



# How we can apply lessons from Soviet to today's changing times



■ In the second of a two-part piece, former Solidarity councillor **Cian Prendiville** looks at the lessons learnt from the events of 100 years ago

The Limerick Soviet captivates people for many reasons. The image of tanks on the streets of Limerick. The idea of a democratically-controlled police force patrolling the streets with red armbands. And of course, the fact the strike committee issued its own currency.

But there is another reason why this story interests people: It stands out like a sore thumb from the usual story we are told about Irish history from 1916 to 1923.

Too often this period is presented as a straightforward march from the Easter Rising, to the War of Independence, Treaty, partition and civil war.

The choice, we are told, was British domination, or rule by Irish bosses backed up by the clergy.

The Limerick Soviet speaks to an alternative choice, a 'Road Not Taken', the road of the 'Workers' Republic' as James Connolly called it.

## Workers' Republic

In calling for a Workers' Republic, Connolly wanted a new Ireland that would be free from the domination of not just British imperialism, but also Irish capitalism.

He was an internationalist, rather than a nationalist, and argued that the working class must lead the Irish Revolution and bring about a socialist transformation of society and the economy as part of that revolution.

This idea inspired people like Sean Dowling, who was described as the "philosophical



A century on: The Soviet strike committee, pictured here in 1919, after the two-week strike period

ical begetter of the Limerick Soviet".

Dowling had been a close friend and collaborator of Connolly and was the Limerick organiser of the radical ITGWU trade union in 1919. In this role he organised the Cleves workers, who were the first to come out on strike, and put the issue of a

general strike on the agenda.

More than just Dowling, this was an idea that also had the potential to inspire Protestant workers, such as those who in the years following the Limerick Soviet elected avid socialists in Belfast. It was an idea which perhaps could have united the working class and avoided

not just partition and sectarianism but helped to inspire similar revolts in Britain and across Europe.

Tragically, this was the road not taken. It was the O'Briens, who won the leadership of the unions and the Labour Party. And they insured that rather than the workers movement leading

the Irish Revolution, it was left to Sinn Fein.

## Limerick Soviet 2.0

Those who wish to make change today must study history, or be doomed to repeat its mistakes. Across the globe there is a rising movement against inequality, exploita-

tion and oppression. Once again in these movements the idea of socialism has gained an echo. Socialists have been at the forefront of organising the unorganised, intervening in every struggle against oppression. Now, as 100 years ago, the workers movement should take the lead in these movements, and unify all the oppressed on a socialist programme as only it can.

To do that we must learn the lesson of the Limerick Soviet. The O'Brien's of today, the conciliators and careerists, cannot be left in charge of the trade union and labour movement.

The Dowlings of the coming battles cannot be left isolated, and unconnected, we must build revolutionary organisations, linked together into a national and international party, to study our history and develop our theory, and ensure that Limerick Soviet 2.0 succeeds and spreads.

To paraphrase Connolly: Our demands are moderate: we only want the earth!

Part two of a two part piece, part one was printed in last week's Limerick Leader and is available on our website. Cian Prendiville is an activist in Limerick, a member of the Socialist Party and the Limerick Soviet Centenary Committee. He has just released a five-part documentary podcast 'Bottom Dog - The Story of the Limerick Soviet', which is available on [limericksociety.ie](http://limericksociety.ie) and in all podcast apps. The podcast tells the story of the Limerick Soviet through interviews, re-enactments and dramatisation.

## COURT BRIEFS

### Man to face trial for assaulting pensioner

A MARRIED father-of-four who is accused of assaulting an elderly man last summer is to be prosecuted on indictment before the circuit court.

Jonathan O'Brien, 31, of Sharwood Estate is charged with assaulting the 71-year-old causing him harm at Gortboy, Newcastle West on August 12, 2018. It is alleged the victim was kicked and punched during the incident.

After confirming the DPP's directions, Inspector Andrew Lacey requested an adjournment of the case to facilitate the preparation of a book of evidence.

Solicitor Enda O'Connor asked that his client's bail conditions be varied for two weeks late next month to allow him to travel abroad on a family holiday.

Insp Lacey said gardai "could not accede" to the application given the seriousness of the charge before the court.

However, granting the application, Judge John King commented: "If he was going to skip the country, he would have done so already".

### Security guard was not insured to drive

Alexsandras Zalmonas, 39, of Fearann Ri, Doughiska, County Galway was fined €250 for driving without insurance at Ballycannon, Croagh, on July 18, 2018.

Judge Mary Larkin was told the defendant, who works as a security guard, had just bought the car for his wife and that he had insured it the following morning.

While commenting that the law is "perfectly clear" the judge noted the circumstances and said she would exercise her discretion and would not impose a disqualification.

### Fined €300 for being a nuisance to gardai

A MARRIED father-of-three was fined €300, at Newcastle West Court, after he was convicted of public order offences relating to an incident at the Square in the town on St Patrick's Day.

Inspector Andrew Lacey said Daniel Donovan, 44, of Cluain Arra, Newcastle West was abusive and tried to intervene when gardai went to arrest another man following a large row outside a local takeaway.

The incident, he added, happened shortly before 10pm on March 17, 2018.

Solicitor Michael O'Donnell said his client, who is in receipt of social welfare, had consumed a lot of alcohol and that it "didn't react well" with medication he was taking at time.

Judge John King commented that Mr Donovan is "hardly a shining example to his kids"