

Two Renegades Speak Truth To Europe

Clare Daly (Video clip) Listening to the relentless Russiaphobia in this place, why are people surprised that Russia sees no point in engaging with the EU? I'm as happy as anybody else to stand up for anybody's rights, including Navalny's. But let's be honest about him. He's a vicious, anti-immigrant racist on maybe four percent of the support rallying hundreds and thousands in cities of millions. Hardly a mass movement. And we wouldn't be discussing him at all if he'd been arrested anywhere else other than in Russia. Meanwhile, Julian Assange has been incarcerated for almost 10 years for exposing US war crimes. We can't mention his name. Tomorrow, Pablo Hasel, a Catalan rapper, is going to prison for his lyrics. Where's the call to sanction Spain? Tomorrow, sixty two year old Clare Grady is going to prison in West Virginia for her role in the non-violent ploughshare action against Trident. Where is the demand to break off links with the US or the outcry about the hundreds of people arrested in this city on a truck protest a week ago? Nowhere, because this isn't about human rights. This is a geopolitical agenda against Russia, fuelled by a military industrial complex who need an enemy to justify their millions. Of course, your right to go to Russia, we should be engaged in dialogue, not war.

Ross Clare Daly, Mick Wallace, welcome to Renegade Inc.

Clare Daly Thanks a million.

Ross Clare, hard hitting stuff, what you're getting at there is the abject hypocrisy at the heart of what is so-called defence spending?

Clare Daly Yeah, it's it's absolutely incredible for us. I mean, there has been a seismic change in the European institutions. Now, for the first time, in this budget going forward, we have direct public money being spent on defence. And obviously with more and more billions being pumped into this, they need an enemy to justify it. And clearly, Russia has been made into that characteristic for that purpose. It's mad stuff really.

Ross Pretty dangerous game, isn't it Mick? Once you start poking the Russian bear, it's not like having a little military skirmish somewhere in the middle east. With these superpowers, things can go badly wrong can't they?

Mick Wallace I would argue that while the sanctions do have some form of impact on the Russian economy, I would think that the Russians are not actually lying awake at night worrying about the EU at the moment. And their statement that, 'you know what, I think we'll just deal with the member states rather than the EU institution as a unit'. And of course, when they say that's what they mean is they mean Germany and France. And people need to remember that the European Union is run by Germany, for Germany and France would be the sidekick. So if Russia continues with a reasonably decent relationship with Germany and France, they won't be overly worried about a lot of the mindless anti Russian rhetoric that's expressed, especially in the parliament. You can see that the Germans were not backing down on Nord Stream 2. Businesses is business, and they want it to happen. And despite an awful lot of pressure from the Americans, a lot of pressure from the east Europeans, a lot of pressure from so-called human rights defenders, they were going ahead with the project hail,

rain or snow. And you're seeing something similar with the investment deal they did with China. Just before Biden came into office, the Biden administration contacted the European Union and said, 'Listen, please, lads hold off. Let's talk about this when Joe gets into office'. But you know what? Germany's biggest trade partner is China. Germany is waiting for nobody and the deal went ahead.

Ross Isn't it interesting that Vladimir Putin said that the US has become an unreliable partner? He's tried and tried and tried to make alliances with them, do deals, and actually has often walked away empty handed. And then more recently, Sergei Lavrov said much the same about the EU. Where does this all end? Because ultimately, you can't reject a multipolar world forever, can you Clare? There's a moment where you have to say we're going to sit down with so-called enemies and make them allies.

Clare Daly Well, you would think so. And that's why we were fully in favour of Josep Borrell going to Russia. Of course he should. He's a diplomat. That's his job. Russia is a key part of the European continent and we should be having good relations with our neighbours. So whose interest is it not to have good relations?

Ross That's a really good question, isn't it? Whose interest is it? We often ask on this programme, cui bono, to whose benefit? To whose benefit is it to keep Russia as the bogeyman?

Clare Daly What we're seeing is a key part of the narrative is being pushed by the military industrial complex who are deeply embedded here in the heart of the European Union. Obviously, we see similar processes in the United States. The European Union is very Atlanticist in its outlook. It tends to follow the United States lead, which we think is really regrettable and ridiculous. But that seems to be where it's coming from. These are the ones benefiting. There's no one else in Europe benefiting from it, that's for sure.

Ross Flying bombers to NATO member Norway. That isn't going to help, is it Mick?

Mick Wallace Hardly, no. I wouldn't blame Putin for feeling that the US and the EU no longer represent as reliable partners. But people forget that last year the Americans spent 740 billion dollars on defence. Now they refused to introduce Medicare for all for their own citizens. And if you're going to turn around your citizens and say to them, sorry, we can't afford to do Medicare for all, but we can afford to spend 740 billion on defence, you have to have some excuse for it. And Russia is one of the main ones at the moment and China is the other one. Now, I mean, we point out on a regular basis that America has been a colonialist project from day one, from the time they wiped out the native indigenous people in America itself, right up to today and US imperialism hasn't really stopped. They haven't really changed their approach. In 1945, there was a financial expert who gave a talk in America and he said to some of the decision makers and he said, 'America today', he said, 'has six percent of the world's people, and we've 35 percent of its wealth. That figure has actually gone down. It's actually less than 5 percent of the world's people now. And he said if you want to maintain 35 percent of the wealth with 5 or 6 percent of the people, he says it ain't going to be easy. And he says you need a very strong military complex. And that hasn't really changed dramatically over the years. The sad part about it for us is that unfortunately, Europe has been too complicit in supporting them. They have turned a blind eye to war crimes and terrible

atrocities where what America does in order to enhance its financial interests around the world. Will it change? Where's it going? I'm an optimist and I actually think that it's got so rotten and so bad that I don't think the European people are going to stay silent forever. You can be assured that the majority of the citizens of Europe, this is not what they want. They actually don't like people's homes being bombed out because they don't like the fact that nearly 40 million people have been made refugees by wars and a lot of them don't like it then when they try and come to Europe to make a living and to survive and to send money home to some family families left behind. Europeans are waking up to the fact that all is not good.

Clare Daly I think they're incredibly well informed. I mean, the response to my speech - it was only a minute and a half - but I had received a massive response from right across Europe of people who can see through the Russiaphobia narrative. I mean, Russia and China are not security threats to Europe. They may be economic rivals, if you like, but they're certainly not security threats. And this is just utter nonsense.

Ross But the consternation that's caused in Washington, supposedly some of it's faux, but this jumping up and down about, for instance, Nord Stream 2, how possibly are they going to derail this when the Germans, the French and others across Europe need that pipeline?

Clare Daly They're not.

Mick Wallace It isn't going to happen. And if you remember, back in 2017 that's when the pressure really started on this. And what happened was Trump threatened to put tariffs on manufactured goods coming from Europe to America, mainly cars, mainly German produced stuff. OK, and the Europeans said, 'please don't do this', right? And one of the bartering chips that Trump had, he said, right, he said, 'I want you to take our liquid natural gas. I want you to take our frack gas and you build plants'. And Europe went ahead and planned to build 13 of these plants. And one of them is actually in Shannon in Ireland, right? It's called the Shannon LNG, which we've been opposed to from day one. This is nuts. You're talking about the filthiest way ever of taking a fossil fuel out of the ground, carrying it 5,000 kilometres across the Atlantic. And instead of actually buying it from our neighbour in Russia where the gas is cleaner and at present it's turning out to be cheaper. The Germans fobbed off Biden a couple of days ago on the Nord Stream 2 and they said, 'listen, remember, even after it's built, we can stop it and we can close it any day.

Ross You talk about Shannon. It dovetails beautifully into our next bit. Talk to us about your story. You've written the book, Coalition of the Unwilling. People don't really know about what's happened outside of Ireland. Tell us about the action that you took regarding weapons, military aircraft, Shannon Airport and your intervention in trying to stop this military adventurism in far flung places?

Clare Daly OK, well, we were both members of the Irish parliament and in 2014, as part of a bigger group of activists who opposed US militarism, and who opposed the use of our civilian airports in Shannon in the west of Ireland. We're supposed to be a neutral country so we don't take sides. The official laws of the country say that any military machinery, airlines, whatever, weapons, anything, can't come through Ireland on the way to war. It's explicitly forbidden. So we have this peculiar arrangement which really started around when US troops were anchored in Germany and they used to return home for the holidays in the summer that

they used to pass through Shannon Airport and nobody really minded that now and again. But the situation changed around the Iraq war and Afghanistan, where the numbers of flights coming across Ireland multiplied to the tune that we've had over 3 million US troops transiting through Shannon Airport on their way to theatres of war in the middle east. And that is absolutely reprehensible anyway. But it's particularly appalling that it's happening in neutral Ireland and people don't know that it's happening. So we basically broke into the airport, climbed over the fence to examine the aircraft, because when we were in the car the day in and day out, we used to raise with our ministers. Why are you not upholding our neutrality? And we were given a ring around between different ministries telling us, 'oh, it's not my job, it's the other fellows job. These civilian planes, military personnel can come through on civilian planes if they get permission'. But then the military planes come through and we're supposed to believe they've no hardware on it. It's utter nonsense. These aircraft and personnel don't fly halfway across the world for nothing. So we broke in to search them because the minister's told us they had no weapons. We believed they had. We proved in the court case that followed our criminal activity, which put a bit of publicity on the issue that that was the case.

Ross Jumping over that fence - and I love this because your first chapter in the book is Renegades - it turns out that you handled it quite well. Clare, you not so much. What happened?

Mick Wallace As you know, I spent my life in the construction industry and I wasn't in an office. I was on site. I was well used to fences of all types.

Ross Yeah, but not with rolling barbed wire or razor wire on it. All you had was a door mat to put on the top of it.

Mick Wallace Listen, we had a fella from Shannon Watch and he made the rope ladder and he got a bit of old carpet to throw over the fence for us so we wouldn't be getting entangled in the barbed wire. So he throws over the carpet, big high fence, throws over the rope ladder. I got over first anyway and it wasn't really a problem. But I was used to climbing stuff. So I was holding the rope ladder down on the inside for Clare and Clare comes up. And of course, she reaches the top, right? And she started to panic a bit anyway, right? She panics and she had a fear of falling back, so she just dives in. She didn't want me to go ahead and search the planes without her. She dives in and she was going to break her neck only she landed on me. Her shoulder met my shoulder. So her head went down past my shoulder. If it hadn't she'd have broken her neck. She was coming fairly fast and she was coming like an arrow.

Clare Daly It's just trying to claim that he saved my life - a slight exaggeration.

Mick Wallace I might not have saved her life but I saved her neck.

Ross Mick, Clare, welcome back to Renegade Inc. So we're at the point in the story where you've just fallen off the top of the barbed wire. You've hit Mick quite hard. You're inside what's called 'air side', the runway side of the airport. You've just committed a criminal offence, but you're highlighting an amazing cause, which is American military flying through Shannon Airport, going off to kill people in far flung places. What happens then when you're air side and you start going across the tarmac?

Clare Daly Well, we decided to be kind of fairly responsible about it. So we put on hi viz vests and we made our way towards this enormous US military plane. We almost made it when the airport police arrived on the scene with the old flashlight on and pulled in front of us and basically put a stop to that. They brought us to the airport terminal where we were arrested by the Garda at that stage and brought to Shannon Town where we were interviewed and released pending charges which were subsequently brought upon us.

Ross You did something really smart with the court case, didn't you, because you turned it on its head? Instead of it being you on trial, what you actually did is put the US military on trial and shone a light on what they were doing - all this nefarious activity through Shannon?

Mick Wallace Yeah, I mean, it brought light to the fact that the Americans have been engaged in wars of this nature for hundreds of years since the formation of their state. And we were bringing light to the fact that the Irish were complicit in helping them do that. But so when we were supposed to be on trial we were well prepared for the trial. We had powerful witnesses, some working in the airport, some peace activists, some people from a law background, because what was happening was actually a breach of international law as well. Not only did we put the American military behaviour on trial, but we also put the hypocrisy of the Irish government on trial. Literally, for years, they had been telling lies about their own complicity in this arrangement.

Clare Daly We were just the figureheads. But the people we assembled as part of our witnesses were absolutely fantastic. Bear in mind, we were in the Irish parliament for years before that, asking questions of the minister for Foreign Affairs, the minister for Transport, the minister for Defence and the minister for Justice, all telling us our neutrality wasn't being breached, that weapons weren't coming through. We even had a witness who had been arrested for stealing a gun off a US military plane. But of course, he could never be charged because there was no guns on it.

Ross Thematically in the book it's absolutely obvious that what you're getting at is the semblance of neutrality. And as you said earlier, Clare, Ireland meant to be a neutral country, actually in practise, it couldn't be further from the truth, could it?

Clare Daly Look, it's bent the knee to US imperialism largely because of the foreign direct investment, which is pretty reprehensible. I mean, we spent 800 years trying to fight British imperialism and then roll over and become basically vassals of the United States, afraid to take any independent stance for fear that we lose this investment. And we prostitute ourselves as a tax haven, actually really as well, to come in on that basis, which I think is crazy. But that's kind of where it sadly comes from.

Ross Let's get to the judgement. What happened then in the court case? Tell us how it panned out.

Clare Daly As Mick says, we had a really good array of witnesses, from airport workers who gave testimony, to seeing weaponry on flights, to seeing strange flights, which they always suspected to be rendition flights, which probably passed through Shannon. We had a journalist who had travelled on the US military plane, and we played the tape of the flight of

the US captain telling the troops to leave their guns on the seats when they go into the terminal. So we proved that side. We also had some activists from the area who would gather testimony over years, legal experts and our own testimony. So the judge heard all that. In fairness to him, he was a district court judge, assembled normally to do a bit on shoplifting or whatever, hearing what he thought was a case on trespass. And it became a 3 day trial with the Geneva Convention and International Law and the Hague Convention and the whole lot. So, look, he played his part in that as well. But he did convict us in the end. We were given a 30 day sentence in lieu of a fine of 2,000 each on each of the counts. We said we weren't going to pay them. We didn't pay them. And then maybe months, a year later, they came looking to arrest us for our 30 day sentence. And that was another story as well.

Ross What happened?

Clare Daly Well, it's quite a long one. But basically Mick went first. He reported at his Garda station and was arrested and brought him to Limerick prison. He had thought he was making an arrangement with the Garda to maybe go down the following week. But he was literally taken off. I was in the Irish parliament, was waiting to meet him for lunch. And the next day it comes on the news that he had been arrested and brought to Limerick prison. So I had to quickly ring my Garda station and say, 'oh, listen, please don't come and take me. My daughter's at school, At least let her know that I'm not going to be home so wait'. So they did, in fairness. So I went home, told her, and reported myself to the Garda station. But by the time I got to the Garda station, Mick had already been sent back because there was too much people in the prison. They don't keep people there for fines. So he was sent back when a special Garda car with two guards on overtime were bringing me to Limerick. A hundred kilometres, we passed on the way and then I had to go back as well. The whole team cost them about 20 grand and they were going mad. We were blamed for that expense as well. But loads of people learnt then that if you don't pay a fine in Ireland and you get a prison sentence, you'll only serve a couple of hours.

Mick Wallace But when I went to the station to arrange to be arrested sometime because I was I was led to believe that that's what I was to do. And they said, we're arresting you now. And I said 'what'? They said, 'we're bringing you down now'. And I said, 'can I get a few clothes, a change of clothes, to bring down with me and a few books. I'm going to be reading all the days. I've got 30 days. I've got a lot of reading to do. I want to go back to my house and get some clothes and books'. And it was a female Garda and a male Garda. And the female says, 'well, I'm going with you to the house'. And I said, 'that's no bother. Come on'. So off we went. We went back to the house and I got a few clothes and I already had a stack of books that I wanted to read. And I got my books and I went down. And when I went down and they brought in and they put a display top on me, took a picture of me in my prison uniform. And they gave me a number and I was all set and I said, 'thirty days'. I said, 'I'm going to miss Christmas now. I said'. And the man says, 'no, no, if there's no trouble', he says, 'you'll get out in 23 days'. I said, 'really, that's brilliant', I said. So, anyway, he says, 'I'm putting you in a cell here now', he says, 'but we have to get a cell ready for you. We have no cell for you', he says, 'but we're trying to get one ready for you. 'So I can put you into this room here', he says, 'for a couple of hours and I'll be back to you', he says, 'when I have you sorted'. So anyway, a few hours later, they let me out.

Ross What can the average EU, UK, Irish citizen do now, from your point of view, to keep pressure on elected officials to stop this absolutely mindless war machine?

Clare Daly I suppose there are so many people already doing it. Like in Ireland, there's opinion poll after opinion poll which says that people want to be neutral. But they've got to vocalise that. I mean, we would work with activist groups at home, certainly around this issue, but also we'd be aware of many of them around Europe who campaigned for peace, for de-militarism and so on. We've just got to keep doing what we're doing. Truth will out eventually. These crimes that are being done in our name are not being done with our support. And I suppose one of the things that we built into the book was we reproduced, for the first time, all the WikiLeaks cables in relation to Ireland. And information is power. So people need to hear what's going on. They need to educate themselves and that can then hold power to account.

Ross You open the book with a quote which says, 'If wars can be started with lies, peace can be started with truth'. And that's from no other than Mr Julian Assange. Mick, are we now at the end of this US strategy of bomb the hell out of the place and see what falls out. Have the EU citizens, the Brits and the Irish had enough?

Mick Wallace It's very hard to say that we're at the end of it. But I think we're entering a new chapter because, as Clare said, the people are becoming better informed. And even in Ireland, the amount of people who became more aware of it because of our trial and because of us getting into the airport in the first place, and the actions of a whole lot of others as well, is making a difference. And people are starting to realise that their governments, who unfortunately they elect, a lot of the time are doing things in their name, which they do not approve of. And as Clare said, the big thing is to get the information out there. The people right across Ireland, England and Europe have got to muster more support. They've got to organise themselves better. They've got to challenge their elected representatives before they elect them and say, listen, we'd like peace, not war.

Clare Daly I think the key area where change has to come about is from the United States itself. And we've seen huge changes there below the surface. But unfortunately, I think experience will tell us that Joe Biden is going to make no difference whatsoever in terms of US militarism. He will carry on the same Democratic or Democrat tradition, which is exactly the same as the Republicans. But it's out of that disaster, I think that the American people themselves will have to challenge those in power and their people have been exposed like never before.

Ross Mick, Clare. That is an amazing interview. I genuinely laughed throughout it. Your actions at Shannon Airport - sensational. The book's amazing. What's the one thing for both of you that made you laugh most when you're trying to scale a fence and then getting nicked on the tarmac to inspect an American military plane and then make a massive political statement?

Clare Daly The funniest thing I found was during the trial, right? So people can see us. They know what we look like and they see the video footage. We have our cute little hi viz jacket somewhere walking through the long grass and Mick's golden curls are flowing in the wind. And this video footage has been shown from the airport cameras in the court case in Ennis.

And the judge then stops the video and says, sorry, 'excuse me, sorry, excuse me, and which one is deputy Wallace? And the whole court nearly collapses? That's my memory anyway, like you know.