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Socialist Worker

UNITED LEFT WINS 5 SEATS

ORGANISE TO RESIST CUTS

THE UNITED Left Alliance has scored a spectacular breakthrough, winning five Dáil seats in the general election.

The 5 new United Left TDs are: Richard Boyd Barrett, (Dún Laoghaire); Joe Higgins, (Dublin West); Clare Daly, (Dublin North); Joan Collins, (Dublin South Central) and Séamus Healy (Tipperary South).

Ireland's 'riot in the ballot box' could be followed by a social revolt on the streets.

Exits polls showed that the overwhelming motive behind voting in the General Election was anger.

Less attention was paid to the detail of the right-wing policies of Fine Gael.

The former Fine Gael Minister, Ivan Yates, claimed that; "Voters signed up for years of harsh medicine."

But nothing could be further from the truth – the last party that talked of 'harsh medicine' was decimated.

The scale of Fianna Fail's defeat is of epic proportions.

They scored fewer votes than the old Irish Parliamentary Party in the 1918 elections. Their defeat is similar to the wipe out of parties like the Canadian conservatives or the Italian Christian Democrats.

Only the PR electoral system masked their total decline.

Irish politics is witnessing a new polarisation.

Fine Gael's vote increased by 14%.

They were backed overwhelmingly by business interests.

They had the wealthiest war chest and admitted to receiving €2.25 million in donations, mainly through corporate sponsored golf matches.

The business elite yearned for a single party government that could 'sort out' the population.

The Independent Group of news-



Richard Boyd Barrett wins in Dún Laoghaire

papers, owned by the two tax exile millionaires, O'Reilly and O'Brien, were to the fore in trying to create a bandwagon effect for this openly Thatcherite option.

But while a section of the upper middle class backed FG's right wing policies with enthusiasm, the majority of their voters heard a message about 'change'.

They either used Fine Gael as a vehicle to get rid of Fianna Fail or were attracted to ambiguous rhetoric about ending the 'two tier health system' or 'reviewing' the Universal Social Charge.

The reality is that Fine Gael does not have the same deep roots in Irish society as FF and so a volatile electorate will soon turn against them.

The election also saw a major shift to the left in Irish society.

A new left-wing force, the United Left Alliance, now has more TDs than Fianna Fail in the capital, Dublin.

A tactical decision by Sinn Fein to move to the left over the past year also led to big gains, mainly outside Dublin.

And even the increase in Labour votes,

reflected a suspicion among workers of the Thatcherites in Fine Gael.

In all, more voters switched to Labour, Sinn Fein, the ULA and left-wing independents than to Fine Gael.

But you would not know that from a corporate media that is desperately trying to present Enda Kenny as the saviour of the nation.

A NEW GOVERNMENT OF THE BOSSES

'IT IS like a game of Munster and Leinster. After it is over, you put on the green jersey'.

This is how Eamon Gilmore described how Labour and Fine Gael can overcome their differences and form a new coalition government.

He should remember that the last people to talk of 'wearing the green jersey' were Brian Lenihan and 'Seánie' Fitzpatrick!

Both the FG and Labour leaders see politics as a game where election promises are buried after the match.

They want to come together to form a 'stable' government that carries through the assaults necessary to save Irish capitalism.

Fine Gael's extreme right winger, Leo Varadkar, gave the game away when he suggested that in times of crisis the 'centre right' and 'centre left' must join together so that they are not pressurised by strikes, demonstrations or populist pressure. 'Strong, stable government' is only a code for resisting democratic pressures.

In the next few weeks, the new Labour-

FG government will pay over at least €7 billion more to the banks.

After that they are facing even further demands for 're-capitalisation' that could amount to €15 billion.

On March 11th, they will go to the EU summit having told the Irish people that their softly, softly approach to negotiation will yield concessions.

But they will get virtually no concessions apart from a few symbolic gestures.

The population will still be lumbered with a massive sovereign debt to shore up the European banking system.

Once these moves are out of way, the stage is set for an all-out war on working-class living standards.

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Inside: Revolution in Libya p3; International Women's Day p7; Middle East in Revolt p4&5

United Left Wins 5 Seats

(Continued from front page)

Labour has said it has no 'red line' issues so it will make concession after concession on water charges, university fees, privatisation or public sector 'reform'.

The hope of many workers that Labour will 'soften' Fine Gael will therefore quickly melt away.

Labour, of course, could refuse the poisoned chalice of coalition, as a small number of its left-wing members are advocating.

It could join the opposition and allow a government composed of Fine Gael and right-wing independents to self destruct in a short time.

Or even force FG and FF together to bring about a real alignment of Irish politics.

But its leadership are totally plugged into the political and corporate establishment and will jump at the slightest opportunity to put their bums in Merce.

Once entrapped in coalition, Labour will follow the way of the Greens and end up as apologists for the right.

THE LEFT ARRIVES



ICTU March Against Cuts

THE UNITED Left Alliance (ULA) is the new left-wing force in Irish politics.

It has five TDs, one MEP and nearly twenty local councillors.

Only once before, in the

1980s, did a similar force emerge.

But the ULA comes from a very different tradition to the old Workers Party, who emerged during the recession of that decade.

The ULA opposes any involvement with, or support for, right-wing parties.

It promotes the self-mobilisation of workers as the key to change rather than simply parliamentary

manoeuvres.

It does not support foreign dictators who claim to lead a socialist homeland.

The ULA is a principled left that grows out of workers struggles rather than being

an add-on to the republican tradition.

But, crucially, the context is very different.

The scale of the crisis facing Irish capitalism is far deeper and the country

has become one of the weak links in the chain of global capitalism.

Provided it remains a party of struggle, the ULA could expand dramatically.

Its growth will, however, require a new ideological struggle to match its huge electoral effort.

It will have to convince large number of workers to break from trade union leaders who have systematically cultivated a mood of defeatism.

The last minute support for Labour to participate in a 'balanced' government grew out of the experience of the last two years where workers have retreated before the employers' offensive.

The main reason for that retreat has been the sabotage of struggle by union leaders who accepted pay cuts and endorsed a 'more for less' philosophy for workers in the public sector.

The ULA will have to fight hard to reverse this mood of defeatism.

Left parliamentary activity also cannot substitute for the weakness and fear that workers experience.

It can only assist the awakening of a new mood to resist.

GOING FORWARD WITH THE UNITED LEFT ALLIANCE

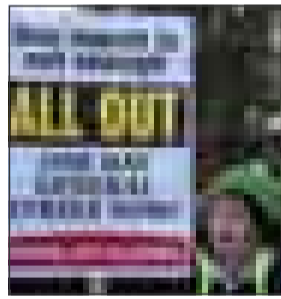
A MAJOR strategic goal of the ULA must, therefore, be to build a base in workers' organisations and win over the many manual and white-collar workers who reluctantly voted Labour in the desperate hope that they could soften Fine Gael.

Second, the ULA will have to relate to the many workers who voted Sinn Fein to show that while this party uses left rhetoric – it will not break from capitalism.

In the past, Sinn Fein looked like the only real opposition to the political establishment.

But across the border they have joined with the DUP in implementing savage cuts in living standards.

The long term goal of Gerry Adams is to enter government with a right-wing party in the South – ideally, before the historic anniversary on



2016.

The ULA can welcome many who support Sinn Fein into struggle – but it must seek to expose in a consistent and fraternal manner the weakness that hides behind a left republican rhetoric.

All of this means that the ULA has a huge

responsibility.

It should engage in a process of open debate and discussion to lay the basis for a new left-wing party.

That party should be a multi-tendency party where the Socialist Workers Party works alongside the Socialist Party and the Workers

Unemployed Action Group to build a genuine party of the left – while giving each other the freedom to debate and discuss their differences.

But above all it should open itself out to the many new activists whose hopes have risen from the Irish left coming of age.

Interview with Richard Boyd-Barrett, TD

SW: Where did your support come from, both in the ballot box and the campaign team?

RBB: It was clear there was a higher turnout than at the last election.

And much of that increase was a bigger turnout in working-class areas and from young people.

We benefitted from new layers in society who often don't vote.

Also we have particular concentrations of support in areas where we had been involved in leading or supporting particular campaigns and struggles against privatisation or where local services or amenities were being cut back.

Our campaign team was very different in character from the other parties.

It was much younger. It was much more working class.

It was much more motivated in the sense that it was made up of

people who we had met through campaigning on local, national and even international issues.

The bigger parties relied more on money and employing people to put up posters and deliver leaflets.

SW: How did you find the campaign as a whole?

RBB: I think we got slightly squeezed by Labour's argument: "We need to put Labour into government to soften the worst excesses of a Fine Gael government".

Labour issued letters appealing to their supporters not to transfer to me.

Fine Gael on the doorsteps were telling people the same.

So given that concerted campaign and the reduction of seats in the constituency it was really quite an extraordinary achievement for us to win the seat.

And I think that was

largely a result of the respect we built up for being active campaigners for local issues.

SW: As for the media do you think there was bias or scaremongering about the campaign?

RBB: We did get some coverage, but generally speaking we were not given time to set out our alternative policy agenda.

There was a bias towards dismissing the Left as cranks who had no credible alternative.

As for the scaremongering, there is no doubt that it was similar to the Lisbon treaty vote, where the political establishment suggested if we voted against the Lisbon treaty the sky would fall on our heads.

We had a similar politics of fear deployed this time.

SW: Do you think the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia played a role

during the campaign?

RBB: Yes, very often when we were talking to people who were despondent about the situation in this country we explained that we wanted to see mass movements of people power like the ones in Tunisia and Egypt to challenge the austerity of the IMF/EU and the establishment.

And these arguments really did resonate with working-class and young people.

The model of people power, popular and workers resistance in Egypt is a very important example of the way forward.

SW: So what next for the ULA?

RBB: There are three immediate tasks we must organise around.

Firstly, the new government is going to Europe with a view to get a renegotiation of the



IMF/EU deal.

We need to insist on an Icelandic-type approach where this revised deal is put before the people in a referendum and a full and detailed discussion can be had over the austerity package.

Secondly we need to demand, especially of the Labour Party, that the

Universal Social Charge is reversed and replaced with a progressive taxation system where the wealthy pay their fair share.

Finally, we need to develop concrete and realistic proposals for getting people back to work.

This would include a public works programme

instead of putting more money into the banks.

Beyond that we want to develop the ULA to become a major force on the left, especially given that Labour are going to prop up a Fine Gael government that is going to wreak such damage on working people and the vulnerable.

An important thing to stress is that any new organisation would have to be broad and has to embrace those who oppose the neoliberal and cuts agenda but aren't necessarily familiar with socialist politics in the traditional sense.

So I think this new radical party has to be broad and accessible.

Certainly the election results do indicate a significant swing to the left from a very wide layer of people.

That was reflected in the vote for the ULA and also a number of left independents.

So we have to build on that and quite quickly.

Hunt Report – More than Fees

By JIMMY SMITH

JANUARY SAW the publication of the *National Strategy for Irish Higher Education* (the ‘Hunt Report’).

It was marked by a range of criticisms and verbal protests over the proposed introduction of student fees and loans, threats to academic freedom, increased layers of management, the amalgamation of institutions and the increased use of ‘for-profit’ education providers.

The report represents a speeding up of the process whereby a degree becomes a commodity and institutions are run as businesses.

This is no surprise as not one practicing lecturer was part of the strategy group (which was dominated by civil servants) responsible for the report.

The report is forced to recognise the achievements of the existing system and staff: “The current system is delivering above average outcomes at below average funding”.

Ireland already spends less than the OECD average on education and in the last two years 1,000 jobs have been lost in the sector while student numbers have increased by 10,000.

The lecturers’ trade union IFUT while generally critical of the report is too complacent in describing the report as: “One of our all-time most expensive dust accumulators”.

The Hunt report represents a very real threat to the nature of higher education and needs to be met with a serious co-ordinated and joint response from trade unions and students in the sector.

Libya: Victory to the Revolution No to US Military intervention



People power in Benghazi

AS WE went to press mass popular uprisings were sweeping Libya and despite vicious repression by the Gaddafi regime they had succeeded in taking over second city Benghazi.

The announcement by the EU that they were imposing sanctions on Libya including the arms trade reminded the world that Western regimes past criticism of Gaddafi as a dictator had not stopped them selling

him weapons.

British prime minister David Cameron said it was unacceptable that “Colonel Gaddafi can be murdering his own people using airplanes and helicopter gunships.” He didn’t say who sold Gaddafi these or mention his recent tour of the middle East to secure arms deals endangered by the spread of people power.

US movements of ships and troops to the Mediterranean through the Suez canal should be opposed by all anti-war activists and supporters of the revolution in Libya and the Middle East.

The first invasion of Iraq in 1991 was claimed as necessary to deal with the dictator Saddam.

However, when the Iraqis rose in a popular revolt against Saddam, US troops stood by while Saddam’s Republican Guards slaughtered tens of

thousands to put down the rebellion.

For the Whitehouse, a dictator is always preferable to democracy in a country they want to control.

The US has supported all the rotten regimes in the region and military involvement will only be to secure its own interests – oil and power.

If the revolutions are to deepen and spread they must be free from the intimidation of US imperial power.

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Media Stifle Left in Election

By LEAH SPEIGHT

PEOPLE WANTED a good debate on the vital issues, like the economy, services and jobs during the election campaign.

Of course the mass media saw to it that this was not the case during the election campaign.

Rejection of the EU/IMF deal, even from the mainstream viewpoint of depressing the economy further, was ruled out.

The formula used by the media for dealing with left-wing ideas in the election was to ascribe them to Sinn Fein and then smear SF as economically illiterate or as untrustworthy terrorists.

Ironically this shallow approach meant a left-wing criticism of SF cuts in the North was not discussed.

When surveying the different party policies on transport, education or health, no newspaper or radio station included the policies of the United Left Alliance.

The ULA was effectively screened away from the public eye or ear.

The United Left Alliance was called the “loony left” and “rag bags” by FG and Labour.

Name calling is easy in the absence of any opposition.

The Sunday Independent referred to Richard Boyd Barrett as ‘the celebrity socialist’.

Fine Gael was constantly put forward as the only party with a real chance of ‘saving’ us.

Frontline’s debate of the party leaders put Enda Kenny in a centre position like Jesus Christ at the last supper.

Even after the results of the election showed a major breakthrough for the Left the media story was FG success.

However the reality is that the right-wing vote of FG-FF combined has collapsed from a traditional 70-80% to the historic low of 53% in this election.

And signs are that it will keep falling.

The media spin of Fine Gael as saviours will soon be realised when people are suffering from FG-Labour government austerity cuts.

People Before Profit and the ULA are certainly held back by the uneven and unfair media treatment, but there are media other than the mass media.

Public meetings, mass leafleting, posterage and papers like Socialist Worker will continue to be at the heart of working-class organisation in communities and trades unions.

As well as that, with 5 strong United Left voices in the Dail as a strong opposition, the media will be even less able to control what the people see and hear.



Northern Lecturers to Strike

By JIMMY SMITH

LECTURERS IN the University and College Union (UCU) in both higher and further education across Northern Ireland are being balloted for industrial action in separate ballots on pension changes and the threat to jobs and pay.

An earlier consultative ballot showed over 95% of union members rejected the employers’ pension changes which include higher

contributions and a later retirement age.

There are huge cuts in public funding for universities and colleges including a proposed increase in university fees for NI students to £5,750 per annum.

The leadership of UCU is recommending a ‘yes’ vote in all ballots; and is continuing to support the student protests against the cuts and fee increases, with the union co-organising a rally with NUS-USI on 6 April in Belfast.

Davenport Strikers Fight Minimum Wage Cuts

DESPITE ASSURANCES by FF Finance minister Lenihan that the reduction in the minimum wage would not mean a cut for existing workers, this is exactly what the Davenport owners have done.

When the workers refused new contracts on lower pay, the Hotel suspended them and they fought back by mounting pickets.

People Before Profit activist, Annette Mooney praised the bravery of the five Polish and Lithuanian women workers involved.

“These women are incredibly brave taking this stand against the mean-minded management at the Davenport Hotel.

“They have been put out of work for refusing to sign new contracts reducing their National Minimum Wage rate by almost €1 an hour.” “I am asking people to boycott all O’Callaghan Hotels, until these women have been put back on the rosters.

“The other workers who signed the new contracts were not members of a union.

“This underlines the importance of trade unions in the fight for a fairer society that puts workers and people before greed and profit.” 300,000 workers depend on the minimum wage.

These workers are fighting for all of us.

LUCAN: SAVE GRIFFEEN VALLEY PARK

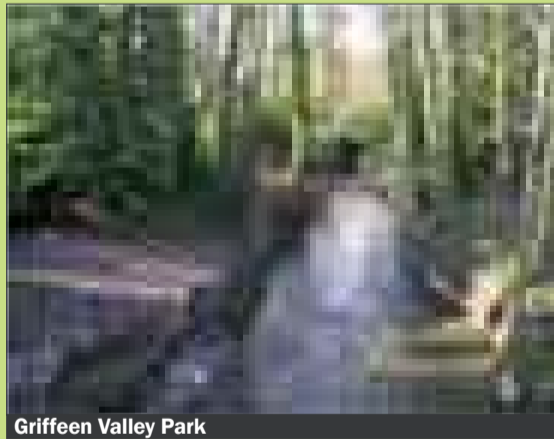
By LEAH SPEIGHT

RESIDENTS OF Lucan have started a campaign to stop a council depot being built in Griffeen Valley Park.

CLlr Gino Kenny met with the residents and has promised he will vote against it when the consultation period ends.

Griffeen Valley Park is a well used popular park with a skateboard park, community centre, football pitches and a scenic walk along the Griffeen River

The key worries for people include



Griffeen Valley Park

the loss of amenities and space in a public park, noise, increased traffic and smells from the waste.

All councillors voted in favour of the disposal of the

existing council depot site to allow for a much needed school in Lucan.

South Dublin County Council received enough money from this sale to buy a new

site for the depot.

Save Our Park campaign have already suggested alternative sites for this depot.

Griffeen valley Park must be defended because Lucan already suffers from over-development and bad planning.

This is the legacy left by FFs Liam Lawlor and his cronies.

South Dublin County Council simply must look for another site.

The other 25 councillors of South Dublin County Council should now also support the Save Our Park campaign.

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Down with Bahrain's king

Bahrain: A history of repression

THE SMALL island state of Bahrain is being rocked by an uprising.

The Shia majority, joined by liberal and radical Sunnis, are protesting against political exclusion and repression by the state, which is ruled by a Sunni royal family.

Bahrain, which is just off the coast of Saudi Arabia, is home to around 800,000 people, a lot of oil, and an entrenched, corrupt regime that is now in crisis.

Britain has played a key role in the state for more than 100 years. Oil was discovered there in 1932 and has been the main source of income ever since. The British advisor Charles Belgrave essentially dictated Bahrain's direction.

He oversaw brutal repression of resistance and stoked sectarian conflicts between Sunni and Shia.

Bahrain's "special treaty" with Britain was brought to an end in 1971 but strong links remain.

Britain has provided weapons to Bahrain, and British-based multinational firms, including BP, have taken advantage of the oil wealth and cheap labour.

Unleashed

Today's uprising has not come out of the blue.

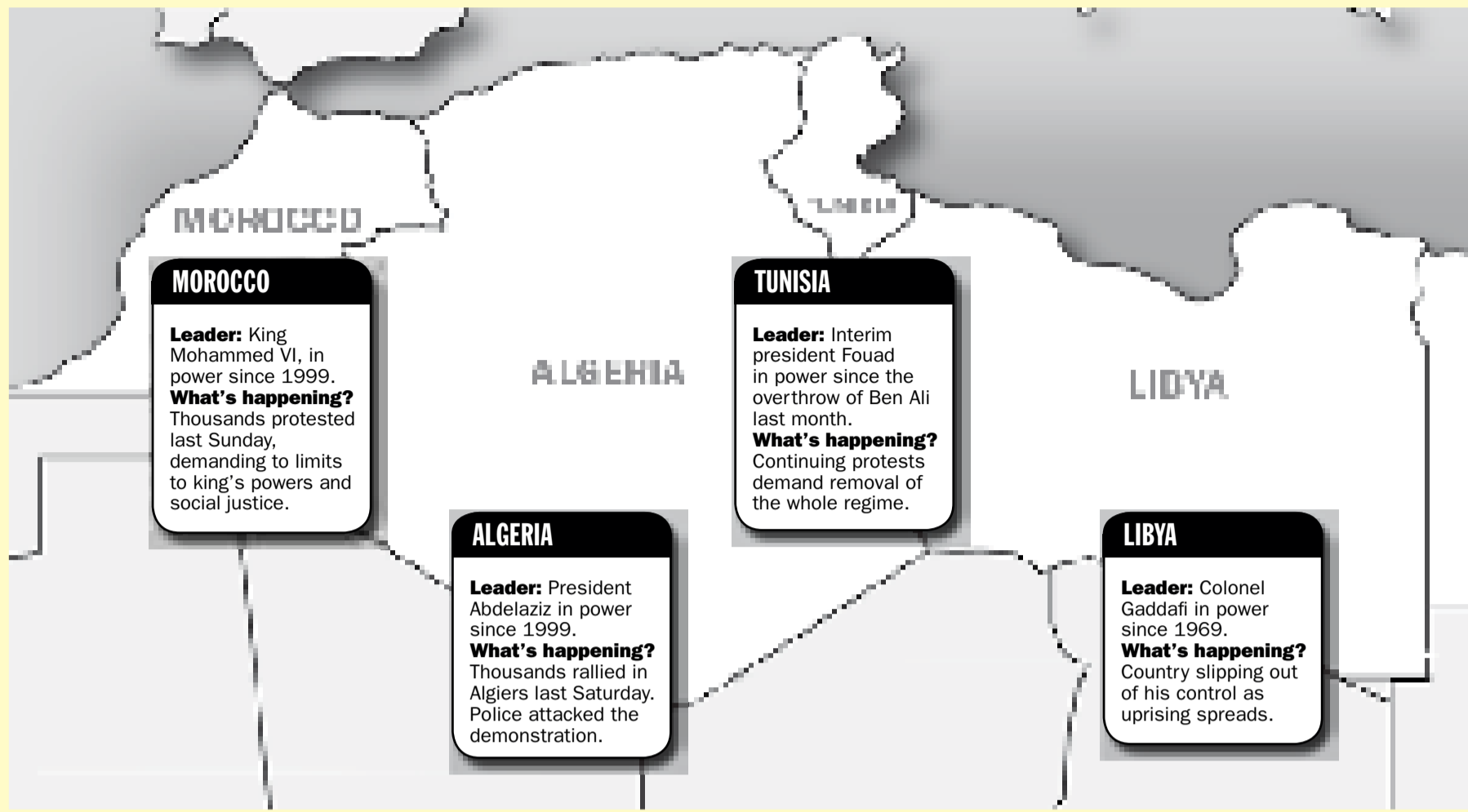
The Bahraini Intifada (uprising) began in 1994. Left wing activists joined with Islamists and liberals to fight for change.

The state unleashed repression. But the intifada lasted until 2000 and saw the National Action Charter introduced in 2001, which sought to show that demands had been listened to. Women were given the vote in 2002.

But oppression and poverty has continued.

In 2005 a strike wave hit construction sites. Workers, many of them from outside Bahrain, refused to work until they were paid properly and given their rights.

Siân Ruddick



Revolution is a cry

by ANNE ALEXANDER

LEADING ACTIVISTS in the Egyptian workers' movement, representing tens of thousands of striking workers, met in Cairo last Saturday.

They agreed a common programme of demands and to co-ordinate further action.

"It is our opinion that if this revolution does not lead to the fair distribution of wealth it is not worth anything," they said in a statement released after the meeting.

"Freedoms are not complete without social freedoms. The right to vote is naturally dependent on the right to a loaf of bread."

The programme goes beyond even the most far-reaching demands raised in waves of strikes in the years before Hosni Mubarak's fall.

In addition to calling for a rise in the national minimum wage, the workers demand that the maximum wage should be no more than 15 times the minimum wage.

Demand

The struggles of fixed-term workers are reflected in the programme, which calls for a complete end to temporary contracts, and job security for all manual and clerical workers, peasants and professionals.

A key demand is the dissolution of the state Egyptian Trade



Union Federation, which was a central pillar of the old ruling party and Mubarak's regime.

The programme also calls for:
 ● "Renationalisation of all privatised enterprises and a complete stop to the infamous privatisation programme."
 ● "Complete removal of corrupt managers who were imposed on companies in order to run them down and sell them off."
 ● "Curbing the employment of consultants who are past the age of retirement and who eat up three billion of the national income, in order to open up employment opportunities for the young."

● A meeting of independent trade unionists in Egypt last week agreed new demands that look far beyond the current capitalist system

● "Return to the enforcement of price controls on goods and services in order to keep prices down and not burden the poor."
 ● "The right of Egyptian workers to strike, organise sit-ins, and demonstrate peacefully, including those striking now against the remnants of the failed regime."

Several of the signatories are members of unions that founded a new, independent trade union federation in Tahrir Square on 25 January.

Workers from the sugar refineries in Al-Fayyum and Hawamidiyya, public transport, Tura Cement Co, pharmaceutical workers, postal workers, employees in the Umar Effendi department store, and representatives of the Property Tax collectors were among the 40 representatives at the meeting.

This declaration is an important step, as it brings together a powerful group of trade union activists to assert their determination to achieve the revolution's social goals.

Nothing approaching this level of co-ordination between



Egyptian workers are still fighting for change

strike leaders has been achieved in Egypt for decades, and their demands look far beyond the current capitalist system.

To read the workers' statement in full, go to www.socialistworker.co.uk

● SUEZ experienced a taste of the struggles to come last Sunday, when an armoured vehicle belonging to the military police killed a woman as the authorities broke up a strike by port workers.

Striking workers were arrested, in the first attempt to enforce the military's ban on strikes.

Police killed the woman as relatives and neighbours of the arrested workers gathered in protest.

The uprising in Suez was among the fiercest and most effective in Egypt, falling into the control of the demonstrators soon after 25 January.

The killing has sent shockwaves of anger through the country.

A SHORT HISTORY OF IMPERIALISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

WESTERN POWERS have been meddling in the Middle East for over 200 years. Here are some of the key events in imperialism's intervention in the region:

1779: Britain's East India Company, backed by British military power, establishes control over Kuwait.

1820: Britain establishes control over part of the Gulf coast.

1830: France invades Algeria. Resistance movement led by



Abd el Kader

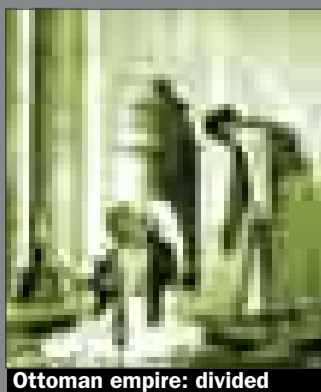
Abd el Kader erupts. **1837:** Britain seizes control of part of Iran.

1840: France sends 115,000 troops to crush the Algerian rebellion, waging "a war of extermination".

1860: British and French forces intervene in Lebanon. Spain invades and occupies Morocco.

1861: Bahrain becomes a British "protectorate".

1881: French army occupies Tunisia, creating a protectorate. **1882:** Britain invades Egypt and



Ottoman empire: divided

bombards the city of Alexandria, making the country effectively a British colony.

1909: Britain and Russia divide Iran between them.

1916: Britain and France agree secret Sykes-Picot Treaty, dividing Arab territories of the collapsing Ottoman Empire.

Britain grabs what is now Palestine, Jordan and Iraq, as well as Egypt. France controls Syria and Lebanon.

1917: Foreign office chief Arthur James Balfour declares that the

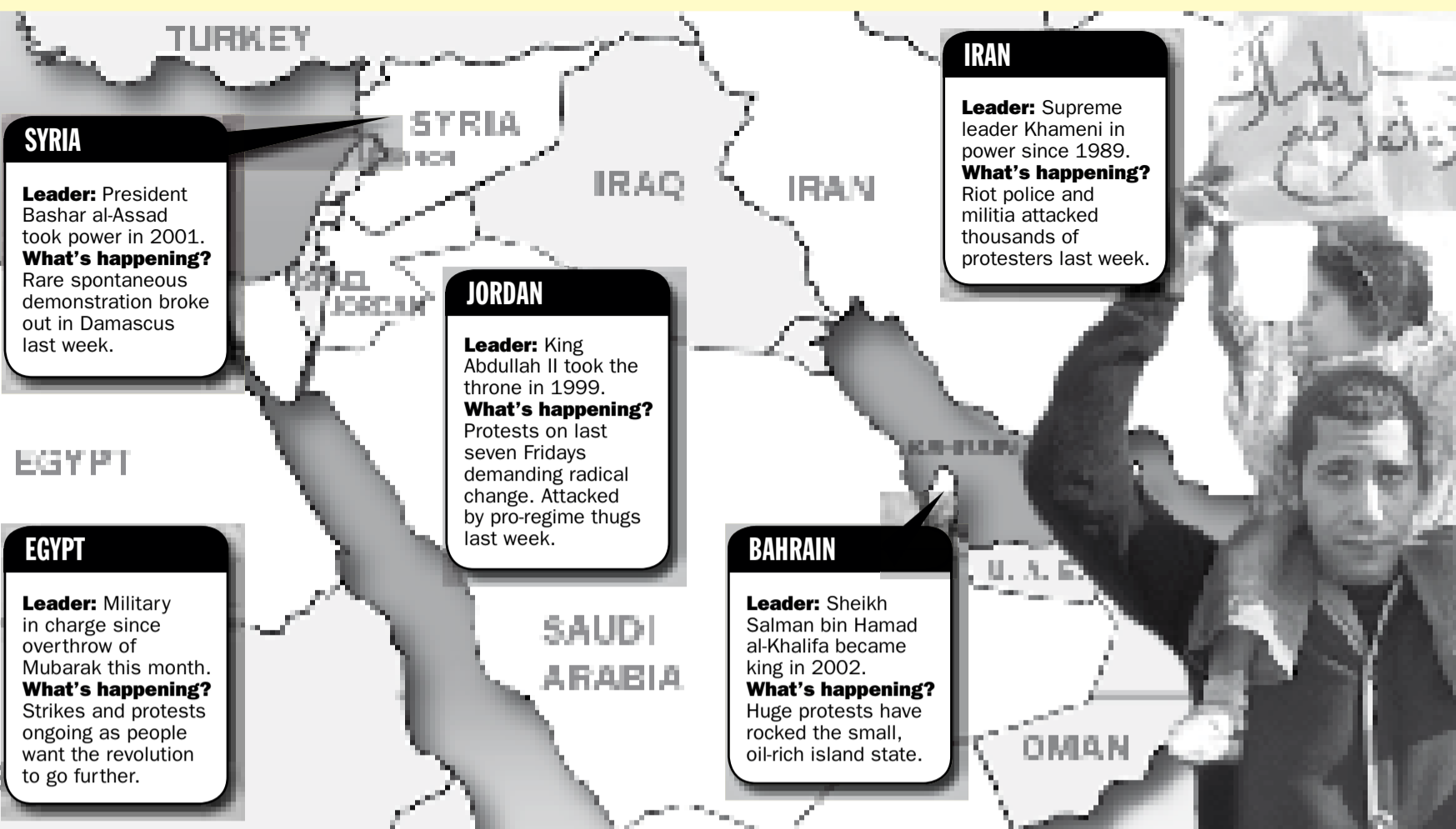
British government "views with favour" the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.

1919: British forces repress rebellion in Egypt.

1920s: Britain uses new weapon of air bombardment against rebels in Iraq and expands areas under its control along the Gulf coast and around Aden.

1925: French crush Syrian rising.

1948: Israel is created, backed by the US and Britain, with 700,000 Palestinians driven from their land.



WHAT WE THINK

An idea whose time has come

THE GREAT storm of revolt that began in a small town in Tunisia now sweeps from Morocco across thousands of miles of North Africa and the Middle East through to Iran, as this map shows.

Tunisia's tyrant Ben Ali and Egypt's dictator Mubarak have gone. Others, such as Gaddafi in Libya, who have ruled for decades over populations suffering poverty and stunted expectations are desperately clinging onto power.

It is no coincidence that the regimes that are facing the force of these great movements for change are some of the staunchest allies of the US, Britain and the West.

For decades obscenely wealthy monarchs and dictators have been more concerned with serving their imperial masters than their own populations. And now they are paying the price.

The revolution in Egypt has shaken the US establishment to its core. Barack Obama only came out in support of protesters when it was clear his great ally Mubarak was finished.

Strategic

Now Bahrain has erupted and he faces losing yet another supporter. The New York Times described it as a "pillar of the American security architecture in the Middle East". The state is home to the US 5th Fleet. But Bahrain's revolt worries the US for another reason—it is only a 15 mile causeway away from Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia is at the heart of the US's strategic interests. It has 20 percent of the world's oil reserves—yet one in four of its 26 million population live in poverty and there is 40 percent youth unemployment.

The most powerful nation in the world is watching as mass collective protest of ordinary people is challenging its interests across the region.

Protesters face bullets and brutal repression, yet still they come out on the streets of Manama and Benghazi and demand their rights. The French writer Victor Hugo once wrote that even the mightiest armies cannot hold back an idea whose time has come.

Revolution appears to be the idea whose time has come.

of rage at injustice

● Revolution threatens dictators across the region—with unprecedented demonstrations challenging the regimes' power

Revolt keeps on spreading

FOLLOWING the overthrow of Ben Ali in Tunisia, and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, all regimes in the Middle East—whether considered "friendly" or "hostile" by the West—have been challenged by the spreading revolutionary movement.

Unprecedented demonstrations have taken place in Syria, where large crowds surrounded a police station in the capital, Damascus, following a beating of a young man.

The crowds chanted, "The Syrian people will not be humiliated."

Demonstrators in southern Iraq faced down security forces in a protest over corruption.

In the Kurdish region of northern Iraq, large crowds have taken to the streets in an attempt to drive out the ruling party.

The unrest has also spread to Kuwait and the eastern region of Saudi Arabia.

In Morocco, crowds attacked a police station and French-owned firms in Tangier in protest against a deal that handed over a utilities contract to a French company.

Last week, young Moroccans attempted to storm the Royal Palace. They are calling for more demonstrations.

Reports

Eyewitness reports from Yemen say that for the first time thousands of people protested in all areas of Aden against president Ali Saleh's regime.

Neither police or Ali's special security force were to be seen.

The manager of the main bank in the city has been

attacked, beaten and thrown out of his job.

His four sons—who hold also senior positions—have been evicted and workers have taken over the bank.

The same thing has happened to managers of the government-run electricity service.

People attribute the huge and continuous increase in their bills to corrupt managers and government officials.

Workers have decided to withhold all payments to central government in order to pay their own wages.

Managers, and those considered to be their collaborators, have been kicked out of a government furniture factory, the port department, and the water department.

Simon Assaf and Alistair W

Yemen's dictator on the ropes

THE YEMENI people have taken to the streets, calling for the resignation of the dictator Ali Abdullah Saleh.

In response, Saleh, who has been in power for three decades, has announced he will step down in 2013 and that his son, who many expected to take over, will not seek office.

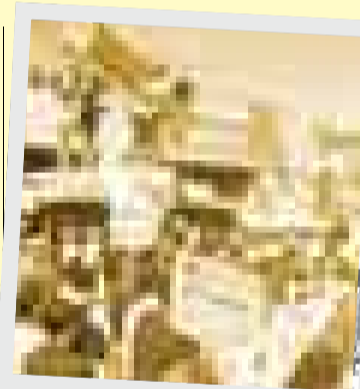
However, while Saleh is publicly calling for talks with opposition leaders, his security forces and hired thugs are suppressing demonstrations.

In the southern city of Aden on Sunday, police shot a 17-year old man dead. He is the 9th protester to be killed since the protests began.

On the mouth of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, Yemen is strategically vital for access to the Suez Canal. The US considers Saleh a key ally in the Middle East.

While the latest wave of protests were inspired by the mass movements across the Middle East, Saleh's regime has been embattled for some time.

Last year millions of people in the south took to the streets, demanding succession from the north. These protests were violently suppressed. Before



Protesting in Yemen

1990, the north and south were separate countries.

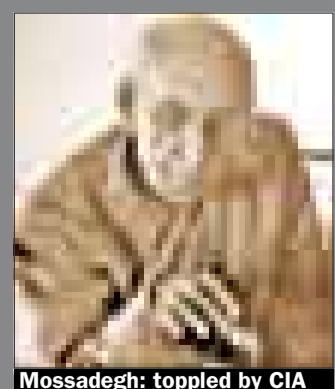
The US backed the north while the south was in the Russian sphere of influence. After the Cold War they unified, but a civil war broke out in 1994.

This saw the imposition of the dominance of the northern government based in Sana'a.

What is significant about the current uprising is that resistance has not been restricted to the south.

Protests have also taken place in Sann'a, meaning that Saleh's corrupt and brutal dictatorship has never seemed weaker.

Tim Nelson



Mossadegh: toppled by CIA

1953: The US's CIA helps organise a coup to overthrow Iranian prime minister Mossadegh, who had tried to nationalise oil. The Shah is installed as ruler.

1950s: French forces wage brutal war to try and keep control of Algeria, deploying 500,000 troops and systematically using torture. Over one million Algerians die in the war.

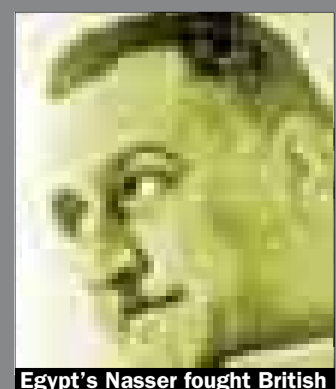
1959: British troops crush nationalist rebellion in Oman.

1956: Britain and France, along

with Israel, invade Egypt after President Nasser nationalises the Suez Canal shipping route. British forces bomb Alexandria, Cairo and Port Said. British troops crush rebellion in Bahrain.

1962: CIA organises coup in Iraq, marking the beginning of Saddam Hussein's rise to power.

1967: Israel attacks Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon in Six Day War, and seizes control of West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights, which it has occupied ever since.



Egypt's Nasser fought British

1982: Israel launches invasion of Lebanon. Ariel Sharon found "indirectly responsible" for massacre of 2,000 Palestinian refugees in camps in Beirut.

1983: US navy shells Lebanon.

1988: US warship in Gulf shoots down Iranian passenger plane, killing all 290 people on board.

1991: US-led forces slaughter over 100,000 Iraqi civilians and conscripts in Gulf War.

2003: US and Britain lead invasion of Iraq, which kills more than one million Iraqis.

Irish Anti War Movement

Revolutions in Egypt and the Arab World

Special Day School—Speakers will include: Wassim Wagdy (well known Egyptian activist)

Anne Alexander (writer on Egypt and the Middle East)

Session 1: The Egyptian Revolution

Session 2: Developments in Libya and the region

Saturday 12th March 3pm-7pm
Cassidy's Hotel, Cavendish Row, Upper O'Connell St Dublin

More details <http://irishantiwar.org>
087-6472737 or 087-988244

What is a Revolution?

By JOHN MOLYNEUX

‘THAWRA, THAWRA, hatt an-nasr!’

This chant, the Arabic for: ‘Revolution, revolution – until victory!’, has been heard repeatedly on the streets of Dublin in recent weeks.

It comes straight from Tahrir Square in Cairo and is one of many slogans from Egypt chanted outside the Egyptian Embassy and at the Spire in O’Connell St.

Groups of Egyptians, Libyans and others gathered in solidarity with various phases of the great wave of revolt that has swept North Africa and the Arab world.

As I write this article the fate of Libya hangs in the balance – by the time you read this article there is no way of knowing what will have happened right across the region.

But one thing is already clear: that anyone who wants to know what a revolution is need only look at events in Tunisia and Egypt.

Equally anyone who has ever read the great writers on revolution – Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg etc – has been able to see their words coming to life on the streets of Tunis, Cairo and Benghazi.

The Role of the Masses

“The most indubitable feature of a revolution is the direct interference of the masses in historic events.

“In ordinary times the state, be it monarchical or democratic, and history is made by specialists in that line of business – kings, ministers, bureaucrats...

“But at those crucial moments when the old order becomes no longer endurable to the masses, they break over the barriers excluding them from the political arena, sweep aside their traditional representatives and create by their own interference the initial groundwork for a new regime.”

These lines from what is the greatest account of a revolution ever written, Trotsky’s *History of the Russian Revolution*, stand as an exact description of what occurred in Egypt on 25 January and the 17 days that followed, culminating in the fall of Mubarak on 11 February.

“For revolution”, Lenin wrote, “it is essential, first, that a majority of the workers, or at least of the... politically active workers, should be willing to sacrifice their lives for it.”

As we know over three hundred people were martyred in the struggle against Mubarak’s cops and paid thugs ‘supporters’ but it was precisely this readiness to die that made victory in the battle of the streets possible.

“Secondly”, says Lenin, “the ruling class should be passing through a governmental crisis that draws even the most backward masses into politics – a symptom of every real revolution is a rapid, hundred-fold increase in the number of members of the toiling and oppressed masses – hitherto apathetic – who are capable of waging the political struggle.”

Again what an apt description of the gigantic popular mobilisations in Cairo, Suez, Alexandria and so on which continually reinforced the anti-Mubarak struggle and secured its triumph.

“Socialism must be created by the masses, must be made by every worker.

“Where the chains of capitalism are forged, there must they be broken!” declared Rosa Luxemburg in the midst of the



Tahrir (‘Freedom’) Square, Cairo, Egypt

German Revolution of 1918-19.

The chains of capitalism are forged in its work-places where workers are exploited and profits are made.

Therefore, Luxemburg argued, mass strikes play a crucial role in revolutions.

It is at work that working people are organised as collectives, have the greatest power of resistance, can most effectively inflict blows on the profits of the big companies that stand behind the government, and can challenge for control of the economy by occupations and the like.

In Tunisia the trade union federation, the UGTT, which had hitherto been ‘moderate’ and collaborationist, played a key role in mobilising the movement against Ben Ali.

In Egypt, it was when mass strikes and occupations started to gain momentum that Mubarak was finally forced out.

And since the fall of Mubarak the workers strike movement has been one of the main ways the revolution has continued and begun to enter a new stage.

All these quotations from Trotsky, Lenin and Luxemburg,

are developments of Marx’s fundamental principle that: “The emancipation of the working class must be conquered by the working class itself.”

And it is the demonstration in practice that the mass of ordinary people are indeed capable of this that is the principle lesson to be drawn from the Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions and the so far successful uprising in eastern Libya.

The Question of the State

‘Ash-sharb yireed iskuk an-nidam!’ (The people want to bring down the regime!) is another slogan that made the journey from Tahrir Sq to Dublin.

It reflected the understanding among the core of the movement that they needed to remove not only the person of Mubarak but also his whole system of rule, including the hated Emergency Law, the systematic torture and the equally hated Security Police.

This in turn found expression in the absolutely heroic struggle over several days and nights against the police which forced their withdrawal from the streets.

In other words the Egyptian masses came face to face with what Marx, Lenin (and all the other great Marxists) regarded as the central issue in any real people’s revolution – the question of the state.

In his key book *The State and Revolution*, Lenin, following Marx, argued:

1) the state i.e. the army, judiciary, police etc., does not represent, as it claims, ‘the nation’ but is an instrument of capitalist class rule;

2) the central aim of the workers’ struggle and of the revolution is the winning of state power; 3) the existing state machine cannot simply be taken over and used by the workers but has to be ‘smashed’ or ‘broken up’ and replaced by a new state apparatus geared to the workers’ needs i.e. a state based on workers’ councils.

The way this can be done, as the Russian Revolution and many subsequent revolutions have shown, is not through defeating the ruling class army in a set piece battle but by winning over the rank-and-file of the soldiers and breaking them from their officers in the course of the revolutionary struggles in

the streets.

On this question the Egyptian Revolution, and the Tunisian Revolution, went further than any other mass struggle of recent years, but nevertheless have, so far, stopped half way.

On the one hand there existed, among some of the masses, illusions in the neutrality and ‘decency’ of the army – despite the fact that the Generals had been hand in glove with Mubarak.

On the other hand the Egyptian Generals did not directly use the army against the protestors.

This enabled them to keep it intact until the movement had lost some of its momentum.

Consequently the state has held on and the revolution is not yet complete, but at the same time it is not yet over.

From Democratic to Socialist Revolution

The issue of the state is linked to the question of turning the democratic revolution into a socialist revolution.

Only if the movement is able to go beyond demands for democracy, necessary as those are, to challenging capitalism and the economic

power of the capitalist class, will the real needs of the mass of ordinary Egyptians be addressed.

The same applies to every other revolution in the modern world.

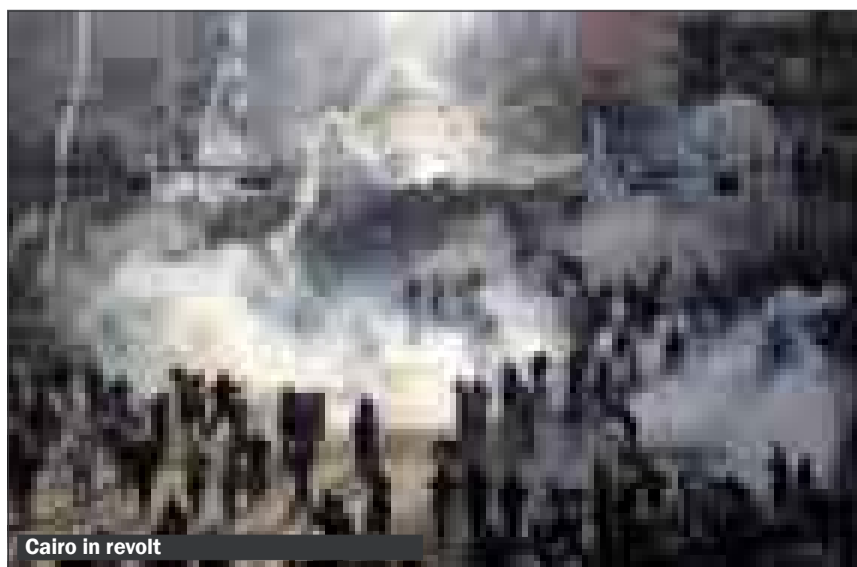
Inequality, poverty, exploitation, unemployment etc exist everywhere and are caused by international capitalism, not just individual dictators.

This in turn leads to the question of socialist organisation.

The Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions, like revolutions in general (the Paris Commune of 1871, the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Spanish Revolution of 1936, France 1968 and so on) began spontaneously, but they do not end spontaneously.

To unify and focus the power of the masses, to combat the power of capitalist ideas, and to defeat the highly centralised power of the capitalist state, the leadership of a revolutionary workers party is necessary.

Hopefully the magnificent struggle of the Arab masses of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen and the rest will aid building such revolutionary parties across the region and throughout the world, including here in Ireland.



Cairo in revolt



Fraternising with Tunisian soldier

100 Years of International Women's Day

By AÍNE DILLON

MARCH 8 is the 100 year anniversary of the first celebration of International Women's Day.

A day when women have taken to the streets to demand economic, social and political rights and a society based on real equality.

International Women's Day was born in a period of turbulence and crisis.

Women were entering paid industrial work in increasing numbers, initially mainly in textile mills and clothing factories.

While they experienced the same harsh conditions as male factory workers, they earned 50%

less. Low wages, long hours and poor working conditions inspired women workers to unionise and strike.

This industrial militancy, along with the demand for voting rights and a reaction against conservative Victorian sexual mores, was a powerful agent for change.

In 1908 in New York 30,000 women textile workers held a 13-week strike.

Under the slogan 'Bread and Roses', they demanded better pay and conditions, shorter working hours and the vote.

They inspired socialist women everywhere and at the 1910 International Conference of Socialist Women, Clara

Zetkin proposed an international day to advocate for women's rights.

The first International Working Women's Day was marked in 1911 in Austria, Germany, Denmark and Switzerland.

On February 23 1917, on their celebration of IWD, women workers in St Petersburg launched a strike for 'bread and peace'.

Already by noon that day 90,000 workers had followed the striking women and four days later 300 years of Romanov rule was ended during the 'February Revolution'.

When the Russian calendar changed from Julian to Gregorian, February 23 became March 8.



X-Factor or X-Case?

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S Day has taken many forms since its revolutionary origins.

The Russian strikers of 1917 would be horrified to see how 8 March there has become a cross between Valentine's Day and Mother's Day.

Members of the Irish Women's Liberation Movement, who defied church, state and society in 1971 when they brought condoms by train from Belfast, must shudder when they see how young Irish women buy into raunch culture – or how our 'sisters'

in the Dáil appear more concerned with the X Factor than the X case.

In Ireland today women earn 13% less than men, and falling wages and high childcare costs are pushing many out of paid employment altogether.

Irish women are still denied the right to choose to have an abortion and fewer than 7% of rapes reported result in a conviction.

But rather than focusing on what makes us miserable, as we mark 100 years of working women's struggles, we should celebrate the political, democratic, and sexual

freedoms that we have won and continue to build the fight against sexism and sexual and class oppression.

In 1917 Russian working women launched a movement for change that was to shake the foundation of capitalism.

Maybe today it will be the women of Egypt and Tunisia who will lead the way.

Further reading: www.siptu.ie has an informative booklet *One Hundred Years of Women's Struggles*, while www.irishtimes.com has a series called *40 years of change*; and Goretta Horgan has two fascinating articles on the International Socialism Journal site www.isj.org.uk on these issues: *Changing women's lives in Ireland* (Issue 91, 2001); and *How does globalisation affect women?* (Issue 92, 2001).



Abortion Rights for Irish Women

By SINEAD KENNEDY

THE RECENT decision by the European Court of Human Rights in the case of ABC v Ireland is a significant victory for Irish women.

The court ruled that Ireland's refusal to provide abortion services for a woman whose life was at risk after she unintentionally became pregnant was a breach of her human rights.

The court was also critical of the Irish government for its failure to legislate for abortion under the "existing constitution right".

The 1992 ruling by the Supreme Court (the 'X case') allows for abortion where there is a real or substantial risk to the life of a pregnant woman.

The ABC case involved three women living in Ireland who were forced to travel to the UK to access safe abortion services.

The women argued that the lack of abortion services in Ireland made the procedure unnecessarily expensive, complicated and traumatic.

In particular, they each felt that Ireland's restrictive abortion laws stigmatised and humiliated them and risked damaging their health and, in the third applicant's case, even her life.

The court only ruled in favour of the third woman, Ms C.

Daily Reality

The experiences of these three Irish women reveal something of the daily reality faced by thousands of Irish women who are forced to



travel abroad for abortions.

Since 1980 at least 140,000 women have been forced to travel to the UK and beyond to access safe abortion services.

Abortion is illegal in Ireland, North and South, in almost all circumstances, with potential punishment of 'penal servitude for life' for both patients and service providers, except where the pregnant woman's life is in danger.

Criminal prosecutions are unheard of while women continue to travel abroad.

However, there is little legal and policy guidance on when, specifically, an abortion might be legally performed within Ireland.

As a result, some doctors are reluctant even to provide prenatal screening for severe foetal abnormalities, and very few, if any, women have access to legal abortions here.

The government has repeatedly

refused to clarify the possible reach of the criminal penalties involved in procuring an abortion.

Throughout the last two decades, the Irish government has used injunctions to prevent individuals from traveling abroad for abortion.

As recently as 2007, a 17-year-old girl in the care of the Health Services Executive had to go to court to get permission to travel to Britain for an abortion.

Abortion is a reality for Irish women.

Ireland's abortion rate is comparable to other European countries where abortion is legal.

Yet its illegal nature in Ireland forces women to hide out of fear, shame or criminal prosecution.

Free and Legal

Opinion polls show that the majority of Irish people are in favour of more open abortion laws.

BOOK REVIEW

Fidel & Che: A revolutionary friendship

Simon Reid-Henry (2009) €10.99

Reviewed by Leah Speight

Indeed, Irish people have never been given the opportunity to vote in favour of abortion but in recent years, despite numerous attempts to further restrict abortion rights, have consistently voted against restrictions.

As socialists we argue that women should have the right to make an informed choice to have an abortion if they decide that is what is best in their situation.

In order to make this choice a reality, abortion should be free, legal and safe.

Abortions carried out early in pregnancy are at a very low risk but delays in accessing an abortion means more risks to the woman and international travel is an unacceptable obstacle.

Abortion services should be part of a full range of good quality reproductive health services.

The majority of women who choose to have an abortion do so not because their life is at risk.

Their reasons are different, complicated and unique to each woman.

Therefore only legislation that allows for free, safe and legal abortion can account for this diversity.

We need to begin the fight today for immediate legislation and for free, safe and legal abortion.

Political parties like the Labour Party who claim to support legislative change on abortion must be pressed to make good on their promises and make abortion legislation a core demand of any programme for government.

WITH UPRISINGS in the Middle East, many will analyse and compare past revolutions for insights.

Fidel & Che: A revolutionary friendship, although it gives some insight into the Cuban revolution does not give enough detail to fully understand that period.

It was not until the 1980's that serious biographies of Castro began to emerge, and in the mid 1990's many works on Guevara followed.

According to the author, this is the first book that uses many archived sources to put together their story.

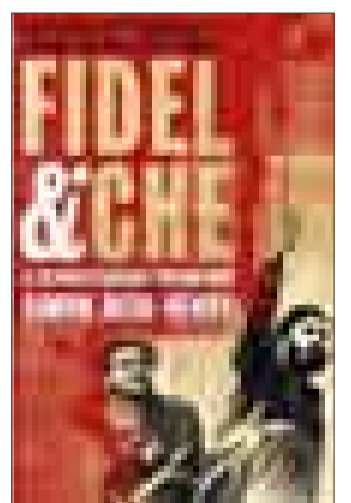
Reid-Henry's objective of writing the book was to give an understanding of what he believes to be the most important friendship of the twentieth century.

To him their friendship was as relevant as Marx and Engels, and Trotsky with Lenin.

Their relationship differs from other political double acts as it was lived out during just a few short intense years.

An early detailed account of both of their lives helps to understand their different personalities

At first Fidel appears to be the more interesting of the two with his



early political activism.

However as their lives unfold, Guevara who is introvert and quiet, emerges as the most fascinating character.

After reading I did not come away thinking they were quite the Marx and Engels.

The book does bring to life the danger and intense emotions of a revolutionary period.

But to really acquire knowledge of the Cuban revolution or South American politics a deeper political and less biographical context is required.

A good introduction is Mike Gonzalez book: *Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution*.

Socialist Worker

PHONY WAR ON CUTS...

JOIN THE REAL RESISTANCE



By EAMONN MCCANN

THE BITTER wrangling over the Stormont budget is – like the budget itself – phony.

The DUP and Sinn Fein have been attacking Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and SDLP Ministers for failing to propose cuts in spending plans in line with the money allocated to them by DUP

Finance Minister Sammy Wilson.

Wilson says that the cuts – totalling £4 billion over four years – in the block grant from London mean all departments have to cut back proportionately.

UUP Health Minister Michael McGimpsey has been particularly vocal in arguing that the cuts being asked of him would ravage the health service

and that he won't accept them.

Peter Robinson and Martin McGuinness have accused him of 'playing politics' and demanded that he produce his cut-back proposals in time to pass a budget by March 25th – when the current Assembly's term expires.

Both the UUP and the SDLP are now hinting that they might go into opposition in the Assembly to be elected

on May 5th.

This would enable them to stand as 'anti-cuts' parties.

In fact, three percent year-on-year 'efficiency savings', in other words cuts, have been under way since 2008.

These cuts have had devastating effects, for example on domiciliary care for the elderly, without a whimper of protest from either party.

There is good reason to believe that the spending plans announced by the DUP/SF for their own ministries are fraudulent anyway.

An analysis of the draft budget by Pricewaterhouse Cooper (PwC) – the Executive's own favourite consultants – says bluntly that: "The Budget may not be deliverable in its current form."

PwC chief economist Esmond Birnie (and UUP member) described the plans as: "a patchwork of unaligned spending proposals".

The bizarre structure of the Stormont administration means that each government department is effectively independent.

Each has its own approach to designing spending plans.

So, as PwC noted, the Departments' plans cannot be measured against each other or related to any overall plan.

It is thus impossible to say with any clarity what cuts in jobs and services will follow from the budget in any area.

All of the parties hope to make it through the election campaign arguing fiercely amongst themselves about cuts but hiding the extent of the cuts to come in all Departments.

They will all be back in office – so they hope – by the time the full extent of the misery to be inflicted on workers and working class communities becomes clear.

The only strategy which makes sense in this situation is to organise to resist the new and deeper cuts when they come.

This will be the focus of the SWP and others involved in the People Before Profit Alliance over the coming weeks and into the election campaign.

The challenge of People Before Profit

THERE IS a crying need for an effective Opposition at Stormont.

But neither the SDLP nor the Ulster Unionists is likely to provide it.

Socialists have argued since the Good Friday Agreement was signed in April 1998 that the system would produce neither political stability nor any loosening of the hold of sectarianism.

The Executive parties hold their positions as representatives of either the Unionist or Nationalist communities.

So there is no shared programme or common political or ideological perspective.

The system is dysfunctional in practice because its *raison d'être* is to accommodate the sectarian division, giving each side its 'own' Ministries.

What's needed is an opposition based on the very different perspective of representing the people in the bottom half of society, irrespective of the community they come from.

That is, an opposition based on class rather than community – a direct challenge to the communal parties.

Seats in the Assembly would be used, by an opposition of this sort, primarily to amplify the voices of those fighting back against the cuts and to encourage and give weight to grass-roots organisation.

People Before Profit hopes to take up this opposition role following the May election.



Robinson, Wilson and McGuinness