

# FORWARD



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# TURNING CRISIS INTO PROFIT

AH, Phort Láirge

It's always been painfully obvious that there is one set of rules for the 99% and another entirely for the rich and powerful. The workers are expected to always be moral and upstanding while the rich are free to exploit, abuse and profit off the suffering of others. The COVID-19 crisis has exposed this clearly. While the rich happily hoard housing, food and medicine for increased profits both during and outside times of crisis, no one bats an eye, however the few cases of working class people attempting to stock up on goods to resell at a higher price has seen widespread and deserved condemnation in the media, shame they wouldn't apply the same standard to the manufacturers of these products. The media is an extension of the capitalist class, owned by it and advancing its interests, and even within the hollow confines of the concept of journalistic integrity, journalists are reared and educated in an increasingly privatised educational system whose culture puts the rich on a pedestal while sneering at social mobility. Is it then any wonder that our media consequently prioritises and lambasts individuals, when as national publications, they should focus on systemic issues?

Even people panic buying toilet paper are ridiculed and laughed at widely all while the rich and powerful make bank off this crisis by stockpiling the vital resources we all need - whether it be the hoteliers payed off to house homeless people who should have houses anyway, the renting of private hospital beds for €115 million per month or using contractors to build emergency response centres. And of course, Varadkar's ideological pedigree is on show when he leapt on the people really exploiting the system - in his mind the poor. The establishment attitude is laid bare as total nonsense when Varadkar's own disregard for the 2m spacing is taken into account. Meanwhile, the classic Irish capitalist narrative of "spongers" and "doleheads" has permeated through society. In the words of Varadkar himself:

*"I have heard stories of people who have asked their employers to lay them off because they would be better off on the €350 payment rather than maybe working 20 hours a week for 11 euros, y'know, do the maths yourself, and I would just say to say to anyone who's thinking that, we are all in this together and nobody in any walk of life should seek to be better off or seek to make a profit out of this crisis."*

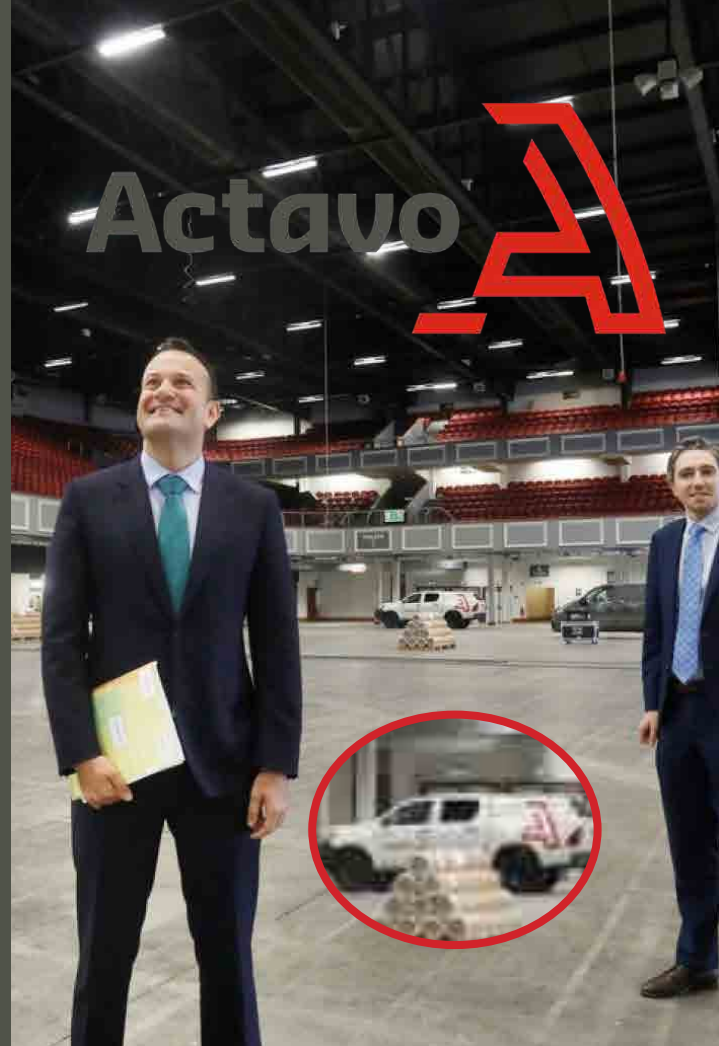
The idea that someone earning beneath a living wage going on the dole is harming society, while hoteliers run away with millions in profit off the homeless year on year due to Fine Gael's ingrained hatred of the working class is unbelievable. Fine Gael's unelected government is now approaching ten years of administration, and has given up on even pretending to distance itself from its blueshirt backbone.

Meanwhile in one of Varadkar's own tweets about the HSE's self-isolation facility in Citywest, converted from a convention centre, you can clearly see a vehicle of one of the contractors involved in the conversion is from a company called Actavo, owned by none other than, of course, Denis O' Brien.

Denis O' Brien is well known for cheating his way into government contracts as exposed by the findings of the Moriarty Tribunal in 2011 which found that:

- Michael Lowry (Minister for Transport, Energy and Communications and Chairman of the Fine Gael Parliamentary Party at the time) "secured the winning" of the 1995 mobile licence for O'Brien.

- O'Brien made two payments to Lowry in 1996 and 1999 totalling £500,000 and supported a loan of £420,000 given to



Lowry in 1999, a benefit equivalent to a payment.

- Lowry imparted substantive information to O'Brien which was "of significant value and assistance to him in securing the licence".

- Lowry bypassed consideration by his Cabinet colleagues and thereby not only influenced but delivered the result for Esat Digifone (owned by Denis O'Brien at the time).

- A \$50,000 donation to Fine Gael was made through Telenor on behalf of Esat Digifone.

O'Brien also owned the company in charge of installing water meters, making sure that the newspapers he owned through the Independent News and Media Group PLC pushed a pro-water charges line so that he could make even more money, not forgetting his ownership of Newstalk, Today FM, 98FM, SPIN 1038 and SPIN South West through Communicorp which helped too. No surprise that through cheating government contracts he has made himself quite wealthy, being the third richest person in the country and now this man, once again, is working another government project, really fills you with confidence doesn't it? So remember next time that someone accuses the working class of leaching off the system, remind them that it is really the rich through bribes and government contracts who are the ones emptying the people's coffers into their own, even at a time like this.



# SMEAR CAMPAIGNS WON'T BEAT THE EPIDEMIC

DPD, Corcaigh

Governments across the world are desperate for someone else to blame. Their mishandling of the Covid-19 crisis has led to countless unnecessary deaths due to lack of preparation and insufficient response capacity. Healthcare systems are being pushed to their limits and millions of vulnerable workers have been laid off. Amongst this chaos Western politicians, aided by mainstream media, are redirecting public anger by capitalising on people's misconceptions about China to whip up negative sentiment towards its people and their culture, leading to a wave of abuse and violence around the world towards Chinese people and other people of East Asian descent.

It's an inescapable conclusion that those pushing this sentiment have a deeper agenda when you look at their reaction to the Chinese mobilisation against coronavirus. When the city of Wuhan was locked down in January

and the Chinese state began building vital healthcare infrastructure, such as a 1,000 bed hospital built in Wuhan in just 10 days, news stories focused on the speed and urgency with which they acted. These stories were coloured with the belief that these kinds of actions were exclusive to "totalitarian" states exercising the kind of control over their citizens which is unthinkable in the West. When the virus began to spread and several cities in China were put on lockdown, Western news outlets referred to their action as "Mao-style mass crusades" (New York Times) or that China was "Descending into a zombie-apocalypse scenario" (The Conversation).

In March, an international group of scientists published a paper in Science titled "An Investigation of Transmission Control Measures During the First 50 Days of the COVID-19 Epidemic in Chi-

na" this paper proposes that if China had not started the Wuhan lockdown and the national response, then there would have been an additional 744,000 COVID-19 cases outside Wuhan. Furthermore, after the World Health Organization created a report after a visit in February, their team members wrote, "In the face of a previously unknown virus, China has rolled out perhaps the most ambitious, agile and aggressive disease containment effort in history." The Chinese government knew that placing 60 million people on lockdown and placing restrictions on a further 1.3 billion people was going to have serious social and economic impact. Despite this the CPC stated from the beginning of the crisis that the economic consequences were not going to play a role in its response; the health and lives of people came first.

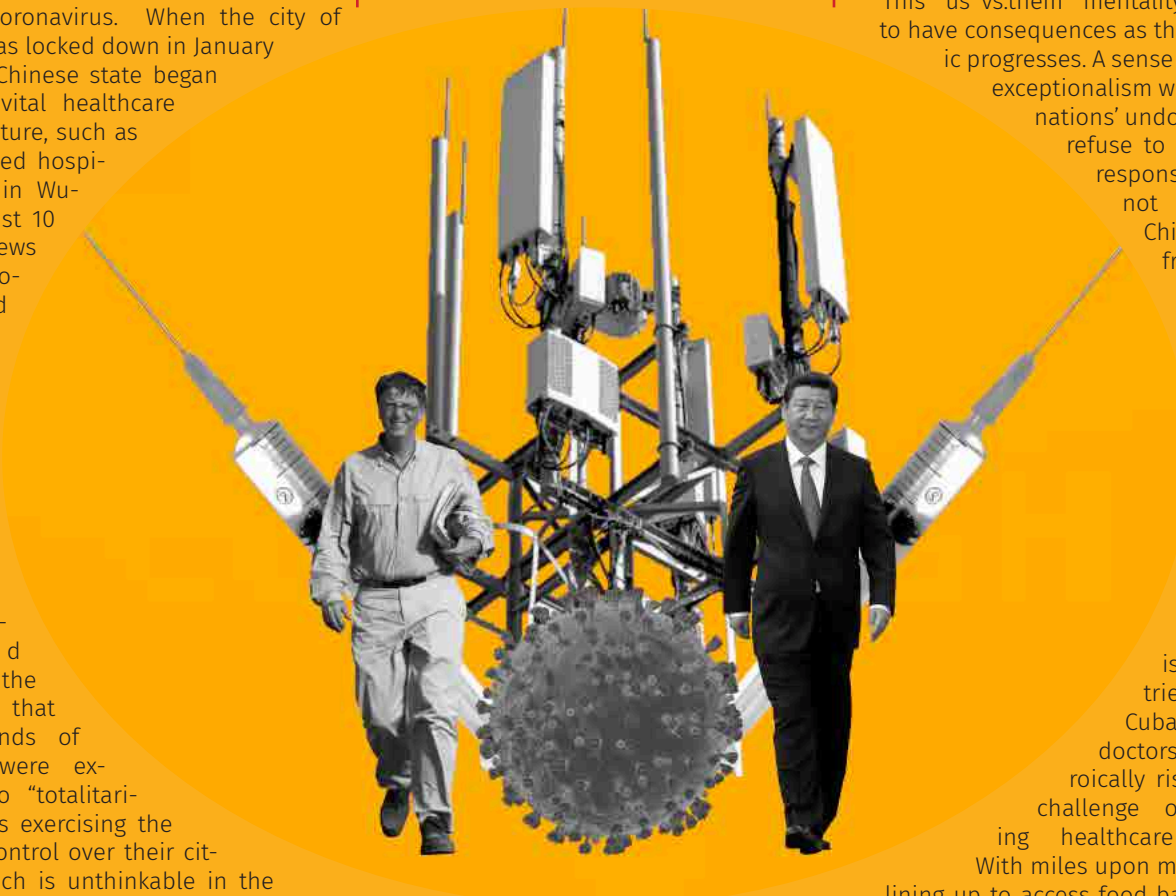
Undeterred by the success of the Chinese response, Western journalists, politicians and public figures waste no time reframing the facts to fit the anti-China, anti-Communist narrative. When Chinese citizens criticize the government, it's proof

particularly propagandised area was the false claim that the Chinese Communist Party suppressed the initial reports of the virus. In fact, timelines are available in Ireland that show the party sprang into full action as soon as information went above the local level. The party responsibly waited for the investigating doctors' confirmation before announcing the disease was contagious, but even this prudent and expert-led approach has been framed as a conspiracy by Western media outlets. The local bureaucrats who attempted to caution Li Wenliang for raising the alarm were later disciplined.

In the Western response to China we see a pattern emerging based on anti-Chinese sentiment which existed long before the coronavirus pandemic. People from Western nations often hold a distorted view of the People's Republic of China as an "other"; an inferior and archaic society with values incompatible with the West's. This pandemic has simply created a "socially acceptable" justification for liberals and conservatives alike to voice their barefaced contempt for China.

This "us vs.them" mentality is bound to have consequences as the pandemic progresses. A sense of Western exceptionalism will be many nations' undoing as they refuse to learn from responses coming not just from China but from other countries in Asia, such as Vietnam (who have not had a single death) or from other socialist countries such as Cuba (whose doctors are heroically rising to the challenge of delivering healthcare abroad).

With miles upon miles of cars lining up to access food banks in the US and child poverty in the UK set to reach its highest point recorded. It has become clear that neoliberalism is going through a crisis of legitimacy. Faced with a problem that cannot be easily bombed, sanctioned or blockaded, capitalist powers are shifting into a new Cold War mentality. In this intensifying political climate, it is crucial that we look critically at our own assumptions and our sources and challenge Western propaganda in all its forms.



of their weakness. When Chinese citizens praise the government, it's proof that they are being brainwashed. When China reported hundreds of deaths a day, it was proof of their incompetent response. When deaths dropped, it was proof the government was lying about their figures. When China had not yet sent aid abroad, it was portrayed as cruel. When they did send aid abroad, it was portrayed as cynical propaganda. One

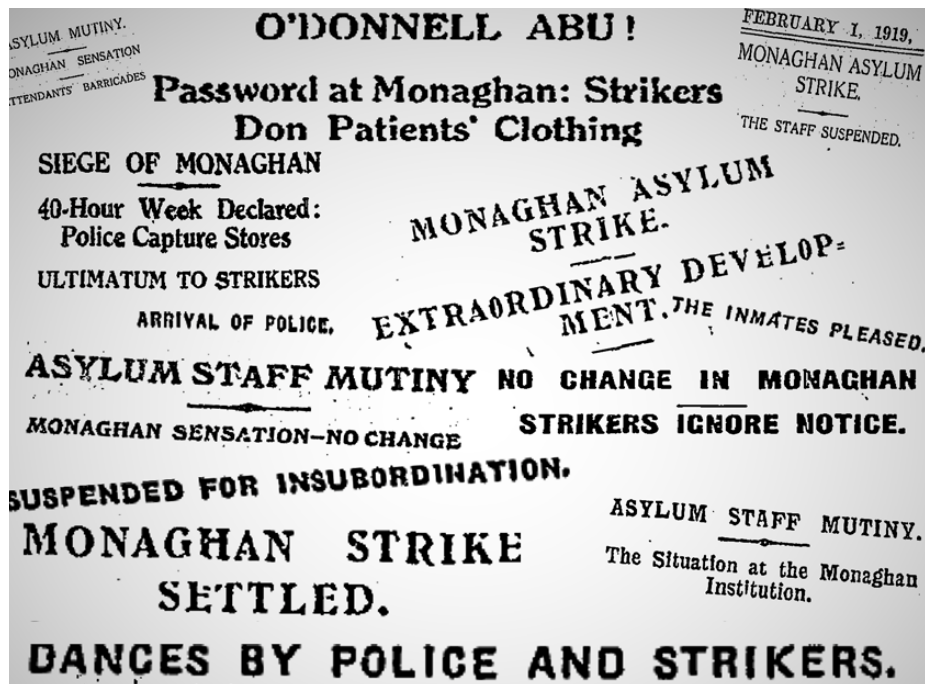
# PEADAR O'DONNELL AND THE MONAGHAN SOVIET

ET, Baile Átha Cliath

Across Europe the fires of revolution burned bright. From the battlefields of the Russian Civil War to the streets of Berlin, from Italian factories to Irish countryside, civil disorder and outright rebellion were the order of the day. In the aftermath of the Great War the world was changing, and in 1919, as the Irish War of Independence began, some workers saw the chance to demand change.

Born in 1893, Peadar O'Donnell, a teacher and IGTWU organiser before the war, was a life-long socialist. An IRA commander in Ulster during the War of Independence, he was imprisoned by the Free State for his part in the Battle of Dublin, was elected as a Sinn Féin TD after the Civil War, and fought for the Spanish Republic against Franco in the Spanish Civil War. Before all of this however, just as the War of Independence began in 1919, O'Donnell led the occupation of the Monaghan Lunatic Asylum by its staff.

Before the declaration of the Soviet, workers in the asylum had long, 93-hour weeks, poor pay, few days off, and were not even allowed leave the premises between shifts. The hospital itself was segregated between Catholic and Protestant patients and was an iteration of the Victorian concept of the asylum as containing rather than rehabilitating. It was an epitome of many of the divisions and inequalities prevalent in Irish society at the time, with female workers excluded



from negotiations from rates of pay.

O'Donnell and the workers barricaded themselves inside the premises, aided by the inmates themselves, and raised the red flag over the asylum to fight for better working conditions.

Under siege by the RUC, they began negotiations with the British authorities. Despite being offered a pay rise, the staff held firm as it did not include equal pay for male and female staff, and continued their occupation, despite O'Donnell having to fire the matron for insubordination and imprison a man for "defeatism".

The strike was a success, the settlement gave the workers a 48-hour week, increased pay for all staff, and allowed

permission for married workers to go home between shifts. Even though the issue had been resolved, it was still brought before the House of Commons, however the chief secretary simply informed the parliament that the strike had ended.

Peadar O'Donnell and the Irish Soviets may be largely forgotten outside of socialist circles today, overshadowed by the War of Independence and the Civil War, but the Monaghan Soviet and the ones that followed are an important part of Ireland's working class history, and a timely reminder of what workers can achieve they organise themselves for the betterment of society.





## COVID-19 HIGHLIGHTS THE CRISIS OF CAPITALISM

AH. Baile Átha Cliath

The role of the state in a crisis, as sold to us by some begging liberals, is to maintain a form of vague idea of “social partnership”, which is usually determined by the interests of free markets and maintaining fiscal stability of the fictitious capital that pervades the stock market. COVID-19 is shining a spotlight on the operating nature of the Leinster and Stormont administrations, their ineptitude at handling a crisis. It has opened up a troubling insight into how the many years and decades of ruthless austerity have left our public services unable to cope, even outside of times of crisis.

In this moment, states are taking extraordinary measures to nationalise and place under public management various sections of their industries. In Spain for example, private hospitals have all come under state management to deal with the virus. As a result of this, insurance costs and health stocks were part of the section of stocks that plummeted in value. What this informs us is that those who hold onto stocks in private health insurance or hospitals make a profit from us being sick, as well as this, it shows us the speculative market does not show an accurate picture of how well the economy is running – just how well mechanisms of exploitation are operating.

In Germany, the State Bank KfW has freed up just under \$610 billion dollars to companies to deal with COVID19 and the impact it will have on the economy and Chancellor Merkel was commented as saying “Doing what is necessary” to help curb the consequences that follow.

The Federal Bank in the United States sank \$1.5 trillion into private markets in order to “stop unusual disruptions”. Measures are being taken by capitalist states all across the world. These measures are aimed at ensuring that the most parasitic elements of society maintain their profits.

In comparison, measures to help the ordinary working-class people of each country have been slow to come around. The State has looked at our service in-

dustry, retail stores and other non-essential mass gathering spaces and took its time to think about things. Then it thought some more, and eventually it decided that emergency measures needed to be introduced. Too slow by our count, and not good enough – especially when the media scoffed at China’s early interventions as being “authoritarian”. The state has only provided the bare minimum of support to workers who are now faced with unemployment and an excuse for Fine Gael to unleash another decade of crippling austerity.

The Connolly Youth Movement believes that Western states need to examine the course of action taken by the Communist-led states such as China and Cuba and adopt it. Only an energetic and efficient approach can curb this virus. Only a desire, a compassion for the people, can address the crippling problems that this virus will bring about.

We believe that extraordinary measures need to be taken and the interests of insurance providers, stockbrokers, speculators, bankers and other parasites should be completely disregarded while we take this opening to put our class at the front wheel of economic management.

The Irish State must take steps taken in other countries. We believe that the following measures need to be taken immediately:

1. All private hospitals, clinics and health providers to be taken under public ownership for usage in tackling the virus and treating those in need.

2. All payment of rent, mortgages, university fees, debt payments, services, subscriptions etc. need to be abolished between 16th of March and 16th of April.

3. All idle residential buildings should be appropriated and placed into public ownership for the housing of those in need.

4. Appropriate quarantines for most affected areas and implementation of social distancing in major urban areas.

6. Employers should pay regu-

lar wages of staff. Anyone that cannot should apply to the Labour Court and the state should assist where needed.

7. Raise Ireland’s low corporate tax rate and demand unpaid taxes from US tech and pharma corporations.

8. All banks should be taken into full, permanent public ownership in the face of the impending financial crisis.

9. Provision for those in emergency accommodation or sleeping on the street to be made either via clinics or appropriated residential buildings.

10. Full disclosure of a business’s finances if they have attempted to fire staff during the emergency. Immediate appropriation of corrupt businesses and the prosecution of rogue employers.

Only rapid, efficient and energetic measures taken on by the State can see a positive intervention in this crisis. Things like distributing food, developing quick test kits, giving health inspections to everybody and taking much more advanced containment measures should have taken place when the virus began to spread in China. Instead, the Western world took on the usual chauvinistic and arrogant perspective that it might never reach us.

When another crisis happens, we can safely guarantee that the response will be equally as slow, equally as disinterested and equally designed to protect the rich. One section of society will receive disproportionate aid, another will be left to suffer, as per the norm. COVID-19 is but one more crisis that shines a spotlight onto the morality of capitalism and the decisions that underpin it. It is one more crisis that reinforces why the Leinster and Stormont administrations must go. It is one more opportunity to showcase why socialism can and does produce better results and outcomes for people. It raises the question – if the state can act to address this crisis, cannot it also act to address the crisis of housing, precarious employment and the lack of a robust basis for the economy?

# CAPITALISM AND HEALTH DON'T MIX

FB. Corcaigh

Does capitalism have its own ideology? Though you might hear those like Bono refer to capitalism as being “amoral”, the truth is far from how he wants you to see it. Bono is what you might call a beneficiary, he enjoys his tax status. The response to the pandemic can be essentially described as a tale of two economic systems, largely aligned to their value systems. Under socialism, the health of every member in society was prioritised, with support being extended to those in the international community. China and Cuba most notably having sent equipment and doctors abroad to the areas worst affected. And capitalism in keeping with appearances having instead chosen to instead to bail out bankers, CEOs along with the rest of the investor classes who worried and fretted about how their assets might be affected. Which method saved lives? Was it the “invisible hand” or was it state planning and the nationalisation of key sectors? Something that will become clear later when the pandemic has subsided is the excuses that will be made for capitalism and policies that can only be described as psychopathic. The initial suggestion of herd immunity offered up by Boris Johnson was quickly retracted after hearing that the estimates for excess deaths could potentially reach up to 250,000.

The United States, that shining example of capitalist entrepreneurial spirit, it could only be expected to preside over one of the worst hit countries with over 100,000 deaths and with a considerable portion of its citizens displaying an attitude almost akin to that of a cult committed to slavish consumerism and false notions of freedom. Far from being neutral, capitalism is in fact very opinionated in how it classifies certain actions and behaviours on whether or not they are favourable to its survival and whether they strengthen the position of those who sit at the top in maintaining hegemonic control. Capitalism prefers to rely on its institutions to perform the role of influencing and setting trends through various mediums whether it's via the media, in movies or even sometimes in the books you read.

With record numbers of individuals now unemployed and reports that COVID-19 related support payments are not reach-

ing a large group of people, the stability of the neoliberal project is being called into question. Without restricting economic activity and limiting movement, most western healthcare systems would have been completely overwhelmed. Even without COVID-19 the healthcare systems in Britain and Ireland were already showing signs of neglect after years of cutbacks and privatisation. The World Health Organisation (WHO) warned as far back as 2018 that due to unending encroachment on the habitat of various species of wildlife (where viruses have been residing dormant for years), it was only a matter of if, not when, a virus would break out. In 2018 the WHO stated “A serious international epidemic will be caused by a pathogen currently unknown to cause human disease”. From a September (2019) Annual Report by the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board, it was stated that “Preparedness is hampered by the lack of continued political will at all levels. Although national leaders respond to health crises when fear and panic grow strong enough, most countries do not devote the consistent energy and resources needed to keep outbreaks from escalating into disasters”. This was only months prior to the initial concerns surrounding the surfacing and detection of an unknown virus in the Wuhan area.

That these are all symptoms of a sick and fractured society should be clear to anyone and now that the time has come to discuss an alternative approach to pursuing health in its broadest sense there are several examples which need to be looked at. The type of society that we should be striving for is one that doesn't degrade individuals and shame them into changing their lifestyles but seeks to encourage change by incorporating health in

the

broadest sense into education and by providing the greater part of humanity access to basic facilities and services which should form a critical component when making that conception. Good health should reaffirm our existence, not lead to mass denial of reality. Healthcare should be used to strengthen ties between communities and people. The need for a socialist alternative has become more pressing as capitalism continues to self-implode and what is needed are examples showing how control can be taken back when our health institutions are owned by people rather than corporations. This will involve taking a look at the legacy of Soviet socialist healthcare systems, at countries like Cuba and Vietnam and how alternatives approaches are being practiced. Capitalism is anti-human, it is time to move past it.

*This article is an excerpt from “Capitalism and Health: Part 2” a longer series soon available on cym.ie.*

**THE REVOLUTION DOES NOT, AS SOME CLAIM, STANDARDIZE THE COLLECTIVE WILL AND THE COLLECTIVE INITIATIVE. ON THE CONTRARY, IT LIBERATES MAN'S INDIVIDUAL TALENT. WHAT THE REVOLUTION DOES IS ORIENT THAT TALENT. AND OUR TASK NOW IS TO ORIENT THE CREATIVE ABILITIES OF ALL MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS TOWARD THE TASKS OF SOCIAL MEDICINE.**

**WE ARE AT THE END OF AN ERA, AND NOT ONLY HERE IN CUBA. NO MATTER WHAT IS HOPED OR SAID TO THE CONTRARY, THE FORM OF CAPITALISM WE HAVE KNOWN, IN WHICH WE WERE RAISED, AND UNDER WHICH WE HAVE SUFFERED, IS BEING DEFEATED ALL OVER THE WORLD. THE MONOPOLIES ARE BEING OVERTHROWN; COLLECTIVE SCIENCE IS CORING NEW AND IMPORTANT TRIUMPHS DAILY. IN THE AMERICAS WE HAVE HAD THE PROUD AND DEVOTED DUTY TO BE THE VANGUARD OF A MOVEMENT OF LIBERATION WHICH BEGAN A LONG TIME AGO ON THE OTHER SUBJUGATED CONTINENTS, AFRICA AND ASIA. SUCH A PROFOUND SOCIAL CHANGE DEMANDS EQUALLY PROFOUND CHANGES IN THE MENTAL STRUCTURE OF THE PEOPLE.**

**INDIVIDUALISM, IN THE FORM OF THE INDIVIDUAL ACTION OF A PERSON ALONE IN A SOCIAL MILIEU, MUST DISAPPEAR IN CUBA. IN THE FUTURE INDIVIDUALISM OUGHT TO BE THE EFFICIENT UTILIZATION OF THE WHOLE INDIVIDUAL FOR THE ABSOLUTE BENEFIT OF A COLLECTIVITY. IT IS NOT ENOUGH THAT THIS IDEA IS UNDERSTOOD TODAY, THAT YOU ALL COMPREHEND THE THINGS I AM SAYING AND ARE READY TO THINK A LITTLE ABOUT THE PRESENT AND THE PAST AND WHAT THE FUTURE OUGHT TO BE. IN ORDER TO CHANGE A WAY OF THINKING, IT IS NECESSARY TO UNDERGO PROFOUND INTERNAL CHANGES AND TO WITNESS PROFOUND EXTERNAL CHANGES, ESPECIALLY IN THE PERFORMANCE OF OUR DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS TO SOCIETY.**

**THOSE EXTERNAL CHANGES ARE HAPPENING IN CUBA EVERY DAY. ONE WAY OF GETTING TO KNOW THE REVOLUTION AND BECOMING AWARE OF THE ENERGIES HELD IN RESERVE, SO LONG ASLEEP WITHIN THE PEOPLE, IS TO VISIT ALL CUBA AND SEE THE COOPERATIVES AND THE WORK CENTRES WHICH ARE NOW BEING CREATED. AND ONE WAY OF GETTING TO THE HEART OF THE MEDICAL QUESTION IS NOT ONLY TO VISIT AND BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE UP THESE COOPERATIVES AND WORK CENTRES, BUT TO FIND OUT WHAT DISEASES THEY HAVE, WHAT THEIR SUFFERINGS ARE, WHAT HAVE BEEN THEIR CHRONIC MISERIES FOR YEARS, AND WHAT HAS BEEN THE INHERITANCE OF CENTURIES OF REPRESSION AND TOTAL SUBMISSION. THE DOCTOR, THE MEDICAL WORKER, MUST GO TO THE CORE OF HIS NEW WORK, WHICH IS THE MAN WITHIN THE MASS, THE MAN WITHIN THE COLLECTIVITY.**

*On Revolutionary Medicine, Che Guevara, 1960*

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EDITOR - FT  
DESIGN - AC  
PUBLISHED AUGUST 2020