

# Socialist Voice

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## ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

New opportunities for struggle

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"I know that many thoughtful scientists are deeply disturbed that their organisations are becoming fronts for industry . . . The tailoring, the screening of basic truth, is done not to suit any party line but to accommodate to the short-term gain, to serve the gods of profit and production."

**Rachel Carson** (pioneer environmentalist, author of *Silent Spring*), speech at the Women's National Press Club, Washington, December 1962.

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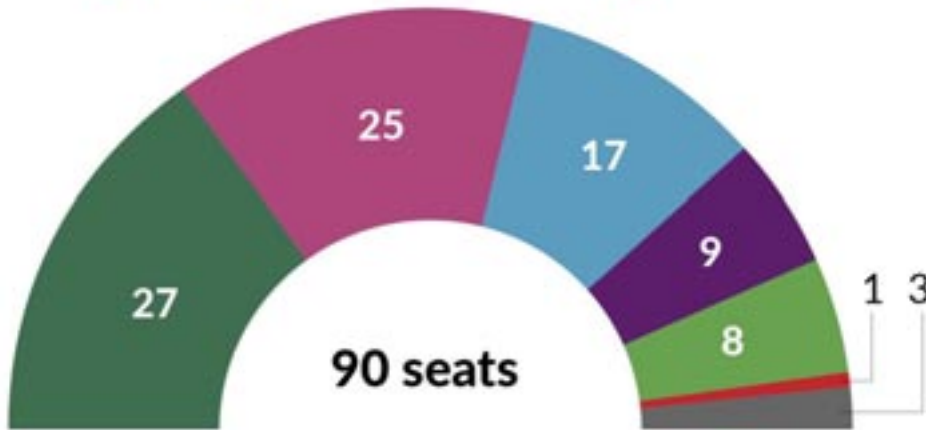


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## ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

■ Sinn Féin ■ DUP ■ Alliance ■ UUP ■ SDLP ■ TUV ■ Ind/Other



**A** HISTORIC STEP forward was taken on the road to Irish freedom when the nationalist party Sinn Féin won more seats in the recent Northern Ireland Assembly than the pro-British Democratic Unionist Party. Sinn Féin secured 29 per cent of the popular vote, to become the largest party, with 27 of the 90 seats. The DUP secured 21 per cent and 25 seats.

Since the British state frustrated the establishment of an independent Ireland through partition over a century ago, unionism has ensured a subservient regional government in the north-east of Ireland. In return it expected, and still expects, to impose its rule over the nationalist minority in the north.

The election on 5 May has ended

that as a working assumption of Northern Ireland politics. In the words of the general secretary of the CPI, the opportunities are now here “to strengthen the national content in the class struggle and the class content in the national struggle.”

Under the power-sharing arrangements of the Belfast Agreement (1998), Michelle O’Neill of Sinn Féin, as leader of the largest party in the Assembly, is now entitled to become First Minister in the next governing Executive, unseating the DUP from that position. While Sinn Féin did not emphasise Irish unity in the election, it has made it clear that it anticipates a border poll within the next five to ten years.

Ironically, also thanks to the Belfast

Agreement and its power-sharing architecture, the DUP is able to block the appointment of a Sinn Féin First Minister. The DUP is refusing to exercise its right as the largest unionist party to nominate a Deputy First Minister. That must be done in order for the First Minister’s post to take effect. Without those posts filled, an Executive cannot be formed.

The DUP is also blocking the necessary cross-party election of a speaker (chairperson) of the Assembly, thereby preventing it from meeting.

The history of the struggle for Irish freedom has never been straightforward. Today the development of national sovereignty in Ireland is constrained by three competing and collaborating global powers: Britain, the European Union, and America—what the Communist Party of Ireland describes as the “triple lock of imperialism.”

British imperialism not only continues to maintain its direct political power in Northern Ireland but also has a major economic presence on both sides of the border. European imperialism is seen in its economic regulation and political influence on both sides of the border. This will increase as the EU moves ever closer to becoming a federal superstate, including its militarisation, which undermines Irish neutrality. US imperialism exerts its control through its economic presence, its political influence, and its abuse of Irish neutrality through the military use of Shannon Airport.

Understanding the internal dynamics of Northern Ireland politics has to take

## THE FIRST WOMAN IN SPACE

**CLOVER CARROLL**

**O**N 16 JUNE 1963, only two years after Yuri Gagarin became the first man in space, Valentina Tereshkova made world history and became the first woman in space. This was during the height of the Cold War and during the space race, in which the Soviet Union achieved tremendous feats, such as having the first space station, first artificial satellite, and first spacecraft to land on another planet, namely Venus.

The decision to launch a dual-orbit mission including a woman, with Valeri Bykovski as the second person orbiting, was made twenty years before the American mission that made Sally Ride the third woman in space, the second



account of this triple lock. The internal accommodation between unionism and nationalism achieved by the Belfast Agreement was brokered by the British, the EU, and the Americans. Despite its international fanfare, the agreement was inherently unstable. Since being set up in 1998 the Assembly has been suspended on five occasions—once for five years (2002–07) and recently for three years (2017–2020). At the start of this year the DUP First Minister resigned in protest at the Northern Ireland Protocol; so at the time of the recent election there was only a caretaker Executive and Assembly.

The Northern Ireland Protocol places a customs border in the Irish Sea between Britain and Northern Ireland. This was agreed as part of the negotiations on the United Kingdom leaving the EU. As Ireland has the only land border between the UK and the EU, it has had an important place in those negotiations.

Both sides have been aggressively determined to defend and advance their own strategic interests but making great play of wanting to protect the Belfast Agreement.

Just as the leadership have wholeheartedly committed themselves to the British side in those negotiations, the leadership of Sinn Féin, in its pursuit of power through political respectability, has committed itself to the EU side. The unionists have clearly been used in those negotiations by a British Prime Minister who promised “there will be no border down the Irish Sea—over my dead body” and then agreed just such an arrangement.

Sinn Féin can expect the same treatment from the EU in both the North and the South when it attempts to

pursue the more radical aspects of its programme within the neoliberal restrictions of the EU.

The Belfast Agreement was premised on the continuing existence of the political and communal divide and the need to ensure cross-community agreement on important decisions. Elected representatives are required to designate themselves as “nationalist,” “unionist,” or “other.” Voting by designation is used to test cross-community agreement—in effect providing a veto to the two political blocs and giving licence to intransigence.

This veto has been used 159 times since 1998, unionists using it about three times as often as nationalists, including preventing same-sex marriage, abortion rights, and welfare reform.

The result of the Belfast Agreement has been to consolidate the two communal political blocs. Despite the historic shifting in the balance of power achieved at the recent election, Sinn Féin did not actually increase its number of seats and only increased its vote by 1 per cent. The DUP lost 7 per cent of its vote, but a unionist party even more intransigent than it, Traditional Unionist Voice, increased its vote by 5 per cent. The designations following the election were unionist 37, nationalist 35, and other 18.

At its 2017 Congress the Communist Party noted: “When the Belfast Agreement was implemented in 1998, the CPI recognised the possibilities it could bring regarding the cessation of paramilitary action and the potential of political struggle that helps to build the unity of the people and of the country. We have always held the view, however, that in the interests of real democracy we need to go beyond the agreement.”

**British imperialism not only continues to maintain its direct political power in Northern Ireland but also has a major economic presence on both sides of the border. European imperialism is seen in its economic regulation and political influence on both sides of the border.**

That need for institutional reform has become more apparent since then and was loudly called for at the recent Assembly elections by the party that made most electoral gains, the centre-right cross-community Alliance Party, which designates itself as “other.” It increased its share of the vote by 5 per cent and its number of seats by a third, to 17.

The growth of the Alliance Party vote alongside Sinn Féin’s position as the largest party, and the splits within unionism, suggest a fluidity in the political situation. This provides opportunities in which political, social and economic struggle can be developed in order to build, from below, the unity of the Irish people and of the country—something Sinn Féin have been unable to achieve despite their efforts and the DUP have no interest in.

Throughout Ireland, republicans—inside and outside Sinn Féin—socialists, labour movement activists, campaigners on issues of the environment, women, youth, health, education, housing, peace and international solidarity need to link their struggles. The requirement for an all-Ireland outlook was clearly shown during the covid pandemic, and the results that can be won by militant action are being taught by the strike wave at present under way in Northern Ireland.

Experiences of unity in struggle will require expression in reformed political institutions in the North. Experiences of unity in struggle must also inform the debate on the political institutions and policies needed to build a new, united Ireland. ★

**John Pinkerton** is secretary of the Communist Party of Ireland’s Greater Belfast Branch

being Svetlana Savitskaya, also from the Soviet Union. Tereshkova was picked for her ability in parachuting, as this was needed when the Vostok craft was landing. She was able to parachute in her spare time while she worked in a textile factory at the time.

Without a worker-oriented society such as the Soviet Union, a working-class woman might never have been to space, let alone the first woman in space.

After her space flight Tereshkova toured the world as a good will ambassador, promoting equality. She travelled to Cuba in October 1963 as a guest of the Cuban Women’s Federation. She was also part of the Women’s Committee within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and was chairperson of the committee in 1977. She was a deputy to the Supreme Soviet between 1966 and 1989, and a people’s deputy from

1989 to 1991. She also headed the USSR’s International Cultural and Friendship Union from 1987 to 1991.

Tereshkova was not only picked to fly to space but proved herself within the party many times. A working-class woman at the time being so involved in politics was achieved by altering society’s political structure. After the October Revolution in Russia, which brought the Communist Party to power, women were given opportunities they never had before, such as access to education and positions in politics.

Women such as Aleksandra Kollontai and Clara Zetkin are examples from early in the USSR of women in politics. These women have shown that it is not enough to see a woman who has been given all the opportunities that her class grants her in a position of power. Seeing women in politics continuing to serve a patriarchal state is not emancipation but a continuation of

**Without a worker-oriented society such as the Soviet Union, a working-class woman might never have been to space, let alone the first woman in space.**

what we should be fighting against: making revolutionary changes to how we perceive gender as a society is what will emancipate those who lack opportunities to advance in society.

We must attack sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia and other forms of bigotry equally to allow all citizens to advance in society, no matter their background or where they’re from. We must look to past and present socialist countries as examples, not to emulate but to learn from.

Valentina Tereshkova, a working-class woman who was able to visit space, shows us that the working class can do the unimaginable in a socialist society. To truly emancipate all workers regardless of gender a socialist society is needed. In such a society we can all achieve anything we set our minds to. We only need to be given the opportunity that Valentina Tereshkova was given. ★





## MARCHING IN STEP

**TOMMY MCKEARNEY**  
**POLITICS**

**W**E ARE LIVING in difficult and dangerous times, with every chance that things may get worse. Global inflation is driving up the cost of living, the impact of which is felt most severely in working-class communities.

Against this backdrop of economic hardship there looms the spectre of war in Ukraine spreading beyond its present boundaries. Worryingly for people living in Ireland, the Republic is at present

governed by a coalition wedded to free-market economics while simultaneously preparing its citizens for external military engagement.

Working together under a “confidence and supply” agreement since 2016 and embedded in coalition since 2020, there has now developed a de facto merger between Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. Though formerly it was a distinction rather than a difference, under the leadership of Micheál Martin even that minor divergence has disappeared. From the privatisation of Dublin buses to kowtowing to the Roman

church in relation to the National Maternity Hospital, the two parties are marching in step.

It wasn't always thus. In contrast to the downright reactionary Blueshirts, in its early years Dev's party appeared to at least have some degree of empathy with the less well off. Fianna Fáil could never have been described as progressive, but with little competition from the hapless Labour Party it offered an alternative of sorts.

No longer, though. The party is committed to the most ruthless interpretation of neoliberalism. Look at its record on housing, health, or public transport—all crucial services and all floundering and hopelessly inadequate, thanks to dependence on the private sector. Micheál Martin's party no longer even pretends to differ in policy from the right-wing Fine Gael.

Illustrating this was the junket shared last month by Taoiseach and Tánaiste as the pair strolled round the bright lights of the World Economic Forum in Davos, a festival of “red in tooth and claw” capitalism.

There is no prospect of the de facto merger dissolving or changing tack. The nasty pair are inescapably corralled together, because the political space vacated by Fianna Fáil is now filled by Sinn Féin. Fresh from its success in the recent Northern elections, Mary Lou McDonald and her

## CRISIS BY DESIGN

**JIMMY DORAN**  
**HOUSING**

**T**HIS IS NOT the first time the citizens of Ireland have been faced with a housing emergency. Back in the 1930s and 40s it was solved by building public housing—and it can be done again.

From the 1930s until the 1950s, 55 per cent of all housing was built by the state. In 1961, 18½ per cent of all citizens lived in a publicly owned home.

Last year the Government aimed to get 33,000 homes built. They didn't: they managed only 20,443; and of those a mere 1,198 were built by local authorities. Property-ownership is the key to the housing crisis. Who owns it controls it, be it price, rent, type, size, location, or supply.

In the early days of the state, when Fianna Fáil still held some revolutionary ambitions, hundreds of thousands of publicly owned homes were built for the citizens. These provided shelter for our citizens and managed to eradicate the squalor left behind by the British in the form of the slums and tenements in our cities and towns.

Mistakes were made, of course. Some housing estates were built without any facilities for the residents, such as shops, schools, or transport. But many of these homes were of high quality, and tens of thousands of families have been reared in local authority homes for many decades. What they may have lacked in facilities they made up with the communities that developed in them.

The major mistake that was made was the income limit that was established to qualify for a council house. This building of public housing by the state did not happen by accident. The state was forced to act, as the tenements were overcrowded and in a desperate condition, affecting the health of the residents, and they

were literally collapsing and killing people. We had the worst slums in Europe.

**Like all capitalist governments, when faced with an emergency they adopted socialist models to solve the crisis.** They made the decision to build and provide homes for the citizens at differential rent and to end the squalor left by the British.

But the propertied class and the Church had different ideas. This could not be allowed to happen in the land of saints and scholars, holy Catholic Ireland—or, more importantly, capitalist Ireland; so the lackeys and protectors of capital spoke up.

In 1952 Senator James Tunney of the Labour Party said, “I am a firm believer in private ownership, because it makes for better citizens, and there is no greater barrier against communism.”

In 1967 Archbishop Cornelius Lucey of Cork told de Valera that public housing was akin to Bolshevism, while a property-owning citizenry would make more compliant and obedient citizens. Ironically, there is now a public park in Cork named after Archbishop Lucey, in



colleagues are pressing home their advantage in the Dáil. Opinion polls have routinely demonstrated that Sinn Féin is now a permanent fixture in Irish parliamentary politics.

There is reason aplenty, though, to question how far Sinn Féin would be prepared to go in challenging capitalism if elected to office. Its commitment to the European Union makes it difficult to envisage the party bringing about a radical transfer of wealth to the working class, nor to overlook that its support for Irish neutrality would be severely tested on the issue of US military involvement in Shannon.

However, opinion polls notwithstanding, as a result of the incessant hostility to Sinn Féin emanating from the Irish establishment and its subservient mainstream media there is a real possibility that the party will not get the opportunity to exercise power but will continue to lead the parliamentary opposition

Whatever the outcome of the next general election, there is now an urgent need to recognise the challenges and indeed dangers approaching. We need to prepare for the coming storm; and, in view of the assessment above of the balance of power in Dáil Éireann, we are not in a good place to do so. What the working class need is the protection and support of a mass movement led by organised labour, the type of movement that successfully fought the anti-water-tax campaign, only this time with a broader agenda.

The coalition government and Irish

**Working together under a “confidence and supply” agreement since 2016 and embedded in coalition since 2020, there has now developed a de facto merger between Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael.**

establishment are well aware of the potential risk such a development would pose to the status quo. Faced with a potential threat to its position of privilege, the 26-County state’s establishment is quietly and discreetly putting in place counter-measures. On the one hand it is strengthening its capacity to control the population, and on the other hand it is preparing to entice the leadership of organised labour into another corporatist trap.

As if we haven’t enough coercive legislation, last month the minister for justice, Helen McEntee, announced that the Government had agreed to legislate for facial-recognition technology, a measure rightly condemned by, among others, Liam Herrick of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties as opening the door to mass surveillance by the state. Reassurances offered by government sources are undermined by comments made by the Garda commissioner, Drew Harris. Interviewed by RTE, he said this technology would be used in relation to matters of national security—the old catch-all to cover every critic of the state.

The ruling class intend thereafter to supplement such heavy-handed measures with an offer of negotiations with the trade union movement—in reality a crude attempt to neutralise organised labour, the one section of society capable of upsetting their plans. According to reports in the *Irish Times*, Micheál Martin has indicated a willingness to enter into discussions with union leaders.\*

There is talk too of a new social partnership arrangement. From coverage in the same newspaper it is evident that prominent trade unionists find the suggestion agreeable and have welcomed the initiative.

It hardly needs repeating in *Socialist Voice* that in the past social partnership did not work out well for Ireland’s working people or for organised labour. Corporatist social partnerships invariably only ever assists capital. Business adheres to it only for so long as it finds it advantageous and abandons it without hesitation when it no longer suits its interests. Such was our experience with previous arrangements, and it would be no different now.

It has been said often enough in the pages of this paper that the trade union movement must be radical or it will become redundant. It is important to recognise the need to argue at every level possible for no compromise on a corporatist partnership and to work for a vibrant movement of organised labour, a movement capable, willing and able to challenge the reactionary forces of capital, epitomised and facilitated by the de facto party merger mentioned above.

As followers of Connolly and Larkin we have the inspiration and, equally important, the ability to do so. So let’s go! ★

\*“Broader agreement for public pay talks raised in negotiations,” *Irish Times*, 21 May 2022.

which a number of people live in tents, homeless as a result of housing policy. So this is what Lucey’s contribution has ended up doing for the housing of the citizens of Ireland.

De Valera began selling off council houses to tenants at knock-down prices twenty years before Thatcher did it in Britain. They were sold at a small fraction of their worth and of what they cost to build. Those who did not want to buy were offered a lump sum, a bounty to move out of the council home. The sale to tenants denied all these homes for use by future generations of citizens. The lump sums brought the building of new homes to a trickle, as existing houses were recirculated prematurely to those on the waiting-list.

This was the beginning of the end for public housing and the start of the commodification of the provision of homes for citizens, being transferred to the private sector in a direct transfer of wealth, using the working class as a vehicle by way of loans and mortgages to the propertied class.

Saddled with thirty or forty years of mortgage, the citizens became

**In 1952 Senator James Tunney of the Labour Party said, “I am a firm believer in private ownership, because it makes for better citizens, and there is no greater barrier against communism.”**

obedient; the mortgage had to be paid on the home that the bank in reality owned. They would eventually own it for a few short years before they died—till debt do us part. This created an income stream for the banks, builders, and speculators—the capitalist class—that was denied to them by public housing, and starved the local community of this valuable income that the citizens spent locally when they had rented accommodation from the council.

This still did not satisfy the capitalist class when eventually the mortgages began to be paid off. Years later the income stream from mortgage repayments would slow down to a trickle, or stop. **A trickle down might be fine, but the capitalist class always want wealth to flood up.**

Something had to be done to open up this income stream again.

From the 1970s the state, as well as selling homes back to tenants, withdrew from building public housing. Homes were now being built almost exclusively by the private sector, reopening the lucrative income stream.

We can see from the 2016 census that this led to a situation where private rented accommodation is now the main form of tenure in our cities and towns as workers are priced out of the market by developers, with the insatiable greed of the propertied classes pushing rents always up.

The 2016 census also tells us that overcrowding has increased, for the first time in fifty years. This is the reality of what government housing policy has achieved.

There is no housing crisis for the ruling class, only for the citizen. **The crisis is the housing policy** that causes all these other symptoms, be it high rents, homelessness, overcrowding, squalor, or despair.

The government housing policy is working very well for those it was designed to benefit: landlords, builders, bankers, developers—the business class. It is not caused, as some would have us believe, by either cronyism or corruption.

The system is not broken: this is the way it is designed. It’s called capitalism. ★



## NATIONAL WAGE AGREEMENTS

National wage agreements with a private-sector aspect may re-emerge, given the current social costs of capitalism (the “cost-of-living crisis”).

**NIALL CULLINANE**  
**CLASS STRUGGLE**

**W**ITHIN THE CPI contributors have put forward hostile assessments of wage agreements—see Jimmy Doran, “Social partnership? No, thanks” (*Socialist Voice*, July 2020) or “Talk given by Graham Harrington from the Communist Party of Ireland at the Kranthi Commemoration in Dublin, 17 May 2022” ([tinyurl.com/yc87k522](http://tinyurl.com/yc87k522)).

However, these assessments overestimate the negative effects of national wage agreements on working-class power.

Take wage restraint. Real wages increased under wage agreements, although in the 1990s, because of wage-restraint biases, the increase fell below the productivity rate. Without the wage-restraint element, pay increases for private-sector workers, particularly in the foreign-owned sector, could have been higher in the absence of national wage agreements.

However, the absence of incremental wage relativity gains in a capitalist context is not decisive for establishing working-class power. Local bargaining—no matter how militant—faces similar wage-restraint pressures, just at a different scale. If we consider the 2000s, wage increases outstripped productivity. Facing squeezed surplus value, employers (driven by the increased costs of reproducing Irish labour power) became less committed to wage agreements as the benefits disappeared.

So, on wages at least, the reality of wage agreements is not outright “class betrayal.”

Turning to density, decline is well known, but it preceded partnership, and continued in its absence. Membership, however, increased during the social partnership era, suggesting that workers saw continued value in unions. In the early 1990s the membership decline of the pre-partnership age stopped, and membership stayed more or less constant. During the second half of the decade, membership increased. By 2000, unions had reversed the membership losses of the 1980s.

## WORKERS' WORLD REPORTS

### UNIONS

ON 12 MAY the Local Authority Professional Officers' (LAPO) section of SIPTU adopted a motion calling for a constitutional referendum to enshrine public ownership of water services in the Constitution of Ireland, to counter the threat of the privatisation of water services.

LAPO organises approximately 2,000 local authority professional officers working in various roles around the country, including engineers, archaeologists, and urban planners.

The LAPO sectional conference also expressed support for a campaign

of industrial action to achieve this goal. The organiser of SIPTU's Public Administration and Community Division, Adrian Kane, said: “A referendum on the public ownership of water services is a key demand of the trade union movement in our ongoing talks with the Government on this issue. I believe it must be secured and can be secured in order to protect our water services for future generations.”

This is a welcome development, and is in marked contrast to the position adopted by SIPTU, which failed to engage with or call for support for the mass Right to Water movement.

Better late than never! ★

**MANDATE HAS supported the campaign for abolishing the Industrial Relations Act (1990).**

**“This Conference applauds the public stance taken by Mandate and other campaigning unions to seek to have the 1990 Industrial Relations Act repealed and replaced with a suite of legislation intended to better protect working people and assist them to better organise into unions.**

**“Conference therefore instructs the incoming Mandate NEC to initiate and adequately fund a national campaign, with other like-minded campaigning unions, to secure strengthened employment**



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Membership levels reached a record.

However, increases in trade union membership did not keep pace with overall employment growth. That is derived, however, from shifting capital accumulation patterns and labour market effects, not partnership.

Consider strike trends. This also reflects structural patterns, but one observation is relevant: Ireland experienced two periods of significant increases in working days lost in the 1990s from industrial action in the run-up to new national agreements. That evidence suggests that unions could turn on the tap of industrial action among their members when they felt it warranted and feasible. Strike decline is independent of partnership, and the reality is more complex than leaders becoming “pacified.”

The partnership era also saw a turn to organising in the 2000s: the creation of the Organising Unit within SIPTU and the generalised push for collective bargaining rights. The Industrial Relations Acts (2001–2004)—secured by means of partnership—did create a credible amount of union activity in the non-union sector, delivering some modest results before the Supreme Court judgement of 2007. So, the reality of unions under partnership is more nuanced than demobilisation.

In sum, partnership was not the obstacle to developing working-class power that some imagine: **it is the institutional structure of the capitalist economy and the political organisation of workers that matter, not the wage-bargaining level at which unions pivot.** Indeed national wage agreements could hypothetically offer advantages: could not shop

stewards use the economies of scale generated by wage agreements to turn their energy to local job control issues, for example?

The problem with social partnership in the Irish context is that union engagement derives from a position of structural weakness (and a comfortable public-sector orientation and limited aspirations). Unions have not either been able (or desired?) to use national wage agreements to entrench workers’ collective power institutionally. Instead, Irish unions go for the easier option of selling percentage wage increments to members.

Perhaps a better exchange for wage restraint than tax cuts is expanded job protections for workers, rendering them less dependent on individual employers? or creating substantial collective rights? or securing laws to support more significant encroachments on managerial autonomy in deploying labour-power?

Of course an alternative is to inflict a Sharon Graham-style “inflation-busting” wage-bargaining campaign locally instead. That strategy (despite its high-risk, high-cost basis) shows initial promise in providing immediate gains, at least in well-unionised establishments, although we need more evidence on a range of benchmarks to assess the full effects. Militant economism could expand union membership (although figures from Unite from 2020 to date show aggregate decline).

Militant economism cannot circumvent the capitalist problem of inflation by individual pay deals at the firm level. Inflation is a political question that requires us to address capitalist social relations of production. ★

**law through the establishment of a Fair Work Act in Ireland. This Fair Work Act should include the right to join a union; the right to access work-places; the right to representation; effective union recognition and collective bargaining rights; the inalienable right to strike; the right to decent and fair work; and any additional legislative provisions deemed necessary in defence of the Irish working class.**

**“Conference further instructs the incoming NEC to seek to influence the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to campaign to abolish the 1990 IR Act in its entirety and to join in the fight to secure robust and effective workers’ rights legislation and, if so required, due constitutional amendment that adequately defends against the rampant neo-liberal agenda pursued by successive Irish**

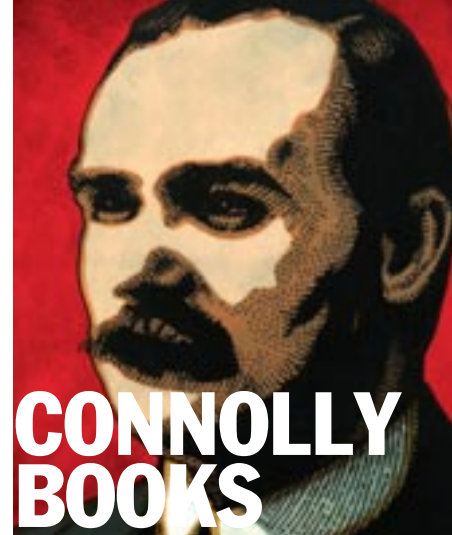
**governments since the foundation of the Free State.”**

**Hopefully Mandate will now throw its weight behind the recently drafted Fair Employment Act launched on 2 June by the Trade Union Left Forum. ★**

MEMBERS OF UNITE at the Moy Park mill in Randalstown, Co. Antrim, have voted by 78 per cent to take industrial action in a dispute over pay parity.

Unite members working as drivers, mill operators and engineers at the Moneynick Road feed mill have rejected the management’s attempts to tie an agreement on pay parity with the removal of wider terms and conditions.

Workers at the Moneynick Road site are paid less per hour than workers doing similar work at other Moy Park sites; but the employer says that any



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movement to end unfavourable pay rates must be tied to workers’ losing holiday and special day premiums, which are also paid at other sites.

Strike action at the mill is due to start from 7 a.m. on Monday 6 June.

The work force of approximately forty at the mill produce chicken feed for thousands of farms supplying Moy Park throughout Ulster. Unite is warning that the company’s greed is attacking members’ wages as well as putting animal welfare at risk.

The Moy Park group made an operating profit of £86 million last year, with the total package paid to its highest-paid director worth £924,000.

The general secretary of Unite, Sharon Graham, offered her full support to the workers. “Moy Park wants to give with one hand but grab back more with the other, and that’s just not acceptable to Unite.” ★





Wikimedia Commons

## **TOURISM** KILLING **IRISH-LANGUAGE** **COMMUNITIES**

“Is it hard to see death when it is disguised and tricked out in the surface trappings of life?”

**John Healy,**  
*Death of an Irish Town.*

### **PÁDRAIG MAC OSAIR** **TOURISM**

**I**F MOST IRISH people think of the country’s Irish-speaking regions in Cos. Donegal, Galway and Kerry at all, they largely think of them in the form of memories of first kisses and stolen cigarettes behind secondary schools in remote villages along the Atlantic coastline when their parents sent them to coláistí samhraidh as teenagers, aping the American summer camp experience.

Any time they travel to one of these areas as adults it’s most likely to be as a tourist once again, be it as a student on an immersion course or to post photos of themselves along the Wild Atlantic Way on their Instagram.

These villages certainly cater for this: you only have to drive through the villages of Bearna and An Spidéal in Co. Galway, dominated by hotels, craft villages selling handmade souvenirs, and expensive





seafood restaurants, to see how tourism has come to define their local economy.

In one particularly extreme case, the island of Inis Oírr (population 260) can expect as many as 2,000 visitors a day at the height of the tourist season.

This drive towards a tourist economy has been taking place along Ireland's western seaboard for many years, but it took on particular momentum after the economic crash of 2008, when the building industry collapsed for the best part of a decade and the volume of manufacturing employment that hadn't already been outsourced dwindled even further.

One industrial estate in the Donegal Gaeltacht went from employing 1,300 people in 2008 to a mere 425 in 2016, an experience repeated in many other areas. At the onset of the covid-19 pandemic in 2020, 13 per cent of all jobs in Co. Donegal and 19 per cent in Co. Kerry were directly linked to tourism.

This figure was even more disproportionate in Irish-speaking areas, such as Gaoth Dobhair, the Aran Islands, and Corca Dhuibhne, where the local economy had long been reliant on visitors, and demand for staff in pubs, restaurants and hotels was such that workers were regularly brought in from outside the area, with little regard to whether or not they could or would speak Irish to Anglophone tourists.

Thankfully, the worst scenario for the tourism industry represented by the covid pandemic was mitigated by the "staycation" boom, in which people who would otherwise have gone abroad had to holiday within Ireland. There was an increase of 31 per cent in internal travel between June and September 2020 compared with the same period in 2019, a trend that largely held into the second year of the pandemic.

Unfortunately for many local people, this tourism boom has taken place after the hotel industry largely collapsed in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crash; for example, Gaoth Dobhair in Co. Donegal lost five of its six hotels between 2010 and 2015. This wave of tourists are instead staying in holiday homes and Airbnbs, giving rise to a surge in rents for accommodation during the peak tourist season. In the absence of hotels, rents for a holiday home reached heights of €800 per week in Gaoth Dobhair and €588 in the Irish-speaking district of Co. Kerry during the tourist season in 2021.

Given the possibility of returns like this, it can be little wonder that tourist accommodation has come to dominate the rental market. This was the case even before the "staycation" era. There were only three houses available as a long-term letting in the Kerry Gaeltacht, as opposed to 219 tourist lettings in the last off-season period before the covid pandemic, namely November 2019. There were as many as forty entire houses or apartments listed on Airbnb in the neighbouring town of Dingle, where many local people go to work or socialise.

The Irish-speaking districts are, sadly, far from unique in being overrun by hotels and tourist lettings at the expense of affordable housing for local people; but it's often forgotten just how small these communities actually are. The Kerry Gaeltacht has a permanent population of only 8,729—barely more than half that of the Dublin district of Stonybattery, which is an estimated 15,000. That there were 219 tourist lettings among such a small population removes a major proportion of the area's housing stock from circulation. This prices local people, who

**Any rural village losing the shops, pubs and schools that have held it together for generations is a tragedy in itself, but there's also a linguistic significance to this decline. The Gaeltacht represents the last areas of Ireland where Irish is naturally used in most if not all aspects of daily life, in particular the work-place, as opposed to an object of study, a social outlet, or a hobby.**

are reliant on low-paid and seasonal tourist work, out of the housing market almost entirely, given the gulf between what a landlord can make by letting to tourists as opposed to a local person who is working in a hotel, or selling to a wealthy retired person rather than a couple in their mid-twenties who wish to start a family.

From here, local people often have little option but to migrate to larger, Anglophone towns and cities or to emigrate in their search for secure work and housing opportunities. Between the 2011 and 2016 censuses the number of daily Irish-speakers in the Gaeltacht fell drastically, by 11 per cent. A fall in population of twenty young people over the course of a decade would pass unnoticed in a city, but in a small Irish-speaking village it represents a lost generation and could even lead to the closing of primary schools within a few years as demand falls beneath what is deemed viable by officials elsewhere.

Any rural village losing the shops, pubs and schools that have held it together for generations is a tragedy in itself, but there's also a linguistic significance to this decline. The Gaeltacht represents the last areas of Ireland where Irish is naturally used in most if not all aspects of daily life, in particular the work-place, as opposed to an object of study, a social outlet, or a hobby. What's often ignored by those living outside these areas is that Irish-speaking communities are, without exception, bilingual communities, in which Irish has co-existed with English, sometimes for hundreds of years, often with basic state services (outside the education system) and employment opportunities being nearly entirely Anglophone.

From this unpromising starting-point Irish has been gradually washed away over the years by the constant torrents of English from successive waves of inward migration as emigrants return home with English-speaking partners and children, omnipresent radio and television exposure to English, and an economic dependence on Anglophone tourism work. This is a bilingualism that works in only one direction, with Irish gradually forced out of daily use, to the point where only 21 of the 155 officially defined Irish-speaking areas above the rate of 66 per cent daily use that sociolinguists claim to be the key to preventing language loss.

This is compounded by the fact that most, if not all, economic activity outside the education system is in English and for the consumption of English-speakers, as the use of Irish on signage, in local media and in businesses dwindles to nothing so as to better accommodate visitors. Communities are anglicised from the bottom up, and children grow up being exposed to Irish in ever-fewer situations outside the classroom. Irish as a living language withers into extinction all the while.

It can be observed that there has been an upsurge of interest in the language in recent years outside traditional Irish-speaking districts, yet a larger number of pupils attending Irish-language schools or adults attending Irish-language social events in English-speaking areas can hardly even begin to compensate for the loss of Irish as a community language used in all spheres of life.

Tourism represents the arrival of death in the trappings of life, a boon for landlords and publicans which just accelerates the decline of a language and the erosion of proud rural communities into glorified holiday camps. ★



## ON ANOTHER MAN'S WOUND



**JIMMY CORCORAN**  
**REPUBLICANISM**

**I**N A FACEBOOK post on 13 May condemning the Israeli military's attack on the funeral of the murdered Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, the Connolly Youth Movement made the following claim: "As Irish Republicans we know what it is like to be harassed and attacked while mourning our dead."

During the republican military campaign in the North it was common for their funerals to be attacked by the RUC and the British army and in the South by the Gardaí, and in some instances the bodies of republicans were kidnapped by state forces in an attempt to thwart republican funerals.

The CYM post, whether intentional or not, gives the impression that the CYM were active participants in that campaign. They were not; and furthermore there has never been

an occasion when the CYM were harassed and attacked while mourning their dead. I can speak with some authority on this matter, because I was a member of the CYM from 1976 to 1985, and general secretary from 1982 to 84.

This is not the first time the CYM have tried to rewrite history. In 2021 they claimed that Seán Mac Stiofáin had been politically pro-communist but disliked the "reformist attitude on the national question of the so-called communist organisations [in Ireland] at the time."<sup>1</sup> The writer of that piece seems to be unaware that the then CYM was one of those communist organisations disparaged by Mac Stiofáin.

Over the Easter weekend this year the CYM held what they incorrectly called their first annual Easter commemoration. (The Sligo Branch of the CYM held annual Easter commemorations in the 1970s and 80s.) It included a colour party dressed in white shirts and black ties and trousers.

## LGBTQ: A UNITED STRUGGLE



**LAURA DUGGAN**  
**LIBERATION**

**O**N 27 JUNE 1974 ten brave souls marched from the Department of Justice in St Stephen's Green to the British embassy in Merrion Road to highlight the criminalisation of homosexuality in Ireland. This was Dublin's first pride march.

The laws they marched against were the Offences Against the Person Act (1861) and the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act (1885), both enacted by the British Parliament before Ireland gained independence. These laws were hangovers from British rule of the 26 Counties and had already been repealed in England and Wales in 1967. They were intended to combat the vague Victorian notion of vice and included clauses protecting middle-class women and girls against "male lust" and targeted homosexual men and prostitution specifically for punishment.

Given how dated this sounds, and in the wake of the marriage equality

victory in 2015, it is easy to forget that same-sex sexual activity was only decriminalised in Ireland in 1993.

The laws marched against in 1974 were similar to those that had been enacted throughout imperial countries and those that they dominated. Though it is not always clear to us now, the fight for queer liberation has often been entangled with the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggle. Countries such as England, Germany and France often used examples of alternative, indigenous or "deviant" understandings of gender and sexuality as an excuse to legitimise their "civilising" colonial conquest of other nations. They used laws on sexuality to ensure a cultural colonisation with a political and economic one.

Nascent LGBTQ activists in those European countries also looked to these alternative, non-western expressions to legitimise their own existence. Their understanding of solidarity often centred on the finding of their own identity within the cultures of other nations.

Was this simply cosplay by a youth organisation eager to display their “revolutionary” credentials, or part of an opportunist attempt to integrate themselves in the republican past, à la Forrest Gump?

In our January 2021 issue it was pointed out that the CYM was established by the Communist Party in 1965 as a broad socialist youth organisation strongly influenced by the party.<sup>2</sup> When it united with the Young Communist League of Northern Ireland in 1970 it became the *de facto* Young Communist League of the reunited CPI. It was organisationally independent, but politically and ideologically it followed the lead of the CPI.

That remained the situation until a few years ago, when the then CYM leadership decided that socialist republicanism is “the expression of Marxism-Leninism in Ireland.”<sup>3</sup> A problem with this is that socialist republicanism is not a concrete concept, unlike Marxism-Leninism.

In 1965 the IRA claimed that its objective was a democratic socialist republic. The insertion of “democratic” was to distinguish its socialist republicanism from Marxism. Not all of those who would see themselves as Irish

socialist republicans are Marxist-Leninists, nor would they claim to be.

The CYM constitution adds to the confusion because it names a number of people, such as Michael O’Riordan and Séamus Costello, as exemplars of socialist republicanism, ignoring the fact that there were major political differences between them. Also, Costello and Mac Stiofáin were on opposite sides when the republican movement split in 1969, partly over the issue of Marxism.

In a critique of the Workers’ Party in 1982 Eoin Ó Murchú, then a member of the CPI, wrote in relation to a speech by Seán Garland: “the ‘Revolutionary Party’ speech was inspired by an identification of republicanism with socialism. A teleological approach to history was adopted, such that Tone was seen as a socialist and Lalor. The commitment to socialism emerged as a discovery of the true essence of republicanism.”<sup>4</sup>

Forty years on and the CYM are moving in the opposite direction. They believe that republicanism is the true essence of Marxism-Leninism in Ireland. In their conversion to socialist republicanism they have adopted the trappings of a military

**In a critique of the Workers’ Party in 1982 Eoin Ó Murchú, then a member of the CPI, wrote in relation to a speech by Seán Garland: “the ‘Revolutionary Party’ speech was inspired by an identification of republicanism with socialism.”**

organisation, such as colour parties, which the Official IRA abandoned as it became the Workers’ Party.

Why the emphasis on symbols associated with a military organisation? Is their concept of republicanism dependent on the illusion of having a military section? Is it cosplay, political confusion, or opportunism?

By defining republican socialism as the Irish expression of Marxism-Leninism, and having broken with the Communist Party, they needed to rewrite the history of the CYM. In their new counterfactual history the CYM were part of the military struggle and had the funerals of their dead comrades attacked by Crown forces. But their attempt to hijack the legacy of dead IRA and INLA volunteers is no more than grave-robbing.★

#### Notes

- 1 “Seán Mac Stiofáin: An Unyielding Revolutionary,” *cym.ie*, 17 February 2021.
- 2 “The birth and growth of the Connolly Youth Movement,” *Socialist Voice*, January 2021.
- 3 Constitution of the Connolly Youth Movement, article 3.
- 4 “The Workers’ Party: Its Evolution and Its Future,” *Irish Socialist Review*, autumn 1982.

This approach was by no means selfless, pure or without issue either. (The problematic elements are discussed in *Bad Gays: A Homosexual History* by Huw Lemmy and Ben Miller, available on line and in person at Connolly Books.)

The link between the radical left and the LGBTQ liberation movement is not one that solely existed in the west. Almost immediately after the October Revolution the Bolsheviks legalised homosexuality between consenting adults, and, unlike many of the western countries, the official Bolshevik position at the time was that homosexuality was not to be considered a moral issue or failing. This position, unfortunately, did not hold out over time.

The German Democratic Republic took the line that homosexuals and communists fought together against fascism in Nazi Germany and were both targeted and victimised along with the Jewish and Roma people during the Holocaust.

In the West, and specifically in the United States, this radical linking of movements emerged in explicit form in the 1950s with the founding of the

Mattachine Society—one of the first national gay rights organisations in the United States—by gay members of the Communist Party USA. The intertwining of the Red and Lavender threats during the McCarthy era weren’t just fictions created by right-wing forces but an accurate understanding of the links and bonds between those who struggled against capitalism for a variety of reasons.

The legacy of McCarthyism, of course, is that many LGBTQ groups throughout the West decided to venture into respectability politics and removed both openly communist members and any radical demands; their aims became acceptance through assimilation. Many communist parties also discouraged open homosexuality in members and often took homophobic positions. That is not to say that collaboration did not exist at this time but not officially in either group, and many gay communists felt obliged to choose between these two aspects of themselves.

It was only in the aftermath of the Stonewall Riots in New York in 1969 that marginalised voices, the working

**Unemployment, homelessness and poverty are not an accident of a flawed system but a need for capitalism to continue to exploit workers.**

class, the “deviants,” and Othered, coalesced again in defence of each other. The foundation of the Gay Liberation Front blended the radical voices of queer liberation and communism; the front marched with Black Power groups and anti-war left-wing activists, feminists, and fellow-travellers.

This was mirrored in England with such campaigning groups as Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, which linked queer liberation struggles with working-class solidarity, and here in Ireland, where LGBTQ groups such as the Dublin Lesbian and Gay Men’s Collective fought anti-gay and anti-abortion legislation in the pages of *Quare Times*. (More can be found in the Irish Queer Archive at the National Library of Ireland.)

Our liberation is not one that has ever been given to us by benevolent powers but something that has been fought, sacrificed and struggled for. Our own first pride march in 1974 is one we should remember and look to as the example of the anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist and radical roots of queer liberation. ★



# ANTI-IMPERIALISM



## MAY DAY IN HAVANA

### MICHELLE BYRNE SOLIDARITY

International Solidarity Brigade, 2022

**F**ROM HAVANA to Santiago de Cuba, the revolutionary people of Cuba are an inspirational force, struggling against the effects of the US blockade on their beautiful country.

Living under the blockade is having a seriously detrimental effect on the day-to-day lives of Cuban people. The United States has blocked trade between the countries, including deliberately blocking medical materials, such as ventilators and oxygen during a pandemic. Despite facing the dual pandemic of both



## INCOMPATIBLE WITH HUMANISM



### SAJEEV KUMAR IMPERIALISM

**T**he *New York Times* has published a “revelation” about the involvement of French and US imperialism in Haiti, the poorest country in the western hemisphere.

Imperialism in form can change from time to time, but in essence it is the extraction of surplus value. During the colonial period the force used by imperialism to it was blatant, but after decolonisation the extraction of surplus value was by means of trade agreements and loans that have strings attached.

Structural changes in the economy in favour of capital are necessary for the country to avail of these loans from financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Frantz Fanon, in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), wrote



covid-19 and the US blockade, the health service is the core of their socialist society: it's free, in abundance, community-based, and concentrates on prevention.

Understanding the risk the blockade would place on their ability to respond to the pandemic in a people-first manner, they spared no time in inventing their own vaccines—five in total. With more than 94 per cent of the population vaccinated against covid, Cuba is one of the most vaccinated countries in the world, giving priority to the vaccination of children from two years old and pregnant women.

Cuba's health system is based on care, not profit. Because of this they trust science and public-health advice free of commercial interest. There is no anti-vax movement, and people still wear masks in all public places for the collective health of society. Vaccines are shared with countries in the Global South, and Cuban doctors travel to other countries to support them in their health crises.

Outside their covid care they've also created cancer vaccines, and are the first country in the world to create a cure for the transmission of HIV from pregnant mother to baby.

The much-admired colourful vintage cars that Cuba is known for are a result of the blockade too. Since 1959 they cannot import new cars or get materials to build or repair them. Those cars often have no seat belts or window panes, and run with unhealthy-sounding noisy rattles. Buildings crumble along the roadside, as there are shortages of construction

materials, such as cement.

Despite the many difficulties stemming from the US blockade and the attempts by the United States to crush Cuban socialism, the resolve of the Cuban people is strong. The people persevere, despite the difficult economic conditions, and work to protect Cuba's sovereignty from the United States.

The Cubans work hard for the collective good of all the people there: they understand the value of their work and its role in keeping the country going: food on the table, free education, free health service, and access to housing for everyone.

During the huge May Day celebration of more than a million people in Havana, and millions more around the country, workers proudly displayed floats of the fruits of their labour. The occasion of May Day spans weeks, with concerts in work-places, international conferences, and community parties—a true celebration of workers, of socialism and the revolution.

Cuba is the most sustainable place in the world, according to the Sustainable Development Index. But they will be disproportionately affected by climate change as globally things get worse. The beautiful beaches and coastal areas will be under water as water levels rise from global warming that they are not the cause of.

Beauty and culture are very important—as the Cuban president called it, creative resistance. This creative resistance could be seen in every community: the people danced, sang, performed spoken word and

**Cuba's health system is based on care, not profit. Because of this they trust science and public-health advice free of commercial interest. There is no anti-vax movement, and people still wear masks in all public places for the collective health of society.**

theatre and displayed art everywhere.

At the International Trade Union Conference in the Cuban parliament the president, Miguel Díaz-Canel, spoke about the values of the Cuban people and said that the highest point of humanity is those who create and give solidarity. "We defend our values of anti-imperialism and trust. Unity within diversity. Against the opulence of some and the plundering of others."

At present the Cuban people are engaging in a huge participatory democracy process throughout society, in work-places and communities, to discuss how they can constantly improve and innovate under their socialist constitution. Adding to their programmes against racial discrimination, for the advancement of women, for children, and for people with disability, they are now in community consultation on the code for the family, which includes more LGBT rights, equal rights in marriage, divorce, single parents, recognition of children, obligations for children's care and education, adoption, rights for those in care, and more.

The Cubans' wide commitment to the revolution, their collective organising and participation in political discussions in work-places through their trade unions and in their communities, is for us to covet.

Che Guevara's father once said that Che had the blood of the Irish rebels running through his veins. Now we should look to Cuba for inspiration—a country based on strong values of care and collectivism.

A better world is possible! ★

that "when we hear the head of a European state declare with his hand on his heart that he must come to the help of the poor underdeveloped peoples, we do not tremble with gratitude; we say to ourselves: 'It's a just reparation which will be paid to us.'"

The imperialist countries owe a lot to the colonised countries for the imperial looting, damage and degradation they imposed during the colonisation. But it's an irony that the opposite happened in Haiti.

After the French Revolution in 1789 the people of Haiti revolted against their colonisers—France—in 1791. C. L. R. James wrote in his book *The Black Jacobins* (1938) that Haiti's was the only successful slave revolution in human history, which created the first Black republic in 1791. The ruling classes saw this as a bad example and could not tolerate the temerity of the enslaved indigenous black people who revolted against an imperial state. Even

George Washington was scared of the impact the Haitian revolution would have on the black slaves in the United States, on whose slavery the American economy depended.

Therefore England, France and the United States did not recognise the new republic, and Haiti had to pay a big price to be recognised and for the embargo and international isolation to be lifted. In 1825 France demanded "reparation debt" from the colonised country as compensation for the loss brought about by the revolution—which included that of the the slaves freed by the revolution.

Haiti, which was sucked dry by the imperial parasite, had to depend on loans from French banks. One of the banks, *Crédit Industriel et Commercial*, which had a direct influence on the Haitian economy, was the one that financed the Eiffel Tower. In fact 80 per cent of Haiti's expenditure was on servicing the reparation debt.

**The imperialist countries owe a lot to the colonised countries for the imperial looting, damage and degradation they imposed during the colonisation**

Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the first democratically elected president, demanded that France pay reparations for its imperial exploitation and compensation for the damage done during the colonial period. As usual, in 1991 a coup d'état removed Aristide and expelled him to the Central African Republic and later to South Africa. This was a warning given by imperialism to countries that dare to ask for compensation for the colonial plunder of their resources.

The *New York Times* has published what we already know, but the message will reach more people about the basis of the "greatness" of the imperial states and how the surplus sucked out of colonised nations created the wealth they proudly possess.

As Walter Benjamin told us, "there is no document of civilisation that is not at the same time a document of barbarism." ★

LEFT: Haiti Revolution  
trimpchs





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## A YOUNG REVOLUTIONARY IN NINETEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND

**\*Weerth, the German proletariat’s first and most important poet, the son of Rhineland parents, was born in Detmold, where his father was church superintendent. In 1843, when I was in Manchester, Weerth came to Bradford as an agent for his German firm, and we spent many a pleasant Sunday together. In 1845, when Marx and I lived in Brussels, Weerth took over the continental agency for his firm and arranged things so that he, too, could make Brussels his headquarters. After the revolution of March 1848, we all met in Cologne to found the Neue Rheinische Zeitung. Weerth took on the feuilleton, and I don’t think any other paper ever had one as hard-hitting and funny.\***

Engels in 1883 on his friend Georg Weerth.

JENNY FARRELL

Having met Engels in Manchester, and closely allied with Marx and the Chartist leaders, Georg Weerth came to understand the misery of the working class as the reverse side of enormous technical progress, and also that this class was destined to overthrow capitalism.

In Weerth’s short story “The Flower Festival of English Workers,” for the first time in German literature a new image of humanity emerges directly from the experience of the fighting proletariat: workers as class-

conscious, fighting people with a developed aesthetic sense. The story ends:

*But in the inn “Zur alten Hammelsschulter” [the Old Mutton Shoulder] they opened the windows, for the night was too delicious. The stars twinkled so cheerfully, as if they were rejoicing over the poor small people down there on earth, over the workers in Yorkshire who, despite all the tyranny celebrate such splendid poetic festivals.*

*Yes, poetic festivals!—For a flower festival of English workers . . . is of all the greater importance because it has sprung from the people without any outside cause. This is proof that workers, in addition to their political development, have preserved in their hearts a treasure of warm love for nature, a love which is the source of all poetry and which will one day enable them to propel a fresh literature, a new, mighty art into the world.*

Weerth captures the inherent power of the proletariat as an industrial, militant as well as aesthetic capacity, a power of the future.

In his poem “Industry,” Weerth articulates the dual character of capitalist industry: on the one hand,

“She sits upon the darkest throne | . . . The poor she drives to temple cold!” At the same time it is she who produces the weapons for liberation: “And they who forged the sword and chains, | Will use the sword to smash the chains!”

Liberated, industry takes on a new character, and she herself appears as the precondition of her own liberation: “Transformed, the goddess dark appears | . . . She rid the rock and made us free!”

Ultimately this struggle for liberation is the prerequisite for a free society, in which freedom achieves the unleashed sensuality of humanity: “And nature with enthralling kiss | Lures the living to greater bliss!”

Like “The Flower Festival of the English Workers,” Werth’s poetry goes beyond the depiction of misery, showing the class-conscious working class, its humanity and strength. His poem “They Sat on the Benches” is about the reaction of English workers to the Silesian weavers’ uprising:

*They sat along the benches,  
They sat around their board,  
The beer was poured in plenty  
They drank with pleasure deep.  
They knew no heavy sorrow,  
They knew no ache nor woe  
They knew not past nor future,  
They only lived this day.  
They sat below the alder—  
Great was summer’s frill.  
Wild and angry lads  
From York and Lancashire  
Their song was rough and throaty,  
They sat until late night  
They listened to the tale  
“Of Silesian weavers’ fight.”*

*And when they knew it all,—  
They almost were in tears.  
The sturdy lads leapt up  
And urgent was their sense.  
They clenched their fists in anger,  
Their hats waved stormily;  
Meadows and woods resounded:  
“Good Luck, Silesia!”*

In this vivid account Weerth depicts confident proletarians enjoying the day sensuously yet with an internationalist grasp of their common cause with the Silesian weavers. Both poems are written from the viewpoint of the struggling proletariat, conscious of their power and eventual victory;

**Werth's poetry goes beyond the depiction of misery, showing the class-conscious working class, its humanity and strength. His poem "They Sat on the Benches" is about the reaction of English workers to the Silesian weavers' uprising:**

and the poems reinforce this class-consciousness.

*Humorous Sketches from Contemporary Commercial Life* is Weerth's most mature prose work. The capitalist Preiss has only one concern: money. Here all humanity ceases. His encounter with the March Revolution in Germany turns Preiss into a comic figure. He dreads the revolution, which threatens his commercial concerns; he adapts to the changing fortunes of the times, always conscious of his financial interests, and ultimately reckons with a ministerial post. The sketch ends: "Upon the completely unfounded rumour that Mr Preiss was to become prime minister, raw proletarians threw in his windows that very evening."

In February 1848 Weerth went to Cologne and worked for the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, edited by Marx. The *feuilleton* genre became a tool for Weerth in the political struggle.

Weerth's most famous political satire, "The Life and Deeds of the Famous Knight Schnapphahnski," targets the Prussian squirearchy (Junkerism) and its counter-revolutionary machinations, based on one Lichnowski. Engels tells of his fate:

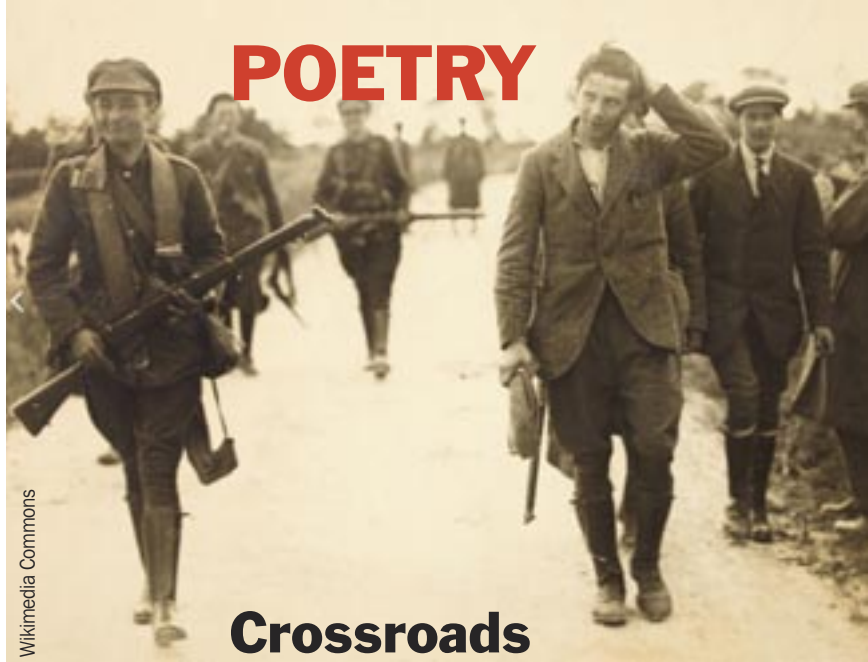
*On September 18, 1848 Schnapphahnski-Lichnowski rode out with the Prussian General von Auerswald (also a member of the assembly) to spy on peasant detachments on their way to join the fighters on the Frankfurt barricades. Both he and Auerswald were, deservedly, put to death by the peasants as spies.*

The Schnapphahnski novel ends: "We would perhaps still be laughing about it if the bullet-torn corpses of the proletarians of Paris, Vienna and Berlin did not grin at us."

After the counter-revolution Weerth resigned and began to work in commerce again, dying of yellow fever in Havana, aged only thirty-four. With amazing foresight, he wrote to Heinrich Heine that Cuba "would be the field where the great conflicts of the new world would be fought out first."★

■ So far only one translation of Weerth's work exists in English, the Seven Seas (GDR) publication *A Young Revolutionary in Nineteenth Century England: Selected Writings of Georg Weerth* (1971).

# POETRY



Wikimedia Commons

## Crossroads Ireland during the Civil War, 1922–23

by Úna Ní Fhaircheallaigh (1874–1957)

Translated from the Irish by Gabriel Rosenstock

Free State Army soldiers escorting an IRA prisoner of war

How mysterious, this road ahead,  
Behind me, a road of desolation.  
Roads to the left and the right of me—  
Whither now, Lord of Creation?

My feet can hardly carry me,  
Empty hands, my loss immense!  
A heart turned into a block of granite  
Looking back . . . what's the sense?

Looking back on a twisted path  
Of strewn bodies—unspeakable sorrow:  
Souls—their light sucked out, their shimmer,  
The price we have paid has carved us hollow.

On the way the vision perished,  
There was nothing, nothing I could see,  
My guiding light became enveloped  
In a fog of misery.

What to me the world's wealth  
All its comforts, all its power?  
Let it melt before my eyes,  
Oh to live again that hour!

To live that hour a final time  
And Ireland to be young once more,  
I'd gladly venture out again  
And walk the same path as before.

Where is that path? Oh merciful God  
To the left or to the right?  
I turn my face to the sun, to You  
That we may face the wind's might.

■ More information on Úna Ní Fhaircheallaigh (Uan Uladh) is available on [ainm.ie](http://ainm.ie).

■ A recent title from Gabriel Rosenstock: *Daybreak: Poem-Prayers for Prisoners* (New York: Cross-Cultural Communications, New York, in association with Smashwords ([tinyurl.com/yckh2w3z](http://tinyurl.com/yckh2w3z))).



# JAMES CONNOLLY FESTIVAL

## A TRIUMPH AGAIN



TOP: Speakers who took part in the debate on Peace and Irish Neutrality are from right to left: Clare Daly MEP, Edward Horgan Shannonwatch, Roger Cole PANA and Jimmy Corcoran from the Communist Party of Ireland.

BELOW: The Communist Party of Ireland's annual James Connolly Commemoration, Arbour Hill Military Cemetery, Dublin 15 May 2022.

**T**HIS YEAR the James Connolly Festival returned to in-person meetings following disruptions forced upon us through covid restrictions over the past two years. Nearly all events attracted a full house, and this year the festival consolidated itself as an important cultural and political event in the Irish political calendar.

The festival was soft-launched on Saturday 7 May with an address from the general secretary of Unite, Sharon Graham. Sharon outlined the need, now more than ever, for a strong, organised working class in the face of struggles the labour movement will face in the months and years ahead. The virtual address set the tone for the series of events that followed throughout the week, culminating with the James Connolly Commemoration at Arbour Hill on Sunday 15 May, 106 years after the death of our greatest martyr.

Owing to high demand for tickets, Monday's discussion on public housing was moved to a larger-capacity venue, the Project Arts Centre. Opening speeches from the invited guests were followed by a healthy Q&A session that took in debate on grass-roots activism, "cost-rental model" housing, and the ownership of private property, among other topics.

Thursday's event on Irish neutrality had another full house on the topical issue. The mainstream media, the US military's use of Shannon Airport and Ireland's un-utilised seat on the UN Security Council all made for a lively debate.

As talk of a united Ireland continues, a timely discussion on "Overcoming sectarianism" took place in which speakers, all of them from the north of the country, took in topics that included the National Health Service, the Belfast Agreement, and a Workers' Republic. The left-wing Irish-language advocates Misneach hosted an event in Connolly Books, where activists recited poetry and rapped in Irish.

This year's theme included "Culture as a form of resistance" in its title. Nothing more fitting than to invite the Palestinian oud performers Gazelleband. The intimate event in the New Theatre included a fifty-minute musical performance followed by a discussion. The night included beautiful renditions of such songs as "The Foggy Dew" and "James Connolly"; and in the talk afterwards Reem Anbar and Louis Brehony spoke of the historical links of oppression and bonds of solidarity between the people of Ireland and Palestine, much of which has inspired their music.

Similarly, a panel of activists from the Travelling community took part in a discussion on the history and culture of Irish Travellers. The historical context of the division between Travellers and the settled community and its roots in British colonialism were discussed. Lively accounts of the obstacles faced by Travellers in mainstream education and the prejudice inherent in these structures

were outlined, drawing on both historical knowledge and personal experience. The severe mental health issues faced by Travellers as a result of the racism prevalent in Irish society were discussed. It was also emphasised that the middle classes claim to oppose racism but at best turn a blind eye towards the racism faced by Travellers. The importance of culture within the Travelling community was noted. Difficulties of working within an NGO sector dependent on state funding, which seeks to mould NGOs in the image of a state that remains hostile to Travellers at its core, was emphasised as a crucial challenge faced by the speakers and many of their colleagues.

Saturday afternoon had a sixty-minute lecture on the environmental crisis caused by the relentless greed and overproduction of capitalism. Invoking the memory and writings of James Connolly on numerous occasions, John Bellamy Foster, editor of *Monthly Review*, analysed the crisis facing humanity and called for revolutionary change in dealing with it.

Later that evening we had the screening of *Keyboard Fantasies*, a spirit-lifting documentary on the mystical tale of the electronic music pioneer and cult musician Beverly Glenn Copeland.

The festival closed on Sunday with the annual James Connolly Commemoration at Arbour Hill. Frankie Quinn of the 1916 Societies and Barry Murray of the CPI addressed a large crowd, describing the continued interference of British colonialism and imperialism in Ireland and the need to build revolutionary forces for socialist change. Comrade Murray closed the festival with a quotation from Connolly: "The Irish Republic might be made a word to conjure with—a rallying point for the disaffected, a haven for the oppressed, a point of departure for the Socialist, enthusiastic in the cause of human freedom."

The festival organisers wish to thank the labour movement and solidarity organisations for their continued support in donating towards the running of the festival. We would also like to thank all the speakers and performers and those who attended any of the events.

For those who couldn't make it in person, recorded events will become available over the coming weeks on the Youtube channel of *Socialist Voice*, as well as the social media platforms of the James Connolly Festival. ★

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