland crisis.

He implied that constitutional nationalism, as espoused by the Irish Home Rule Party, would have achieved

the same outcome without the divisions that ensued.

Foster also conflated the Rising and militant Catholicism: "An intrinsic component of the insurrection (for all the pluralist window-dressing of the proclamation issued by Pearse) was the strain of mystic Catholicism identifying the Irish soul as Catholic and Gaelic".

The British empire, it appeared, played little role in the Irish famine or the wider underdevelopment of Irish society.

The history departments of the two main universities of the state, UCD and TCD, cloaked this approach in a spurious form of liberalism. The leaders of the Rising were presented as 'fanatical Catholics' and in some cases sexually oppressed. Ruth Dudley Edwards who offers a weekly diatribe in the *Sunday Independent* today wrote a biography of Pearse which essentially defined him as a repressed gay man.

Interestingly, this same approach is employed in description of Islamic resistance movements when crude racist caricatures are used to assume they are motivated by a desire to have virgins in the after-life.

This form of liberalism is only a code for superiority. The citizens of the Empire are rational – while their opponents are 'fanatics'. They live wholesome lives – while their anti-imperialist opponents are 'frustrated'.

Today this liberalism which so enthusiastically interrogated the texts of anti-imperialist fighters genuflects meekly before the new Thatcherite rulers of universities. Its reeks of deference to established authorities and lacks any critical faculty to interrogate real power – of the past or the present.

The revisionists are irritating – but they are a tiny minority. They appear vocal only because they occupy university chairs and get employed as newspaper columnists.

When it comes to the commemora-

tion of 1916, the Left needs to get beyond the old debates between revisionist and traditionalists.

Mary McAleese's recent speech on the 1916 rising illustrates why. Quite rightly she defended the rising noting 'that there is a tendency for powerful and pitiless elites to dismiss with damning labels those who oppose them' and that modern attempts to present the rising as a sectarian or exclusive exercise merely followed this pattern.

But her aim was to use the Rising to exonerate the conservative culture that developed in Ireland afterwards. There was no 'narrow nationalism' but the Irish elite were always inspired by the leaders of 1916 to be 'inclusive'.

The fact that the mere 50 Jewish people let were enter this 'inclusive society' after the Holocaust might suggest otherwise – especially as they were only let in after it was established that they had indeed converted to Catholicism!

Or consider the absurdity of the claim that the 'social agenda of the Rising' is being realised in today's Celtic Tiger.

What neither McAleese nor the revisionists can handle is the revolutionary impulse of the Rising. McAleese has no right to proclaim her state the inheritors of the revolutionaries of 1916 when it assiduously helps in the conquest of Iraq today.

She might with some justification have sung a paean of praise to Arthur Griffith, the founder of Sinn Fein.

He never hid his aim to create a 'Gaelic Manchester' and to gain for Ireland its own share in the colonial enterprise.

In the coming commemoration the Left needs to create a space to recapture a genuine anti-imperialist message of the Rising and the socialist aspiration of a minority within it.

REVIEWS

A country divided against itself

There's more radicalism in Nashville than you might think



Willie Nelson: Anti war

By Mark Steele

Country music, it ought to be agreed, can't be cool.

Teenage kids in the Bronx are unlikely to rob passers-by for their Nike stetson, and you wouldn't increase your chances of getting into the most prestigious nightclub in town if you stood in the queue with a pedal steel guitar.

But then there's Johnny Cash. Cool enough to be part of the scene with Elvis and Jerry Lee Lewis in the 1950s, he became an icon all over again in the 1990s, storming Glastonbury and creating a series of astonishing records into his seventies.

And he didn't achieve this by following current trends, or reissuing "A Boy Named Sue" in a 12-inch club mix version, but by maintaining the honest, gruff simplicity that made him popular in the first place.

He was country's Tony Benn, finding that sticking to his original principles made him a hero for youth, the nose-studded generation adoring him as a beloved and slightly vulnerable uncle.

And this has continued after his death, with a Hollywood film about his life - or rather, part of his life.

Because, as well as his music, Cash's life was driven by a deeply held ideology which is barely present in the film.

One of my favourite live recordings of any musician is of Cash in New York in 1970, in which he humbly mutters an introduction to a pacifist song, describing how he'd recently played for the troops in Vietnam.

He says, "Afterwards a general said to me, 'Johnny, as you've performed here, that must make you a hawk now.' I said, 'No sir, it's made me a dove with claws.'" And this to a largely white working class audience that Dylan and Hendrix found much more difficult to reach.

Cash also became obsessed with the plight of Native Americans, producing a series of records about their condition.

One of the most delightful lines in these is in a song about General Custer.

He sings "Now Custer split his men," then breaks off to cough out a jolly chuckle before continuing, "Well, he won't do that again." When radio stations banned these songs, he paid for a nationwide advert that must be unmatched in its combination of courage, integrity and amphetamine-fuelled incoherence.

It screamed, "DJs, station managers, owners, etc. Where are your GUTS?... The songs ARE strong medicine. Well, so is Harlem, Birmingham and Vietnam."

And his most famous record, recorded live at San Quentin prison, includes possibly the most impressive pause in music.

He begins a song with the simple line, "San Quentin, I hate every inch of you." There follows an audible silence of about a second, as the inmates contemplate whether they've actually heard this right, the first expression of humanity they've experienced since arriving there - until they overcome the disbelief, then cheer and cheer and cheer.

But Hollywood's problem wasn't just of how to sanitise a popular radical.

The country scene today ought to epitomise Bush's heartland.

It's the music of the small towns, the Midwest, the middle-aged flag-waving proud, overweight truck owners who wear very big belts.

Could anyone symbolise this America more than Willie Nelson, usually pictured on a horse, and who apparently owns an entire county somewhere.

Last year I saw Willie Nelson at the Shepherd's Bush Empire, playing in front of a vast Texan flag, and yet he has campaigned stridently against the war in Iraq, and wrote a song that ended "How much blood can oil be worth?/Whatever happened to peace on Earth?"

The only person with a claim to be more American than Willie Nelson must be Dolly Parton, except she has spoken of her opposition to the war as well.

The Dixie Chicks' statement that George Bush made them ashamed to be Texans was well publicised.

But late one night I stumbled across a TV programme showing a Country Music Awards ceremony from Nashville that threatened to drown under a torrent of glittery hats, stars, stripes and screams of "Yee-ha".

The best of us, I thought, asked to talk about the war to that audience, would probably decide to skirt round the issue.

But then an announcement was made that a special commendation

was being awarded to the Dixie Chicks for their "international achievements".

Merle Haggard is a country star who took on opponents of the Vietnam War, saying in one of his songs "If you run down your country you'll be running on the fighting side of me." But even he has written a song condemning the war in Iraq, and said recently, "The three biggest assholes ever to walk the earth are Hitler, Nixon and George Bush." Which could be interpreted as a subtle move to the left.

The process isn't in one direction.

The country song "Where Were You When The World Stopped Turning" by Alan Jackson became a patriotic anthem, despite containing the depressingly accurate line

"I'm just a simple man/I don't know the difference between Iraq and Iran."

And other singers have worked hard to maintain the stereotype, but the country scene, the terrain Bush must see as his cultural heartland, is clearly deeply divided.

So what could Hollywood do with Johnny Cash? They could portray him accurately as driven by a Christian pacifism, and unyielding anti-racism, but while this may excite half the potential audience, they'd alienate the other half.

So they gently ignore the ideals that drove him, in an effort to appeal to both sides of an America that's polarised - not just between cities and the countryside, or students against conservatives, but divided where America's at its most American.

FILM

Review of Good Night, And Good Luck Director George Clooney

By Phil Waite

Good Night, And Good Luck tells the story of how campaigning television journalism was used with devastating effect against senator Joseph McCarthy's anti-Communist witch-hunts in the US in the early 1950s.

The film centres around Edward Murrow (played by David Strathairn), who worked for the CBS broadcasting company. In 1953, the See It Now team came across the story of lieutenant Milo Radulovich, a working class reservist who was being discharged from the air force as a security risk, due to the allegation that his father and sister were Communist sympathisers.

Murrow and his team decided to use the case of Radulovich to expose what McCarthy was doing. Their campaign led to Radulovich's reinstatement.

David Strathairn is brilliant as Murrow. He not only captures his mannerisms and look, but also the sense that Murrow felt a higher purpose about what he was doing - that television was not just there to entertain.

There is a very strong cast, including the film's director, George Clooney, as See It Now's producer, Fred Friendly, who is Murrow's ally against the station bosses. Frank Langella plays CBS boss William Paley, who sees the programme's popularity, but is worried that he will lose the advertising sponsors.

The film is shot in black and white, and the combination of this with contemporary footage of some of the participants in the story works brilliantly. The real McCarthy is shown in old footage, including from the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings where he tried to destroy people for supposed Communist affiliations.

Despite McCarthy's slurs against him, Murrow wasn't particularly radical. He was a liberal who thought that McCarthy's methods weren't the best way to undermine Communism in the US. The fact that he was appointed to the US Information Agency by President Kennedy in 1961 should make it clear that he wasn't an enemy of the powerful.

Several broadcasters took on McCarthy well before Murrow and the See It Now team, when he was much more powerful and it was far more dangerous to do so.

The film is bracketed by a speech Murrow made to the Radio and Television News Directors Association convention in 1958. "This just might do nobody any good," he begins, going on to say that television is "being used to detract, delude, amuse and insult us". The speech made Murrow few friends in the industry, but what he was talking about was all too clear even then.

In making a film about the dark period of McCarthyism, George Clooney has also made a film about the current climate in the US media around the 'war on terror', where the corporate news media follow Bush's agenda.

The need for an alternative has even led the film's makers to set up a website, www.report-it-now.com, encouraging people to tell stories from their communities and put pressure on the media.

Protest/Reports/Struggle

email to info@swp.ie Phone 01 8722682

BOLKESTEIN DIRECTIVE

Protests wins EU compromise

The Bolkestein Directive, better known as the Services Directive, was finally passed by the European Parliament on 15th February.

The document finally voted on by a large majority was a compromise reached by the main political groups, which buried the initial Bolkestein proposal and put a new text in its place.

Labour law is now excluded, fundamental rights to collective bargaining and action are respected, services of general interest, such as healthcare, are excluded and the infamous country of origin principle has been abolished.

The reason for this climbdown was the campaign of opposition by workers and their Trade Unions from across Europe.

On the opening day of the debate the city centre of

Strasbourg was brought to a halt by a demonstration of over 50,000 Trade Unionists. These included Polish miners, German transport workers, Swiss teachers, and a huge noisy contingent from Portugal. Health workers, members of UNISON from London marched shoulder to shoulder with steel workers, from the German union IG Metal.

The Irish contingent included health workers from SIPTU, retail workers from Mandate and both postal workers and Eircom technicians from the CWU. The opposition to this directive clearly demonstrates the strength of the Trade Union movement. This and the one day national strike of 9th December should now become the launch pad against Social Partnership and against the ICTU policy of support for a bosses neo-liberal Europe.

N.U.J.

Journalists strike vote

Unbridled greed was how the Nation Union of Journalists described regional newspaper employers decision to scrap a national pension scheme.

Journalists over 27 regional titles, from the Donegal Democrat to the Kerryman voted 82 per cent in favour to strike for three days starting on Sunday, 19 March.

This was in response to owners' decision, grouped under the Regional Newspaper Association of Ireland (RNAI), to stop funding the healthy pension scheme, even though they were in negotiations purportedly aimed at improving it.

The defined benefit scheme being scrapped promised a two-thirds of the basic rate pension for local journalists on retirement.

In its place, the individual employers, which include rich multinationals such as the Johnson Press and Tony O'Reilly's Independent News and Media, want to introduce a much inferior defined contribution scheme.

They would pay less in to it with no guarantee of a fixed outcome for the workers—the final pension would be dependent on investments on returns from a strong world economy at the time of retirement.

Within hours of the ballot result last week, bosses sought to avert the strike possibility by agreeing to withdraw its instruction to the trustee to wind up the scheme and enter talks.

The NUJ was expected to convene on Monday, March 13 to decide if the three day strike go ahead, but crucially the employers have not said they will keep the existing pension scheme.

While the outcome of this meeting is not known at the time of going to press, many union activists insist the strike must go ahead.

They fear the employers

are simply using stalling tactics, as they did when they stretched negotiations over pay for almost four years.

As one journalist said, "When we looked for a pay rise around four years ago, the employers said to shelve the pensions issue."

"We accepted a miserly pay increase thinking that at least our pension would be increased in line with our new basic wage; instead they scrapped it completely," he said. "The scheme is healthy, it is about them saving even more money at our expense—their arrogance is astounding," he said.

"They must have thought our union would never be militant, so it's even more important we carry out our strike, not just for talks, but to save the pension as it is and even improve it."

BIN CHARGES HIKE

South Dublin County Council will implement a €2 increase in the cost of a bin tag from April 1st. The proposed increase represents a 33% hike in bin charges for communities in Tallaght, Clondalkin, Lucan and beyond. But even more sinister is an attack on the waiver scheme for social welfare recipients in the council area.

Last year when SDCC moved to introduce the tagging system in an attempt to undermine resistance to bin charges they issued waiver tags to households without putting them through a weighty bureaucratic process. But now they have written out to thousands of households withdrawing the waiver scheme without even assessing the welfare of the families involved.

Gino Kenny, a spokesperson for the anti bin charges campaign in Clondalkin told Socialist Worker, "Thousands were given the waivers last year to try to get over the dissent that was around over the payment of bin charges. It was a

MANDATE

Historic victory at Dunnes Stores for Joanne Delaney

Joanne Delaney won a fantastic and historic victory over Dunnes Stores management when she won her job back in the Ashleaf Centre in Crumlin.

Joanne had been sacked for the crime of wearing her union badge at work. She had been an active and effective shop steward for her trade union MANDATE.

Because she was getting her store organised, Joanne was sacked on the spurious grounds.

A campaign to defend Joanne and to win her re-instatement



Joanne Delaney

won international and local support.

A web petition to Dunnes Management

was signed by hundreds of thousands of trade unionists globally.

In the Crumlin area

of Dublin where Joanne worked and lived a support group was set up that organised pickets of the store every week-end.

There were usually 40 to 50 people on each of these pickets and there was widespread political support from the Labour Party, Sinn Fein and Socialist Workers Party and other socialists.

Joanne is absolutely delighted with the victory.

As one of her union colleagues said, "Joanne brought Dunnes to their knees quicker than anyone has ever done - She has made history."

IRISH ANTI WAR MOVEMENT

SUCCESSFUL TOUR FOR U.S. VETERANS

By Kieran McNulty (TAWG)

Two US veterans have completed a successful tour for the Irish Anti-War Movement with big meetings held in many cities. Here is the report from one town.

Tralee Antiwar Group (TAWG) held a very successful public meeting against the war in Iraq at the Grand Hotel on Thursday, March 9th. This meeting attracted the largest audience ever for an antiwar meeting in the town with over 60 people in attendance. This fact was even more remarkable when you

consider the fact that the local media virtually blanked the event.

The meeting was addressed by Frank Corcoran (Vietnam Veterans Against War) and Benjamin Hart Viges (Iraq Veterans Against War). Both veterans condemned the use of Shannon Airport as a military base by the US Government and were particularly scathing in their condemnation of the use of the airport in the transport of prisoners.

"They also talked of the considerable physical and mental damage done by the war to the soldiers who have

served in Iraq. Hart Viges referred to the shock and disorientation he felt when he got home:

"I was a good soldier - hardworking paratrooper. When I got home I would end up doing a perimeter check around my place on a regular basis."

He got to the point where he no longer believed in the war and filed successfully for conscientious objector status.

Many of these men and women may never be able to work again. Veterans of the war in Iraq are already being called up from the reserve to serve second and even third

tours of duty despite having already completed their original four years which they signed up for.

The cost of the war is falling on the US working class with massive cuts in public services with medicare and pensions under sustained attack. Over 50% of the US budget goes on the industrial military complex.

At the end of the meeting the International Day of Action on March 18th was fully supported by all the audience.

The website for Iraqi Veterans Against the War is www.ivaw.net

SHELL TO SEA

Over 100 people attended a public meeting in the Metropole Hotel, in Cork on Thursday 16th February in support of the Shell to Sea Campaign.

The meeting, organised by the local Shell to Sea support group was addressed by Micheal O Seighin, Caitlin Ui Sheighin and Tracey Ryan.

Micheal outlined the history of the opposition to Shell's plans to bring unrefined gas inland at Rosport.

"The pipeline would have the capacity to bring this gas ashore at pressures of up to 345 bar, where as the normal Bord Gais lines can only handle pressures of 88bar.

"Clearly this presents a great danger to the local community.

"We only were able to face down the Government and Shell because of the support we received from all corners of Ireland and from further afield" said



Shell: Great danger to the local community.

Micheal.

Tracey Ryan spoke as a representative from the Rosport Solidarity Camp.

"The camp will be opening again at the end of February, and we need both volunteers and equipment. We have repositioned the camp directly in the line Shell intend laying their pipeline."

Tracey made the connection between the struggle in Rosport and the campaign against the incinerator in Ringaskiddy,

the opposition against Shell in Nigeria and the successful fight by the Bolivian people against the privatisation of their natural resources.

The meeting divided into sub-groups, which put forward the following suggestions as to how Cork based people can support the people of Rosport in their struggle, raising awareness, support for the Solidarity Camp, fundraising, local meetings, picket all Shell sponsored events, enter a

BALLYFERMOT

COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT STRIKE

A six day old strike was called off at the end of February at the Ballyfermot Resource Centre following negotiations between FAS, the centre's management and SIPTU.

Ballyfermot Resource Centre provides essential services to the community such as crèche facilities, Meals On Wheels and services for the elderly.

Workers at the centre took strike when their jobs were threatened. Management had changed their contracts from Social Economy to Community Employment and alleged that all nine workers who were to be laid off had no more entitlement to CE.

But this was clearly not the case and when pickets were placed the workers got full support from everybody working at the centre.

Carmel Ward Siptu shop steward for the strikers explained:

"Out of the 16 of us working there nine were to be let go because management decided we were no longer on Social Economy and that we had no more entitlement to CE. But we knew we had at least another year and a half.

"We lifted the pickets after six days and are proved right because we will all get another year and a half on CE. But it won't be back at the resource centre and we feel annoyed at this outcome.

"Especially because we didn't get to vote on the decision to go back to work. Our union was wrong to get us back without a ballot so a lot of us are unhappy with the result.

"But one thing is sure we were proved right and have been abused by management of the resource centre."

float in the St.Patrick's Day parade, link up with Nigerian and Bolivian struggles, stand in elections and set up a local Solidarity Camp.

All present were asked to get involved with the local group, which meets every Wednesday night at Barracka Books.

As Micheal O'Seighin concluded "2006 will be an important year in our struggle—maybe the first time since 1798 that the Mayo people will have to face the armed might of the State. We need the support of all people".

The previous evening saw a crowd of 35 attend a similar meeting in Clonakilty.

The Cork group staged a successful blockade of the Statoil Station in Tivoli at tea time on Friday 17th February.

People interested in getting involved in the Cork campaign can contact Joe at 087-2994796

Protest/Reports/Struggle
 email to info@swp.ie Phone 01 8722682

TRADE UNION RIGHTS IN BUILDING INDUSTRY

Ballybrack 3 released: Fight goes on



The Ballybrack 3 and supporters outside the court: Fighting for trade union rights

Keith Kelly, Andrew Clarke and Billy Mc Clurg spent two weeks in prison because they stood up for trade union rights and jobs with proper pay and conditions for all workers. They were fighting for all of us.

The Ballybrack 3 exposed the scandal where bosses in the building industry are using sub-contractors to drive down the wages and conditions.

Over 130,000 building workers are not having their pension, death in benefit and sick pay contributions paid in for them by bogus sub-contractors and cowboy builders. Building bosses are flouting the law for profit yet the government does nothing.

The dispute in Ballybrack is the tip of an iceberg. Irish Ferries, GAMA or

the recent sacking of Joanne Delaney by Dunnes Stores for wearing a union badge, show bosses in this country are lining up to bash trade unions and create slave labour conditions for all workers.

The dispute with Collen also shows there is one law for the rich and another for the rest of us. Three trade union members were jailed in an instant for protesting while employers that flout labour law and health and safety regulations get away scot-free.

For example, 23 workers died on building sites last year because builders do not have proper health and safety on their sites. Yet no building boss has spent even a day in prison.

It is also a disgrace that over 50 gardai were deployed every day for more than a week at Collen's site in

UCD to harass and intimidate peaceful protesters. This is taxpayers money which could be spent on important things like health and education.

Some politicians tried to blame the builders protest for slowing down the delivery of council houses. This is nonsense. Poor building standards led Laurel Avenue in Ballybrack to fall apart in the first place leaving residents living a 20-year nightmare.

Now the council is finally replacing the houses on Laurel Avenue they want to use cowboy builders and build the houses on the cheap.

If we want decent houses for people on the housing list we must ensure workers rights and proper building standards are maintained.

The housing list gets longer every year because the council builds a tiny number of council houses but allow

private developers make a fortune building over-priced apartment and exclusive developments

■ The trade union leaders are also not fighting on our behalf. In the Irish Ferries and the Ballybrack three dispute, union leaders should have called all-out strikes instead of wasting their time in partnership talks with the bosses.

Employers that bash unions and put workers in jail are not our partners!

But the actions of Keith Billy and Andrew and struggles like Irish Ferries or the Rossport 5, show ordinary working people are fed up with injustice and corruption in this country.

We must link all these struggles together into a major fight to put the rights of people before greed and profit our behalf.

Statement from Ballybrack 3

We thank the staff and our fellow prisoners of Mountjoy Jail for their courtesy and kindness and the patrons and staff of Mick's Kitchen.

We would like to thank Richard Boyd Barrett of the People before Profit Alliance/Davitt League, for all the work and effort he has put in on our behalf.

We'd like to thank the B.A.T.U officials and our families, friends and every bricklayer, carpenter, labourer and all trades and all the people who supported us.

The issues that we tried to highlight by our protest are still there:

1. As long as rogue builders are allowed to use bogus subcontractors to drive a coach and four through the Registered Employment Agreement by employing non-union labour.

2. As long as major contractors are allowed to breach the tax code, on publicly funded projects. By non-payment of P.R.S.I, through the use of the C45 scam.

3. As long as our fellow workers are being maimed and killed because builders are failing to implement integrated safety plans on site, because of the use of multiple contractors.

4. As long as widows and orphans are being left destitute because builders are criminally not paying into the pension fund, thereby depriving dependants of mortality benefits of their loved ones.

5. As long as the authorities fail to take action over all these abuses —there will be other men willing to stand up and be counted.

To all men and women whose rights are being trampled on, on building sites, everywhere in Ireland, our message to you is throw off your shackles of fear, stand up for your rights and join a union.

BILLY McCLURG, KEITH KELLY, ANDREW CLARKE

WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

Capitalism is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet.

A new society can only be constructed when the workers take control of the wealth and plan its production and distribution for human need and not profit.

REVOLUTION

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed. The courts, the army and police exist to defend the interests of the wealthy.

To destroy capitalism, we need to remove the present state structures and create a workers' state based on much

greater political and economic democracy.

AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR

War is a constant feature of capitalism today as the imperialist powers try to dominate the earth.

Bush's "War on Terrorism" is a crude device to attack any country which threatens US military, strategic or economic dominance.

END RACISM AND OPPRESSION

We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the

working class.

We are for full social, economic and political equality for women.

We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH

We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Blair government.

Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction'

We want to see an Irish workers republic where all

workers gain.

Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party.

This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system.

We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc.

We stand for fighting trade unions and for independent rank and file action.

Join the Socialists

Fill in the form and send to

SWP PO Box 1648 Dublin 8

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Email.....

Phone.....



Socialist **Worker**

End Irish collaboration with the war and occupation of Iraq

End the use of Shannon Airport for torture flights

**WEAR THE
BLACK
SHAMROCK**



The Black Shamrock badge is set to become the symbol of Irish opposition to the Iraq War.

Launched in the week before St. Patrick's Day, the badge mourns all who have died in the Iraq conflict as a result of Irish collaboration with the US-led occupation.

According to the organisers, it also mourns the death of Irish neutrality.

Twenty thousand of the badges have been produced by the Derry-based group behind the initiative and are being sold from anti-war stalls at St. Patrick's Day parades across Ireland, North and South. The

Irish Anti War Movement is heavily involved along with others in the effort.

It is hoped that the Black Shamrock will remain the symbol of opposition to war throughout the year and not just around the Patrick's Day holiday.

Irish responsibility for the results of the Iraq war arises from the Shannon stop-over for US troops, the use of Irish air space for the "rendition" of kidnap victims, Irish involvement in the arms trade—Raytheon, Timoney etc.—and through the Ahern government's diplomatic silence about the illegal occupation.

As well, there's the complicity of parties, some of whom say they are anti-war, who want to keep on-side with the Bush administration as far as the "peace process" is concerned. So they are anti-war when it suits them—but not when the war-mongers are within ear-shot.

The US-led occupation is being maintained in the face of overwhelming opposition from the Iraqi people. Every poll taken since 2003 shows a majority for withdrawal—85 percent in the latest survey.

Even a majority of US soldiers in Iraq want out. A Le Moyne College/Zogby

International survey last month showed that 29 percent believe the US should leave "immediately;" another 22 percent say they should get out in the next six months; 21 percent want the US out within 12 months; and 23 percent took the administration line that US forces should stay "as long as they are needed."

That is, more than seven out of 10 American soldiers in Iraq think the US should exit within a year; more than one in four says Troops Out Now; fewer than one in four backs Bush.

But even as the horror mounts, the Irish government continues the policy which has

allowed more than 500,000 US troops through Shannon since January 2003, in flagrant violation of Irish neutrality. In addition, the decision to facilitate the CIA "renditions" programme, and the refusal to search CIA aircraft when on the ground, has implicated Ireland in violations of international law and put a question mark against commitments to the Geneva and Hague Conventions.

The Black Shamrock is a means of signalling grass-roots opposition to this involvement in the war, and opposition to war and militarism generally, across parties and among people not affiliated to any party or group.