

SPANISH CIVIL WAR MEMORIAL EVENT, TOLLCROSS COMMUNITY CENTRE

This is the talk Alice Bowman, Edinburgh RIC gave to the Spanish Civil War Memorial Event, in the Tollcross Community Centre.

I just wanted to start by saying how happy I am to have been invited to speak at such a fantastic event remembering the Scottish men and women that went to fight against fascism in the Spanish civil war.

I must admit that I don't know that much about the Spanish Civil war, and I'm not going to stand here and pretend that I do. Despite my gaps in knowledge, I think we can all learn and draw inspiration from the men and women that left their homes here in Scotland to fight for a truly internationalist cause: the fight against fascism. Their drive and determination to create a better world society based on the principles of equality, freedom and solidarity is something which we must continue.

When I think about the politics of Europe in the 1930s, it is easy to see the distinct polarisation of political opinion; from the growth of the labour movement in Britain, to the rise of fascism in Germany, Italy and Spain, to the Stalinism in Russia. We can draw parallels with the Europe of the 1930s and the Europe of 2013. Mass unemployment, mass poverty and inequality are all rising across the continent. Unfortunately so is fascism. Right now the Golden Dawn Fascist party hold 18 seats in the Greek parliament, fascism is on the edge of Europe. Not only is it there, but it is on our doorsteps. The Scottish Defence League are gaining a footing within a section of the Scottish working class.

Like our comrades from the 1930s, it is our role to provide an alternative, a real socialist alternative. An alternative which condemns the racist ideologies that scapegoat ethnic minorities and immigrants for issues like unemployment and poverty. An alternative that provides a counter culture, a counter ideology against the capitalist thinking that penetrates the working class, pushing reactionary views like racism and sexism. I see this alternative as the campaign for radical Scottish independence, a grassroots campaign which fights against austerity, against imperialism and for a better, more equal Scotland. A Scotland whose foreign policy sides with the oppressed and never the oppressor.

Scottish independence provides us a unique opportunity to put progressive ideas back on the table, so we can shape the Scotland that we want to see. From disarming nuclear weapons that sit in our waters, to reclaiming the welfare state; providing for those in need, to solidarity with those oppressed people across the world in campaigning against foreign war and implementing a full boycott, divestment and sanctions on the apartheid and racist state of Israel. We can demand equal rights for immigrants and asylum seekers, demand full equality for women and LGBTQ persons.

The austerity measures imposed on Greece could determine the state of austerity on the rest of the world. In Spain in the 1930s internationalists had to fight against fascism, in 2013 we have to fight against austerity. On the 11th of June George Papandreou the ex Prime Minister of Greece, the man that pushed such destructive austerity measures is coming to Edinburgh. The Greek community have called out asking for people to mobilize, we must respond to this, showing our solidarity with the Greek people. This is an opportunity where we can again show our vision for Scotland's future. By taking to the streets when Papandreou comes, we can show that an independent Scotland will be active in the European labour movement, pushing working class unity on a global level.

The Radical Independence Campaign has a vision for the future. A vision where the working class aren't punished through austerity measures. A vision where wealth isn't in the hands of the global elite, but is redistributed to all. A vision where equality is established and maintained. A vision where international solidarity is at the heart of our foreign policy.

Another Scotland is Possible. And we must ensure that this becomes a reality.