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FORWARD

#24

A YOUNG VOICE FOR SOCIALISM



Understanding the Limerick Soviet - Rewritten History - What's next? - Remembering Lenin

1917 2017 CELEBRATING THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION



‘Today, the attack on the history of revolution is no less restrained than it has ever been: We find the Romanov Tsars are being rehabilitated and even canonised by the Orthodox church in the year 2000, warnings about the evils of violence are more pronounced than ever.’

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End of Year Report

The past year has been one of growth and new energy for the Connolly Youth Movement, as events and successes set a confidently growing momentum. A new branch has come into being in Mullingar and membership has increased all over the six counties with potential new branches in Ballymena and Newcastle, showing the appeal for revolutionary politics exists on both sides of the partition as youth feel the squeeze of health services under attack and the continuing atrophy of career prospects and educational opportunity led by twin neoliberal regimes.

Music has proven an important medium for political expression and rallied young workers and students in an environment of celebration rather than despair. Anti-Fascist music nights have drawn great receptions both in Dublin and Cork, as the Connolly Youth Movement made its stance of opposition to national chauvinism,

xenophobia, and politically sanctioned and normalised prejudice both at home and abroad. At the Spailpin Fanach in Cork, the movement joined veteran activists in celebrating the 100th anniversary of the October Revolution in recital and song.

The housing crisis fomented by the policies of Fianna Fail and Fine Gael has overseen an unprecedented surge in the number of rough sleepers. It has forced students into a precarious and unwinnable fight with unscrupulous landlords and cynical rent hikes. The CYM has answered this situation in Cork with the expropriation of a derelict property near UCC to house young workers and students in crisis. This campaign has met with intimidation by the authorities but also broad popular support from the people of the city. This is the beginning of a widespread campaign to develop organic structures of collective ownership to exist parallel with capitalism, laying the first foundations for democratic spaces to supplant it.

The Connolly Youth Society at University College Cork has been the source of exciting events, including a talk given by the Cuban Ambassador Dr. Hermes Herrera Hernández which was attended by over 100 people, as well as continuing film screenings and educational discussions on a range of topics. This theme of bringing

revolutionary ideas and lively debate to campus will be continued in 2018 with more prominent speakers and topical films to come. The Dublin branch of the movement has enjoyed success with monthly screenings, beginning with I, Daniel Blake, which have stoked interest in anti-capitalist politics in the capital. The Belfast branch has multiple forthcoming events, including participating in anti-fascist counterprotest to the ethnonationalist sect Britain First, as well as Information sessions to broadcast the presence and activity of the Connolly Youth Movement to a wider audience.

The Connolly Youth Movement has ended its first phase of activity since its refoundation in the early noughties. The organisation has ended this period of regrowth and consolidation, and regained a firm footing with membership and activity across the island. Once again, the CYM is foremost in the minds of young people as they look for support in their confrontations with a ruling class totally deaf to their concerns and intent on maximising their exploitation. This rising trend is a reflection of the growing disillusionment of a generation abandoned by the state, the first to enter life more disadvantaged and more precariously employed than the

generation before it. Our movement has faced challenges in establishing itself, but has now come into its role as one of the primary groups in Ireland defending the interests of young workers and students. The CYM has shown its firm militant tradition was not ephemeral, but will continue as long as there are committed socialists

within it. As community-based activism and trade union politics return to the fore and the efforts of the movement are tempered by experience, impact will grow exponentially. The Connolly Youth Movement rejects career politics, opportunism and the political compromise that has failed us and led

to our current powerlessness in the face of multinational corporations and absent representation. As we prepare for the work ahead, we remember the words of Joe Hill – Don't Mourn, Organise!
FT

Ireland

The Limerick Soviet

Celebrating 100 years of the October Revolution gives us cause to reflect on our own national history and in particular the achievements of Irish workers engaged in collective struggle such as those of the Limerick Soviet of 1919. Although it only lasted 14 days, the Limerick Soviet left a rippling impression on the consciousness of the Irish working class. It was the first of nearly 100 soviets inspired by the October Revolution to take hold in Ireland between 1919 to 1923, each with their own aims and unique circumstances to contend with.

In 1919 the occupying British Army, in an attempt to target those involved in IRA activities, declared martial law in the city of Limerick. This forced residents to apply for and be granted RIC passes in order to enter and leave the city, effectively keeping them hostage.

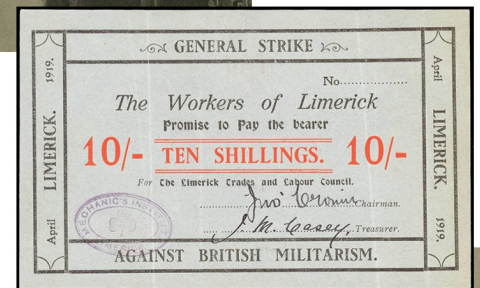
At this time the Limerick Trades and Labour Council encompassed 35 unions and represented most of the workers in Limerick. They were outraged at the compelling of their members to pass through military check points to go to and from work and made a decision to take a stand

against the martial law. The Council announced a general strike and within less than a day almost every business in Limerick was closed due to striking workers.

During the strike, the soviet controlled food distribution and prices and produced their own currency which was widely accepted by Limerick businesses. Shops were issued with permits to open at assigned times and posters displaying the fixed prices of goods were hung in public places, with the threat of action against profiteers. There was not one case of looting during the fourteen days. Pubs were kept closed but, by order of the strike committee, cinemas remained open.

The soviet did not seize any of the private businesses of Limerick, instead working with the shop owners, dictating opening hours and what food to make available. The level of cooperation was strong, with those who didn't cooperate faced with the revoking of their opening permits or shortening of their hours. As John Cronin, one of the strike committee, declared: "The necessary steps have been taken to ensure a sufficient supply of food for the people...."

While the Limerick Soviet didn't inspire revolution on a national scale, in only 14 days it succeeded in getting support from the majority of people of Limerick, keeping a mass strike strong




despite mixed reactions from outside the city, as well as ensuring the people were supplied with food and essentials throughout a military blockade. The soviet also won an easing of the British military checkpoints. They proved the ability of ordinary working class people to organise, self govern and hold positions of strength and do so with the needs of the people as a foremost concern.

For 14 days the workers controlled the fourth largest city in Ireland, armed only with a vision of a better world and an unwavering belief in their power when united as a class. The achievements of the Limerick Soviet in just 14 days are a reminder to us all to believe in our ability as workers. Men perish but principles live.

EUROPE 1917

February 1917 - The February Revolution begins with strikes, demonstrations, and mutinies in Petrograd (modern day Saint Petersburg). Czar Nicholas II abdicates and a Provisional Government is formed.

March 1917 - Petrograd Soviet is founded as a representative body of the city's workers and soldiers.

 October 1917 - Workers and soldiers criticized the provisional government and its actions. Lenin's 'Bolsheviks' led their forces in the uprising in Petrograd, the insurrection was mostly bloodless as workers occupied industries and soldiers abandon the orders of the Russian Provisional Government. Bolsheviks take control of government.

 November 1917 - Bolsheviks take Moscow and continue to grow in Russia.

 December 1917 - Finland declares independence and begins the Finnish Civil war.

 1918 - The Red Guards' (paramilitary units of the Finnish labour movement) strongholds in southern Finland.

 January 1918 - Proclamation of a sovereign Ukrainian state with the assistance of German and Austro-Hungarian Empires. Ukraine becomes a protectorate of the German Empire and also erupts in civil war.

 March 1918 - German / Austro-Hungarian advances into Russia during WWI.

March 1918 - Bolsheviks control Russia and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, between Germany and Russia, is signed and takes Russia out of World War I. It also demands Russia grants independence to Finland, Estonia, Livonia, Courland, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine.

June 1918 - Russian civil war begins. Anti-Bolshevik groups included monarchists, militarists, and foreign nations. Collectively, they were known as the Whites while the Bolsheviks were known as the Reds.


 1918/1919 - White advances during the civil war.

May 1918 - Following a German invasion, the Conservative 'White Guards' defeat the Red Guards in Finland and become a protectorate of the German Empire.

 June 1918 / November 1919 - WWI Czech prisoners-of-war join the whites and capture much of the trans-siberian railway.

July 1918 - Lenin orders the execution of the former royal family near Yekaterinburg.

November 1918 - German and Austro-Hungarian forces lose the first world war.

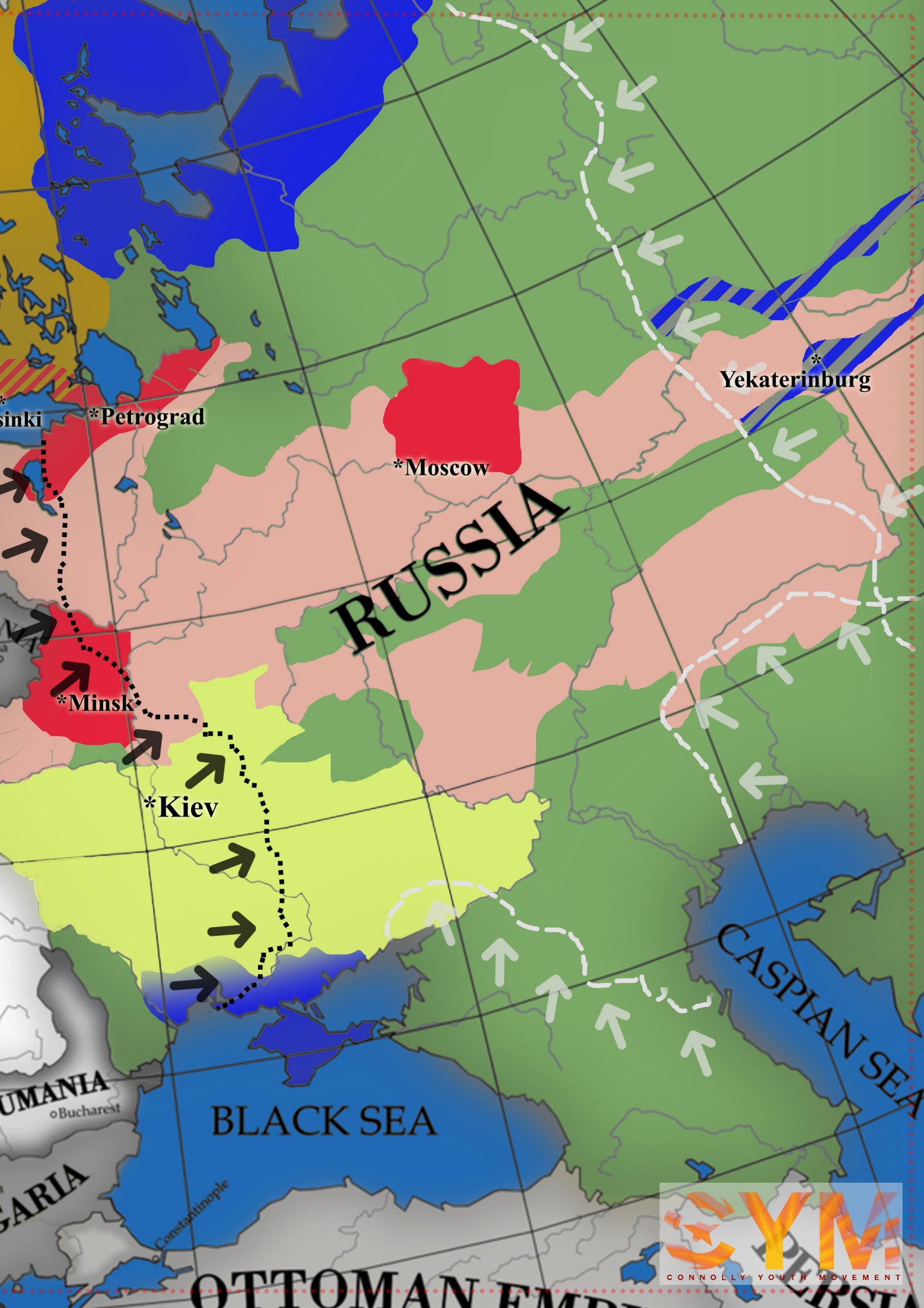
 1919/1920 - Allied forces (Britain, France, Italy, the United States etc) invade and occupy parts of Russia and support The Whites during the Civil War.

December 1919 - Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine founds the Ukrainian Soviet government.

April 1920 - Poland invades the Soviet Ukraine.

November 1920 - Remaining White/Allied forces are defeated and evacuated from the Crimea.

March 1921 - Polish forces are pushed out of the Ukraine and back to Warsaw, the Treaty of Riga is signed and ends the Russian Civil War. Ukraine becomes a founding member of the Soviet Union.



*Minsk

*Petrograd

*Moscow

*Yekaterinburg

RUSSIA

*Minsk

*Kiev

ROMANIA
Bucharest

BULGARIA

Constantinople

BLACK SEA

CASPIAN SEA

OTTOMAN EMPIRE



1917-2017

1917 Lives

“We have the right to be proud that to us fell the good fortune of beginning the building of the Soviet State and, by doing so, opening a new chapter in the history of the world”.
Vladimir Lenin

The foundations of the world, of Empire and of colony trembled underneath the march of the Petrograd proletariat. As the red flag flew over Petrograd, so too was it hoisted over towns, villages and cities in the former Russian Empire. The spirits of the people were raised, a new way of life became possible. When we, as young communists look back upon this momentous part of history, what do we see? What do we feel in our hearts and minds? Not just the new opportunities seized by the Soviet workers, but an array of historical moments and possibilities; a world of raised and redefined aspirations.

Imagine the moment that Petrograd became liberated from the yoke of capitalism, imagine what the colonial and oppressed people of the world felt as the Soviet Republic grew. Imagine the slave in Africa. What did the poor peasant farmer in Latin America think? The news of the Revolution spread far and wide. Within weeks, workers all over the world were ushering in the birth of the Revolution and its ideals. Congratulations, marches, rallies, demonstrations sought to revel in the potentiality of a new world. So when we stand in

Ireland and look back across a hundred years, how must we feel? Many are mourning, but lamentation is for the dead and I say the torch we carry has flickered but never failed.

Let us celebrate the joy that the October Revolution brought to the peoples of the world. Let us celebrate the ideas of the great thinker Lenin and his contributions on the entire redevelopment of humanity. Let us celebrate the new ideals which continue, to this day, serve as an inspiration for a better, and more beautiful and just world.

The October Revolution, or as John Reed defined it ‘Ten Days That Shook the World’ brought the proletariat into a head on confrontation with global capital. Immediately after the revolution the Communist Party of the Soviet Union sought about smashing the passive and weak Second International through the formation of a new international body: the Comintern, or Third International. Yet it was not just dreams and aspirations that the Soviet Republic gave to the world, it was tangible and practical aid, knowledge and assistance. The Bolsheviks took their cause as seriously internationally as they did

domestically. Establishing training institutes such as the International Lenin School the Comintern actively promoted the development of communist parties everywhere and the struggle for world Socialism. This included delegates from Ireland, for whom the twin struggles for a people's republic were indelibly linked.

The October Revolution and the lessons we draw from it are not simply lessons of economics or statistics to draw upon but also a love for life and humanity unlike we have ever experienced before. Imagine, imagine! The centenary breathes new energy into the historic objectives of the Connolly Youth Movement and our desire to smash the oppressive institutions upheld by the establishment parties in Ireland. We must do what the people around the world did in 1917 and continue to do, learn.

History, however, has been written and the Soviet Union and the October Revolution are relegated to obsolescence in the dominant narrative of 1991. Now it is for us to write the future of the Communist movement in Ireland and abroad. Even if the red flag no longer flies over

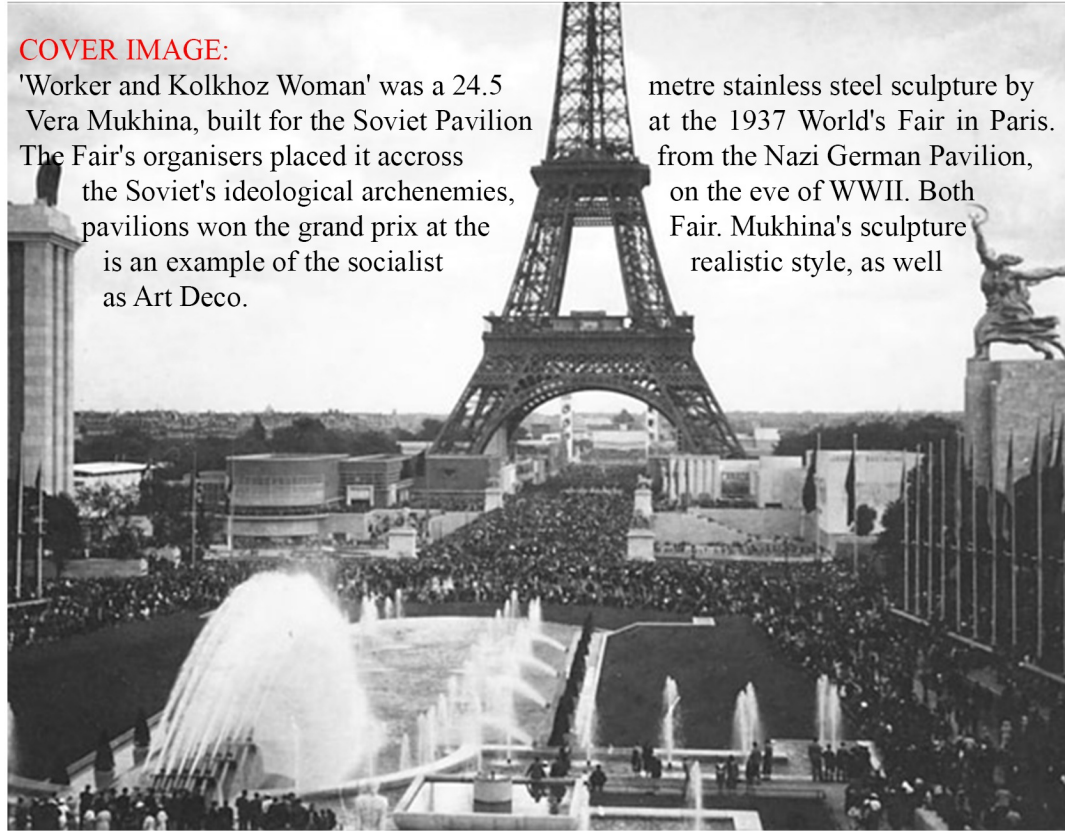
Moscow, it can still fly in Ireland. The Irish Communist movement, led by the Communist Party of Ireland and the Connolly Youth Movement will continue to mobilize around the guiding principles of Marxism Leninism, we will continue to do battle with the forces of capitalism and we will continue to struggle for the liberation of our communities and our people. The path opened by the blazing surge of their vision has not been buried, but remains open to every traveller willing to pursue it. We, as prisoners, have seen a glimpse of freedom's light.

“I suddenly realised that the devout Russian people no longer needed priests to pray them into heaven. On earth they were building a kingdom more bright than any heaven had to offer, and for which it was a glory to die.” John Reed, author of *10 Days that Shook the World*. A.H

COVER IMAGE:

'Worker and Kolkhoz Woman' was a 24.5 metre stainless steel sculpture by Vera Mukhina, built for the Soviet Pavilion. The Fair's organisers placed it across the Soviet's ideological archenemies, pavilions won the grand prix at the is an example of the socialist as Art Deco.

metre stainless steel sculpture by at the 1937 World's Fair in Paris. from the Nazi German Pavilion, on the eve of WWII. Both Fair. Mukhina's sculpture realistic style, as well



Histories of a Revolution

On the eve of the anniversary of the centenary of the Russian Revolution, the history of that revolution and the development of the Soviet Union remain crucial flashpoints in our ideological battle. To understand the significance of this battle, we must not only revisit and retell our history, we must also ask how that history is being remembered and retold by others.

Women demanding bread lead 50,000 people on strike, a proclamation is read from the steps of the GPO, shots are fired in the town of Lexington and the Bastille is stormed. Each of these events would spark a revolution and fundamentally alter the destinies of their state and even the world. In

addition, these events have entered the national mythologies of each nation and just as importantly these events are no longer merely facts from history, they have attained the status of historical facts.

What distinguishes a historical fact from any other, argues E.H. Carr in his influential “What is History?” is not the truth or falsity of that fact (although truth is always hoped for) but rather whether that fact becomes part of the narrative of the past a historian creates. Thus, for instance, while any number of people could have read documents aloud in Dublin on the 24th of April 1916, only one such oration has attained the status of a historical fact. Indeed, the popular narrative of history is built on the scaffold of carefully chosen historical facts and the inclusion or exclusion of one event or another informs our perception of the past. Nowhere is this

more exemplified than in our popular understanding of history relayed through commodified multimedia.

Let us compare the different dominant narratives on the American and French revolutions. The French revolution is invariably associated with the Terror and violence of the period. It is presented as Domenico Losurdo argues in his “War and Revolution” as the taking hold of a vicious disease of radicalism. It is suggested that mild reforms would have better served the people’s needs and that the bloodshed was both unnecessary and unforgivable. In contrast to this picture of darkness, the nearly contemporaneous event across the Atlantic is almost without exception, portrayed as a righteous moral struggle against an imperial overlord. In this case, not only is the violent action of the revolutionaries not condemned, it is lionised, and the

instigators are awarded the highest standing in US history. Now, those who wring their hands over the violent methods of the French revolutionaries are nowhere to be found. There is never a suggestion that the Americans might have better or more justly realised their aims by pleading their case or by following a path of non-violent protest.

Tellingly, the popular narratives surrounding both these revolutions, diminish the importance of, or even outright ignore several major influences on the course of these events. The French, who had just overthrown an absolute monarch, soon found their nation invaded by almost all the major European powers (something which would recur in the Russian experience). It is hardly surprising that such an atmosphere would require strong and unyielding leadership. Moving to America, we see that there was little fear of reprisal and no subsequent invasion after the revolutionary war. This relative safety however, did not prevent reprisals against the loyalist population there, many of whom had their property seized and were forced to flee to Canada (something which would shock our liberal historians when the Whites were forced to do likewise). Furthermore, while the French fought



for liberty for all, the Americans fought largely to strengthen their brutal hold over the thousands of men and women they held in slavery. The American victory however, not only meant that slavery would continue on a devastating scale for decades to come, it also sealed the faith of the native population of the continent.

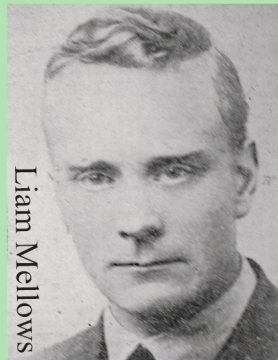
Today, the attack on the history of revolution is no less restrained than it has ever been: We find the Romanov Tsars are being rehabilitated and even canonised by the Orthodox church in the year 2000, warnings about the evils of violence are more pronounced than ever. This attack has also recently become focused on our own history in Ireland. The same techniques and selective emphases are being employed here to discredit the 1916 Rising and its ideals. The establishment has begun constructing the narrative that the events of that fateful year were an unfortunate folly and the entire episode was a wasteful bloodshed. This interpretation is being built through the downplaying of the horrors of imperial rule in Ireland, through equating the victims and perpetrators of tyranny (most recently in the shameful wall in Glasnevin) and by asserting that we would have gained independence in a manner similar to Canada had we just been patient. (Oddly enough, no one ever suggests that the Americans should simply have waited or petitioned the crown for their nation's freedom).

The stakes of the ideological battle over our past have perhaps never been higher. In order to reassert our history and to defend the revolutionary tradition, we must challenge these attempts to rewrite the past. The task that faces us must be pursued in a comprehensive, consistent and above all disciplined manner. Our task is not to bury ourselves in trivial debates over minor historical details, but rather it is to build the grand sweep of our historical narrative so that we may once again instil the revolutionary ideal in our class. J.M

Our Republic is the People's Republic: Ireland's Second Revolution

As centenaries peeter out around us in a stagnant politics beset by reactionary forces, we are faced with the burden of two unrealised legacies. Both bear an identical promise which has been obscured beneath the weight of decades of historical revisionism and the murk of societies which have been constructed in the interests of sellouts. That promise, as articulated by Liam Mellows, is the ownership of the nation by the people of the nation. The meagre response generated by the commemorations for the one hundredth anniversaries of the Irish and Russian revolutions reflects not the failure of these projects, but the success of their systematic erasure by the projects of the gombeen classes which followed. The fight for a new social as well as political order, first given body by the Irish Citizen Army and carried on by the IRA, has been usurped by a political caste which inherited the institutions and culture of an unwanted state founded to protect the interests of the wealthy from a growing popular threat.

We see the attempt to control the aftermath of great betrayals both in Ireland and Russia. Vladimir Putin, despite supporting the October congress of the World Federation of Democratic Youth, states it should "avoid politicization" and operate under "humanitarian values". Micheál Martin lays a wreath on the grave of a fallen socialist Republican martyr. The power of these memories has been incorporated into a dominant inclusivity and neutralized in the process. While Leo Varadkar raises red poppies for the British army, Micheál Martin can also sing the praise of Liam Mellows. Both men



together represent parties which have overseen the greatest expansion of the power of business and curtailment of the power of labour in Irish history. The tricolour and union jack can fly side by side in a beautiful gesture of peaceful co-existence of views, all while families are torn from their homes to live in one-room accommodation akin to the tenements Mellows gave his life to end.

Confusion and uncertainty set the order of the day when the anxiety and hardship of the people is disconnected from its source in the economic organisation of the country. There is no identifiable centre for them to focus their frustration against, while the words of those who fought for an alternative cannot give them hope when they have been stolen from the dispossessed to sit in the mouths of the powerful. In the spirit of breaking this paralysis we must reassert the authority of Mellows in its first context: “It would be folly to destroy English tyranny in order to erect a domestic tyranny that would need another revolution to free the people”. After his death, that tyranny became a reality and, with the support of the church and his erstwhile comrades, it

evolved into the society we now find ourselves in. Only by restoring the revolutionary standards of the liberators of the past to their true purpose – the destruction of a state unrecognisable and alien to the people – can we build a solution to the stasis we suffer under.

The lack of a strong labour movement today is not simply the consequence of social partnership. It is a consequence of a long and steady alteration of economic policy to ensure the precarity of work in Ireland and the delocalisation of responsibility. The ruling parties, instead of pursuing a policy of national industrial development that would allow them to leech directly from the workers, instead instituted a policy of foreign investment which allows them to act as the mediators for the exchange of Irish labour to multinationals. This combination of privatisation and deregulation has shifted the obvious presence of a native capitalist class into vague network of global capital. Fine Gael today governs with 17% of the mandate of the voting public. Fianna Fail supports them, and through the advantages of the status quo they engrained is poised to return

to power and continue the uninterrupted decline of the living conditions of the Irish working class and its loss of a dignified livelihood. This carefully crafted inertia is the product of an interplay between Fine Gael and Fianna Fail as ruling parties through almost a hundred years of civil and economic development.

This combination of factors sets our current predicament: there is no path of reform open to a society which is only held afloat by a crass system of patronage. The break that recovers the future from the past can only come through the precise strike of revolution, by action which does not take account of a rule of law instituted to uphold decades of accumulated inequality. This is the kernel of the October Revolution – the combination of all means, crystallized in organised and dedicated activism, to replace rather than reform. The counter-revolutions of 1921 and 1991 have left us with one central lesson. To construct a new history, you must first do away with the old one. They had no shame in doing so. Our task is now to turn their own methods against them and initiate the road to a second republic: a people’s republic. F.T

Red Bloc in Manchester

Sunday afternoon in Manchester, October 2017, the sky an eternal slate of grey, the streets a sea of glorious scarlet red. Inexplicably, the Tories had decided to hold their annual

conference in a city which greeted their arrival with the draping of hang the Tories banner from a bridge over the river Irwell. Their previous visits had been met with volleys of eggs and had made necessary the erection round the conference venue of huge metal ‘peace lines’ to protect the anxious conference delegates from the locals. This year 30,000 anti-austerity

protesters took to the streets. In pride of place in the middle of it all, was the Red Bloc, a hundred strong mass of militant youthful energy. Bearing red flags, flares, a soundsystem blaring a mixture of Mancunian classics and 90’s house and a contingent from FC United of Manchester with a street wide banner reading, ‘forward reds.’ The sight of this noisy brigade clearly

captured the imaginations of the nations paparazzi as their exploits filled the pages of Monday's papers including the Mirror, the M.E.N and even the Daily Heil. Various news sources called the Red Bloc anarchists, stalinists and, libellously, anti-brexiteers. Never one to let slanders pass I'd like to set the record straight on what the Red Bloc actually is.

The Red Bloc was an idea borne out of a desire to address a perennial image problem on the left. Sick of protests which were simply a dirge, a dutiful meander, an exercise in paper seller avoidance, the organisers of the first red bloc decided that they wanted something more eye catching, inspiring and fun. It would seek to do away with the petty divisions on the left which led to protesters chanting competing Trotskyist slogans calling on the Trades Union Congress to do something it was patently never going to contemplate. It would unite communists, anarchists, anti-fascists and left Labour folk into one bloc whose only proviso would be that you must be a socialist and willing to carry the red flag.

This simple idea opened up the bloc to many who would have balked at the prospect of making such a visible show of one's politics. The distinctive bolshiness with which the bloc wore it's heart on it's sleeve turned on its head the usual dynamic of protesters looking like they are almost ashamed to be there. Instead it inspired sing-alongs of indie standards like, "rip it up and start again," outside Downing Street, or, "there is a light that never goes out," while tens of flares blazed away outside Manchester's GMEX, the symbolism and poignancy of each moment lost on no one who was there.

The experience of marching in the Red Bloc has a galvanising effect for those involved. Not only has it strengthened ties of friendship but has forged real working relationships across diverse sections of the left who would rarely come into contact without it. It walks that fine line between respectability and mobbish militancy, a toxic mix that can give the impression of being on the precipice of taking over while avoiding the hassle of arrest. These relationships have spawned other blocs in other

cities as well as working class self-defence clubs in London and Greater Manchester.

That some of these projects intersect holds real promise for the future too. The organic link between sports clubs, anti-fascist brawlers, football fans and those involved in the murky world of fighting for socialism in the Labour Party is a concrete expression of what many commentators have called building the social movement. A real mass base for socialism that is self-assured, ambitious and proudly proletarian.

I'd urge everyone who believes such a mass base to be necessary to contribute to either the next UK Red Bloc or starting their own. All you need is some drive and the cheek to ask every socialist you know to chip in a few quid for flags and flares, a few folk who are handy with a sewing machine also don't go amiss. If you need a hand don't hesitate to get in touch with us in Manchester as we're hopeful the Red Bloc will bear bountiful fruit. So don't wait around, do your bit for the cause and as the old anthem goes, "though cowards flinch and traitors sneer, we'll keep the red flag flying here." JR

WWW.CYM.IE

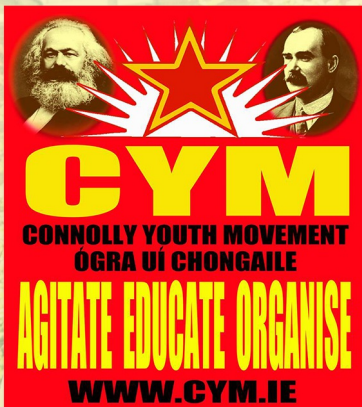
The Connolly Youth Movement is a youth organisation committed to fighting for democracy, freedom and unity in this country. The CYM takes part in the struggle to build socialism in Ireland and everywhere around the globe. Since 2008 the crisis in Ireland has deepened which has seen many talented and gifted young people leave this island in search of a better life abroad. We as a youth organisation are fundamentally opposed to any government using its youth as a safety valve in trying to ease economic and political tensions. So we are determined to stay and fight the injustice brought on this and future generations.

Working with progressive movements to develop young workers' and students' consciousness in their own proud history and culture. As a member of the World Federation of Democratic Youth we struggle in opposition to imperialism and for liberation around the globe of all oppressed peoples, including ourselves.

The CYM has branches in Dublin, Belfast, Cork and Mullingar.

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CONNOLLY YOUTH MOVEMENT