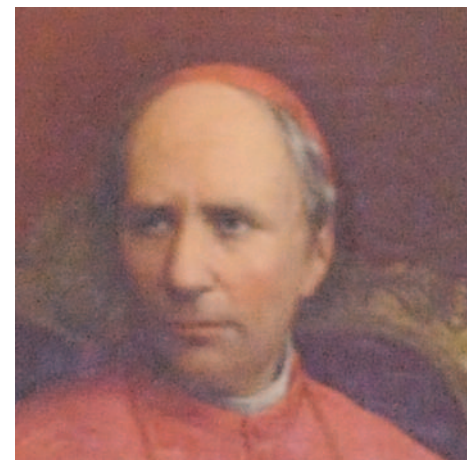
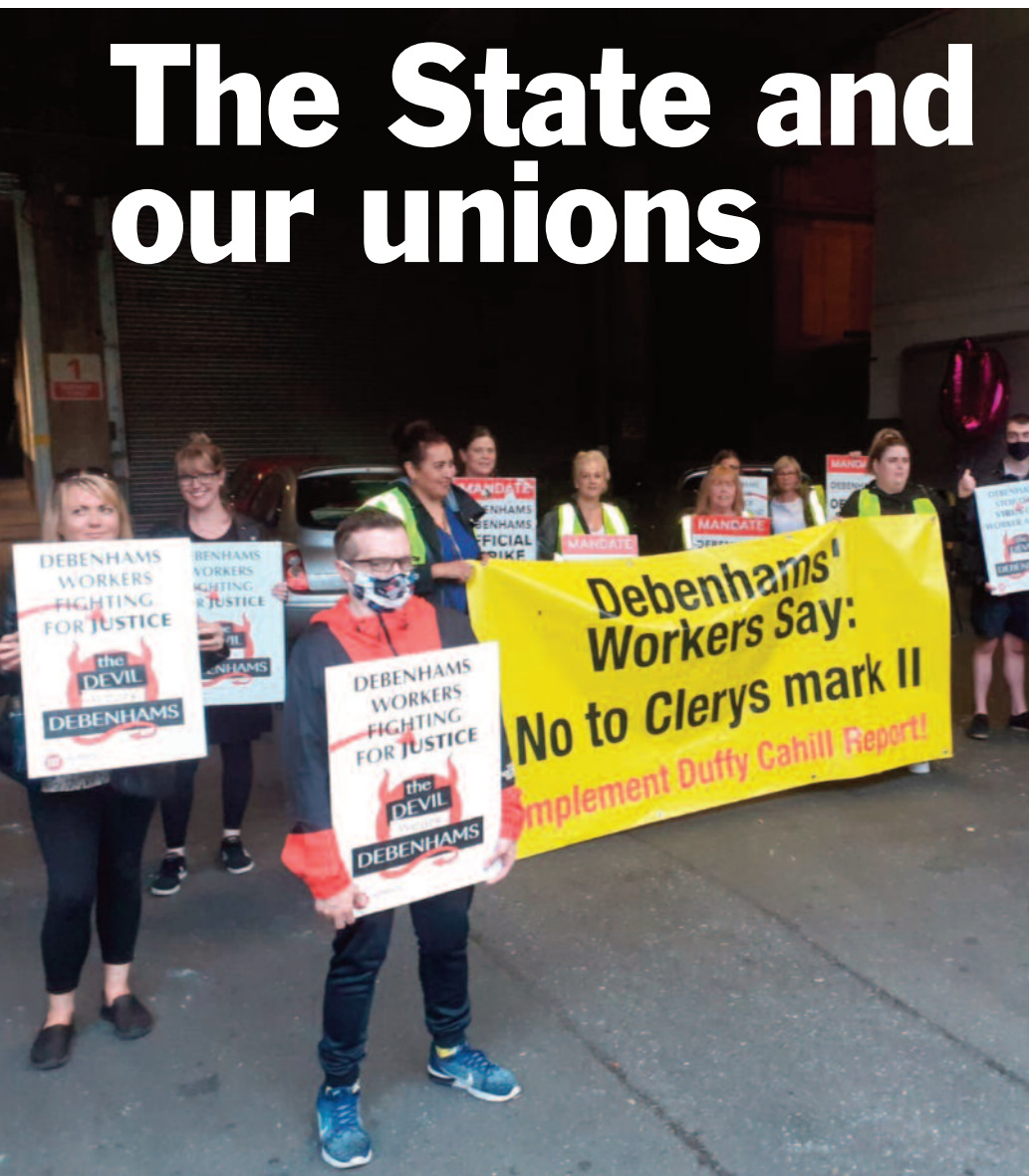


# Socialist Voice

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## The State and our unions



“Too high an education will make the poor often times discontented and will unsuit them for following the plough or for using the spade or for hammering iron or building walls.”  
**Cardinal Paul Cullen,**  
*letter to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Powis Commission), c. 1870.*

Covid-19 did not cause the lack of workers' rights in Ireland, but it most certainly exposed them argues **Jimmy Doran**

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## The State and our unions

**T**HE DISPUTE at Debenham's reveals the lack of workers' rights, and the lack of actual experience among workers of disputes, struggle, organising and tactics as a result of the decline in union membership and union activity over the last thirty years, especially since the introduction of the Industrial Relations Act (1990).

It has been a steep learning curve for the workers in dispute, but they have done themselves proud, heroically defending their rights and those of all other workers who will find themselves in a similar situation unless the balance of power is tipped towards workers and away from employers.

Unfortunately the Debenham's dispute is not unique. We have seen similar situations before: in Clery's department store and Connolly shoes, for example. Debenham's was even more vindictive and callous, closing down the business at the height of the pandemic when workers were in quarantine. They informed the workers by e-mail that they were being laid off.

They claim they have not enough assets to pay the collective redundancy agreement of 2016—this despite

almost €30 million in stock still in the shops, and a very lucrative on-line business. This meant that the collective agreement of four weeks' redundancy per year of service was out the window, and the workers would only receive the statutory redundancy payment based on two weeks' service. The workers and their union have been fighting this situation for almost six months now.

Under employment law as it stands, the company has no obligation to pay the collective agreement. The Duffy-Cahill Report, produced after the Clery's dispute, would have protected the workers and guaranteed their entitlement if it had been enacted. Duffy-Cahill, like hundreds of other reports made for the Government, has been gathering dust and never been implemented.

These reports are purely a PR exercise on behalf of the Government, intimating that they care about the citizens. Quite the opposite is the case: successive governments have put business and property rights above the rights of the citizen. It's called capitalism.

A joint proposal has been put to the Government by Mandate and the ICTU that would guarantee workers their rights and redundancy payments in situations like this. Joan Collins TD

brought in a private member's bill to enact the proposal. During the debate the minister of state for "trade promotion," Robert Troy, said that "the Government intended to review whether current legal provisions surrounding collective redundancies and the liquidation of companies effectively protect the rights of workers."

There is no need for another review to see whether workers' rights are protected. The fact that Debenham's workers have been on picket lines for six months, fighting tooth and nail for their entitlements, is proof enough to anybody with half a brain. How many committees and investigations do these puppets of industry think they can fool the people with? Troy in name and nature: he is a Trojan horse to protect exploitative employers at the expense of workers.

His fellow-conspirator Damien English, minister of state for "employment affairs," went on to say: "We are finalising a multi-stakeholder forum to ensure appropriate recommendations were carried forward and put on a statutory footing."

The contempt being shown by this government for workers is stomach-churning. Éamon Ryan, the supposed "left-wing" saviour of our environment, fell asleep in the Dáil last month

## Strengthen our fight for our rights!

### Statement by the World Federation of Trade Unions

The World Federation of Trade Unions, the world's class-oriented, progressive trade union movement, considers the achievements of technology to be very important and positive, given that they are used to improve and facilitate the lives of workers and peoples, such as modern health services and improved working conditions.

Tele-working, working from home, which increased greatly during the covid-19 pandemic in all countries, could be considered one of the achievements of progress and technology. However, it has

had a negative effect on working conditions, such as an increase in work load, the demand of employers that employees be available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, not providing internet connections and necessary software, not providing free ergonomic equipment (suitable chairs, large screens, etc.), the costs of which are borne by the employee.

Also, through tele-working workers work in isolation from their colleagues, with negative effects on trade union action and on the organising of their claims and also on their mood and psychology. Work from home makes it impossible to control

violations by the employer, such as forced or unpaid overtime, as inspections by the labour inspectorate are not carried out. In the event of an accident at work while tele-working, the employee is alone and helpless at home, while it is much easier for the employer to hide the nature of the accident as an occupational one and escape their responsibilities.

There have even been demands from companies to install cameras in the homes of tele-workers to monitor all their movements,



during another debate on workers' rights, such is his concern for the working class. The Blueshirt darling of Donnybrook and minister for "enterprise," Varadkar, shows his "concern" by not even attending the debate on Debenham's. It seems the only thing he is enterprising about is when he wants to have a few drinks with his mates in the Park during a pandemic quarantine.

The three amigos, Troy, English, and Varadkar, are well able to put behind them their Civil War differences, to join together in collusion with big business to deprive low-paid retail workers of their meagre redundancy payments. These three "representatives of the people" earn well over half a million per year between them, not to mention their lucrative expense accounts.

English stressed that "any additional payments for Debenham's workers could only be secured through negotiations between the unions and the liquidator, KPMG." In one short sentence washing the state's hands of any responsibility to citizens and our rights as workers.

Dáil Éireann does not operate in the interest of the citizens. It will always take the side of business. It's how capitalism operates.



**If you don't like wearing a mask, see how you like wearing a ventilator**

leading to a complete violation of their basic rights and dignity.

On the occasion of the pandemic, governments seek to generalise and legalise this form of work, making it a form of work that employers can impose unilaterally, and for as long as they wish, or permanently, reducing their operating expenses and intensifying the exploitation of workers.

In the IT, education, health, banking and other sectors governments aim to maintain tele-working after the end of the pandemic. In such countries as India, tele-medicine is also being promoted—not, of course, as an aid and complement to modern public and free health services for all but as a stopgap in the face of huge, tragic shortcomings in health structures and the consequences of these shortcomings, which workers have been violently experiencing during the pandemic.

The militant trade unions of all countries must oppose these plans of

governments and employers, which are part of the broader plan for workers and the poor to pay for the effects of the pandemic and quarantines on the economy, for the new economic crisis.

Regarding tele-working and the generalised attack on workers' rights, the WFTU draws attention to demands that can ensure our health and rights:

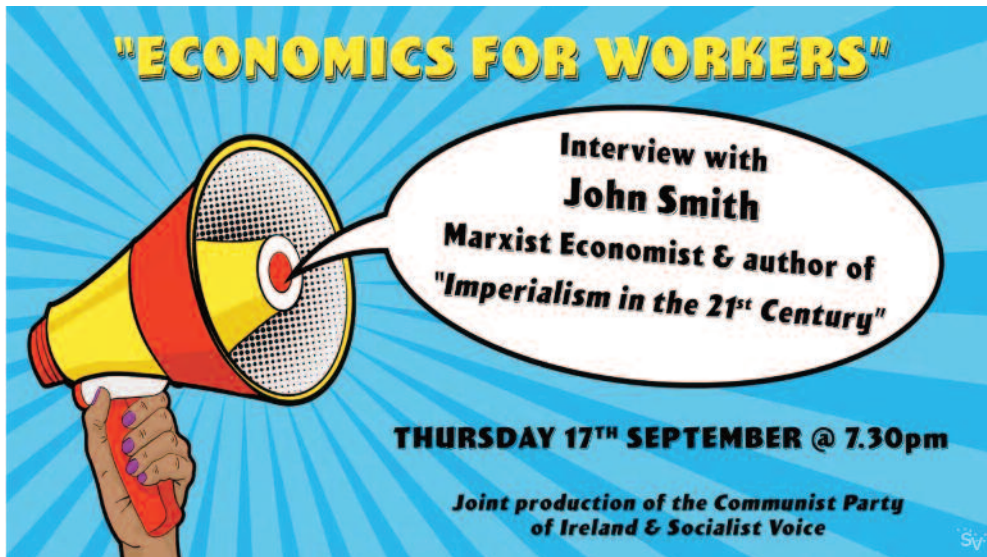
- ensuring the job positions of all workers, with all the necessary protection measures in the work-place
- free tests for workers: no covid-19 cases silenced in the work-place
- implementation of health protocols
- no negative changes in terms and conditions of work, in workers' rights, in the name of dealing with the pandemic
- emergency paid leave for those workers who need to stay at home, either for the care of children or patients or for measures related to dealing with the pandemic (such as

closing buildings for disinfection)

- if for any reason an employee cannot work in the work-place in guaranteed health and safety conditions, with the responsibility of the state and the employer to take leave with full pay and insurance
- adequate disinfectants for cleaning hands and surfaces for workers who have daily contact with the public, and also measures for disinfection and proper use of the tools of work, such as headphones, keyboards, etc.
- the staffing of public hospitals with all the necessary health personnel and equipment, for the treatment of the pandemic and all other diseases and for their prevention.

On the eve of the 75th anniversary of the World Federation of Trade Unions, on 3 October 2020, let us strengthen our fight for our modern rights, with the militant workers of WFTU in the forefront of the struggle, worthy successors of its militant action and history.

## Understanding the crisis — and preparing for what is yet to come



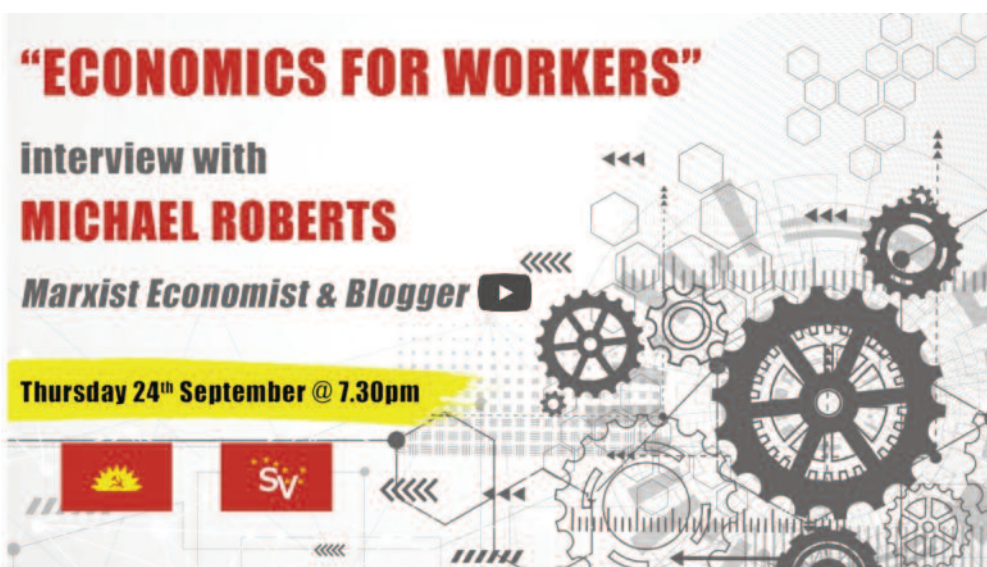
DORIAN Ó SEANÁIN

THE CPI, in conjunction with *Socialist Voice*, streamed two talks in September under the title "Economics for Workers." The guest speaker on each occasion was a leading Marxist economist.

The thread that linked the interviews by Graham Harrington of the CPI was an attempt to understand the current crisis (or crises) of capitalism while drawing the attention of workers to the general economic trends that have brought us to the present moment and, crucially, what we should expect in the coming year as capitalism calibrates yet another vicious offensive against the working class of all countries.

The first was John Smith, regular contributor to *Monthly Review* and author of *Imperialism in the Twenty-First Century*, an essential book for those seeking to apply Lenin's analysis to the contemporary era. He made early reference to a term coined by another writer, "the great capitalist climacteric," to underline the severity of the current crisis.

In keeping with the themes of his book, Smith focused on the relationship in recent decades between the imperial core (the global North) and the periphery (the global South). Investors have deserted the global South since the pandemic hit, depriving those countries of capital reserves. At the same time \$8 million has been committed by the



## The possibility of a perfect storm grows

EUGENE MCCARTAN

THE ECONOMIC crisis facing the Government continues to grow. While economic data paints a much rosier picture of the economy, thanks to the dominance of foreign direct investment (i.e. transnational corporations), the pandemic is having

a wider and more lasting impact on the domestic economy, in particular on small and medium-sized businesses.

On a global scale we can see the growing monopolisation and concentration of capital. Amazon continues to tighten its grip and its monopoly position in the on-line market. This will have long-term effects on small and medium-sized businesses and thereby on jobs and family incomes.

The latest research shows that working people in Ireland experienced one of the largest falls in household

spending in Europe during the quarantine, while on the other hand there was robust export growth in a small number of important sectors (computer services and pharmaceuticals), led by the transnational sector. But this growth in exports masks the true extent of economic contraction.

The research also shows a picture in all sectors of the economy of two extremely different economic experiences. "While industrial value added grew by over 10 per cent in the first half of 2020," it reports, "value-

# The massive debts that peripheral countries owe to the sovereign governments of core countries have been frozen—not written off!—which only means that the reduced incomes of the debtor-countries are paid to private creditors as a priority.

global North to propping up their economies and, more specifically, the profits of the capitalist class since restrictions have been imposed.

The massive debts that peripheral countries owe to the sovereign governments of core countries have been frozen—not written off!—which only means that the reduced incomes of the debtor-countries are paid to private creditors as a priority.

However, as Michael Roberts, a blogger and author of several books on economics, pointed out, the shock the initial lockdowns have caused on production and consumption in Western countries will certainly lead to an avalanche of private-sector bankruptcies in the next twelve months. Such companies have accumulated massive amounts of debt since the stock market crash of 2008, buying back their stock from shareholders in the vain hope that share prices would continue to rise.

Contrary to the bourgeois media narrative that economies are better equipped this time around to deal with a prolonged slump than in 2008, both Smith and Roberts emphasised that a day of reckoning for heavily indebted businesses and national treasuries is on the horizon.

One of the linchpins of Marxist economics, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, was referred to regularly during both broadcasts. Smith pointed to the consistent decrease in productivity since the 1980s, as well as the decline in capital investment relative to the stock of private capital. Capitalism has little incentive to invest in new production facilities: a job can be outsourced to a low-wage country, which blunts the need to develop new

added in construction fell by over 40 per cent, value-added in arts, entertainment and recreation fell by nearly 75 per cent—both of these represent the largest declines of any EU country or the UK.”

Why one sector has grown and the others declined can be put down to a number of factors, including a concentration of exports in companies that did not experience lockdown. 26 per cent of Ireland’s exports are computer services, and a further 11 per cent are medical and pharmaceutical goods. Exports in both

technologies for increased efficiency. Instead of tangible commodities and infrastructure, modern figures for capital investment include expenditure on such unproductive activities as advertising and protecting patents.

On the other hand, Roberts evoked the tendency of the rate of profit to fall when explaining that the crucial factor in predicting a crisis is profits, not the emergence of monopolies. He noted that General Motors was once a giant of the automobile industry but that such is no longer so. Even when dominant transnational corporations emerge there is always an element of competition in capitalism. Breaking up monopolies would not change the structure of the capitalist system: it is the squeeze on the total amount of profits because of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall that most accurately tracks the capitalist system’s trajectory at any given time.

The role of central banks and access to hard currencies (most notably the American dollar) is a component of the two economists’ analyses. Smith singled out the large amounts of foreign-currency debt that beleaguer many countries in the global South. For these debtors to gain access to credit immediately they must obtain local currency from their central bank. But printing more money debases the value of the currency, making foreign debts even more expensive, perpetuating a vicious downward spiral.

In response to a question from the host, Roberts rubbished “modern monetary theory” by arguing that it is just an updated form of Keynesianism, explaining that capitalism doesn’t work the way the soft-left, respectable economists think it does, and that this

these areas grew annually during the last few years, despite the lockdown. These companies and sectors experienced growth throughout the first half of 2020.

While medicinal and pharmaceutical exports show consistent growth, they are completely outweighed by the decline in travel, tourism and transport activities, which have almost collapsed from the impact of the pandemic.

What it shows is that the local economy has been severely hit, one of the hardest hit of EU member-states.

theory is not useful for any country that doesn’t have its own monetary policy (like the Irish state) or a debtor-country (for reasons outlined above).

In addition, injecting more money into the economy by means of modern monetary theory ignores the fundamental problem of private owners storing their fortune in investment funds to generate a return instead of generating employment. Yet again the Keynesians hold out the false hope of a “fairer capitalism.”

Smith and Roberts sounded a note of extreme caution for the times ahead. International trade is increasingly used as a weapon, and much of the consensus that followed the Second World War has evaporated. The imperialist core (the United States, the major European powers, and Japan) is weaker than at any time in living memory, while China and other countries threaten their hegemony.

We are in the midst of an uneasy “calm before the storm” as the full extent of the upheaval of recent months transpires, given the frailties that were appearing before the pandemic.

Each guest in this series made an insightful contribution to the challenges that befall us as communists and working-class activists. The appeal of the series goes far beyond the CPI, and anyone seeking to hone their thinking on political economy would be well advised to listen back to the interviews on the Socialist Voice Youtube channel.

*Imperialism in the Twenty-First Century* by John Smith and *The Long Depression* by Michael Roberts can be purchased in Connolly Books (43 East Essex Street, Dublin) or on line at [connollybooks.org](http://connollybooks.org).

These sectors employ large numbers of workers and depend very much on the strength of the domestic economy. While exports from transnational corporations in such areas as computer services and pharmaceuticals increased relative to 2019, this growth may well be affected as the global economy slips into recession, if not depression.

The establishment will most probably face a perfect storm: a huge slump in the domestic economy coupled with a significant reduction in exports by these transnationals.

## A changing of the guard?



Admittedly we can only ever be certain of death and taxes. With that caution in mind, though, it's safe to say there is abundant evidence that the once all-powerful Fianna Fáil is sitting on the edge of a political precipice.

**Tommy McKearney** on the failures of Fianna Fáil

### Who said this?

**DECLAN MCKENNA**

"The earth is not dying, it's being killed, and those who are killing it have names and addresses."

**Utah Phillips**, folk singer

"The US has bombed no less than thirty countries since the end of World War II, killing millions of people, maiming tens of millions more, disrupting and destroying education, healthcare, housing, businesses, infrastructure, the environment, and

OVER THE past decade, its share of the vote at general elections has been approximately half what it received for the previous seventy years, with its seats in Leinster House reduced accordingly. No less alarming for party supporters have been recent opinion polls. Admittedly only reflecting a sample of the electorate's view on a particular day, this showed an unmistakable downward trend.

Old Dev's creation is in deep trouble, and the Establishment's power-brokers know it.

creating untold numbers of refugees. Since 1946, no other country has killed and injured more people living outside its borders."

**Michael D. Knox**, US Peace Memorial Foundation

"The most damaging lies they [the media] tell us are the little ones they tell us many times every single day by way of spin, omission, half-truth and distortion, in order to give us the impression that this status quo [capitalism] is normal and inescapable."

**Caitlin Johnstone**, journalist.

In the three months since forming a government, Fianna Fáil has presided over confusion, fiasco, scandal, and ineptitude. The list of political setbacks is lengthy. The forced resignation of a minister within days of the new Dáil sitting, losing another minister by way of the golf dinner scandal shortly thereafter and the appointment of highly paid advisers on the same day as reducing pandemic unemployment payments are only the more spectacular of many *faux pas*.

Confused messaging has been a continuing feature of the Mícheál Martin leadership, a problem exacerbated by the constant and apparently deliberate undermining of his position by the Fine Gael tánaiste, Leo Varadkar—a situation underlining the weakness of a party that is now in the invidious position of carrying responsibility but with reduced authority.

Adding to his woes, the taoiseach has powerful critics within his own party. In spite of Mary Lou McDonald's verbal attacks on Martin's performance, she has been outdone in that field by certain Fianna Fáil TDs. Marc MacSharry and Jim O'Callaghan are just two of several critics. Most outspoken, however, has been the Galway West TD Éamon Ó Cuív, grandson of the party's founder, who has bluntly called for his leader's replacement. He has repeatedly warned that after the next general election only two large parties will remain: Fine Gael and Sinn Féin.

Such undisguised discontent has fuelled a view that the present leader

"Governments could reverse this process [increasing illiteracy] by putting money into literacy programs, but why bother when there are so many countries that need bombing?"  
**Helen Buyniski**, American journalist

"Anyone who tells you it's human nature to be greedy, violent, domineering and abusive isn't telling you about humanity's nature: they're telling you about their own nature. And it's probably a bad idea to turn your back on them."  
**Caitlin Johnstone**

# That the prospect of Sinn Féin displacing Fianna Fáil is now a distinct possibility has been recognised by the power-brokers of the Establishment, and they are reacting

bears sole responsibility for the party's plight. Though he has certainly contributed to its distress, the malaise goes much deeper than one individual. Fianna Fáil has been in difficulty for several decades, with its failings disguised by a cunning ability to retain office through finding willing coalition partners.

At the heart of its difficulty is a problem of identity, coupled with a lack of clarity of purpose. Sustained for decades by its ability to dispense favours rather than presenting, or representing, an ideology, Fianna Fáil is now paying the price for its duplicity. Once it was seen as offering some degree of opposition to the strident *laissez-faire* policies of Fine Gael. With a Labour Party wedded to a policy of coalition with the Blueshirts, Fianna Fáil was able to gain significant working-class support.

Such illusions have been shattered over the past decades with a series of devastating disclosures, with Charvet shirts in the diplomatic bag, brown envelopes in the Dáil and untruthful accounts of "personal dig-outs" among the more spectacular. Any lingering illusions were finally laid to rest during the years of "confidence and supply" while supporting the Blueshirts in their pursuit of the harshest of neo-liberal strategies.

Torn between protecting the business interests of its wealthy backers and taking the decisive measures necessary to guarantee the health and safety of working people, Mícheál Martin knew, for once, exactly where he stood.

Within five days of assuming the leadership of the Government in June, his minister for health, Simon Donnelly, oversaw the reprivatisation of hospitals taken into state control at the outset of the covid pandemic. Add to this the inexcusable failure to deal with the threat to workers in food-processing plants, the failure to address the injustice done to Debenham's former staff, and the state's refusal to treat covid-19 as an occupational hazard—all clearly indicating that the party's commitment to the free market remains as firm as when it oversaw the fiasco leading to the 2010 bail-out, which cost working people so dearly.

Elsewhere, the supposedly anti-Treaty, republican party has struggled with its foundation myth. Its commitment to maintaining the 26-County state, with its institutional gravy train, has required it to endeavour to retain partition at all costs. Few episodes illustrate this better than the aftermath of Varadkar's identification of the "changing tectonic plates" in the Six Counties last December. Rather than recognise reality, the mealy-mouthed Martin hurried to Belfast to publicly reassure unionism that the republican party harboured no desire to end partition.

Hardly surprising, therefore, that Sinn Féin has found itself well placed to supplant Fianna Fáil. With a Labour Party that has spent so long in bed with Fine Gael and is now led by a TD who tried to bulldoze through the water-tax legislation, the social-democratic slot is vacant. Not

surprisingly, therefore, Mary Lou McDonald and colleagues are able to use that card to good effect. Moreover, with its repeated calls for a border poll, Sinn Féin can now lay claim to the republican role once played by Fianna Fáil.

That the prospect of Sinn Féin displacing Fianna Fáil is now a distinct possibility has been recognised by the power-brokers of the Establishment, and they are reacting. After decades of outright hostility, the *Sunday Independent* recently devoted two pages to an interview with McDonald. Last month Joe Duffy spoke to her on RTE about "The Meaning of Life," and—perhaps most surprising of all—a retired colonel raised the possibility of a Sinn Féin minister for defence for the 26 Counties some time in the near future.\*

There is about all this, nevertheless, the impression of a "Come into my parlour, said the spider to the fly" strategy. The party can become acceptable to the Establishment, but at a price.

Whether it will pay that price is a matter for its members. For the left, there is the need to recognise the emerging situation and, no matter what changes take place, that we keep our eye firmly on the goal of an independent and sovereign workers' republic.

\*Thejournal.ie, "Retired Colonel Dorcha Lee: Is a Sinn Féin minister for defence really that unthinkable?" Thejournal.ie, 13 September 2020 (<https://tinyurl.com/y45wa2e5>).

"As I watch this, already lonely in the shadow of the right-wingers dominating the debate, I want nothing more in life than for more people in the post-Soviet space to stop being afraid of socialism and start being afraid of capitalism, nationalism, and fascism."

**Katya Kazbek**, Russian writer and translator resident in the United States, on the one-sided "analysis" on events in Belarus

"Those at the head of the queue will seize as much as possible for themselves and the rest can just

hang back—at a social distance of at least 1.5 meters—and wait their freakin' turn!"

**Damien Wilson** on RT, on how the rich countries will treat the poorer countries when, or if, a covid-19 vaccine becomes available

"I have seen people like this before. I've seen movements like this before. I've seen ideas like this before. I am here to tell you—we cannot let them take over our country . . . I heard the promises of Fidel Castro."

**Máximo Álvarez**, Cuban-American

businessman at the Republican Party national convention, comparing Joe Biden to Fidel Castro

"The waning US empire and its allies within the disintegrating EU prefer to attack their rivals Russia and China to deflect their own populations' attention away from domestic problems with some good old-fashioned xenophobia."

**Tomasz Pierscionek**, medical doctor and editor of the *London Progressive Journal*

## The United States strengthens its campaign against Cuba's international medical cooperation

**Declaration by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba**  
Havana, 30 September 2020

The Cuban people and the international community are aware of the dishonest campaign that the government of the United States has launched since 2019 to discredit Cuba's international medical cooperation; exert pressure on the governments that have asked for it and deprive peoples of these health services.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba denounces that, as part of that offensive, the US government has unleashed an array of pressures and blackmails against the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO).

Under the threat of forgoing the payment of its financial contribution, the United States, the main contributor to the PAHO budget, has forced the Secretariat of that organization to accept what is called "an external audit of PAHO's role in Brazil's 'More Doctors' Program", which involved the participation of thousands of Cuban professionals, at the express request

of the Workers' Party's popular government. Said Program has been the target of to the most gross disparagement campaign launched by the United States and the current Brazilian government.

The alleged concerns of the United States regarding Cuba's cooperation, particularly about the 'More Doctors' Program, are neither legitimate nor relevant so as to deserve further consideration at PAHO. The 'More Doctors' Program, which has been audited several times before with positive results, was established by virtue of a tripartite agreement achieved between the Cuban government, the then Brazilian government and PAHO. Thanks to this program, from August 2013 to November 2018, Cuban doctors in Brazil assisted 113 000 359 patients in more than 3 600 municipalities and provided permanent health coverage to 60 million Brazilians. Thanks to this program, primary health care was expanded; health services access and offers were increased; health indicators improved and hospital admissions decreased due to the preventive work carried out by Cuban doctors.

The level of satisfaction and acceptance among patients, doctors and the Program's managers was high. According to a survey made by the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), 95 per cent of patients said to be pleased or very pleased with the Program.

If Cuba had not been forced to

withdraw its doctors from Brazil, they could have contributed to tackle and control the covid-19 pandemic in that country, which is currently the second most affected by this disease in the world.

As was stated in the Declaration issued by the Cuban Ministry of Public Health on November 14, 2018, Cuba decided to discontinue its participation in the 'More Doctors' Program, in the face of the servile behavior of the Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, who adopted a contemptuous and threatening attitude towards our cooperation workers and, in open disregard for PAHO and the agreement reached by this organization with Cuba, imposed modifications on the terms of the Program, which led to non-compliance with originally agreed guarantees and the imposition of new conditions to the permanence of our professionals in that country, which were unacceptable.

The US government's attempt to manipulate international and regional bodies to its will is disgusting. It is well known that the executive organs of PAHO have not adopted any single document mandating or legitimizing the implementation of this audit or the drafting of its so-called "Terms of Reference."

Such document was drafted by a group made up by the United States, Brazil, PAHO's own Secretariat and Canada, where the latter acted as mediator among the parties. The height of all these arbitrary



## Communist youth in action

**MUHAMMED SHABEER**

**M**EMBERS OF the Democratic Youth Federation of India in the state of Kerala raised €1.2 million by running a recycling campaign in

which they collected scrap from around the state and sold it for recycling.

Ever since the beginning of the covid-19 pandemic, left-wing youth organisations around the world have been in the forefront both in providing relief and in resisting attempts to attack the rights of the people. An instance of this has been the "Recycle Kerala" initiative launched by the communist Democratic Youth Federation of India, which raised more than €1.2 million to help the state's fight-back against the pandemic. On 6 August the state leadership of the DYFI contributed the entire amount to the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund.

Kerala's left-wing government stands out globally for its people-centred approach to combating the pandemic and has won renown for successfully combating two waves of the pandemic. The youth organisation's initiative comes as the state deals with the third wave.

Unlike many fund-raising campaigns, Recycle Kerala involved the collection of used secondary materials from households for recycling, which were then sold by DYFI to scrap dealers and recyclers.

From May, members of all 27,240 branches of DYFI visited households in their locality, collecting books, old newspapers, damaged electronic devices, and other such items. Some households also donated valuables, such as paintings, sculptures, and other pieces of art, adding substantially to the fund.

Contributions also came in the form of farm products, including fruit, vegetables, poultry, and dairy produce. Some small-scale farmers even donated their entire produce for the season, including rice, tubers, and plantains.

In remote villages in Kerala, where farmers have found it difficult to sell their agricultural products because of the



actions is that the entire auditing process is being financed from PAHO's regular budget.

Without any mandate whatsoever, a US law firm was hired to issue an adjusted and predetermined evaluation within a term of 180 days, in conformity with the "Terms of Reference" that the select group headed by the United States had already defined.

No-one with an elemental sense of honesty, knowing the intentions and behavior of the government of the United States, or with a modicum of common sense, would ever doubt that this is a head-on attack against multilateralism; a gross politically motivated manipulation of PAHO and an extension of the aggression against Cuba.

After the denunciation of this maneuver by Dr. José Ángel Portal Miranda, Minister of Public Health of Cuba, at the Fifty Eighth meeting of the Directing Council of PAHO on September 28, the statements made by the representatives of the State Department showed that the government of the United States is behind the pressures that are exerted on the Organization, against Cuba's cooperative programs with member States of the region and the so-called "external audit" of the 'More Doctors' Program for Brazil. The United States went far beyond that and opposed the election of Cuba as member of the Executive Committee of PAHO, an action that failed to succeed thanks to the unanimous support that Cuba's candidature received. During

the sessions of the Council, several countries recognized and expressed their gratitude for the solidarity and cooperation offered by the Cuban medical staff to cope with the covid-19 pandemic.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba denounces that a spurious and mendacious evaluation is currently in the making, promoted by and to serve the aggressive purposes of the United States, in its effort to discredit Cuba's international cooperation.

It is unfortunate that, through this new maneuver, the US government is trying to damage Cuba's relations with PAHO, which has historically been based on cooperation, respect, common identification of humanist goals and values and a determination to guarantee health quality services to the people. This has been the basis of a relation Cuba feels proud of.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba reiterates Cuba's firm commitment to the development and sustainability of its health system for the benefit of the Cuban people and the cooperation with the peoples in the region and elsewhere in the world.

Cuba has the capacity to do it, which has been created with its own efforts. This is a reality that no one can change.

Access to health care is a human right and the United States is committing a crime when it tries to deprive millions of persons of that inalienable right.

As was expressed in the Declaration issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on

December 5, 2019, it is both immoral and unacceptable that the dignity, professionalism and altruism of the more than 400 000 Cuban health cooperation workers, having accomplished missions in 164 countries during 56 years, are called into question.

The tightened economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba, whose effects are being particularly devastating in the context of the covid-19 pandemic has not, nor will it prevent our country from sharing its scarce resources with other peoples in need in the world.

In addition to coping with the pandemic within its borders, and guided by the humanist and fraternal vocation of our people, Cuba has reinforced its international medical cooperation by sending more than 3 800 cooperation workers, organized in 52 medical brigades, to 39 countries and territories affected by the disease. These specialists have been joined by those who were already offering their services in 59 States, prior to the outbreak of the pandemic.

As was expressed by the historical leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, in his Reflection of October 20, 2014 entitled *The Time of Duty*, "the medical staff that is ready to go to any region to save lives, even at the risk of losing their own, is the best example of solidarity that human beings can offer."

quarantine, DYFI committees purchased the produce and resold it. Other items donated were poultry, cattle, seeds, saplings, and high-yield fruit plants, which were resold. The members also sold fish that they themselves caught in inland rivers and lakes. Locally stitched and embroidered clothes, along with state lottery tickets, were also sold in some places.

One particular initiative was the cleaning of the rivers throughout the state by removing an estimated 6½ tons of plastic waste, including plastic bottles, which was then sold for recycling. Members also engaged in cleaning private wells, factories, offices, and houses.

Several popular football-players who are part of the national, state and local teams donated their jerseys, which were then auctioned by block committees.

In a number of places the DYFI ran

small eating-places, selling local delicacies at lower prices. They also provided cheap local transport in places with limited connectivity. Various artists who are members of DYFI conducted spot caricature drives and street concerts, while adhering to covid-19 safety protocols.

Along with all these efforts DYFI members joined in the work at building sites, farms and markets and contributed their earnings.

Though this initiative did not receive any coverage in the mainstream corporate media, the effort and contribution of DYFI was well received on social media. On 7 August, in his official press briefing, the chief minister of Kerala, Pinarayi Vijayan, acknowledged and appreciated the initiative of DYFI as a model for the world to follow. "This initiative will be remembered as a hallmark of the valour of the youth in our

state," he said, "who are ready to fight for the common good, braving all adversities."

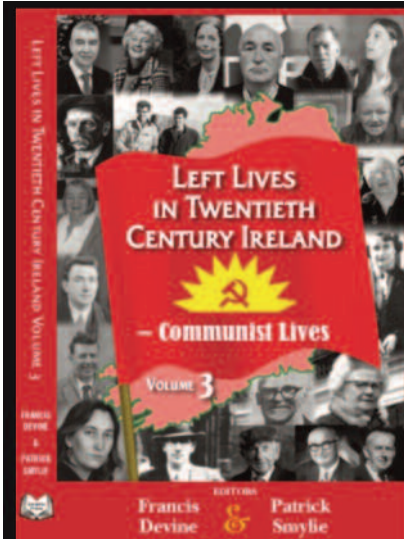
The Youth Brigade volunteers from DYFI have been active in relief and rescue efforts for the people affected by heavy rains and floods. In June more than 11,000 devices, including televisions, mobile phones, iPads, tablets, and laptops, were delivered free by DYFI to students from deprived sections of the population, enabling them to participate in the temporary on-line classes.

Apart from these efforts, the cleaning and facilitating drive by DYFI for covid-19 treatment infrastructures throughout the state, including the Covid First-Line Treatment Centres, began in March, and a chain of co-ordinated relief activities during the quarantine also received much publicity and appreciation from civil society

## Communist lives

GRAHAM HARRINGTON

Francis Devine and Patrick Smylie (editors), *Left Lives in Twentieth-Century Ireland, vol. 3: Communist Lives*, Dublin: Umiskin Press, 2020.



THE COMMUNIST PARTY of Ireland will celebrate a hundred years of Irish communism in 2021. This book is a welcome contribution to the centenary of the party.

After the counter-revolutions in eastern Europe in 1989–1991 it became safe for historians to write about communism in Ireland, believing—wrongly—that it was a spent force. Pivotal research into the CPI, especially in its first few decades, has been done by Emmet O'Connor, Charlie McGuire, Seán Byers, Adrian Grant and other historians to show the contribution the party made to Irish politics— notwithstanding the hatchet job done by Matt Treacy.

This book, as well as some others, gives an insight into how the party has not merely survived but has grown since the ending of the Soviet Union. The CPI in its first incarnation owed its existence as much to Irish history as to the October Revolution. The United Irishmen, the IRB and Connolly's ISRP all form the foundations of the Irish party

as much as the Bolshevik model.

It was in the respite of the Truce during the Irish Revolution that the CPI was formed, in an attempt to fuse the republican and socialist struggles into one movement under Marxist-Leninist direction.

What is also interesting to note is that the founders of the CPI were young and even inexperienced: Roddy Connolly was only twenty-one when he became the first general secretary of the party, and Seán McLoughlin only twenty-four.

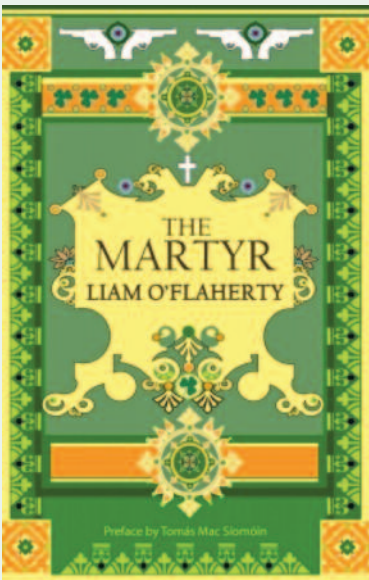
After the counter-revolution of 1922–23 and the consolidation of Irish capitalism—based on a subservient relationship with British imperialism and prevented from developing as a national capitalism because of this and partition—the CPI and the revolutionary left were forced to struggle on the outside of mainstream politics. After a period of being stood down, the party reformed in 1933.

What cannot be denied is that the CPI was a vital component of the left in the 1930s. The left at that time was

## The last of Liam O'Flaherty's banned novels to see the light

JENNY FARRELL

Liam O'Flaherty, *The Martyr*, Nuascéalta, 2020



WITH THIS sensational republication of *The Martyr*, Nuascéalta completes its epic task of restoring the remaining three major O'Flaherty novels banned by the Irish state. The other two novels reprinted were the first book to be banned under the Censorship of Publications Act (1929), the Galway novel *The House of Gold* and O'Flaherty's insightful and scathing Hollywood satire, *Hollywood Cemetery*.

This publication makes available for the first time since the 1930s the entirety of Liam O'Flaherty's novelistic work and moves towards a restoration of the panorama of this author's work for a global audience.

Banned writings were dangerous to come by for many decades, and the long-term effect of such an establishment ban on literary works radiates to this day, as once-censored novels can still be rare on library and bookshop shelves.

O'Flaherty's novels, mainly written in the 1920s and 30s, address significant events in Irish history and the newly emerging Free State, a fundamentalist Catholic state in which books were banned and a whole people systematically kept in ignorance—a

state betraying the ideals of independence.

Nuascéalta's return of *The Martyr* to the reading public comes at a time when we commemorate—controversially—the centenary of the War of Independence and the Civil War.

*The Martyr* gives O'Flaherty's view on the battle to control the country's destiny. The novel, written only ten years after the Civil War, brings to life the nationwide Free State attack on the anti-Treaty forces. One such offensive was the landing at Fenit, Co. Kerry. O'Flaherty fictionalises this incident at "Carra Point" and "Sallytown" (Tralee).

Events concerning the Free State army landing and its sequel are seen through the eyes of Sallytown's defenders and its townspeople, clerical and lay. In the author's imaginative reconstruction, professional Free State troops face Sallytown's ill-trained, badly led and poorly equipped volunteer defenders.

O'Flaherty's point of view is always informed by his understanding of class and class interests. He writes from the point of view of the ordinary people, fishermen, peasants, workers. As part of this perspective he leaves no doubt about which side in the Civil War the

largely reduced to the CPI, the left wing in the IRA, and the occasional left Labour member. It was these forces that engaged in the struggle for an Irish republic of a new type with the formation of the Republican Congress, land agitation, trade union battles, housing struggles, and the fight against the Blueshirts and clerical domination, culminating with the Connolly Column in Spain.

It was the CPI's lone voice that spoke out about clerical abuse in the industrial schools, and Irish communists put the politics of unity into action when they organised Catholic and Protestant workers in the outdoor relief (unemployment assistance) strike in 1932. Small wonder that Jimmy Gralton was deported by the Irish state at a time when Irish communists suffered assaults and intimidation.

Special note needs to be made of communist women, some of whom are profiled in the book. The CPI had the first female leader of an Irish political party, as Charlie McGuire has covered

elsewhere. The founding meeting of the Irish-Soviet Friendship Society elected an all-woman committee. The role of communist women in housing struggles, civil rights campaigns, workers' struggles, access to nursery schools and women's centres are all covered in the book.

The CPI was a party as much of the working class as it was for the working class. Unlike other left-wing fractions, which spent their time with the latest trendy issue in the university colleges, the CPI organised in working-class communities. The pivotal role of communists in workers' struggles comes across in the massive emphasis put on trade union activism within the party, particularly in Belfast. The CPI was in the forefront of the unemployed movement and the civil rights movement in the North as well as internationalist struggles in solidarity with the Soviet Union, Cuba, and Viet Nam.

More recently the party has played a leading role as an ideological vanguard, with the Right2Water struggle, the Trade

Union Left Forum, the Peadar O'Donnell Socialist Republican Forum and the People's Dáil being areas of party focus. *Socialist Voice* and other media are influential outlets for the party, as is Connolly Books. The CPI has campaigned for Irish independence from British, EU and US imperialism and in countless other causes in recent years. The Connolly Youth Movement has played a vital role in youth politics.

What comes across in the book is that it has not been easy to be an Irish communist. Anti-communism, of the "left" and right varieties, remains an obstacle. Confounding its critics, the CPI has shown in the past three decades especially that we are an independent and principled party that will continue to fight for our class. A hundred years later we can look at our history with pride and continue the fight. "*When I am asked if I'm ever sorry I took this difficult road, I reply that my life shows that I had chosen correctly. To be a Communist means to live for others.*"—Lillian Murphy

gombeen class stood: "Every one of these peasants felt that Tracy was fighting for Ireland and that Sheehan was not. Down in their souls they felt it, by instinct . . . It was all very well for posh fellows in Dublin, he felt, to mock at these ignorant poor people; but all the same the poor people's instincts were always right in the long run."

O'Flaherty presents the reader with the complexities of each class as erstwhile comrades find themselves on opposing sides of this tragic conflict; Sheehan "was about the same age as Tracy and he had an equally brilliant record as a guerrilla fighter. He came from a village on the coast of Cork and he had been a fisherman before he became a revolutionary. He had been admitted into the ranks of the Republican Brotherhood for a very skilful landing of some arms right under the eyes of a British gunboat."

This central conflict of the novel, between Tracy and Sheehan, comments memorably on how differently the Civil War could have ended: Sheehan refuses to kill Tracy and defies any military order to do so.

The group of revolutionaries around Tracy as their central player is diverse. Some, like Rourke, are simply farmers;

others, most prominently Crosbie, are devout Christians; others again have been soldiers, guerrilla fighters, and have been imprisoned. There is also an informer among them.

*The Martyr* is the rare Irish Civil War novel that presents some fighters on the anti-Treaty side as informed by the socialism of Connolly, indeed declared atheists and communists, and Tracy and Sailor King have most in common with O'Flaherty's own thinking. However, O'Flaherty combines all these diverse people into a group around Tracy to shape a group hero, as opposed to the idealised individual hero that dominates the bourgeois novel. This band of revolutionaries includes women, though there is a certain degree of stereotyping in these female characters, including the rather startling portrayal of Constance Markievicz.

Brian Crosbie, Sallytown's ineffectual Republican leader, is also based partly on a historical character: Terence MacSweeney. Crosbie, who becomes the martyr after whom the novel is named, is central to the plot. MacSweeney was a devout Catholic who described Ireland's struggle for independence as a religious crusade and his goal as a new Catholic state.

Laid out in his coffin, he wore underneath his IRA uniform the rough brown habit of a Franciscan monk.

Crosbie's ineffectuality arises from his Catholic nationalism, an issue of immediate relevance to O'Flaherty at the time he wrote the book. An extensive dialogue between Crosbie and his Free State army torturer, Tyson, reminiscent of Satan and Christ in the desert, paves the way for the novel's shocking ending.

This raw novel provides a gripping contemporary account of events that defined Irish history. It contradicts revisionist presentations of those times and suggests that, at a time when history is being removed from school curricula, one should read literature. It is unlikely to find favour among the descendants of the "Stater" camp, and could make for an uncomfortable reminder for the modern offspring of the anti-Treaty movement.

Following the recent general election, the media, along with the politicians of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, trumpeted about overcoming the divisions of the past, in an effort to exclude from government the party that aspires to achieve the goals of the anti-Treaty party of the Civil War. O'Flaherty reminds us of what this was all about.



## War on women

**LAURA DUGGAN**

**C**OGADH AR MHNÁ [war on women], a documentary that TG4 broadcast at 9:30 p.m. on 23 September, describes how sexual violence was used against women during the War of Independence and the following Civil War.

More heartbreaking are the words of the women themselves, women who often didn't have the language to describe what happened to them and were forced to resort to innuendo and implication to convey the horror of their experience. Some were plagued by shame and the trauma of what happened to them, silenced except to themselves. Those who were able to attempt to seek justice found themselves walled off and isolated, their case never being heard or followed up. Others had their stories used for propaganda purposes, ironically often by those refusing to correct or denying such behaviour in their own ranks.

The War of Independence and following Civil War were not conflicts of equals; but this documentary was not one focused on the political machinations of the time or the reasoning behind these historic events. The point was to look at and lift up the forgotten voices of women throughout the country victimised by both sides of the conflicts. Though sexual violence has long been a part of almost every conflict, this has been a blind spot concerning our own history during this period. It was long assumed that sexual crimes were absent from these struggles. As stated in the documentary, the British assumed their national character would prevent such crimes being carried out; the pro and anti-treaty sides resorted to the narrative of heroic men doing battle and sacrificing

themselves for a greater cause. Women's participation or existence was largely unmentioned on and, in many instances, removed.

This belittling of women alongside the view of women's bodies as legitimate targets by the fledgling state has had a lasting impact on the role of women in Ireland. Women of the new Ireland were quickly and quietly returned to the home and their "natural role" of wives, mothers, and caregivers. Social pressure tacitly implied that a woman who performed these roles sufficiently would be protected by their absence from public life. Women who were seen to be a little too friendly or outgoing or loud brought attention upon themselves and therefore punishment, be it by sexual crime or incarceration in laundries, often both.

The continuation of this legacy is still in evidence to this day: newspapers that publish stories filled with faux-outrage about judges sympathising with perpetrators of sexual crime even when

the act of sentencing them are the same ones who denounce the character or actions of the survivor.

The scales of justice have never been balanced in this country, and it would be foolish to expect them to suddenly be in the case of crimes against women, particularly those of the working class. It was not that long ago that a woman could face a longer term for the termination of a pregnancy than a man would for rape. 95 per cent of incarcerated women are locked up for petty crime, and the vast majority of these women are from the poorest sections of the working class—women who have already been victimised by the capitalist system.

Not one sector of our society is free of sexism in all its various forms, and as a result the left has a particular duty to challenge it and combat it, and long before it reaches the point of a crime. Women are an essential component of any struggle, and it is not enough that we try to right the wrongs of the past alone. It is not enough to talk the talk.

In a world where workers are seen as disposable, women workers even more so, true solidarity comes in lifting their voices, having them tell their stories, in their own words, for their own purposes. No-one should have to wait a hundred years for their truth to be heard. Our job is to listen.

■ "Cogadh ar Mhna" can still be viewed on TG4.ie until 29 October.

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