

# Socialist Voice

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First Anniversary  
**IRISH COMMUNISTS  
ON THE UKRAINE WAR**



"A rebel is a patriot who failed—a patriot is a rebel who succeeded."  
**John O'Connor Power**, Ninety-Eight Celebration, London, 17 July 1898.

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## ANNIVERSARY OF THE UKRAINE WAR

Statement by the National Executive Committee, Communist Party of Ireland

24 February 2023

**Today the need for a ceasefire and genuine negotiations is more urgent than ever**

ON THE FIRST anniversary of the outbreak of the proxy war between NATO and Russia, the chances of it escalating into a direct war between nuclear-armed NATO and Russia increases as NATO continues to pour arms and tanks into Ukraine, with the promise of more to come. Russia in turn has ended its participation in nuclear arms control with the United States.

The proximate cause of this situation has been the expansion of NATO and its project to constrict its imperial competitor, Russia, by establishing large bases of troops and mass-destructive weapons along its western and southern borders.

One year ago the Communist Party of Ireland condemned the escalation of violence in the region since the US-orchestrated coup of 2014, including the killing of 14,000 people in the Donbass by Ukrainian forces and the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022, which has resulted in

the death and displacement of countless civilians, and we called for an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine and a political solution within the UN-negotiated Minsk Agreements of 2014.

Such a solution would encompass a demilitarised, neutral Ukraine, with all foreign forces and mercenaries removed and the dismantling of neo-fascist paramilitary groupings.

Today the need for a ceasefire and genuine negotiations is more urgent than ever. Hawkish elements within NATO oppose peace negotiations, preferring to risk nuclear armageddon in their quest to eliminate Russia as an imperial rival. The EU is actively involved in the war against Russia and played a major role in bringing it about by its active involvement in the 2014 coup and its continued attempts to subsume Ukraine within its structures.

The Irish political and media establishment, in an updated version of John Redmond's slavish Woodenbridge speech urging Irish youth to their death to protect the "civilisation" of the British Empire, vie with each other as they

demand that we abandon our tradition of neutrality and fight to defend "democracy." The Irish government's strategy has been deeper intervention in Ukraine, including supplying arms and now military training for Ukrainian forces, in complete contravention of the triple lock on the deployment of Irish troops.

The Communist Party of Ireland calls on all progressive and democratic forces in Ireland to put pressure on the Government to break with the pro-war forces within the EU and instead to call for a ceasefire and a political solution. We also call on all progressive and democratic forces to demand

- the enshrining of neutrality in the Constitution as the best way to block the Irish establishment bringing this state into NATO

- that Ireland withdraw from all EU military structures

- the ending of the US military use of Shannon Airport

- the dissolution of NATO and the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Europe.

## BOOM OR BUST?

**In Ireland the rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer, and more people are falling into poverty every day.**

**JIMMY DORAN  
CLASS**

IN IRELAND the rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer, and more people are falling into poverty every day.

The Central Statistics Office is the statistical agency responsible for gathering information relating to economic, social and general activities and conditions. It collects and "analyses" this type of information and publishes it regularly.

The statistics are there in plain sight. Of course the establishment media create a narrative around them to make them fit their purpose of supporting the status quo. So when the CSO finds that one in every three workers depends solely on the state pension, and will face poverty in retirement, this is reported from the opposite angle to say that two in every three workers have a private pension.

The CSO published a survey in February on income and living standards.

It found that in 2022 the richest 20 per cent of people had four times the income of the poorest 20 per cent, compared with 3.8 times in 2021. The rich are getting richer.

13 per cent of people were at risk of poverty in 2022, compared with 11½ per cent in 2021. The poor are getting poorer.

20.5 per cent of people would have been at risk of poverty without covid-19 income supports in 2022, compared with 20 per cent in 2021. The number of poor people is growing.

The "Labour Force Survey" for the last three months of 2022 found that the number of people in employment in the fourth quarter of 2021 was 2.506 million, compared with 2.575 million for the fourth quarter of 2022. This is an increase of 2¾ per cent—or, put simply, there were 68,500 more people working in the last three months of 2022 than in 2021. The survey also found that the weekly hours being worked have increased, from 77.6 million hours in the fourth quarter of 2021 to 80.6 million

hours in the fourth quarter of 2022—an increase of 3.9 per cent, or 3 million extra hours worked.

The number of people working has increased by 2.75 per cent, while the number of hours being worked has increased by 3.9 per cent. When you look at these three statistics together it shows that there are now more people working longer, for less.

This is inextricably linked to the fact that Ireland, at 23 per cent, has one of the highest numbers of people in Europe or North America on low pay—second out of the 37 countries of the OECD. Only the United States, at 24.1 per cent, has a higher number of people on low pay. The United States is ranked as the richest country in the world, and Ireland is ranked as the second-richest country in Europe. This is not an accident, nor is it unrelated to the increase in low-paid jobs, or extra hours being worked per worker.

Unfortunately, being a rich country doesn't mean an end to poverty—quite the opposite: in fact poverty increases as



# DEBT AND STRIKES

**Nicola Lawlor**  
**MILITANCY**

**I**N 2017 The Trade Union Left Forum published an article that speculated about the link between increasing household debt and reduced strike action. The article suggested a relationship between growing debt and inequality and reduced worker militancy. The full article and the statistics used are available at [tinyurl.com/2p88sn67](https://tinyurl.com/2p88sn67), but a couple of quotations will demonstrate its argument well:

There is no one reason for the weakening of the trade union movement. Much has been written about the partnership model, the neo-liberal offensive of the last five decades, and more recently offshoring, monopolisation, and the global labour arbitrage. But there are three interrelated factors in Ireland that, while not direct cause-and-effect phenomena, are most certainly related

**Simply put, indebted workers are less likely to strike, and indebtedness is ironically linked to weaker pay**

and reinforcing, creating a self-fulfilling cycle. These are household debt, growing inequality, and declining industrial action and union density . . . There certainly is a reinforcing relationship between rising household debt and the hold this has over workers, making it much harder to take industrial action and risk losing pay. This then contributes to weakening union power, meaning that a greater share of all wealth created by workers goes to the elite and top earners.

Now, thanks to the academic work of Dr Giorgos Gouzoulis of the University of Bristol, we have more compelling evidence on the relationship between debt and strike action. Earlier this year Gouzoulis published a paper in the Industrial Relations Journal headed “What do indebted employees do? Financialisation and the decline of industrial action.” This paper argued that debt leads to workers self-disciplining, for fear of losing their job, losing out on wages, and defaulting on their mortgage.

The study used multiple sources of data and robust data analysis from the 1970s to 2018 covering six countries, of different varieties of capitalism: the

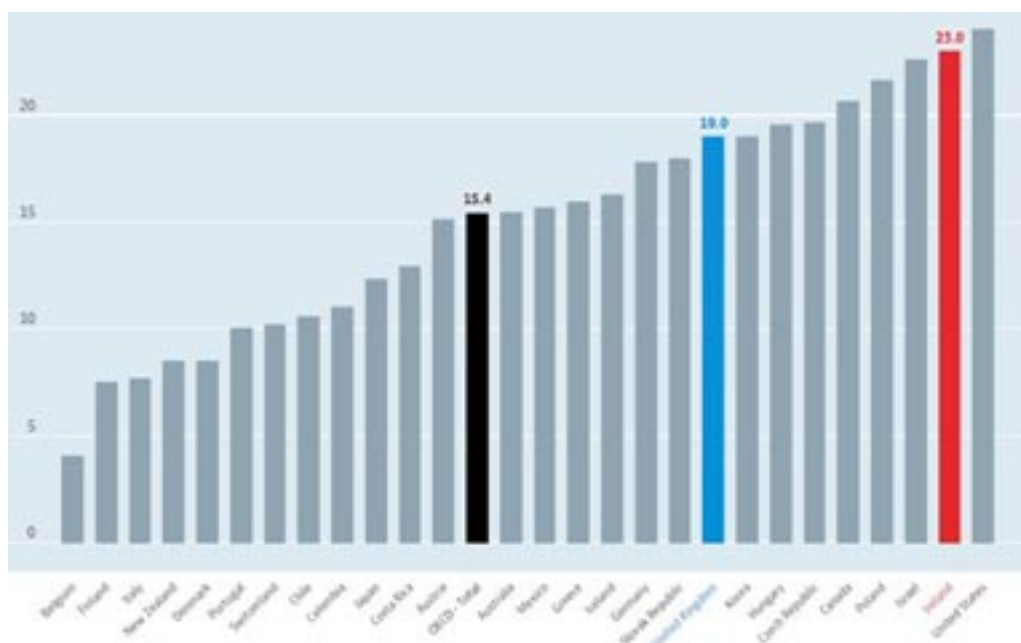
United States, Britain, South Korea, Japan, Norway, and Sweden. The paper shows that since the 1980s workers’ share of national income has declined, household indebtedness has increased, and industrial action has declined.

Dependence on credit, it is said, makes workers more averse to risk and less likely to take on the risks associated with industrial action, such as loss of pay or dismissal. Simply put, indebted workers are less likely to strike, and indebtedness is ironically linked to weaker pay demands, for the reasons given.

This evidence should give unions pause for consideration and thought on our future strategy. Two things would seem necessary to combat this decline of power. Firstly, union strike funds need to be healthier in order to mitigate the loss of income and the fear workers legitimately have of defaulting on a mortgage.

Secondly, unions must become a force once again for public housing. They must mobilise to pressure the state into building public housing on a significant scale so that it is a real option for all workers.

Actions on these fronts might help combat this vicious cycle of debt and declining militancy.



the owners of industry take an ever-larger share of the wealth produced by workers. There is no trickle down of wealth: there is a flood up.

The accumulation of wealth is directly linked to the exploitation of workers. Karl Marx explained this when he wrote: “Accumulation of wealth at one pole is at the same time accumulation of

▲ Low pay is defined by the OECD as earnings below two-thirds of a country’s median income. The chart above (courtesy of the OECD) dispals the proportion of the work force in each country that is working for low pay.

misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole.” Leo Varadkar put it another way when he said: “One man’s rent is another man’s income.” Put another way, one man’s boom is another man’s bust.

The narrative created by the state and the media, of course, is that there are now more people working than ever before, in a booming economy with the highest growth rate in Europe. The Government is doing a fantastic job.

Yes, there are plenty of jobs; but you would need to have two or three to afford to rent a home or have children.

When the CSO statistics are analysed it becomes clear that the more people there are working the more poverty and inequality grows. The economy is built on poverty wages. It’s called capitalism.

Workers need to join up these dots, work out what a “booming economy” really means. For workers it’s low pay, high rents, chronic public services, and ever-increasing inequality—all to support the lavish life of the ruling class.

Our poverty pays for their luxury. The opposite to poverty is not wealth: it is justice.





# A STORY OF GLOBAL TERRORISM

## HOW LONG WILL EUROPE SUFFER FOR THE USA?

**12 January 2019:** The US ambassador to Germany, Richard Grenell, writes to companies involved in the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, urging them to stop working on the project and threatening them with sanctions if they continue.

**2019:** The RAND Corporation (an American think tank), in a report commissioned by the US army on how to weaken Russia—including “causing Russia to overextend itself militarily or economically or causing the regime to lose domestic and/or international prestige”—states: “A first step would involve stopping Nord Stream 2.”

**29 July 2020:** The US secretary of state, Mike Pompeo: “We will do everything we can to make sure that pipeline doesn’t threaten Europe.”

**19 May 2021:** Senator Tom Cotton: “There is still time to stop it . . . Kill Nord Stream 2 now, and let it rust beneath the waves of the Baltic.”

**JIMMY CORCORAN**  
**ATLANTICISM**

THERE IS A saying that generals always fight the last war. They plan for future wars based on the tactics of the previous wars. Only when war commences and changes in technology etc. become evident are tactics adjusted to take account of the new situation.

That saying came to mind when I read an article by the former *Fine Gael* TD and pro-war *Business Post* columnist Lucinda Creighton. In her article she assailed Joe Biden for championing the interests of US capitalism.\* She decried what she saw as an assault on free trade and economic co-operation between US and EU capitalism. Unlike a general who, recognising that change responds accordingly, Creighton is stuck in the past, seemingly unaware that the world is changing.

While US imperialism still dominates most of the world, its position is being challenged. China has emerged as its greatest economic threat; however, the United States also faces competition from the EU and in particular from German capitalism. US imperialism seeks to maintain its hegemony at the expense of its “allies,” or rivals.

There has always been competition between the imperialist centres; however, since they all accepted US hegemony, conflicts that arose between them were dealt with using the “rules-based international order,”



**7 November 2021:** Senator Ted Cruz jointly proposes a bill to enable sanctions against Russia if the pipeline becomes operational.

**14 January 2022:** US national security adviser, Jake Sullivan: “We have made [it] clear to the Russians [that] that pipeline is at risk if they move further into Ukraine.”

**18 January 2022:** US under-secretary of state for political affairs, Victoria Nuland: “I want to be very clear to you today. If Russia invades Ukraine, one way or another Nord Stream 2 will not move forward.”

**3 February 2022:** Senator Ted Cruz: “This pipeline must be stopped, and the only way to prevent its completion is to use all the tools available to do that.”

**7 February 2022:** President Biden lets the cat out of the bag: “If Russia invades [Ukraine] . . . then there will be no longer a Nord Stream 2 . . . We will,

I promise you, we will be able to do that . . . There will be no longer a Nord Stream 2.”

**26 September 2022:** On Biden’s orders, the Nord Stream 2 pipeline is blown up.

**27 September 2022:** Former Polish foreign minister, Radosław Sikorski: “Thank you, USA.” (He takes it down two days later.)

**29 September 2022:** President Putin describes the sabotage as “an act of international terrorism” carried out by western powers and specifically the United States.

**30 September 2022:** The US secretary of state, Antony Blinken: “It’s a tremendous opportunity to once and for all remove the dependence on Russian energy . . . That’s very significant and offers tremendous strategic opportunity for the years to come.”

**27 January 2023:** Victoria Nuland: “I am, and I think the administration [government] is, very gratified to know that Nord Stream 2 is now . . . a hunk of metal at the bottom of the sea.”

**8 February 2023:** The American investigative journalist Seymour Hersh publishes an article based on US government sources revealing that President Biden planned and gave the order for the attack, which was carried out by the US Navy, the CIA (reluctantly, it seems), and the Norwegian navy, with the collaboration also of the Danish and Swedish governments.

And as a “bonus,” Biden’s criminal act means that an estimated 115,000 tons of methane—a significant greenhouse gas—has probably been released, or 9.6 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent. This will have the same effect on the environment as the annual emissions of two million cars, or two-and-a-half coal-fired power stations.

“Thank you, USA.”



drawn up by the United States to underpin its dominant position.

As US economic dominance is being eroded, inter-imperialist rivalry has increased. The United States has long been a critic of Germany’s policy of importing cheap energy from Russia; and even before the proxy war in Ukraine began Biden had pledged to stop the Nord Stream project. As far back as 2014 in Ukraine a US government official, Victoria Nuland, crudely articulated the US attitude to the EU with her “Fuck the EU” comment as the United States put its own candidate in power as president of Ukraine.

The war in Ukraine has helped the United States to achieve a number of strategic goals. It has forced German industry to forgo cheap and abundant Russian energy, weakening the German economy and, by making it dependent on American energy, making it more susceptible to US pressure. To make sure there would be no backsliding, for good measure the United States sabotaged Nord Stream, just as Biden

**If the war escalates, it is not the United States or Britain that will be the war zone but Continental Europe**

had promised. It has strengthened NATO, whose raison d’être is American control over Europe.

In Ireland the Government and media have attacked Irish neutrality, in defence of “democracy.” Russia has been put beyond the pale, economically, politically, and culturally. The United States also hopes to defeat it militarily, thus removing another rival.

For the moment there is unity between the United States, the EU and Britain as they prosecute their proxy war against Russia. It must be noted that most of the world has refused to be dragooned into NATO’s proxy war, in a sign of waning US dominance.

The longer the war continues, the greater the pressure on European economies. If the war escalates, it is not the United States or Britain that will be the war zone but Continental Europe. European capitalism does not want a zone of instability on the borders of the EU. However, at the moment the United States and Britain refuse to allow any negotiations short of a Russian surrender. It is likely that the anti-war protests that (despite being ignored by RTE and the Irish media) are taking place in a growing number of European cities will continue to increase. The question is, How long is European capitalism prepared to suffer in order to preserve US hegemony?

Even if NATO is successful, the wartime unity will not last. Inter-imperialist rivalry is a feature of capitalism, and US imperialism is in decline. How will the Irish ruling class

react to these changed circumstances? As the CPI pointed out, the Irish state is dependent on and subservient to the triple lock of imperialism: Britain, the European Union, and the United States. Its institutions, such as the courts, uphold the laws generated at the EU level; they uphold the rights of transnational corporations in relation to their tax contributions and their labour contracts, and they abide by British policy in the North of Ireland.

The Irish ruling class is dependent on relatively stable relations between the three imperialist centres. That is why Creighton wishes to put the genie of inter-imperialist rivalry back into the bottle. If Creighton is articulating the thinking of the Irish ruling class, then they are ill prepared for the future. No amount of burying one’s head in the sand will change reality.

Late in 2022 Ursula von der Leyen said that the present economic policy of the United States is a threat to European capitalism. If the intensified rivalry becomes a trade war, the Irish ruling class will be forced into taking sides against at least one pillar of its support. Its position will be weakened.

As the contradictions between the three imperialist centres mature, opportunities for advancing the cause of the working class and raising the standard of socialism and national liberation will increase.

\*Lucinda Creighton, “Joe Biden has embraced the worst of Trump’s economic policies,” *Business Post*, 10 February 2023.





# SLEEPWALKING INTO WAR



**TOMMY MCKEARNEY**  
**WAR**

**M**ORE THAN a century has passed since the end of the First World War. In that interval Ireland has known some bitter conflicts; but, tragic as these have been, they were confined to this country. With the exception of the Belfast Blitz during the Second World War and the North Strand bombing, we have been largely spared the horror of global warfare. As a result, there exists an aura of complacency in relation to neutrality.

Consequently, we are blinded to the possibility that global conflicts might spill over into this country. This has created a false sense of security, giving rise to a dangerous misconception that little old Ireland will always be spared the fall-out from events elsewhere.

Lest anyone believe that war in Ukraine cannot spread beyond the Donbass, they would do well to reconsider. Last month the secretary-general of the United Nations, António Guterres, said he feared that “the world is not only sleepwalking into a wider war but doing so with eyes wide open.”

If that isn’t enough to raise alarm, what about the recent announcement from the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*? That respected group set the hands of the Doomsday Clock forward to 90 seconds before midnight. This is the closest to a warning of global catastrophe it has ever been. And there is reason aplenty to justify these fears.

The principal cause for concern lies in the determination of western imperialism, led by the United States, to continue and prolong the conflict in eastern Europe. Their rationale for doing so is savage and brutal.

US-led imperialism is concerned that its global dominance is at risk as a result of China’s rapid economic growth.<sup>1</sup> China’s spectacular development has

caused the global balance of power to shift. South America, South Africa and the Indian subcontinent are no longer locked in to Washington’s sphere of influence as they were in the past.

As China relies on its relationship with neighbouring Russia for raw materials and energy, the United States views a prolonged conflict as beneficial to its overall plan. By damaging Russia, the intention is to weaken and possibly isolate China.

In order to wage this proxy war against Russia, the US-driven coalition has provided Zelenskyi’s forces with vast quantities of money and munitions. According to *USA Today*, the United States alone has sent more than \$100 billion in weaponry and finance to Kiev in less than a year—and more is on the way.<sup>2</sup> This enormous intervention is in addition to significant finance and vast quantities of munitions from other members of NATO. Of particular note is the recent supply of sophisticated German-made panzers, (Above) for use on the Eastern Front, no less.

No surprise, therefore, that this war is also being encouraged by large capitalist corporations. Western oil companies and energy suppliers have made extraordinary profits as a result of war-related sanctions on Russia.

Arms manufacturers are naturally drooling at the prospect of a prolonged conflict. A *Financial Times* headline of 23 February stated: “Defence industry shares soar on Western backing for Ukraine.” Illustrating the point, Saab Bofors Dynamics, an arms-manufacturing subsidiary of the Swedish car manufacturer, reported last month that it expected organic sales growth of 15 per cent in 2023, and that operating income would rise faster than revenue.

Nor has the United States confined its meddling to arming and funding one protagonist in the hostilities. It has also

engaged directly by way of sabotage. The highly respected American investigative journalist Seymour Hersh has claimed that the US Navy was responsible for bombing the Nord Stream pipelines carrying natural gas from Russia to Germany. Although the Pentagon denied Hersh’s report, it must be said that it also initially denied the accuracy of his reporting of the My Lai massacre and the abuse of prisoners in Abu Ghraib.

It hardly needs pointing out that when all this is taken into account there is the ever-present risk of a worldwide conflagration. With so much at stake, and with two nuclear powers confronting each other under such fraught circumstances, there is a real danger that a misunderstanding, an accident or a misinterpreted signal could trigger the Doomsday situation.

Yet in spite of all this, and as the clouds of war gather, the Dublin government is determined to dispense with what is left of Irish neutrality. For long there has been the decidedly dangerous policy of allowing the US military to use Shannon Airport. More recently the Government approved the participation of up to thirty members of the Defence Forces in the newly established EU Military Assistance Mission in Support of Ukraine. Moreover, according to the *Irish Examiner*, these trainers will be supplemented by a small number of staff positions based in the Military Planning and Conduct Capability staff in Brussels, and in the multinational Special Training Command at Strausberg in Germany.

The coalition government may spin this decision and its implications until the proverbial cows come home. However, only the wilfully blind can deny that such an action is a gross distortion of any conventional understanding of neutrality.

Let’s be absolutely clear about what ending our neutrality means in practice.



**As China relies on its relationship with neighbouring Russia for raw materials and energy, the United States views a prolonged conflict as beneficial to its overall plan. By damaging Russia, the intention is to weaken and possibly isolate China.**

In short, it entails aligning this country with a military alliance led by the United States and NATO, in other words participating, to some degree or other, in any and every conflict involving the western powers. Bear in mind that with the Doomsday clock closer than ever to midnight we are not talking about sending troops to spill blood in some far-distant land: in reality this decision presents us now with the real danger of a nuclear strike on Ireland.

If this assessment is valid (and let's hear from those who can deny its accuracy) two actions are imperative. In the first instance it is essential that we challenge and end once and for all any lingering complacency about the threat arising from ending neutrality and aligning with NATO, or an EU-led military alliance. Consequently, it is of the greatest importance that we campaign vigorously and vociferously to restore and thereafter reinforce Irish neutrality.

One such event promoting peace and neutrality will take place in Dungannon on 11 March 2023. The Charlie Donnelly Winter School, organised under the auspices of the Friends of the International Brigades in Ireland, will deal directly with these matters. In the words of the organiser, Gearóid Ó Machail, "the world is currently in an extremely precarious and dangerous place, with global tensions growing . . . Our Winter School in Dungannon will examine these themes and explore what options are open in the struggle to preserve our neutrality and promote peace." Among a number of expert contributors will be the renowned Bernadette McAliskey, and Roger Cole of the Peace and Neutrality Alliance.

Notwithstanding the excellent speakers addressing such a crucial issue, this event is only one step along the road. Similar events must be organised around the country. A stop has to be put to the coalition's headlong rush into a foreign military alliance, with all the attendant danger.

Failure to do so risks a holocaust the likes of which this country has not experienced since the Great Famine. So get out and get organising. Our very existence may depend upon it.

**1** Michael Gordon and Brett Forrest, "US defense strategy casts China as greatest danger to American security," *Wall Street Journal*, 27 October 2022 (<https://on.wsj.com/3INOhD0>).

**2** Tom Vanden Brook and Rachel Looker, "US has spent billions on Ukraine war aid: But is that money landing in corrupt pockets?" *USA Today*, 19 February 2023 (<http://tinyurl.com/mrx69b8k>).

**3** "Saab's operating profit rises, sees 15% sales growth in 2023," *Reuters*, 10 February 2023.

# LETTERS

## NÁ DÍOLAIMIS COILLTE DO CHREACH-CHISTÍ

A chara,

Ba chóir do Choillte diúltú don socrú seo le hinfheisteoirí.

Tá Éire, lena haeráid bhog mheasartha (téite ag Sruth na Murascaille) an-fheiliúnach do chrainn dhúchasacha. Ach le míle bliain anuas laghdaíodh méid ár gcoillte go dtí 1%. Faoi láthair tá níos lú ná 12% den talamh faoi chrainn, i bhfad níos lú ná an meán san AE. Tá seo scannalach.

In Aibreán 2021, d'fhógair Coillte plean chun foraoiseacha a leathnú go tapaí, dá straitéis mhaolú aeráide. Anois cuirtear in iúl dúinn go mbeidh na mílte acra talún á ndíol le Creach-Chistí Gresham House.

Cén bhealach a gcuirfidh an moladh seo ó infheisteoirí plean Choillte chun cinn? Ní chuirfidh sé chun cinn é. Beidh an infheistíocht i gCreach-Chistí Gresham House ag feidhmiú chun brabúis amháin. Is díolachán de acmhainní nádúrtha na tíre é, cosúil lenár nGás Nádúrtha saor in aisce do Shell i Ros Dumhach, agus le loingeas mhóra an AE amach ónár gcósta ag brú ár n-iascairí dúchasacha amach.

Caithfidh muintir na hÉireann cur i gcoinne an bhagairt nua seo de dhíolacháin ar n-acmhainní nádúrtha.

## COILLTE SHOULD BACK OFF PROPOSED INVESTORS DEAL

A chara,

Ireland with its mild temperate oceanic climate (warmed by the Gulf Stream) is ideal for indigenous afforestation. Yet deforestation over the past 1,000 years has reduced Irish Native Forest to just 1% of the total land area. The current forest cover in Ireland remains at less than 12%, well below the EU average. This is lamentable.

In April 2021, Coillte unveiled a plan to rapidly expand afforestation in its obligatory climate mitigation strategy. Now we are informed that thousands of acres are expected to be sold to Gresham House Vulture Funds in a land deal.

How will this investor proposal integrate or promote that Coillte plan? It will not. Investors in the Gresham House Vulture Fund will be profit driven only. It is a sell-off of the country's resources like the Rossport Giveaway and the EU Factory Ships off our coast displacing our indigenous fishermen.

The Irish people must resist this latest threat in the sell-off of our resources. Is muide, le meas,

Micheál MacAonghusa  
Antaine Mac Mathúna  
Brian Tubbert  
Aaron Nolan  
Mary Delaney  
Roibeárd Mac Cathmhaoil  
Elizabeth Bach  
Proinsias Ní Mhurchú  
Tadhg Ó Cruadhlaioich  
Marie Uí Fhaogáin

Ar son Ionad Buail Isteach na Gaeilge  
Sráid Essex Thoir, Baile Átha Cliath 2



## COMMEMORATING AN IRISH ANTI-FASCIST HERO

THE CHARLIE DONNELLY Winter School returns to Dungannon on Saturday 11 March and will again be hosted by the Hill of the O'Neill and Ranfurly House. The centre will play host to a series of presentations and discussions on the ideals and legacy of the Dungannon-born revolutionary socialist poet who died during the Battle of Jarama in 1937.

Admission is free, and booking is not required.

The well-known activist and campaigner for social justice and human rights Bernadette McAliskey will head an impressive line-up of speakers at this year's winter school, which coincides with the 86th anniversary of Charlie Donnelly's untimely death while fighting with the 15th International Brigade in the Spanish Anti-Fascist War, 1936–39.

The event co-ordinator, Gearóid Ó Machail from Benburb, outlined the theme of the 2023 winter school:

"The world is currently in an extremely precarious and dangerous place, with global tensions growing between the US, EU, NATO and the Russian Federation over the war in Ukraine and with the unwelcome rise of a nasty far-right element both here and abroad, who seek to spread hate and intolerance towards minorities in our communities.

"The toxic combination of extreme right-wing populism and increasing sabre-rattling, militarism and warmongering among competing geo-political forces has many echoes of the 1930s. Charlie Donnelly and his comrades in the International Brigades were acutely aware of the dangers to world peace posed by the overthrow of democracy in Spain at the hands of fascist forces under General Franco and his allies in Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Italy.

Unfortunately, back then the reasonable voices calling for an end to fascism, militarism and imperialist warfare went unheeded as the world drifted into global confrontation, mass destruction, and unprecedented loss of human life.

"Our winter school in Dungannon will examine these themes and explore what options are open in the struggle to preserve our neutrality and promote peace."

Gearóid and his colleagues from

Friends of the International Brigades, Ireland, have just returned from Spain, where they participated in an extensive international programme of events commemorating Charlie Donnelly and his International Brigade comrades last weekend in the capital, Madrid, and in the towns and villages around Tarancón, Rivas-Vaciamadrid, and in the Jarama Valley.

Saturday's programme in Dungannon will begin in the morning with the annual wreath-laying ceremony at the Charlie Donnelly Memorial in his home townland of Killybrackey, near Edendork. Wreaths and flowers from a variety of groups and individuals will be laid before a short oration and poetic tribute at the site.

Delegates will then travel to the Hill of the O'Neill for the first panel discussion, "Peace and neutrality in an age of militarism," featuring Roger Cole, founder and chairperson of the Peace and Neutrality Alliance, and Dr Karen Devine, lecturer in European Union policies and politics, DCU. This discussion and subsequent presentations will be livestreamed on Facebook to an international audience.

After lunch in the Hill of the O'Neill Events Centre, Dr Bahman Azad, president of the United States Peace Council and retired professor of economics and sociology at Berkeley University, will join Rev. Dr Mark Gray, minister of Bannside Presbyterian Church, for a discussion on the theme "Imperialist rivalries and the threat to world peace."

The keynote address at this year's school will be given at 3 p.m. by the popular social justice activist Bernadette McAliskey, on the theme "The rise of fascism and the threat of the far right." Bernadette's presentation will be followed by a live Q&A.

A large audience is expected to attend the presentation, and delegates will be admitted on a first come first served basis.

Proceedings at the 2023 winter school will close with the laying of flowers and wreaths at the memorial to the International Brigader Ben Murray in Moybridge, near Aughnacloy.

Charles Donnelly was born in Killybrackey, near Dungannon, Co. Tyrone, on 10 July 1914. He enrolled in UCD in 1931, where he studied logic,

**"The toxic combination of extreme right-wing populism and increasing sabre-rattling, militarism and warmongering among competing geo-political forces has many echoes of the 1930s. Charlie Donnelly and his comrades in the International Brigades were acutely aware of the dangers to world peace posed by the overthrow of democracy in Spain at the hands of fascist forces under General Franco and his allies in Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Italy."**

English, history, and Irish. In university he began writing poetry and prose for student publications. He joined the Republican Congress in 1934, and twenty-year-old Donnelly was soon elected to the National Executive. Thereafter he wrote for the Congress newspaper on political and social questions. In February 1935 he left Ireland for London. There he worked for the London Branch of the Republican Congress. He also wrote articles for various left-wing publications.

In 1936, with the outbreak of the fascist coup in Spain, he joined the International Brigades. He reached Spain on 7 January 1937 and at Albacete joined an Irish contingent, led by Frank Ryan, known as the Connolly Column, who had come to Spain to fight on the government side. Donnelly and his comrades were attached to the American Abraham Lincoln Battalion.

On 15 February, after receiving only rudimentary military training, the Lincoln Battalion was thrown into the Battle of Jarama, near Madrid. Donnelly reached the front on 23 February, where he was promoted to the rank of field commander. On 27 February his unit was sent on a frontal assault on the nationalist positions on a hill named Pingarrón. Donnelly and his unit were pinned down by machine-gun fire all day. He was eventually caught in a burst of gunfire. He was struck three times, in the right arm, the right side and the head. He collapsed and died instantly.

His body lay on the Jarama battlefield until it was recovered by a fellow-brigader, Peter O'Connor, on 10 March. He was buried nearby in an unmarked grave with several of his comrades.

There are memorials to Donnelly in Dungannon, Dundalk, Jarama, Omeath, Rivas Vaciamadrid, and his alma mater, UCD.

■ The Charlie Donnelly Winter School, 2023, has received financial assistance and support from Comhairle Ceantair Lár Uladh / Mid-Ulster Council, Friends of the International Brigades, Ireland, and Betty Sinclair Branch, CPI.





# THE CHARLIE DONNELLY WINTER SCHOOL

SCOIL GHEIMHRIDH CATHAL Ó DONNGHAILE

**SATURDAY 11TH MARCH 2023**  
**HILL OF THE Ó NEILL, DUNGANNON**  
**INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM**

Friends of the International Brigades Ireland  
Cairde na hÉireann de na Briogáidí Idimáisiúnta



Coshaire Ceanálair  
**Lár Uladh**  
Mid Ulster  
District Council

**Sat 11th March 2023**

**10:30**

**Wreath Laying at IB Charlie  
Donnelly Memorial Cairn,**  
Killybrackey

**11:15**

**Tea, Coffee, Registration**  
at Ranturly House, Dungannon

**11:30**

**Welcome and Introductions –**  
Square Box Theatre, Ranturly  
House

**11:45**

**Panel Discussion:**  
*Peace & Neutrality in an Age of  
Militarism*

**Roger Cole** - Founder and  
Chairperson of the Peace and  
Neutrality Alliance (PANA),  
**Dr Karen Devine** - lecturer in  
European Union policies and  
politics, Gender and Politics,  
Irish Foreign Policy, Gender  
and Security, and Research  
Methodologies

(Followed by Q&A with live and  
on-line audience)

**13:00**

**Delegates Lunch**  
at Events Centre, Hill of the Ó Néill,  
Dungannon

**13:45**

**Panel Discussion -**  
*Imperialism and the Threat to  
World Peace*

**Dr Bahman Azad** - President of  
the United States Peace Council,  
Retired professor of Economics and  
Sociology

**Dr Rev Mark Gray** - Minister of  
Banside Presbyterian Church

(Followed by Q&A with live and  
on-line audience)

**14:45**

**Tea & Coffee**

**15:00**

**Keynote Address:**  
*The Rise of Fascism and the Far  
Right* - **Bernadette McAiskey**

(Followed by Q&A with live and  
on-line audience)

**16:30**

**Closing Remarks**

**17:00**

**Wreath Laying**  
at IB Ben Murray Memorial Cairn,  
Moybridge

## “NO ETHICAL CONSUMPTION”

LAURA DUGGAN

“No ethical consumption under capitalism” is a phrase that is often bandied about with no real connection to its origin. It’s used to provide cover for superfluous hauls and conspicuous consumption (or overconsumption), the line of thinking being that “if no choices are ethical then I can and should be able to do whatever I want.”

**T**HIS TAKE, WHILE simplistic, can and does recognise the contradictions of capitalism. The crux of the issue is that it responds to these contradictions in an individualistic and escapist manner

rather than rising to the challenge of collective action. However, the response is often just as simplistic, individualistic, and escapist.

It revolves around the notion that we all just need to take responsibility for our choices, and that, while there are no “good” choices under capitalism, we can try our best to do the least damage with them by being as informed as we can about the choices we are making in the first place.

This is appealing, because it is quite clear and easy in many cases: we don’t cross picket lines, and we don’t buy products produced in apartheid states. The list can get a bit long and tricky

when we are trying to ensure that items are as ecologically responsible as possible—avoiding palm oil, for example. It gets trickier again when we try to take on some of the worst examples of exploitation, especially when it has the veneer of respectability about it.

Coca-Cola workers in Ireland have some pretty decent trade union representation. To buy from them you are supporting Irish workers and an Irish (or close enough) business. They have a plan to close the pay gap and smash the glass ceiling. In Colombia, however, Coca-Cola hired death squads to threaten, intimidate, harass, maim and kill trade unionists attempting to organise

## PEACE AND PACIFICATION

BARRY MURRAY

**I**N APRIL, the 25th anniversary of what was called the “Good Friday Agreement” will be marked. The name “Good Friday” was no doubt the invention of the best media and advertising gurus, who were asked to come up with a catchy title for it, and they did.

The agreement has since been more broadly called the “Peace Process.” Again, this Irish Peace Process is still a well-promoted one and is known all over the world. In fact it has been used for implementing other “Peace Processes”

in several countries and continents around the world: South Africa, the Basque Country, and Colombia, to name a few.

The thirty-year war in the North of Ireland had, politically, run its course many years before the IRA ceasefire in July 1997. Without doubt the highest levels of British intelligence and their political thinkers had recognised this, and its potential value to them. They knew well that “the war was over” politically, probably by the end of the 1970s.

Military stalemate was a constant battle to be avoided by both the IRA and

the British. But infiltration of the republican movement by British Intelligence, and counter-revolutionary political developments, along with war-weariness, meant that time was not on the side of the republicans.

What is commonly known as the Peace Process was in fact always a pacification process as far as British imperialism was concerned. They designed it, and they controlled it from the start. They still do. But they were not alone in this enterprise: they had the Dublin government, itself founded on a counter-revolutionary “peace process” in 1922. They certainly had America and Europe, who fully understood the needs of imperialism.

The consequences of that pacification process are still with us

## NORTHERN IRELAND PROTOCOL

### Part of an inter-imperialist struggle

Statement by the National Executive Committee,  
Communist Party of Ireland

**T**HE “NORTHERN IRELAND PROTOCOL” negotiations are best characterised as part of the inter-imperialist struggle between the EU and Britain with regard to the latter’s future trading relationship and access to markets within that bloc. They are about securing Britain’s future relationship with the EU and are not about the Irish people, north or south of the British-imposed border.

The “protocol” has exposed Britain’s disregard for “Northern Ireland,” in that

it has effectively ceded economic control to the EU and drawn a border down the Irish Sea. Both the EU and Britain will use Ireland to assert their own internal interests. Ireland as a whole is economically marginal to the interests of either Britain or the EU. Neither the Irish ruling class nor the unionists are involved in the negotiations, other than as bit players. The negotiations confirm the life experience of many colonised and dominated peoples and nations: that

imperialism has only interests to pursue, and only temporary friends.

The current impasse results from the ongoing differences within the British Conservative Party. One group, centred around the European Research Group, are using the DUP and the Protocol to force the Conservative government to push for a much harder Brexit than the one currently being negotiated by the Sunak government. Sunak represents the interests of British finance capital, who are keen to conclude a deal with the EU that reflects their interest to have



workers working in dire conditions. Coca-Cola at least is not a necessity.

An affordable and necessary pair of trousers for a funeral or job interview can be bought from a chain such as Penney's, where the workers at least have a union, an often quite militant one. The workers have banded hours, minimum pay, minimum rest periods, etc. It's not ideal, and there are more battles to be won, but overall it's not an unusually bad employer. This, however, is not the case along their supply chains. "No ethical consumption under capitalism" is really about how low-wage workers are forced from necessity to buy the products produced by other, more exploited workers.

Choices made at the individual level can be useful for guilt alleviation, but not much else. While some very

today, as they were meant to. In the early days it was common practice to brand anyone who objected to their process of pacification as wanting to return to violence. The name "dissidents" was born. And then it migrated into "violent dissident republicans." Oddly, there was no similar moniker for loyalists. No genuine politically oppositional discourse was allowed, and the term "dissidents" was used to put fear into those who dared to oppose their plans.

In turn, that meant that you could be seen as a dissident, or a fellow-traveller, if you protested about housing, or health cuts. The same tactic would be used against you if you opposed the cuts in services or the runaway cost of living and benefits crisis. Even those who were

successful boycott campaigns have been carried out, they were organised collective actions, with very specific aims and goals. While incredibly important, such as with the South African apartheid boycott, they challenged a symptom of capitalism and imperialism and left the root largely untouched.

Capitalism cannot be reformed through consumer choices. Consuming in any way is still "buying in" to capitalism, and we cannot merely buy our way out.

"No ethical consumption" as a slogan was meant to take the wrongful blame off exploited workers for buying the necessities of life produced by other exploited workers' labour and place it onto the corporations that are the original exploiters in the first place.

suffering directly remained silent, in case they too would be labelled as terrorist. If you spoke out against social injustice you were against peace and wanted to return to the "dark old days" of violence. It was a great trick by the ruling class to keep the working class in their box.

The "Good Friday Agreement," and subsequent agreements, told us that a whole new world of social justice, jobs, economic boost, equality and fairness would transform our standard of living. We were assured that politics was the new road ahead. Republican activists were led to believe that a 32-county Ireland was just round the corner.

None of this transpired, nor was it ever intended to. Instead British imperialism strengthened its grip on Ireland, assisted by counter-revolutionary

## **Capitalism cannot be reformed through consumer choices.**

As communists we should feel the weight of the choices we make, even when they aren't really choices.

How we move in the world has weight and has an impact on others; and even when we cannot avoid doing harm entirely we should do what we can to lessen it, where we can. Those we hurt are our own, and it shouldn't be easy or a thoughtless action for us to do it.

What is truly important is that we don't let that immobilise us or desensitise us but rather to galvanise us in the correctness of what we believe. By working as a collective, by moving as one, we can throw off our shackles and uproot the capitalist system that dehumanises us and alienates us from each other.

## **What is commonly known as the Peace Process was in fact always a pacification process as far as British imperialism was concerned.**

former republicans—a mirror image of the 1922 counter-revolution in Ireland after the Tan War.

The liberation of Ireland has been pacified. It is no longer acceptable to oppose the deteriorating standard of living, or to campaign for your humanitarian rights. To mention the destruction of neoliberal capitalism is "peace process" heresy.

Meanwhile the pro-pacification forces are planning at a growing pace that any Ireland that transpires over time will be one that makes sure capitalism remains the dominant system, to make sure the wealthy elite hold on to power and the working class are as subjugated as ever.

This has nothing to do with peace and everything to do with pacification.

minimum Brexit and maximum co-operation with the EU. The real stumbling-block is not the Protocol but the extent and role of the European Court of Justice.

The Protocol, having the border between Britain and the EU running down the Irish Sea, in the face of unionist opposition, has the potential to weaken the east-west relationship between the Six Counties and Britain. British imperialism is shifting its alliance away from unionism to developing its influence with the Irish state and the ruling bourgeois elite.

Despite the trade ruptures caused by Brexit, British imperialism's primary ally in Ireland today is the Irish bourgeoisie. Placing the EU-UK border in Ireland would be a setback for that relationship.

The introduction of the Irish Sea border was originally accepted within

the unionist establishment, selling it that it would be good for business to have access to both the EU and the British markets, as well as an opportunity to attract inward investment. The current impasse is causing internal divisions within the DUP. Donaldson is more willing to facilitate Sunak, reflecting the needs and interests of the Unionist business sector, who are content with the Protocol as it stands. MPs like Sammy Wilson are willing to be used by the FRG and have alluded to loyalist paramilitary opposition to the Protocol.

A declining industrial base and the impact of demilitarisation have weakened unionism's ability to deliver jobs and influence to its political base. This has added to the alienation felt by many working-class unionists. Alienation, bitterness and a sense of loss felt by those communities have

## **Despite the trade ruptures caused by Brexit, British imperialism's primary ally in Ireland today is the Irish bourgeoisie.**

been channelled through the Protocol. They feel betrayed by Britain. However, in at least the short to medium term this is unlikely to lead to any reassessment of their position in Ireland. For well over a hundred years they have been fed on a diet of supremacy and sectarianism, and their response, if any, to what they see as a British betrayal is likely to support the more extreme manifestations of loyalism.

However, the Protocol reflects unionism's growing alienation from the British ruling class and its declining economic influence, and as such presents opportunities to raise social and political demands that have the potential to appeal to class loyalties across the sectarian boundaries fostered and nurtured by imperialism in the north-east of our country.

## CULTURE/BOOKS

# BORSTAL BOY BRENDAN BEHAN, ON THE CENTENARY OF HIS BIRTH



JENNY FARRELL

**B**RENDAN BEHAN was born after the foundation of the Irish Free State and during the Civil War, on 9 February 1923, into a working-class family of house-painters. Behan's people sided with the Republicans. One of Behan's uncles, his mother's brother Peadar Kearney, wrote "A Soldier's Song," and another uncle, P. J. Bourke, was involved in the Irish theatre movement.

When Behan left national school he became apprenticed to a house-painter, his father's and grandfather's trade. He joined the Republican youth movement, Fianna Éireann, in 1932. In 1939, at the age of sixteen, he joined the IRA, and became messenger for the chief of staff, Seán Russell. When in 1939 the IRA decided to launch a military campaign in Britain, Behan became part of this.

We get a good idea of this from Behan's autobiographical novel *Borstal Boy* (1958), in which he describes how he travelled to Liverpool in late 1939 carrying explosives and his subsequent capture. When he returned to Ireland in 1941 he was already classified as a communist suspect.

There followed imprisonment in Mountjoy Gaol, Arbour Hill, and then in the Curragh Camp, experiences recorded in his memoir *Confessions of an Irish Rebel* (1962). While in captivity in Irish prisons Behan began to study Irish. He later spent a great deal of time on the Great Blasket Island off the Dingle Peninsula. Here, native Irish-speakers were steeped in the wealth of Irish poetry and song. Behan took to this like a natural cultural habitat, and his best poetry is in Irish.

In his Irish-language writing Behan targets the conservatism of the middle-class bureaucrats in constraining the living language of the dispossessed of the Gaeltacht by assuming an artificial "superiority." Other



## SIBLINGS

JENNY FARRELL

**S**IBLINGS BY the GDR writer Brigitte Reimann (left) has just been published in an English translation by Penguin in its series of classic international literature.

In this novella we have an authentic female voice communicating what it felt like to live in the GDR just before the Berlin Wall was sealed in 1961.

The Western allies had introduced the Deutsche Mark in the Western zones in 1948, establishing an exclusive economic area, followed by the establishment of the West German state, the Federal Republic of Germany, in May 1949. In October 1949 the Soviet authorities founded the GDR. Soviet plans right up to 1952 (four Stalin notes) to form a united





**Behan also saw himself as a republican and a socialist. His relationship with the Communist Party was a friendly one. For example, he painted the party premises free of charge, and in 1954 he signed the nomination papers of Michael O'Riordan, who stood in the general election that year.**

Irish-language writers, such as his contemporary Máirtín Ó Cadhain, or later Tomás Mac Síomóin, also highlight this administrative stranglehold on the language. Behan expresses in his writing a vision of an Irish language revival that was opposite to the hijacking of the language by middle-class officialdom.

Behan's breakthrough play, *The Quare Fellow* (1954), is set in Mountjoy Gaol. The play's title hero never appears—his death sentence, for fratricide, is to be executed the next day, and there are certain echoes of Oscar Wilde's "Ballad of Reading Gaol." Like *The Hostage* (1958) later, *The Quare Fellow* comments on the gulf between the existing Irish Republic and the aspirations the Republicans had fought for. What emerges here, and in *The Hostage*, is a society in which the flag has changed colour but the same kind of people remain in charge.

Behan's friendship with his cousin Cathal Goulding continued throughout this time. By the mid-1950s it had become clear that the campaign simply to remove the inner-Irish border was not succeeding. Between then and the early 1960s Goulding, who was a leading activist and member of the IRA leadership in the 1950s, chief of staff throughout the 1960s, had rethought the political assessment and policy. He saw that unification of the country was only one objective, but there was another developing dimension to Irish independence: dealing with the different neocolonial occupiers coming into the south of Ireland.

The concept of an Irish Republic needed to be newly defined in terms of the people who live in it. Behan's work shows that he fully agreed with this concept of an Irish republic.

*Borstal Boy* fictionalises Behan's time spent in prisons. Charlie, a Royal Navy sailor and Cockney petty thief, becomes a close friend. An Irish warder, on the other hand, is hostile towards him. And a Catholic priest encourages Protestant warders to beat up Behan, betraying his alliance with the enemy against the inmates.

Through this plot, but also through his language, Behan shows how much common ground exists between Catholic-Irish and Protestant-English workers, making extensive use of numerous dialects of English

as spoken by the British working class in different regions. In addition, he uses song and poetry, but also references the Irish language. The book, published in 1958, describes Behan's distancing from violence while remaining a principled Irish patriot.

Behan's play *The Hostage* is set in a shabby Dublin tenement, which is a bizarre reflection of Irish society in 1960. Pat, a veteran of the Irish liberation struggle, passes the day trying unsuccessfully to avoid any political involvement. An IRA officer brings Leslie Williams into his house, a kidnapped young English conscript who is held hostage for an 18-year-old IRA prisoner sentenced to death in Belfast.

Much as in *Borstal Boy*, the audience is shown a likeable working-class English soldier, who gets shot accidentally in senseless crossfire, underlining Behan's non-sectarian attitude to working-class English people. His overriding sympathy lies with the people who suffer, never with the beneficiaries of history, and he always examines closely the political purpose of actions in this light.

Behan also saw himself as a republican and a socialist. His relationship with the Communist Party was a friendly one. For example, he painted the party premises free of charge, and in 1954 he signed the nomination papers of Michael O'Riordan, who stood in the general election that year. When O'Riordan received barely 300 votes, Behan said: "Well done on the 295 mortal sinners!"

Above all, Behan's goal was a united Irish Republic, which would serve the interests of the many, not the few. This opinion, of course, did nothing for his popularity with the Irish literary and political establishment.

When Behan had become an internationally famous author by the early 1960s, he spent much time in the United States. Here he met Bob Dylan, Allen Ginsberg, Jackie Gleason, Norman Mailer, Harpo Marx, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and others. However, his fame exacerbated his alcoholism, and this, along with diabetes and jaundice, disastrously affected his health. He died on 20 March 1964, aged 41.

Watercolour by Reginald Gray 1953 Dublin

**In this novella we have an authentic female voice communicating what it felt like to live in the GDR just before the Berlin Wall was sealed in 1961.**

demilitarised Germany in central Europe as a neutral buffer between the Cold War powers were rejected by the West.

From 1949 to 1961 hopes of reuniting Germany remained in the East. However, as the Cold War accelerated, the Marshall Plan boosted the West German economy, while East Germany alone paid reparations to the USSR. A devastating brain drain took place, the sabotage of East German production sites, and tens of thousands of people working in the West and shopping and living in the subsidised East.

Military espionage contributed to making the open border unsustainable. This led to the gradual closing of the inner-German border to stem the defection of the GDR's trained work force. Until 13 August 1961 people could leave illegally via West Berlin, after which all borders were sealed.

Western history books spin their own version of events as historical fact. To gain access to historical truth, other than speaking to witnesses of the time, the

art of an epoch can give a sense of what it felt like to be alive at a particular time. *Siblings* does this for the 1950s and early 60s in the GDR.

Brigitte Reimann knew the times she wrote about intimately. *Siblings* had been preceded by other texts, which had alerted the GDR reading public to her. These trace recent German history from the Nazi dictatorship, the full acceptance of the guilt of the past, to members of an East German family deciding in which of the two German states they would live (*Siblings*, 1963). In each of these novellas a young woman needs to make hard decisions. All of them are working women, protagonists that became Reimann's signal subject.

*Ankunft im Alltag* (1961)—*Arrival in Everyday Normality*—signalled the arrival of the society and its people in a new normality, the building of socialism and the world of work.

Continued overleaf





## Programme of events

### 8 March

Online interview with Luna Oi (Viet Nam)

### 11 March, 11:30 a.m.

Self-defence for women (In conjunction with Red Phoenix)

### 11 March (afternoon)

Cultural event, poetry etc. with La Mansarda and Small Trans Library

Full details of all events: [www.communistparty.ie](http://www.communistparty.ie). [www.socialistvoice.ie](http://www.socialistvoice.ie)

## SIBLINGS

In 1959 a significant cultural political conference took place in Bitterfeld. The recent congress of the ruling party, the Socialist Unity Party (SED), had directed that the working class should be enabled to conquer the heights of art, that any divisions between social strata should be overcome, and that there should be no gulf between art and life.

The Writers' Union in the petrochemical plant of Bitterfeld then determined that GDR artists should spend time in production, and run creative workshops in factories for aspiring working-class writers, from which some well-known authors later emanated. Also, the artists themselves were encouraged to write about the lives of ordinary working-class people.

Brigitte Reimann supported this movement with heart and hand.

In *Siblings*, Elisabeth is a painter who is deeply involved with life in a lignite plant, as are other characters around her. The novella revolves around this industrial core; it is what forges the lives of the characters. There she runs a workshop for worker-painters, some of whom show real talent. And it is in this setting that a variety of conflicts arise.

Reimann's contemporary Christa Wolf addressed the same subject, of a young working woman having to decide between her fulfilling working life in the GDR and following her lover to the West, in her novella *Der Geteilte Himmel* (1963)—“*Divided Heaven*,” “*They Divided the Sky*”).

Both novellas evoke the early sixties in the GDR, shortly before the Berlin Wall was erected. Both authors identify with the GDR, as do their protagonists. Reimann made the world of work the core sphere of her texts, in which her characters and their conflicts are fully integrated. The most famous of

# INTERNATION

### CLOVER CARROLL

INTERNATIONAL WORKING WOMEN'S DAY is celebrated on the 8th of March. This celebration has been watered down and stripped of its history by liberal feminists and the ruling class.

Marxists understand the important role that women have played throughout the history of socialist movements. Here in Ireland, seeing the importance of the liberation of women and its intrinsic connection to socialism, James Connolly went to Belfast to organise women in the textile industry. In 1913 he wrote: “Irish men have proven themselves to be heroes in fighting to abolish the tyranny of landlordism. Irish women fought heroically in the same cause.”

While women were allowed to join the Irish Citizen Army, they were not allowed to join the Irish Volunteers. In 1913 a group of women met at Wynn's Hotel in Dublin and discussed the possibility of forming a women's organisation to aid in the national liberation movement. On 2 April 1914 a meeting chaired by Agnes O'Farrelly officially founded Cumann na mBan, and in 1916 they played a crucial role in the rising.

Constance Markievicz, (Above right) who was a member of both the Citizen Army and Cumann na mBan, would go on to be the first woman elected to the British Parliament and minister for labour in the Irish Republic.

While Ireland has a rich history of women playing important roles, the October Revolution also could not have



# AL WORKING WOMEN'S DAY



**Connolly himself referred to the position of women by saying, “The worker is a slave to capitalist society, the female worker is the slave of that slave.”**

been accomplished without the women, who are overshadowed by the likes of Lenin and Stalin. The October Revolution, which led to the formation of the socialist republic of Russia and later the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, was started by tens of thousands of women, who marched in Petrograd (now Saint Petersburg) against the First World War and food shortages resulting from the war.

On the oppression of women Lenin said: “You cannot draw the masses into politics without drawing in the women as well. For under capitalism the female half of the human race is doubly oppressed. They remain, firstly, deprived of some rights because the law does not give them equality with men and secondly they remain in household bondage.” To combat this double oppression Lenin did not wait for the October Revolution to bring an end to it. The central committee of the Communist Party brought in new laws. However, new laws don’t put an end to household bondage.

In 1920, in the Socialist Republic of Russia, areas were set up for communal dining and dish-washing to ease the burden on women in the home. The language used in many writings, such as “working men” and the consistent use of “he” when referring to workers, is inconsistent with the number of instances throughout history of women being crucial to socialist movements. The history of socialist movements is one of women’s liberation and emancipation. The idealist feminism that consists entirely of putting women in CEO and executive positions does nothing for working women, immigrants, refugees, or homeless women. We must combat liberal feminism with a materialist analysis, Marxist feminism.

Connolly himself referred to the position of women by saying, “The worker is a slave to capitalist society, the female worker is the slave of that slave.” However, the development of society is the oppression of women and the establishment of patriarchy. While

Connolly is correct in his assessment, the position of women as a slave within the home can be seen as the monogamous family formed. This monogamy, however, was enforced on women, as men would live with a moral blemish. As Engels writes in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, the family has a “specific character of monogamy for the woman only, but not for the man.”

Through antiquity, feudalism, and now capitalism, the patriarchal family model has pushed women into unpaid work in the house and under capitalism to also take on paid work outside the house, although paid less than men. We Marxists, or Marxist feminists, must look at the historical development of society, and the development of the family, and come to answers on the emancipation of women through the analysis.

The burden of this cannot be solely placed on women. Men have historically played the part of the oppressors of women, as white people have played the part of the oppressors of people of colour. We must share the responsibility of emancipation through solidarity with all oppressed people. Within unions, left-wing organisations and the party we must lead the way and set an example collectively on how women, people of colour, LGBTQ+ and all oppressed should be accepted. As Lenin put it, “Working-class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence and abuse.”

these is the unfinished novel *Franziska Linkerhand* (1974), with a subtitled GDR drama based on the book, *Our Short Life* (1981), in which Reimann explores the difficulties encountered by a young architect who strives to build towns where people will live in fulfilment.

Epic stories arising from women at work, their growing social equality stemming from economic independence, became a hallmark of GDR literature. Yet GDR art was the sphere where the most open criticism was voiced and therefore the arts became critically important for GDR citizens. *Siblings* too contains criticism of party apparatchiks with tunnel vision.

However, the family, which loses one son to the West and another one almost, has a father who confronts his sons with the money their education cost society and what their defection means financially to the state. Daughter Elisabeth fully identifies with the

aspirations of the socialist state and fights for her rights and her dignity within this new society.

The novella, like most GDR literature, expresses women’s confidence in their legislated social equality. Closely linked to this is Reimann’s search for and tracing of a new humanity emerging with the development of socialism: how people change when living in a society that puts their interests before profits. She examines the extent to which they identify with this state and how this affects their daily lives, their relationships with one another.

Central to these questions is the role of work. Her depiction of the brain and skill drain has lost none of its relevance in today’s world, both within the EU and globally.

GDR literature and art have been widely suppressed as part of the blanket rewriting of its history by the West. Read it to remember what had once been possible in Germany.



## CAPITALISM AND DEMOCRACY



**Socialism can be defined in simple terms: it is the extension of political democracy to social and economic democracy. If people don't have social and economic democracy, then political democracy is meaningless.**

**demos**

### SAJEEV KUMAR THEORY

**D**EMOCRACY is a combination of two Greek words, *dēmos* (people) and *kratos* (rule). As societies change, some words wither away, some new words come into existence, and some words change meaning.

Democracy has a broader meaning today than in ancient Greece. The democracy of the ancient Greeks had its limitations and flaws. Only a chosen few took part in the democratic process, unlike the universal suffrage we have now. At the same time the bourgeois democracy of the modern world has its own flaws as well. The idea of democracy should not be attached to the right to vote alone. Within the capitalist world even the largest democracy, India, where elections are held every five years, is descending into an electoral autocracy. In India the democratically elected government has no concern for the minority Muslims and Christians and is aiming to create a fascist Hindu nation.

Bourgeois democracy always keeps the door open for fascism. Even in a democracy such as the United States the voters get to choose between

“Republicans” and “Democrats,” two parties with the same policies.

Many intellectuals have defined democracy in different ways. Bertrand Russell defined it as “a concern for the other.”

When nations were created on the basis of language, religion, ethnicity, etc., there is bound to be the creation of the “other.” The way the “other” are treated and how their concerns are addressed is the measure of democracy. Otherwise democracy will only be majoritarian rule, where minority opinions are not considered at all.

Capitalism is credited with developing democracy in a broader sense. Many bourgeois intellectuals claim that capitalism is synonymous with democracy. This argument is flawed when we take into account the colonial era. When democracy “flourished” in Europe, colonialism denied basic human rights in their colonies; the Asians and Africans were not even considered human beings.

Even though capitalism developed in the United States in the eighteenth century, it was only in 1965, after the civil rights movement, that black people were allowed to vote. It means that democracy is won by organised movements and is not a gift of capitalism.

Racism, which is anti-democratic, was a concept developed by capitalism to justify the exploitation of humans and natural resources from the Third World. The colonial powers justified racism on the grounds that people of colour are inferior to white people, and it was part of the white man's burden to civilise the “barbarians.”

Even in “democratic” Europe, capitalism did not democratise the work-place. Capitalism is undemocratic in the way it organises production. The workers have an option to choose who will rule them in a bourgeois democracy but have no democracy in their work-place when it comes to decisions concerning their work.

After the Soviet Union collapsed there was a rush to push the neoliberal agenda throughout the world, on the grounds that “there is no alternative” (TINA). As empirical details reveal, the neoliberal phase of capitalism has only exacerbated the income inequality, austerity, debt traps and poverty in countries rich in resources.

Democracy has no meaning if wealth is not distributed democratically; as

Angela Davis questioned, “The idea of freedom is inspiring. But what does it mean? If you are free in a political sense but have no food, what's that? The freedom to starve?”

Socialism can be defined in simple terms: it is the extension of political democracy to social and economic democracy. If people don't have social and economic democracy, then political democracy is meaningless.

True democracy can only be achieved through socialism. Capitalist democracy will only allow democracy to an extent that will suit the capitalists. If people rise in organised struggles to achieve economic and social democracy the capitalist system will trample democracy and will unleash fascism without hesitation. It was the big corporations such as Ford, IBM etc. that supported the Nazis in Germany and funded the eugenics project to establish the racial superiority of Aryans.

That is why Rosa Luxemburg said, “No democracy without socialism, and no socialism without democracy.” Democracy is also a right to dissent; as described by Howard Zinn, “Dissent is the highest form of patriotism.” But how much dissent is shown by the mainstream media today? Capitalism has converted the media into creators of opinions in favour of the ruling class, rather than reporting the truth and raising questions against power. People such as Julian Assange, who exposed the violations of imperialism, are behind bars in the bourgeois “democracy.”

With the emergence of capitalism there is evidence of an increase in military spending, which means money that is to be allotted for health services, housing, education and green energy are diverted to fighting wars. Arundhati Roy rightly said, “Once weapons were manufactured to win wars; now wars are manufactured to sell weapons.”

This is a direct consequence of capitalism, which is imperial and undemocratic in its very nature. When “intellectuals” say capitalism gifted us democracy, there is no need to believe them. Political democracy was won by people who fought for it; and that fight will follow through until we reach economic and social democracy through socialism.

Left Above: Proletarian democracy  
*'We Will Fulfil the Plans of the Great Works'*

