

Editorial: Race for the Future

The battle to repeal the 8th Amendment to the Constitution, which equates the life of a foetus with the life of a woman and thus prevents any progress towards a woman's right to choose, is a key issue in Irish political life at the moment.

But for all its importance - and winning it is clearly vital - it remains an episode in two interconnected wider struggles: the struggle for women's equality and liberation and the struggle to free Irish society from its domination by the deeply conservative and rotten hierarchy of the Catholic Church.

The role of the Catholic Church in the Irish State in the 20th Century was almost unique and certainly highly unusual. Its grip on the Government, on education, health services, social services, the media, charities and so on, and through these institutions on the minds of a large proportion of the people was close to unparalleled in the modern world. And as is now well known this near absolute power led to countless abuses and cruelties, especially on women and children of the working class and the poor as well as to a general conservatism in the society.

It is a fact of the greatest social and political significance that this unfettered power has now been enormously weakened but, of course, it has not gone away, and battle to eliminate it continues. In our lead article Kieran Allen records and explains the historical circumstances that enabled the Church to establish this dominant position and those that undermined it, arguing that the time has come for a definitive separation of Church and State.

For some time now the *Irish Marxist Review* has argued that one of the main features of contemporary capitalism is political polarisation to both the right and the left. This process is rooted in the underlying crisis of late capitalism, conditioned by the declining rate of profit, and is based on the deep anger and disaffection caused by the

economic crash of 2007-8 and years of neoliberal austerity which followed and which have generated so much inequality and poverty for the many while protecting the wealth of the few.

This situation has created a race for the future between the racist right and the radical left as to who will most successfully articulate and harness this mass anger. At the moment the process is very uneven between different countries, with the right in the lead in some (eg France and Hungary) and the left making more gains in others (Ireland and now, surprisingly, Britain). But so far neither side has won a decisive victory, such as that of Hitler in 1933, and there is everything to fight for.

The establishment hope that what they call 'the moderate centre', and that the left have taken, after Tariq Ali, to calling 'the extreme centre', will be able hold. But it is evidently weakened and in the long run this is extremely unlikely, especially with the threat of climate catastrophe looming. This means that the race for the future is indeed a struggle for the future of humanity.

This issue of IMR addresses a number of aspects of this polarised race. In a Letter from Britain Sheila McGregor give a detailed and vivid account of the recent British election and the spectacular campaign waged by Jeremy Corbyn. Séamus O'Kane charts the disturbing rise of the French Front National which has emerged as the most successful fascist party in Europe since World War 2. This is accompanied by a report from Catherine Curran Vigier on the recent election campaigns of the French Corbyn, namely Jean-Luc Mélenchon, and in the process highlights some of the dilemmas and difficulties of the French left. To this Dave O'Farrell adds an analysis of Donald Trump's first volatile five months.

One of Trump's most heinous and significant actions has been the withdrawal of

the US from the Paris Climate Accords thus ensuring that the world's biggest economy makes a further contribution to what in the end is likely to prove a decaying capitalism's most fundamental threat to humanity. Fiona Boyd's article provides data reminding us just how serious and damaging this threat already is.

In this rich and diverse issue Sean Carroll provides a careful and balanced, but critical, analysis of the thorny question of identity politics which has been a considerable source of conflict on the left. We also carry an important interview by Memet Uludag of Syrian Revolutionary, Ghayath Naisse which is a necessary counterblast to those on the left - in Ireland and elsewhere - who claim that anyone on the left who protests the brutal regime of Assad or the bombing of Syria by Putin's Russia or defends the Syrian Revolution is simply getting their information from the Western media. Plus we have from Ciáran O'Rourke an account of the fight for BDS in Trinity.

Finally we have a number of useful book reviews. Tommy McKearney gives a warm welcome to Seán Mitchell's powerful study of working class unity in the Belfast Outdoor Relief Riots in his new book *Struggle or Starve*. Marnie Holborow and Nikos Lountos review two books, by Yanis Varoufakis and Helena Sheehan respectively, which reflect on the Syriza defeat in Greece. As Corbyn, Mélenchon, Sanders, and Podemos challenge for power critical analysis of Syriza's capitulation is vital but has been in short supply from most of those who gave Syriza enthusiastic support. Barney Doherty and Paul O'Brien look at two just published books that mark, in different ways, the centenary of the Russian Revolution, namely the editor of this journal's *Lenin For Today* and Dave Sherry's *Russia 1917* and Sean Egan recommends Joseph Choonara's *Unravelling Capitalism* as a fine introduction to Marxist economics.

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