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Forward to a new decade

Eugene McCartan on the struggle to rebuild in the new decade *page 2*



“... We are going to maintain the military bases necessary for the complete protection of our interests and of world peace. Bases which our military experts deem to be essential for our protection, and which are not now in our possession, we will acquire.”—**Harry Truman** (president of the United States), radio broadcast, 9 August 1945.

Pictured above as a First World War artilleryman

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43 East Essex Street
Dublin D02 XH96
(01) 6708707

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THE NEW DECADE



AS WE ENTER a new decade, the real living conditions of working people continue to decline; profits are up, which means exploitation is intensifying; large numbers of working families rely on family income supplement—the state’s subsidy on behalf of low-pay employers—to survive.

One in ten workers earns only the national minimum wage (€9.80 per hour, going up to €10.10 per hour in February). Nearly a quarter earn less than the “living wage” (€11.90 per hour).

The exploitation of workers, and disproportionately part-time, immigrant, female and young workers, is most intense in the accommodation industry. Food service workers experience the lowest average hourly earnings (€12.70), as this is the least unionised sector,

followed by those in the arts, entertainment, recreation, and other services (€16.71). There is also a trend towards low pay in the public sector.

While within the European Union in general the unemployment rate has dropped, this masks a growing level of poverty, particularly among low-paid workers. Governments took full advantage of the economic crisis to roll back hard-won social gains, while “social safety nets” were attacked and have subsequently not kept pace with the cost of living and new employment structures. There are growing signs of a new crisis within the capitalist system.

In the EU in 2017, 9½ per cent of workers lived in a household that was at risk of poverty (earning less than 60 per cent of the national median income). The

capitalism in a series of policy changes that have resulted in the balance of power being almost entirely on the side of capital and away from workers.

The main weapon used is business. Capitalism has now reached its highest form, imperialism, as Lenin predicted. A small number of transnational corporations control the world economy. This gives them tremendous influence and the power to control government policy. They can stimulate or decimate the economy of a country or region at will.

Their influence over economic policy has led to a raft of anti-worker legislation, such as the Industrial Relations Act (1990) in Ireland and similar legislation all round the capitalist world, designed to restrict and control workers and trade unions.

All these anti-worker laws must be abolished in order to return power to

situation for workers in the United States is even more precarious, with a quarter earning less than two-thirds of the country’s median earnings in 2017, and 18 per cent of the people at risk of poverty in 2018, despite an official unemployment rate of only 4 per cent that year. Some estimates put a figure of \$6 billion paid in government food assistance to workers who are in full-time employment.

Britain claims to have virtually full employment; but after decades of austerity policies by both Conservative and Labour governments the incidence of rough sleeping rose by 165 per cent between 2010 and 2018, and the country has 2,000 food banks—compared with 29 before the latest crisis. The minimum wage is insufficient, as it is usually set at a rate to support one person, not enough to support a single-wage family. It is designed to support someone with a full-time job, and in today’s world of work such jobs are diminishing.

In Spain, 91 per cent of employment contracts in the first half of 2018 were temporary, with 38 per cent lasting less than one month. In the United States, half of all new jobs created were eliminated within the first year.

In the EU, 16 per cent of those on temporary contracts and 15½ per cent of

workers and give them the weapons needed for fighting back against inequality and injustice.

State-owned businesses have been privatised, public services have been slashed, and taxes on workers have increased. Where workers are regulated, business has been deregulated. Where profits have soared, wages have collapsed. Where services were privatised they were stripped back to maximise profits, a life of luxury for the new owners and hospital trolleys and waiting-lists for the users.

This is how capitalism works: more profits means a reduced cost of labour and resources, or, in the words of the Government, we have to become “more competitive”: that means reducing costs, wages, and of course taxes on business.

These changes went into overdrive after the defeat of the Soviet Union, as

The time has come

JIMMY DORAN

THE WORKING CLASS is under attack in a class war that we are losing. There was a time when one average worker could earn enough to provide a family with the basic necessities of food and shelter and a few luxuries. This, of course, did not come easy: the pay and conditions necessary for achieving this were fought hard for by workers and their unions over many long years of struggle. The ruling class was forced to compromise, and some gains were made.

For the past forty years these gains have been under sustained attack by

In the EU in 2017, 9½ per cent of workers lived in a household that was at risk of poverty (earning less than 60 per cent of the national median income).

those in part-time employment are among the working poor. So much for “social Europe”!

A recent report revealed that the self-employed are at even higher risk, with 22 per cent in working poverty. Many are “independent contractors,” which is often a way for companies to use their workers without having to put them on the books as employees and having to provide the accompanying benefits (sickness, holiday pay, or pensions).

In Ireland, one in five renters is spending 40 per cent of their income on rent, one in ten is spending 60 per cent, and one in twenty is spending 75 per cent.

12½ per cent of the population of the 26 Counties, or 611,982 people, were living in substandard conditions in 2017. In Greece, where EU-imposed austerity has devastated working people, they can spend up to 72 per cent of monthly income on housing.

The cost of child care for working parents in Ireland is over a fifth of their monthly net pay—four times the proportion paid by families in Sweden.

Financially, the level of difficulty in making ends meet is still higher in Ireland, as well as in Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Slovakia, and Spain, than it was before the economic crisis in 2007. Simply put, there are too many weeks in

capitalism didn't have to compete any more with the socialist world.

For working families to survive, both parents now have to work, often in multiple jobs, so as to provide food and shelter for the family. Ordinary working people have little interest in the accumulation of vast sums of money or wealth: all they want is a happy, healthy life for themselves, their families and communities, with a bit of leisure time.

Capitalism, on the other hand, has one obsession: the accumulation and control of all the wealth and resources of the world.

As a result of the bosses taking more and more from the wealth created by workers, we have now got to a stage where even two workers' wages can no longer support a family. Poverty wages, high rents, increased taxes and the slashing of public services in housing, health, education and transport have

the month for the wage to cover.

We need a more radical trade union response to the growing exploitation of workers. The old ways of doing things have clearly failed. The movement must become more radical or become even more redundant in the eyes of hundreds of thousands of workers.

What is clearly needed is to organise the majority of workers who are unorganised and to reorganise those already organised. We need to abandon the “service model” of how workers are now organised and rebuild grass-roots organising. It has been done in the past; and life teaches us that there are no solutions to the problems workers face without being better organised than the bosses.

The first step would be the repeal of all anti-worker laws in the whole country. In the 26 Counties this requires the repeal of the Industrial Relations Act (1990). Workers must have the right to join a union, and have that right recognised by their bosses, in that a union must be allowed to represent its members against their bosses.

We need to build a vibrant Workers' Rights Campaign throughout the trade union movement and among the unorganised. Low pay and poor terms and working conditions undermine all workers and only strengthen the hands

made it impossible for workers to survive as they used to without accumulating debt. This is unsustainable.

Just as capitalism has destroyed the planet and we now face a catastrophic tipping-point in our climate, workers and their families have reached an economic tipping-point as a result of capitalism, where our ability to provide the basic requirements of life is becoming impossible.

The time has come to fight back, to tip the balance of power towards the majority of people, the working class, and not a tiny elite. Our best weapon is the trade union movement, which has won so many gains for the working class in the past.

Only the organised working class has the strength and the numbers to lead this battle to save our people and our planet from the greed of capitalism. A change of government will make no

both of private employers and of the state as an employer.

Around the world we see tens of millions of workers mobilising to change their material conditions—in Chile, Lebanon, Iraq, France, India, Britain, and Ireland. Workers have had enough of the decades of austerity. But so far we have not been able to provide a clear path to the destination where these struggles need to go.

As the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci wrote, “the crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.” This is very appropriate to the situation being experienced today not only here in Ireland but throughout the capitalist world.

The capitalist system has passed its historical sell-by date. It is poisoning our planet and poisoning human relations by promoting fascism, racism, sexism, and homophobia.

Make the next decade a decade of rebuilding and the rebirth of a more militant working-class movement, a more militant and thereby more relevant trade union movement, and a stronger and more militant world communist movement.

And we start at home by building a stronger Communist Party of Ireland. ★

difference: we have to change the system. We need a people's government, whereby all decisions are in the interest of all the citizens, not the global corporations.

Private health only benefits a small number of people who can afford it and an even smaller number of people who make all the profits from it. On the other hand, public health benefits everyone. The same goes for housing, education—the entire economy in fact: an economy for the common good, owned, controlled and managed in the interest of all.

Who needs twenty brands of sausages or fifty types of perfume when there are ten thousand homeless, a million on hospital waiting-lists, and so many people living in poverty? Economics has to change by making people and the planet the priority, not the accumulation of wealth by a tiny elite. ★



The unavoidable question of the European Union

NICOLA LAWLOR

Socialist Voice has arguably been the most unwavering of English-language socialist periodicals in its analysis and exposition of the EU as an inter-state structure of monopoly capital, under German hegemony.

IN THE DECEMBER issue Eugene McCartan outlined the role played by the EU, and in particular Germany, in burdening working people and families in Ireland with 42 per cent of all European banking debt during the crisis, for which we are still paying today. That article also highlighted the “fiscal brakes” the European Union applies from the European Fiscal Compact, which leave public services in Ireland permanently under-funded and are a further set of handcuffs, leg-cuffs, straitjacket and gag on any Government elected in Ireland, whether progressive or not.

This is a further reminder—as if we needed it (but sometimes it feels that some “leftists” do)—of why the question of the European Union is unavoidable to anyone with an ambition to strive for a socialist Ireland and a socialist world.

The actually existing European Union

When dealing with the question of the EU it is important to look at what it actually is, not what its propaganda (of which there is no short supply) says it is, or—what is more common on the left—people want it to be.

The European Union is a set of inter-state institutions designed to legally maximise the freedom of movement of capital, goods, services, and labour. It is the embodiment of capitalist reproduction and accumulation, monopoly-finance capitalism in more recent times (M–C–M' and M–M', in Marx's terms). These four freedoms are freedoms for capitalism to maximise profits and reproduce itself. They are embedded and backed up by many treaties (Maastricht, Rome, Lisbon, and the Fiscal Compact). They are extended and imposed by legislation from the unelected EU Commission and given force by the Council of Ministers (indirectly elected, that is, elected or appointed in their own member-state).

These laws are interpreted and applied by the—again unelected—European Court of Justice, and take priority in most areas over domestic law. Its foreign policy and its pooled army are unaccountable to people.

To rebuild and secure a position in the new world order (US and USSR) after the Second World War, Germany and France, underpinned by US financial and military support, were willing to cede some sovereignty in order to create these institutions over time. States that join the EU, or single market, cede some sovereignty; but the bigger the state the less it has to cede.

So for Germany, it essentially was willing to cede some sovereignty in return for having hegemony over Europe, a Europe that was strong enough to be part of what Samir Amin calls the triad of imperialism: the United States, the European Union, and Japan.

To suggest that it is somehow possible to reform such an institution, to rewrite the treaties and create a democratic legal and executive structure over a different and dispersed grouping of peoples living in extremely uneven economic and political conditions, is utopian in the extreme. To seek to redefine the single market, customs union and economic

We are in the midst of a system crisis on many levels: environmental, political, ideological, and economic.

and monetary union to take due consideration of uneven development and the creditor-debtor dynamic of economies in Europe is naïve beyond belief.

It is far more practical and more achievable to recognise the EU for what it actually is and to accept that breaking up the EU is actually a better route towards building socialism throughout the world than seeking to reform it towards socialism.

A transformative strategy for socialism

The Communist Party has called for, and integrated in its work, a strategic transformative approach to fighting for socialism. This can be loosely described as making demands on such issues as water (constitutional amendment) and housing (build public housing), which seek to expose the contradictions between the popular demand or right and the capitalist system, the state, and the EU.

In addition, transformative demands should seek to rebalance power towards labour and working people and away from capital and its cronies. In that sense they are not merely reforms: they are, if you will, “revolutionary reforms,” which lead on to a path to socialism rather than a nicer capitalism.

So in the area of workers’ rights, rather than calling for an increase in the minimum wage of, say, €2—which is good but doesn’t rebalance power—we call for repeal of the Industrial Relations Act (1990) and for the right of access to organise workers. The former is a quantitative change; the latter is a qualitative change.

Pursuing this strategy, an actual strategy of moving towards socialism, will inevitably bring any government into conflict with both the Irish state and the EU and its laws and courts. It will inevitably break EU fiscal, monetary and competition laws, to name a few. Truly tackling climate change means challenging corporate activity and power in a way that EU laws simply will not allow.

We must be honest and open about this strategy. It does not mean calling for Ireland to leave the EU, as we have to be conscious of the subjective conditions that exist and the general levels of political class-consciousness, which are

extremely low at the present time in Ireland. But a demand for nationalisation or public investment, for example, should make clear the conflict with the EU and the possibility that leaving it will be required in order to implement a programme of rights and welfare for the people of Ireland. This places an exit from the EU in a very real context and for real popular reasons, as opposed to an abstract and unpopular demand in and of itself.

The long revolution and internationalism

We are in the midst of a system crisis on many levels: environmental, political, ideological, and economic. Yet capitalism persists and will continue down its path of horror and destruction, leaving our children and grandchildren in a very real dystopia. Samir Amin has pointed to the global south as the weak link in the chain of imperialism, to paraphrase Lenin; and he suggests that workers in the global north need to give priority to solidarity and support for a revolution in the global south against imperialism and environmental destruction, as they face the harshest and most extreme consequences of actions emanating from here.

We need to fight against the Irish state and the EU in their destructive actions against the global south and people here. A continuation of capitalism in the global north, in whatever form (social-democratic, neo-liberal, or neo-fascist), will continue to do harm to the people in the global south.

This is going to be a long revolution, which, because of uneven development, will have stops and starts and bursts in different parts of the world at different times. We need to be prepared to support and build alliances with workers, the poor and oppressed all over the world in our common struggle, even if sometimes we cannot understand or see the full facts.

The long revolution will not always be clear and clean—just like our own history—but we must be part of it or else we obstruct it. The system crisis demands a united international response that leads us on a path to socialism, which inevitably means the breaking up of the EU. ★



The blood of thousands is on their hands

Statement by the Communist Party of Ireland
4 January 2020

THE COMMUNIST PARTY of Ireland expresses its solidarity with the working people of both Iraq and Iran at this extremely critical moment in the life of their nations.

The actions of US imperialism in the Middle East and most recently in Iraq are driving the world to the brink of a possible global nuclear conflict with the murder of General Soleimani in Baghdad. For nearly two centuries the imperial powers, including the United States, Britain, France, and Germany, have given the world nothing but continuous wars, genocide, and barbarism. It is time to end imperialism’s reign of terror.

The silence of the Irish government on the murder of Soleimani by the US regime is not surprising. No doubt some of the thousands of extra troops sent by the US regime to the Middle East that have passed, and are now passing, through Shannon Airport will leave a few dollars in their greasy tills.

Ireland’s neutrality has been completely undermined by the Irish ruling class and its slavish crony media. All the establishment parties, including Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil, the Labour Party, and the Green Party, have supported the use of Shannon Airport by the US military, thereby contributing to the undermining of neutrality, and by their actions have supported US and NATO wars. The blood of thousands of women, men and children killed by US and NATO forces in the many illegal wars in the Middle East is on their hands. ★



What type of united Ireland do they want?

TOMMY MCKEARNEY

WE ARE RARELY forced to agree with Leo Varadkar, but it is difficult to find fault with his observation that the political tectonic plates in Northern Ireland are shifting. In the light of recent general election results, it is safe to say that not only is unionism's majority eroding but its once-solid political monolith is fracturing. In a region long known for "not an inch" politics, these are important changes.

Not only did nationalists and unionists win an equal number of seats in the British House of Commons but three of Belfast's four constituencies returned non-unionist MPs. No matter how this is spun, losing control of Ulster unionism's birthplace is hugely significant. Moreover, when a strong DUP candidate lost the overwhelmingly unionist North Down constituency to Alliance, a new chapter was being written. Unionist hegemony is diminishing as divisions emerge between intractable hardliners and a more pragmatic element amenable to negotiation.

Of course in the flawed British first-past-the-post electoral system, results can sometimes be deceptive. Unionism, after all, still retains an overall majority in the Six Counties, and will continue to do so for some time. Nevertheless the latest election shows an inexorable trend, demanding measured evaluation.

Whoever else may be indifferent to a

Nationalism: Progressive or reactionary?

DÓNALL Ó BRIAIN

THE FIRST requirement in a debate is that everyone agree on the meaning of the words they use; otherwise the exercise is pointless and can only generate more heat than light.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the debates about nationalism. Is nationalism a progressive or a reactionary ideology? Was Connolly a nationalist? Is the CPI nationalist? Or are there different kinds of nationalism,

according to particular circumstances? Various distinctions are made in order to justify one point or another, and frequently according to whether the agenda is to defend Connolly (or the CPI) or to undermine them.

If we attempt to define this term by reference to various authorities, all we discover is more confusion. One thing we might do is go back to the beginning and try to detect a pattern.

The first interesting thing we discover is that the term "nationalism" is not very

old: in fact it dates only from the middle of the nineteenth century, when it was used as a synonym for patriotism. The second interesting discovery is that at first it was applied mainly to Ireland.

About the year 1885 the British press began to apply the term "nationalism" to the Irish Party (the loose grouping of Irish members of the British Parliament who, in one way or another, supported the demand for what was called "home rule") and especially to the policies of Charles Stewart Parnell, its most

The British ruling class has made it clear in word and deed that it has little or no interest in maintaining its present relationship with Northern Ireland

new reality on the ground, we can be sure that the ruling class in Ireland and Britain most certainly are not. We can also be certain that they are already planning for that eventuality, and are undoubtedly co-operating closely on the project.

Britain's and Ireland's ruling classes share one overriding ambition, and that is to retain their power, influence, and wealth. Whatever other differences they may have are set aside if or when their authority is vulnerable to challenge. Rapid or unmanaged change to the constitutional position in Ireland is viewed as a major threat to the status quo. From their point of view, the risk of violence is disturbing but comes second to their determination to remain in control.

So, as the outcome of the count became clear, the establishment north and south responded. Initial reaction was to divert attention from the constitutional issue with calls for the restoration of devolved institutions at Stormont. By way of adding authenticity to these calls, Julian Smith, secretary of state for Northern Ireland, claimed that a working Assembly and Executive were needed to address the dire state of the North's health service. With the Royal College of Nursing planning the first strike in its history, this Tory MP seemed to have a point.

His case would have been more convincing, though, had it not been that a few months earlier the British

Parliament had ignored the Stormont Assembly and passed legislation dealing with abortion and same-sex marriage.

However, it wasn't long before the national question re-emerged. On this occasion, however, it had an added dimension, in that hard-line unionism feared not only the removal of partition but also the imposition of customs clearance regulations in the Irish Sea. The air was soon filled with talk of border polls and the break-up of the United Kingdom.

And at that point a wide range of Irish conservatism also stood up to be heard, decrying any notion of even addressing the central constitutional issue.

The list of nay-sayers is impressive. In spite of feeling the "tectonic plates," Varadkar dismissed the notion of unity as divisive. He was joined shortly thereafter by his old colleague in the austerity coalition Éamon Ryan of the Green Party. Colin Eastwood of the SDLP has already reserved a special place in Hell for such talk. Not to be outdone either were the two Martins, Micheál of Fianna Fáil and Éamon, Roman Catholic archbishop of Armagh, joining the do-nothing chorus.

The establishment here and in Britain can, nevertheless, only stall this process for so long but not indefinitely. The British ruling class has made it clear in word and deed that it has little or no interest in maintaining its present relationship with Northern Ireland. As a political entity, the North is in permanent deadlock, while economically the area is

floundering. Compounding all this is inescapable evidence of changing demographics. All of which makes change inevitable.

The issue will then become one of what type of united Ireland will emerge. We know what the right-wing establishment north and south want, and it will be an Ireland offering little benefit to working people. Unity will be presented by Irish capitalism as a wonderland where we are embedded within the European Union, enthusiastic participants in NATO, and host (or in reality hostage) to a phalanx of American transnational corporations and international financiers.

To ensure that we are not presented with such a *fait accompli*, the left must rise to the challenge and recognise this as an issue we cannot afford to ignore and a reality that will not go away. It is imperative that this question is not abandoned to conservatives and pro-imperialist free-marketeers.

With support from socialist republicans and communists, the Peadar O'Donnell Socialist Republican Forum is organising a Left for Unity campaign that aims to highlight these issues and assist in the work towards achieving the goal of a workers' republic. The campaign welcomes support and contributions from throughout the left. Our opponents are prepared, and so must we be. ★



Peadar O'Donnell Socialist Republican Forum

prominent and in many ways its most progressive member. It meant essentially those who wanted national independence—in some form or other—for Ireland.

The term proved useful and came to be widely used; but gradually the meaning began to drift—something that constantly happens with words. In particular, it began to be applied not only to those who simply wanted national independence for their own country but also to those who claimed that their country was superior to others—what was originally known as chauvinism—and so to justify their dominion over other countries. This was particularly

noticeable in relation to England and even more so, later, to the US.

This usage reached its peak in the middle of the twentieth century, when national pride and feelings of superiority were combined with—and used as a justification for—German fascism.

The result is that there are now two distinct phenomena that go under the name "nationalism"; and attempts to separate them would seem to be impossible. Worse still is the deliberate use made today of this confusion by those whose agenda is to undermine demands by colonial and neo-colonial countries for their national independence. This finds expression in

such phrases as "Look at what nationalism did in the twentieth century," in which an attempt is made to equate the demand for national independence in (say) Ireland with German fascism. This and similar expressions are a commonplace today among the media and the academic establishment, and have even found their way into schoolbooks.

What can we conclude? A term that is used for completely distinct phenomena is simply no longer usable. Writers and speakers cannot simply claim that their particular usage is the correct one but must find other ways of expressing themselves. ★

Rehearsing a possible war against Russia

NIALL FARRELL

LAST MONTH the US government announced that its military budget for 2020 will be a colossal \$738 billion.

The US military is one of the largest polluters in history, consuming more liquid fuels and emitting more climate-changing gases than most medium-sized countries. But only a minority of environmental campaigns or peace groups focus on war and militarism.

This horrendous pollutant is simply exempt from climate treaties, such as Kyoto. Ignored by governments and NGOs, it won't be ignored by the environment and the climate. How could it be? As Judith Deutsch writes in a recent article on "Counterpunch," "the B-52H Bomber holds 47,975 gallons of fuel and still requires mid-air refueling. The F-15 [fighter plane] uses 25 gallons/minute or 1580 gallons/hour."

NATO's summit declaration in London on 4 December announced a review of its war capabilities but also mentioned, for the first time in an official document, "China's growing influence and international policy." The language towards China is more cautious than towards Russia. But both the reorientation of NATO and China's growing power are expressions of historical upheavals.

The coming decade will see dramatic change. China's economic output will surpass that of the United States. In many technical areas China is already the vanguard. In media interviews NATO's secretary-general, Jens Stoltenberg, did not state that China is the enemy, but it soon will be.

However, when it comes to military spending, China's military budget is estimated at \$250 billion, Russia's at \$60 billion. While huge, these remain significantly less than NATO's expenditure of \$1 trillion.

As the following table shows, the



No limit to servility

AISLING JOYCE

THERE APPEARS to be simply no depth to which the establishment will not sink to show what faithful servants they are to imperialism and in particular to British imperialism.

The Irish people endured centuries of colonial and imperialist domination. They endured mass starvation, violent oppression, the destruction of our

language and culture; but we continued to resist. We also experienced those Irish who collaborated with our oppressors, and dealt with them accordingly.

The latest quisling approach by the Fine Gael government is the intention, for the first time, to hold a commemoration on 17 January for those members of the Royal Irish Constabulary and the Dublin Metropolitan Police who were killed in our War of Independence defending the British empire.

The minister for justice, Charlie Flanagan, stated that the reason for this commemoration was that "they

were doing what police officers do. As they saw it, they were protecting communities from harm. They were maintaining the rule of law"—thus presenting the war for our country's independence as some sort of minor squabble and the actions of a small disgruntled group.

Who were the collaborators who made up the RIC and DMP? What were they protecting the people from? Whose laws were they upholding?

During the War of Independence, Ireland was under martial law, with summary executions of both ordinary citizens and those who had taken up arms against British occupation. The

NATO needs a bogeyman to justify its militarisation, and Putin is at present the culprit



EU too is embracing militarism with gusto; and Ireland has agreed to contribute up to 2 per cent of its GDP yearly—that's €6 billion!—through its membership of PESCO.

2004–06: €65 million
2014–20: €6,585 million
2021–27: €43,995 million

NATO needs a bogeyman to justify its militarisation, and Putin is at present the culprit. Russia's retaking of the Crimea is the great crime. No reference is made to the \$5 billion invested by the CIA in carrying out a fascist coup in Ukraine; forgotten is how the West broke the agreement made between Reagan and Gorbachev that after German unification NATO would not expand east of the old GDR borders.

Nothing less than Russia's total surrender will satisfy the NATO powers. Conciliation will not suffice. It was therefore wise, for strategic and historical reasons, for Moscow to reclaim Crimea. Besides, it is overwhelmingly Russian.

With sycophantic Western media, NATO doesn't need to justify the recent manoeuvres in Poland and neighbouring states, nor the naval exercises in the Baltic, nor the stationing of US and German tank battalions permanently in Lithuania.

And as we prepare for the 75th anniversary of the defeat of German

fascism by the Red Army and its allies on 8 May, don't expect a journalistic eyebrow in the West to be raised at NATO's manoeuvre "Defender 2020," which will see 38,000 soldiers and their equipment congregate on Russia's border.

While this is officially a US exercise, NATO states are rehearsing the march towards a possible joint war against Russia. Soldiers from a total of eighteen countries are actively involved. The preparations have long been under way, and the first troop movements are expected in February.

20,000 American soldiers will receive war material from four special warehouses: in the Netherlands, in Belgium, and two in Germany. These warehouses contain tanks, howitzers and armoured troop transporters—in total, 13,000 pieces of equipment, which are to move eastwards towards the Russian border.

Rest assured that Shannon and Aldergrove airports will play their part.

Its impact on international relations can only be detrimental. And the moving of a massive war machine across Europe will inevitably have devastating consequences for the climate.

It is essential that we seek to prevent Ireland being involved in these catastrophic developments. ★

LEFT: PESCO in preparation: Coming soon to a street near you

Irish people had no "rights" to be protected. After the appointment of Field-Marshal John French as governor-general in May 1918 our people experienced a new level of barbarity and oppression, inflicted on them by a new type of military administration in Ireland.

As a recent letter by Dr Brian Murphy to the national papers put it: "Following a proclamation of Lord French, on May 16th, 1918, the police were responsible for arresting and imprisoning without trial hundreds of Sinn Féin activists and sympathisers . . . Lord Wimborne, the former lord lieutenant wrote in the *Times* of

London, on May 25th, 1919, that: 'popular leaders were incarcerated and a military regime was established.'"

The RIC was an integral part of the British state's oppressive apparatus. In the first Dáil Éireann on 10 April 1919 it was reported that the RIC "are no ordinary civil force, as in other countries. The RIC, unlike any police force in the world, is a military body armed with rifle and bayonet and revolver as well as baton . . . They are spies in our midst."

The letter goes on to quote Prof. Eoin MacNeill, who declared that "the police force in Ireland are a force of spies. The police in Ireland are a force

of traitors, and the police in Ireland are a force of perjurers." He concluded that "you should take such measures as will make police government in this country by the enemy impossible."

On 17 January 1920 the following advertisement appeared in the British press seeking members for the proposed RIC Special Reserve—later known as the Black and Tans—made up of demobbed soldiers just back from the war in Europe: "Do you want a job? You can join the R.I.C. today."

This proposal is an appalling affront to all those who fought and those who died in the struggle for our freedom. ★

Only socialism can save the planet

GRAHAM HARRINGTON

THE SOVIET UNION put a massive emphasis on forest preservation and set up zapovedniki (nature reserves), set aside for scientific research. By the 1930s enough new forests had been created to cover an area the size of Mexico.

The country was also home, by the 1980s, to one of the largest conservation societies in the world, the All-Russian Conservation Society, set up in 1924. Established under Lenin, it declined under Stalin but was renewed in the post-war period and by the 1980s had succeeded in having Soviet policies

changed to reflect the growing awareness of people about climate change. So much for there being no democracy in the USSR!

The post-war period saw the launch of the Great Stalin Plan for the Transformation of Nature, which at that point was the largest afforestation plan in history, planning for 15 million acres of new forests. It was—and this is a point worth emphasising—“the world’s first explicit attempt to reverse human-induced climate change.”

The plan was discontinued, but its ambition is worth remembering. For context, the period in which it was discontinued is known to ecologists as the Great Acceleration, when the amount of carbon emissions and pollution began to skyrocket, along with consumerism, nuclear testing, and military pollution.

The massive potential of the ecological movement in the Soviet Union was cut short by the counter-revolutions in 1989. Had socialism not been overthrown, who knows where we would be now?

After the events of 1989–91 socialist Cuba lost 85 per cent of its trade and entered what they call the Special Period, the era in the 1990s when Cuban socialism faced its greatest challenges.

After the revolution in 1959, Cuba had been forced to move closer to the Soviet sphere of influence. The Cuban economy had been built on the back of sugar exports to the United States (think of Ireland and cattle exports to Britain). After the nationalisation of American companies, Cuba began to export sugar to the Soviet Union and eastern Europe instead, in return for oil and food imports. It was these ideas that led Cuba from survival to sustainability. The people were forced to defend socialism with the minimum of food, energy imports, and crippling sanctions, without any aid.

In response to the breakdown of the transport system, the state imported more than a million bicycles from China, and also produced hundreds of thousands itself. A re-localisation policy meant that schools and hospitals would always be sited in communities. Despite

Mental health under capitalism

RAYMOND Ó DUBHGHAILL

IT IS NOT in the interests of capitalists to resolve crises: it is in their interests to make money from them. Too often we find that the interests of profit and the interests of the people are irreconcilable. With mental health it is no different.

The capitalist media are happy to allow endless empty talk about mental health crises, precisely because there exists an effective means of commodifying mental illness and turning a profit from it. For example, we are unlikely to encounter front-page headlines calling for action to resolve crises in poverty, illiteracy, racist bigotry, sexual violence, etc.—not because these are not significant problems in our society but because, among other things, there is no easy way for them to be exploited for ready profit.

However, mental health provides, firstly, a fertile ground for the production and sale of a range of related commodities and, secondly, for the commensurate spread of bourgeois ideology, under the guise of depoliticised “self-care” (in other words, “Your mental health is your problem, not ours! Buy some scented candles.”)

Mental health and illness under capitalism

The dominant view of mental health seeks to understand human beings essentially as individuals with more or less defined and consistent personal qualities, each containing a brain that is subject to influence by intrinsic chemical factors, which in turn may cause illness. The social component is almost completely ignored.

It is no accident that this alienated view of humans as selfish and self-contained individuals is precisely the theory of humanity that underpins capitalist ideology.

Under capitalism, someone exhibiting what would be considered a healthy mental state might be able to walk briskly

past a dozen homeless people on freezing Dublin streets without sparing a thought, on their way to work repossessing homes for a company that buys up bad debts from the banks, where in turn they will lie, cheat and steal to ensure that they get promoted above their colleagues and treat their “inferiors” with practised disdain.

This sort of manifestly sick behaviour is called having ambition and a healthy work ethic under capitalism. So, what solutions can that same system offer to treating mental illness?

Depression and SSRIs

Take selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (SSRIs) as an example. These are the most commonly prescribed pharmacological treatment for depression on the market, with such trade names as Prozac, Zoloft, Celexa, and Lexapro. In Ireland, studies have shown that the prescribing of antidepressants has risen annually since 2009,¹ to a point where between 10 and 12 per cent of Irish adults are now being prescribed antidepressants of some kind by their doctors.²

However, the efficacy of these drugs

The capitalist media are happy to allow endless empty talk about mental health crises, precisely because there exists an effective means of commodifying mental illness and turning a profit.

the cutting of the food ration in the Special Period, not a single health clinic or school was shut down. This not only reinforced the collective ethos that is one of the main strengths behind the Cuban health system but was also practical, in that it reduced the total distance people had to travel.

The collective farm system was completely overhauled, with more than 60 per cent of the inefficient state farms being broken up and given over to worker-owned co-operatives. The small average size allows for the use of animals, such as oxen, instead of tractors. The largely regulated market price that does exist means that animals are fed much less than they are here. 90 per cent of the produce is organic, with limits on the use of pesticides and genetically modified organisms.

A point worth highlighting is the status of the agricultural workers themselves. Traditionally in Latin America the agricultural labourer is among the most exploited in society, with a disproportionate number of them black or

indigenous. However, in Cuba the agricultural workers—who were the main base of the revolution in its formative years—are often university-educated, are paid well, and are members of a trade union, which means that, along with the emphasis on local public utilities, Cuba is probably the only place in the world where the standard of living is higher in the countryside than in the towns.

During the Special Period people were forced to grow their own food in the cities, usually in old, derelict areas. The state established a department to facilitate this movement and to provide education, seeds, tools, etc. And the movement grew, with schools, work-places, apartment blocks and all institutions tending to have their own little plot next door for their food. Not only is this practical, it also develops a collective responsibility among people. Today more than 60 per cent of all fruit and vegetables grown in Havana is grown in urban plots.

These policies have allowed Cuba to become the world's most sustainable

country, according to the UN's Human Development Index. The changes to the constitution in 2018, which were endorsed by 86 per cent of the electorate, included a pledge against climate change, the first example of a constitution to do so.

Fundamentally, the climate emergency can only be solved by the people themselves. It can not be solved with a "green capitalism," which is more capitalist than it is green. The problem is monopoly capitalism itself; and such broad ideologies as "eco-socialism," much like "democratic socialism," with their promise of a so-called Green New Deal, serve only to pull the wool over people's eyes. The Nordic countries have been just as much a disaster for the environment; Norway is the seventh-worst source of carbon dioxide emissions.

The reality is that socialism, past and present, provides the solution. The climate struggle will be proved by history to be this generation's Battle of Stalingrad; and we all know who won the first one. ★

has been questioned by scientists for decades, with meta-studies concluding that they are no more effective than placebos in treating depression.³ These drugs have serious potential side effects, such as nausea, headache, stomach ache, loss of sexual function, suicidal thoughts, etc.

If they are not proved to treat the problem for which they are prescribed, why do we continue to do so? The simple answer is that there is a multi-billion pharmaceutical industry that requires it. The pursuit of profit trumps the welfare of the people every time.

Cognitive behavioural therapy

In terms of psychotherapy, perhaps the most popular form of treatment for depression and anxiety at the moment is cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). This typically takes place over a short period, say eight sessions over a period of a month or two. In this way it is very cost-effective compared with more long-term therapeutic or counselling methods.

In fact many insurance companies and employers will only pay for CBT if an employee is suffering from depression.

The stated goal for them is getting you back to work as quickly as possible.

However, it is not only its relative cheapness that appeals to those with power: CBT also relies on a logic that places the ultimate responsibility for the sufferers' mental state on the sufferers themselves. This is done by "emotional regulation," or trying to adapt one's psychological responses to a distressing situation.⁴

Indeed CBT goes further and asks, "How did you contribute to the suffering you are now experiencing?" It goes without saying that this is an inappropriate way to deal with the suffering of many people, especially those who have experienced trauma. "Therapy didn't work for you? Well, that's simply your fault!"

Again, the "one size fits all" approach to treating mental disorders wins out. And why? Because it is more profitable.

The communist response

How then do we respond? As communists, our tasks are as follows: (1) to challenge the established paradigm of mental illness and health

under capitalism, to promote positive human relations, not exploitative ones; (2) to highlight the social and economic factors that contribute to mental disorder as it is now understood, and work towards ending these; (3) to fight for a world in which the interests of the people come first and foremost, where their health and dignity are no longer at the mercy of capitalist profiteers.

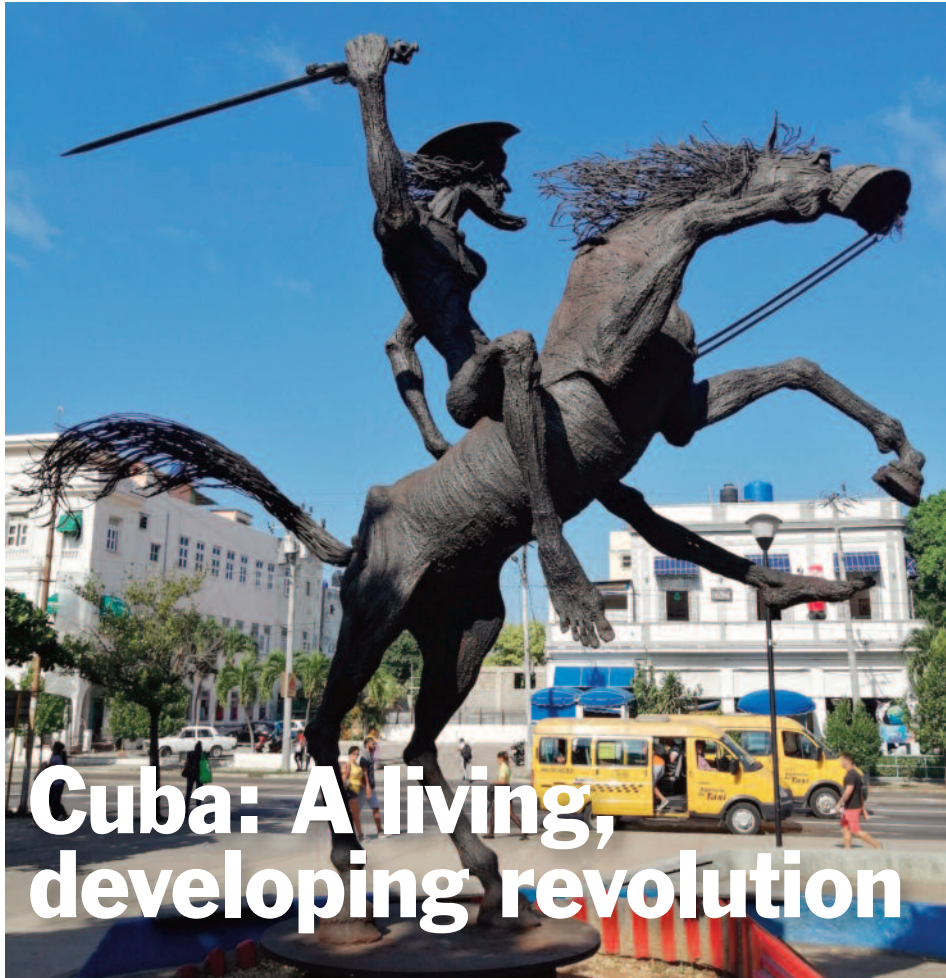
Notes

1 "HSE prescriptions for antidepressants and anxiety medications up by two thirds since 2009," *The Journal*, 1 August 2018 (<https://tinyurl.com/vs6yaoa>).

2 Martin Wall, "Ten per cent of Irish adults are being prescribed antidepressants," *Irish Times*, 5 April 1918 (<https://tinyurl.com/rfelrzk>).

3 Jacob Stegenga, "Do antidepressants work?" *Aeon*, 5 March 2019 (<https://tinyurl.com/yy6cv4ed>).

4 Åsa Jansson, "From self-help to CBT: Regulating emotion in a (neo)liberal world," *History of Emotions Blog*, 11 December 2017 (<https://tinyurl.com/wx9ubp3>).



Cuba: A living, developing revolution

JAVIER DOMÍNGUEZ

On 1 January 2020 we celebrated the sixty-first anniversary of the triumph of the first socialist revolution in the Western Hemisphere. Sixty-one years after that historic event Cubans, and the friends of Cuba in the world, recognise the greatness of that event, which made the peoples of the world fix their eyes on that small Caribbean island that was beginning to weave its heroic epic of justice and dignity for its people.

The Cubans of my generation received the revolutionary triumph of January as the best gift of the “Three Wise Men,” as described by the award-winning Cuban writer Senel Paz, recalling those festivities in which all the Cuban children of that time, immersed in our childhood dreams, wrote long letters to the Three Wise Men on 6 January, asking them to bring us the most diverse toys. These letters were placed in our shoes, and we went to bed early, not forgetting to put out dry grass

for the loaded and hungry camels carrying the Magic across the land.

When we woke up the following day, the luckiest of us, from the long list we had made, found that there were only one of these little Magic gifts. Others—the poorest—had none, even though they had behaved well.

It was one of the first lessons of inequality that pre-revolutionary capitalist society gave to those of us who began to live: the humble could not have Magic, nor could they have dreams.

In 1981 Fidel Castro said: “I think that if we had liquidated Batista in 1953, imperialism would have crushed us, because between 1953 and 1959 there was a very important change in the correlation of forces in the world. And the Soviet state was relatively weak at the time. And it must be seen that we were decisively helped by the Soviet state, which in 1953 would not have been able to do so . . .”

Later he added: “We were doing our show little by little. All these aggressions

accelerated the revolutionary process. Were they the cause? No, it would be a mistake. I do not pretend that aggression is the cause of socialism in Cuba. This is false. In Cuba we were going to build socialism as orderly as possible, within a reasonable period of time, with the least amount of trauma and problems; but the aggression of imperialism accelerated the revolutionary process.”

The hegemonic, aggressive and intolerant policy of the United States helped to forge in the people an anti-imperialist consciousness that did not exist. It helped to speed up and refine the process; in spite of the imperialists, it was a forge of revolutionary consciousness and patriotism.

The triumph of January 1959 began the end of the neo-colonial domination of the United States in Cuba. There were many imperial challenges, but the men and women at the head of the Revolution, united closely with the people, were determined to face them.

On 8 January, Fidel predicted: “Let us not deceive ourselves by believing that everything will be easy in the future; perhaps it will be more difficult. Imperialism was not prepared to allow a social revolution in Cuba. Imperial control was of such magnitude that any measure of popular profit would clash with its interests and those of the Creole oligarchy. With the signing of the Agrarian Reform Act of 17 May 1959 the United States immediately regarded the Cuban problem as a matter of national security and the overthrow of revolutionary power as a vital element of its foreign policy.”

This policy of aggression has not changed. After a brief détente during the last two years of the presidency of Barack Obama, diplomatic relations broken since 3 January 1961 were restored. In addition, twenty-two agreements of mutual interest were signed, and there was an increase in the number of visitors from the United States, to more than 600,000 per year, following the relaxing of the requirements for visiting Cuba (known as “people-to-people exchange”).

With the arrival of Donald Trump in 2016 there was a resounding change in that policy. The aggressive language of the Cold War was resumed, the possibilities of travel to Cuba for

The triumph of January 1959 began the end of the neo-colonial domination of the United States in Cuba.

American citizens were reduced, and the consulate at the US embassy in Havana was closed. Cubans were forced to travel to third countries to obtain a visa for travel to the United States, and the blockade was tightened with the activation of Title 3 of the Helms-Burton Act, allowing the establishment of claims against Cuba and against foreign companies in Cuba in the American courts for “trafficking” nationalised American property during the period of the Revolution.

The Trump government has instigated 187 measures against Cuba, including the attempt to cut the supply of oil to the country and threatening and fining shipping companies transporting oil. As a result, Cuba has had to operate on half the fuel needed, with the consequent effect on the daily life and the economic development of the country.

Challenges and threats

In Cuba there is no longer the effervescence that accompanies the victory of revolutionary processes. Even the viability of socialism, as an economic and social model, is in doubt, thanks to the failure of “real socialism” in the Soviet Union and the rest of the European socialist camp, which has generated apathy in certain sections or doctrinal differences within the revolutionary ranks themselves.

There is a period of uncertainty, expressed in the problems of governance that appear throughout the world, regardless of the political basis of governments; and although this does not happen in Cuba with the same intensity, the Cuban people are not exempt from these influences.

The political landscape has also changed. Cubans are no longer ignorant, nor are they a protected people whose goals were summed up in access to work, education, public health and social assistance but in continuing to make progress by assuming these achievements as conquered rights that they aspire to preserve but insufficient for the aspirations of many people today. Under these conditions, political goals become less urgent, and it is more difficult to reach consensus.

There are no simplistic responses to

these concerns; old dogmas and worn-out slogans have to be replaced with a more sophisticated approach.

It is not surprising that young people especially, with life expectations supported by their own human development generated by the Revolution, relate their existential motivations more to individual self-improvement than to collective projects that, though perceived as just, do not meet all their aspirations. This apparent contradiction between the individual and the collective, largely resolved by the Revolution in its beginnings, appears today as a “crisis of human development achieved” and is expressed in the reality that Cuba produces human capital that the national labour sector cannot fully absorb, and explains the increase in emigration and the distortions of the domestic labour sector.

Such contradictions have only one definitive solution: in economic development; so the purpose of consolidating a “prosperous and sustainable” socialism is indispensable for articulating the political consensus. And this must be done in the difficult conditions imposed by the country’s insertion into the capitalist world market.

The development of any economy is not enough. It is more than demonstrated that economic growth alone does not generate the general well-being, much less the social and political stability, of countries but needs to equip it with a collective sense that will guide its progress towards the common good and thus confront the irrationality of consumerism. This is the function of politics and ideological work but also of economic logic itself.

In the singular possibility of consciously articulating popular democracy towards these objectives, with a full sense of personal freedom associated with respect and care for others, lies the fundamental difference between socialism and capitalism in the present circumstances; and in this lies the main strength of Cuba.

Older party militants note with concern that a not inconsiderable number of young people are not interested in being a member of the Communist Party of Cuba. This trend will

have to be reversed in the short term, as there is a risk that the party will become a party of old people, without generational replacement.

The corruption that affects many sectors of our daily life is a phenomenon that concerns the citizenry and the leadership of the country. The Communist Party organisations are working hard to eradicate it or at least reduce it to manageable levels.

Personally, I think this is a more dangerous threat than US aggression, and that it can destroy the Cuban revolutionary process. The experience of the fall of the USSR is something that alerts us.

In 2005 Fidel Castro asked an audience in Havana University: “Do you believe the Cuban Revolution can be destroyed?” The auditorium answered with a resounding No! He corrected them by responding: “Yes, by the same people who made it: ourselves.”

We are not naïve; we are aware of the many threats that are hanging over Cuba, from inside and outside. Unity will be the key to victorious emergence. This unity has led us from victory to victory, from the defeat of the invasion of Playa Girón to the internationalist missions in Africa.

Sixty-one years after the triumph of the Revolution, the figure of Fidel is huge, and the heroism of the Cuban people reminds us of those Spartan warriors whose motto was “With the shield or on the shield.” This has been and will always be the case, with the shield defending the Revolution and, if it is necessary, to fall fighting on the shield. That spirit must be brought to the present and future generations of Cubans, immersed in the stubbornness of resistance and the hope that a better world is possible. ★

PICTURE: Don Quixote: a popular example of public art in Havana

Javier Domínguez, a former combatant of the Cuban internationalist mission to Angola, worked for the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), generating international solidarity. He visited Ireland twice in the mid-1990s, working with the Cuba Support Group. He lives in Havana.



The most important German sculptor of the twentieth century

JENNY FARRELL

ERNST BARLACH was born near Hamburg 150 years ago, on 2 January 1870. He was the most important German sculptor of the twentieth century. Bertolt Brecht said about his work: “His genius, meaning, ingenious craftsmanship, beauty without embellishment, stature without overstretching, harmony without smoothness, vitality without brutality make Barlach’s sculptures masterpieces.”

Barlach (above left) was educated in Hamburg and Dresden and also studied in Paris. A trip to Russia in 1906 was a decisive moment in his artistic development. The sense of community among the ordinary people there impressed him deeply, but also their sadness and a threatening silence after the failed revolution of 1905.

In 1910 Barlach settled in the northern town of Güstrow. Systematic slander of his art began even before Hitler took power. In Güstrow he created much of his work that the fascists removed and partly destroyed after 1933. In 1937 the “Commission for Degenerate

Art” confiscated his works exhibited in German museums, including the memorial for the victims of war in Magdeburg Cathedral.

He wrote to his brother Hans following this event: “I will not be able to work for the foreseeable future . . . I won’t go abroad, I feel like an emigrant in my homeland—and worse than a real one, because all the wolves are howling at me and behind me.” In this year before his death he created masterpieces such as *Freezing Old Woman* and *Laughing Old Woman*, testimonies to his courage, his terror, and his humour.

Ernst Barlach died on 24 October 1938 and was buried in the town of his childhood, Ratzeburg.

Barlach’s independent sculptural style is sparse, weighty, expressing both serenity and tension. His masterful woodcuts strongly influenced Käthe Kollwitz and Gerhard Marcks as well as sculptors of younger generations.

Barlach’s lithograph *Mass Grave* (1915) was not deemed safe for printing until much later, in a very small edition. His lithograph *From a Modern Dance of Death* depicts the murderous grimace of war.

His large-format woodcuts of 1919 express social degradation as a direct result of the dehumanisation caused by war. They include *Death of a Child*, *Robbers of the Cross and Coffin*, and *Good Samaritans*. These works moved Käthe Kollwitz so deeply that she tried her hand at woodcutting, creating her famous memorial sheet for Karl Liebknecht.

In January 1952 Brecht recorded his “Notes on the Barlach Exhibition” at the German Academy of Arts. He wrote about *Russian Beggar Woman with a Bowl* (1906): “A powerful person with hard confidence, from whom no thanks for alms may be expected. She seems immune to the hypocritical assertions of a corrupt society that one can achieve something by diligence and making oneself useful.” (Above centre and right)

In *The Melon Cutter* (bronze, 1907), Brecht praises “a work which created an eater from the people with great sensual power. He has seated himself exactly as it is best suited for this very activity, and he does not lose himself in his work.”

Brecht likes *Three Singing Women* (wood carving, 1911 opposite) “because the combination of power and singing is pleasant to me.”

Barlach's independent sculptural style is sparse, weighty, expressing both serenity and tension.



Song is represented differently in the sculpture *The Singing Man* (bronze, 1928). Brecht finds this man “bold, in a free posture, clearly working on his singing. He sings alone, but apparently has an audience. Barlach’s humour desires him to be a little vain, but no more than is compatible with the practice of art.”

In *Dancing Old Woman* (tinted plaster, 1920 above) Brecht praises the “humour, which is extremely rare in German sculpture. The grandeur with which the old woman lifts her skirt to dare another little dance! Her gaze is directed upwards: She delves in her memory for the right step.”

The Kiss, Groups 1 and 2 (bronze,

1921) are “of great interest” to Brecht, “because the sculptor . . . achieved a greater intimacy by roughening the material, *i.e.* by actually coarsening it. The work is a pleasing departure from the sweet, genderless Cupid and Psyche figurines in the drawing rooms of the petty bourgeoisie.”

The year they were made is particularly significant for the sculptures from 1933 onwards. There is *The Book Reader* (bronze, 1936). A man sits bent over, holding a book in his heavy hands. “He reads with curiosity, confidently, critically. He is clearly looking for solutions to urgent problems in the book . . . I like *The Book Reader* better than Rodin’s famous *Thinker*, which only shows the difficulty of

thinking. Barlach’s sculpture is more realistic, more concrete, not symbolic.”

Freezing Old Woman (teak, 1937) finds Brecht’s interest because this crouching “maid or small farming woman, so visibly physically and mentally abandoned by society,” could not “protect her hands from the cold.” Brecht continues: “It is as if her job is to freeze, and she shows no anger. But the sculptor shows anger, far more anger than pity.”

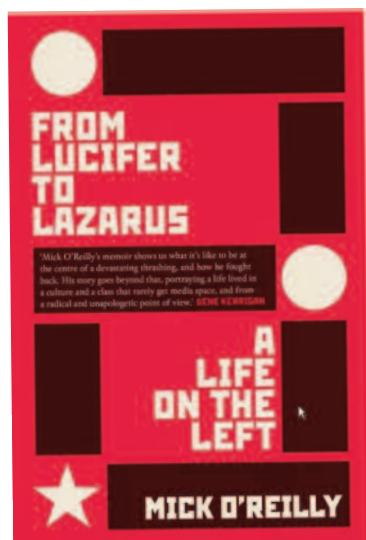
In his commentary on *Seated Old Woman* (bronze, 1933) Brecht refers to how “masterfully the clothing is designed . . . One tiny detail makes it completely realistic: the woollen scarf . . . The old woman sits upright, she is thinking . . . I can imagine a worker nudging Barlach’s old woman with his elbow: Take power! You have everything that you need.”

From 1937 comes *Laughing Old Woman* (wood). Brecht enjoys its irresistible cheerfulness and points out that this was the year in which Barlach’s works were banned from German museums as degenerate. “Her laughter is like singing, it has loosened the entire body, making it almost look young.”

All these sculptures have their realism in common. They point to the essential and express Barlach’s love of people, his humanism. Brecht concludes: “Barlach writes: ‘It is probably the case that the artist knows more than he can say.’ But perhaps it is so that Barlach can say more than he knows.” ★

A valuable source for young activists

JIMMY DORAN



Mick O'Reilly, *From Lucifer to Lazarus: A Life on the Left* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2019)

Mick O'Reilly's recently launched book is a must-read for all young activists, as it records how many of the gains achieved and then taken for granted were won through hard struggle and tough battles, fought by brave and willing members of the working class.

It records many battles over the last fifty-odd years and describes the strategies, methods and planning that are now in danger of being forgotten as a result of "social partnership," bad or treacherous leadership, and the facilitating of anti-worker legislation, such as the Industrial Relations Act (1990), by the trade union movement.

This book is a mine of information, particularly for young activists who have little experience of the struggles of the past and the methods used. There is advice for shop stewards on how to negotiate effectively and on how to be an effective political activist, and for union members and leaders on the importance of self-criticism, on why we must remain true to our politics, and the importance of education. (There is even advice on a successful marriage.)

Most if not all of the disputes that Mick recounts would be illegal today; indeed many of the actions he and his

comrades were involved in were illegal at the time, but this did not stop them from fighting for what was right.

He deals with a plethora of disputes and struggles in a very efficient manner, getting to the point quickly—the battle, strategy, methods, and result—in an honest, witty and page-turning manner, never boring or repetitive.

It is an honest book, often self-critical, and gives a great insight into the trade union movement and life as part of the working class of Dublin, Belfast, and beyond. It is an easy read, moving from battle to battle, on to life as a communist, then from family stories to witty recollections, at a pace as fast as he was willing to down tools, hit the bricks, and place a picket.

He doesn't dwell on his sacking from the ATGWU; he deals with it towards the end of the book, but it doesn't dominate it, as there is a lot more to Mick's life than that particular episode.

Mick is a lifelong communist, and though he left the party back in 1975 (as he disagreed with the CPI's backing of the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and went more Euro-communist over time) he has remained a friend and supporter of the party to this day. There are a lot of interesting anecdotes from his time as a CPI member, which comrades will enjoy. He never hid or hides his politics, something that has cost him dearly over the years.

A valuable training manual for the next generation of activists. ★

Letter Solidarity with Latin America

A chara, As the content of last month's Socialist Voice will show, there is an urgent need for solidarity with Latin America. The existence of mass struggles by a risen people in Chile, Ecuador, Colombia, Haiti, Puerto Rico and so on, as well as the existence of socialist Cuba, are unfortunately at odds with the desire of US imperialism to enforce its domination in Latin America, as events in Bolivia show.

Unfortunately, it has to be faced up to that social democracy, no matter how well-meaning or even popular, cannot solve the problems faced by the people. It is therefore of the utmost importance that anti-imperialists in Ireland find some way to come together to bring into being a class-based movement for solidarity with the people of Latin America, which can present an alternative view to the prevailing liberal human rights discourse, which conveniently manages to link up with the demands of Donald Trump's State Department.

**Graham Harrington
Cork**



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