

Proletarian

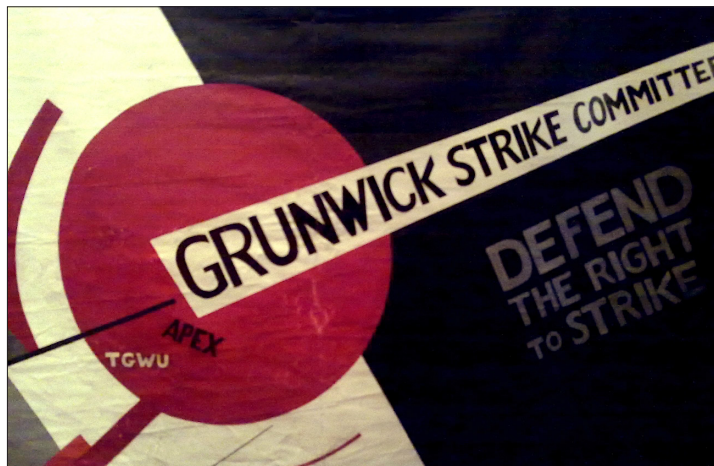


Workers must refuse to be intimidated by the barrage of lying propaganda that fills Britain's corporate media. It is the capitalists' job to try to stop us from taking power and building a socialist society; it is our job to do it anyway!

DEFY THE ANTI- TRADE UNION LAWS!



Industrial



TUC directs members' anger into more meaningless busywork

An email campaign to reverse anti-union laws?

The right to strike is the only meaningful right that workers can have under the capitalist system. And, since no gain is ever permanent under conditions of permanent class war, it has had to be defended many times in the last two centuries.

With the new legislation about to be passed by our rulers, the array of anti-union legislation in Britain will put workers here in a parlous state as regards defending their pay and conditions – a situation compounded by legislation that effectively outlaws protesting as well. Even imperialist NGO Human Rights Watch has been moved to complain!

On 18 January, the TUC organised an online meeting via its front organisation Megaphone, an umbrella group that brings together more than 48 unions across Britain, representing 5.5 million members.

Workers were called on to “help stop these anti-strike laws” and egged on via bombastic hyperbole (“amazing!”, “electric!” ...) to “take action” and “play your part” ... to do what exactly? To join a general strike? To fill the streets? Surround Downing Street? Organ-

ise and change the system?

No. To send an email, yes, *an email* to their local MP demanding they “stop the bill in its tracks”. The meeting organisers reported (also via email) that the “immediate action on the call” they had organised had led 220 people (out of 5.5 million members) “taking action”! Yes, that’s 220 emails to MPs in the hope that they might just forget for a moment that they serve the ruling class and vote against their bosses’ interests.

The same email reported excitedly: “MPs will be voting on these new laws in the coming weeks, and we know that many are undecided about whether they will support these laws or not. In fact, some Tory MPs are beginning to waver and have started to voice concerns about the bill.”

We can’t help but wonder where the TUC gets its information. When did loyal servants of the ruling class – Labour or Tory – ever show a working-class conscience? Yet now we are to believe that, as a result of feeling the ‘pressure’ from a few emails, like Pinocchio under the admonishments of

Jiminy Cricket, the noses of our good parliamentarians have stopped growing and they have discovered their hearts.

Now they are ready to give up on decades of careerism and vote unselfishly for the interests of the working class. Now they will stop helping the capitalists try to escape their crisis by passing the burden onto the backs of the poor. Now they want to defend workers’ most fundamental right within the capitalist system – the right to use their collective power to defend themselves against harsh conditions and unlivable pay.

Pull the other one, it’s got bells on it.

Megaphone exhorts its members to “reach MPs urgently to ensure they act”, assuring them that MPs are “most likely to listen to are their own constituents”. So, the quicker we act, the quicker they will come to their senses and transform themselves into Real Boys.

Well, that sounds logical at a certain level. But, wait, haven’t we been here before?

Why should we imagine our rulers and their loyal henchmen are about to listen to us, the downtrodden, the poor, the underprivileged *now*, when they never have before? Did they listen when we said No to nukes? (Did they spend less on deploying their nuclear arsenal and more on education and healthcare?)

Did they listen when we said No to Nato, or to the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya or Syria? Did they listen when there were outcries about racist and corrupt policing? Did they listen when we voted for Brexit? Are they listening to us on Ukraine? We could go on ...

We in the Communist party certainly do not want this anti-strike bill. But does the strategy of ‘bombarding’ MPs with

emails make any real, substantial difference? Isn’t it in fact just a ploy to keep people busy doing nothing? To keep us thinking that Parliament is our only hope of salvation? To make us believe that we have no power to affect anything ourselves?

What kind of message is that for a mass trade union organisation to send? Whatever happened to ‘Class against class’?

The TUC could not furnish any better proof that it is as much a part of the establishment it claims to oppose as are the MPs themselves.

Its leaders do not really represent the working-class masses; they never have and never will. If they were representative of the working class of this country, they would be calling for people to organise; to use their collective power to *demand* immediate action to save workers from hunger and fuel poverty; to *guarantee* workers a decent living and decent homes.

They would be bringing their members not in hundreds to their computers but *in hundreds of thousands onto the streets*: to surround Parliament and Downing Street; to obstruct the City of London; to close down Nato’s bases; to take over the lying media outlets that help our rulers wage their relentless class war against the workers.

They wouldn’t be diverting people’s attention to an email campaign that can achieve nothing but the demobilisation of our class, the deepening of our apathy and cynicism.

They would also be bringing workers’ attention to the need for a complete change of system, from anarchic and inhumane capitalism to rational, human-centred socialism; the need for a system in which workers can take charge ▶

Industrial



Minimum Service Bill latest salvo in the class war against workers

No cooperation with anti-trade union laws!

The TUC one-day rally against the new anti-strike law, whilst welcome in itself, falls woefully short of giving any kind of a lead to a working class that has been for so long starved of socialist leadership.

The harmless-sounding Minimum Service Bill currently being pushed through Parliament is in fact an outright declaration of war against the working class, aimed at stripping workers of the right to withdraw their labour and go on strike.

For four decades the trade unions have seen the rights of organised labour undermined by wave after wave of hostile laws. Banning sympathy strikes, narrowing the scope for mounting picket lines, imposing ever more restrictions on the conduct of strike ballots, including the arbitrary institution of minimum turnout thresholds, and a myriad other pettifogging constraints upon the legal right to withdraw labour – all these impudent encroachments on the right to

strike have *in practice* been tolerated by an ever more submissive labour movement.

There has been much grumbling about the unfairness of these laws, various legal challenges to their implementation, and periodic half-hearted ‘campaigns’ to ditch the union-busting laws. What has never been seen from the TUC, however, is a readiness to mobilise workers to use their organised power to confront the state, not just symbolically, in fiery speeches, but *in action*, by collectively breaking these unjust laws and making it impossible for the union-busters to prevail.

Instead, most trade unions, with a few honourable exceptions, have submitted meekly to being neutered, getting side-tracked into promoting discount insurance schemes and the like for their members whilst continuing to fund an imperialist Labour party that stands unashamedly on the side of the bosses.

This abject failure of trade

union bureaucrats to fight for workers’ fundamental rights, always excused by the wisdom of “keeping your powder dry” in readiness for the “real fight” to come, and jealously guarding the union’s finances for some future “rainy day”.

Well, the rainy day has come, but it is capitalism, not the unions, that has seized the initiative and started a real fight against workers’ few remaining rights. It is impelled to do this in order to make workers bear the burden of the inflationary cost of living crisis for which they bear no responsibility whatsoever.

The Minimum Service Bill step by step demolishes every last vestige of the right to strike, the one and only way that wage-slaves can collectively exercise their power within capitalist society. The bill gives the government unlimited authority to set minimum service levels for six public services: the NHS, the fire brigade, education, transport, the decommissioning of nuclear installations, and border controls.

Unions representing these key workers will have no say in the matter, leaving the government with a *carte blanche* to decide what ‘minimum service level’ actually is in any particular case. Affected workers who refuse to come into work will be sacked. And as reward for 40 years of passivity in the face of capitalist aggression, it will be the unions themselves that will be ordered to whip workers into line and break their own strikes in order to comply with the new rules.

The government will serve a “work notice”, laying down

what the minimum service will be and which workers must be compelled to work. Next, the union itself is mandated to ensure that workers comply with the notice, identifying which workers must come into work and break the strike. If the union refuses to act as an agent of the government in this way, it can be sued and risk a fine or sequestration of its funds.

This anti-strike bill is not remotely to do with ‘protecting the public’. Indeed, it undermines existing “life and limb” arrangements already agreed to by unions to minimise real harm to the public.

It is everything to do with a coordinated attack on the right to strike, a key part of the campaign to make workers pay for the inflationary crisis by real-terms pay cuts, soaring prices and gutted public services.

This latest attack on the working class needs to be resisted, not just by one-day rallies, legal challenges and TUC declarations, but by an *active campaign of non-cooperation* with the new law *in practice*, making it impossible for the law to function.

Unions worth their salt should refuse to carry out the government’s strike-breaking ‘work orders’, instead instructing members to stand by the decision to go on strike. Conversely, if workers find that their existing leaders are collaborating with the class enemy, let such renegades be ousted and replaced by others who measure up to the needs of the hour.

No cooperation with union-busting anti-strike laws!

◀ of their own destinies and plan production to meet their needs.

Emails will not solve our prob-

lems. Only meaningful mass organisation that harnesses the power of the working class can achieve anything we need, from immediate reforms to

lighten the burden we carry within the capitalist system, to the total overthrow of that system and its replacement with a planned economy.

This is our call to action:

**Join us today.
Organise.**

Economy



It's not workers who cause inflation but capitalists

It is the right and the duty of workers to demand a bigger share of the wealth their own labour has created.

As the cost of living soars, public services fall apart and anger grows apace in the working class, the government is blaming, in equal measure, the workers (for daring to try and hold back the steep decline in their wages) and Vladimir Putin (for daring to resist Nato aggression).

Tory party chairman Nadhim Zahawi managed to blame both Putin *and* the British working class at the same time, declaring that nurses should call off their strikes and abandon their pay demands because their action risked playing into the hands of the Russian president, who allegedly 'wants to fuel inflation' in the west. According to this fantastical logic, NHS workers have chosen the 'wrong time' to strike over poverty pay because a pay rise will 'increase inflation' and 'help Vladimir Putin divide the west'.

No doubt if the strikes are called off, those kids who don't get school shoes, or dinner, or a warm place to sleep, will perfectly understand that they ought to suffer in the interests of maintaining the status quo for their parents' exploiters. No doubt our academy CEOs are already preparing the assemblies: 'Why we're lucky to have British exploiters keeping us hungry and not that evil monster Putin.'

We can't help noticing that there is never any suggestion that negative economic effects might arise from the inflation-busting pay deals and bonuses that CEOs and various mandarins of the ruling class regularly award themselves. Indeed, these flunkys have been piling up their wealth to record levels throughout the crisis while expecting workers to accept the drastic wage cuts that

inflation has caused.

Money-printing

The reality that capitalist economists and politicians are keen to hide is that the biggest reason for the growth of inflation has been endless money-printing, which went up to a whole new level during the banking crisis of 2008, and has continued at an elevated rate ever since.

As the capitalists scramble to help their staggering system lurch from crisis to crisis, they have been bailing out one monopoly-dominated section of the economy after another, each one considered 'too big to fail' – or just next in line for a hand-out. (See, for example, the 'Covid' stock market bailout of 2020, and the almost limitless subsidies given to the pharmaceutical monopolies under cover of the health crisis.)

As the capitalist economic crisis deepens, equally enormous handouts are making

their way into the coffers of the energy companies (by way of the 'price cap' mechanism) and the arms manufacturers (by way of the British government's unlimited commitment to the USA's proxy war on Russia in Ukraine).

Just in time means no contingency plan

Another factor fuelling inflation has been the disruption in supply lines caused when the capitalist 'efficiency' of 'just in time' met the hard reality of closed factories and ports during the pandemic.

The just-in-time system so much favoured by capitalist economic gurus is so finely tuned to optimise profit at every stage in production that it can't easily withstand even a single day's strike at a single factory, or a single adverse weather event, or a single stranded container ship.

The chaos created by a succession of such 'freak' events, occurring in many places around the world and often simultaneously, led to disruptions in the supply of parts and finished goods that are still causing chaos and inflation two years later.

The profitable (for the monopolies) practice of abolishing all contingency planning and all warehouse space turned out to be extremely expensive for humanity at large.

Monopoly price gouging

Another cause of high prices is good old-fashioned price gouging, which is always indulged in by monopolies that are in a position to get away with it. Prices are set artificially high to maximise profits, often as a result of a secret arrangement between the few big companies that between them control a particular area of economic activity.

Economy

Capitalist economists make much of the system's ability to bring prices down, and indeed it does, as a result of the battle of competition, the economies of scale that come from mass production, and the utilisation of the cheapest possible labour. But if big capitalists find themselves in a position where they can keep prices higher, they will most certainly take it.

It is noticeable, for example, that it only takes the *rumour* of a *potential, future* disruption in the oil supply for prices at the pumps or on the meter to go up. And if there is later a small 'correction', the price never seems to go back to where it was before. The line over time for such monopoly-controlled essentials only seems to go upwards.

Economic warfare backfiring

And then, of course, there are the sanctions. The imperialist countries have been using their control of world trading mechanisms to starve all independent-minded countries into submission for decades, but the steady ratcheting up of this blunt weapon against Russia and China in the last decade has forced both countries to take serious steps to protect themselves.

In the process, they have not only made their own economies more diverse, self-sufficient and resilient, but they have created a framework that allows other countries to join them and do the same. The weapon that was supposed to ensure US domination forever has actually accelerated the process of the decline of imperialist global supremacy.

When Russia finally (after decades of provocations and broken promises, and eight years of trying to implement the peace process in eastern Ukraine) responded to the

proxy war being waged against it in February 2022, the west launched a massive sanctions war, which it confidently asserted would bring Russia to its knees in a matter of weeks, collapsing its economy, starving its people onto the streets, and toppling the hated Putin government.

The result, our leaders were sure, would be the installation of a stooge regime in the Kremlin, the break-up of Russia into seven or eight manageable chunks, and an orgy of unfettered looting of Russia's people and resources – just like the one that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and which the rise of a nationalist government in Russia so rudely brought to a halt.

When Russia failed to collapse as predicted, the sanctions began to hurt those who were wielding them far more than they were hurting Russia itself. While Russia found new markets for export commodities such as oil, gas, minerals, wheat and fertiliser, the absolute dependence of western industries on these materials was starkly revealed.

How many workers in Europe had understood before May 2022 that Germany's industrial strength rested on the provision of low-cost oil from the Urals? How many understood the fact that the very engines and refineries that power Europe's economies are built around the specific features of this particular grade of oil, and that no 'alternative source' can easily replace it?

Who caused the war in Ukraine – and who is being asked to pay?

So yes, a certain amount of the inflation that Britons are currently experiencing has been caused by the economic war against Russia, which has had the effect of disrupting

supply and boosting prices. But it's quite a stretch to blame the intended victim of Nato's aggression for the inflationary consequences of Nato's war!

Whilst we are encouraged to dwell on such propositions as the notion that 'every 1 percent raise in pay for NHS workers costs the country £700m', nobody is invited to marvel at the cost in blood or treasure of the latest in hi-tech killing machines destined for the Ukraine meatgrinder.

The brilliant example being set by rail workers, posties, health workers and others is a red rag to the Tories and an uncomfortable reminder to the imperialist Labour party that the working class has not gone away.

Shadow health secretary Wes Streeting recently put the boot into the BMA, accusing the doctors' representative body of promoting a "something for nothing" culture in the NHS and whingeing that in spite of Labour's "commitment" to more staff, these ingrates remain "so hostile to the idea that with more staff must come better standards for patients". How better standards are supposed to be achieved in departments that are understaffed precisely because pay and working conditions are so bad, Mr Streeting didn't say.

As for Keir Starmer, he announced in a radio interview that the pay rise nurses are fighting for (19 percent, that is, 5 percent over the current *official* RPI and a long way short of the real-terms pay cut they've suffered over the last 15 years) is "more than could be afforded".

No parliamentarian of any political stripe would dream of breaking with the holy consensus: blame greedy workers and evil Russian dictators, and don't talk about the capitalist crisis or the class war.

The truth is that with their system in deep crisis, our rulers have only two ways out: pass as much of the burden of the crisis onto the poor as possible, and search ruthlessly and relentlessly around the globe for ways to make a profit.

That might be by cutting wages to raise profits margins. It might be by putting the poorest workers with no choice onto prepay meters and wringing a few more quid out of them that way. It might be by privatising services like healthcare and education so that the public purse can be rinsed for private profit.

Or it might be by driving to war against any and every corner of the world where maximum profit-taking is curbed by some independent-minded people who have the temerity to think it's up to them how the resources in their lands are used and who should benefit from their wealth.

Either way, it is the workers who pay, and the poorest who pay the most.

Marx proved long ago that it's not high wages which cause inflation. What higher wages ultimately do is reduce profit margins and the dividends that are paid out to the parasite class. While the system of capitalist production for profit remains, it's a *fundamental right and duty* of the working class to organise and to demand a bigger share of the wealth that its own labour has created.

Ultimately, of course, we need to recognise the truth of Marx's revelation that workers' problems can only really be solved when we drop the demand for 'fair wages' and take up the demand for an 'end to the wages system': that is, for an end to the system of workers' enslavement to the capitalist class, whose wealth is built upon our poverty.

Social



Prepay meter scandal reveals workers being slowly crushed by energy debt

Workers who can't afford crippling energy prices are being forced to pay even higher rates by the vulture providers.

Soaring energy costs, rapidly escalating food prices, the doubling of fuel prices at the pumps since 2006 and more are all steadily eroding the purchasing power of Britain's stagnant wage packets and further immiserating the workers, with many now facing impossible choices between feeding themselves and their families, turning the heating on to hold back the cold and damp, and powering their homes.

With many workers choosing food, rent and transport to work as the most pressing needs to be met, an increasing number of households are falling into debt with their energy providers. When this happens, the standard practice of these profiteers is to force workers to switch from monthly or quarterly bills to 'pay as you go' meters.

They try to hide this vicious practice behind patronisingly 'altruistic' phrases about 'helping their customers (read poor workers) to manage their finances' – the unanswerable logic being that if you have to pay in advance, you will never accidentally use what you can't

afford.

Of course, this is fooling no one. But it is hardly surprising that, within a system where profit is the sole motivator for all economic activity, an energy business should put its profit margins ahead of the people's need for heating and power.

Clearly, with prices continuing to rise and wages continuing to stagnate, the energy monopolies know well that the best way to insulate themselves from inevitable defaults is to make sure that the problem is passed to the worker at the first sign of difficulty.

Even better (for the companies concerned): in homes where customers have already been persuaded to install 'smart meters', their energy provider can arbitrarily and instantaneously switch them from monthly bills to prepay mode without notice, justification or appeal, saving the expense and embarrassment of having to employ bailiffs to install such meters by force. A perfect example of business efficiency!

Profiting from our misery

But, heartless as capital is in making these decisions and turning its back on the sufferings of those from whom it profits, the story doesn't stop there.

Because those who use a prepay meter pay *significantly more per unit* of energy. According to the Citizen's Advice Bureau, paying via a meter could lead to an average increase of £258 a year as compared with paying by direct debit – another tax on the poorest in our society, and a guarantee that they will get even less of the energy they need.

With another 450,000 households expected to be switched to prepay over the coming months, bringing the total to four million, this amounts to extra payments of £4bn – a huge increase in income for the monopolies once again being sucked out of the poorest strata of workers.

Since workers can't afford energy, they can't feed the meter, and their energy is subsequently cut off. The energy industry has coined a marvelously arms-length term for this barbaric occurrence: 'self-disconnection' – thus neatly hiding the violent reality that

families are being forcibly denied a basic necessity. According to the Citizens Advice Bureau, more than two million people are being disconnected at least once a month.

Once again, we see how monopoly corporations, whose wealth and power is built on the social productive activity of workers, force those same workers to pay the price of capitalism's failures.

The real costs

The prepay data paint a stark image of worsening conditions for Britain's workers, but figures aren't people, and it's easy to underestimate or gloss over the real-life consequences.

Losing heating isn't as simple as just 'putting on a jumper', there are manifold problems that come with lowering the temperature of your home. At a temperature of 18C or lower, the blood thickens – and this thickening increases as the temperature drops, leading to increased risk of pulmonary and cardiac issues.

In fact, there are a whole host of negative effects on the body as a person's environment cools, so just why are workers in a highly-developed country like Britain having to concentrate on wild and wonderful ways to stay warm, cutting more and more into our diminishing 'free' time in the process?

All this takes a particularly high toll on workers who aren't well to begin with. Symptoms associated with chronic issues such as rheumatoid arthritis, MS and ME, to name just three, all increase in prevalence and severity with prolonged exposure to cold. Gemma Carter, who suffers from arthritis, spondylosis and sciatica, told the Metro that when she's cold "it feels like your bones are being crushed from the" ► **page 8**

Environment



Britain's dire water situation no joke

Privatisation has stolen over £60bn from essential services, leaving the country to wallow in its own filth.

It is not often that a Marxist-Leninist would concede that the Bible makes a good point. Deuteronomy 23:11-14 is one of the few verses that still hold water.

Myriad translations abound, but the general gist is this: Of an evening, bathe in water, return to camp. Designate an area outside of the camp to relieve yourselves. Dig a hole with a shovel and, when done, cover it over.

Such biblical wisdom has been lost on a number of paid-to-a-point-of-glut water CEOs in Britain. Granted their positions of power in the land, in their benevolent wisdom, they have decided that the 'designated area' may be any and every waterway; that bathing in excrement is good enough for the people of this country.

The deluge isn't limited to household flushings. Industrial waste, too, is wreaking havoc on delicate ecosystems, leading to an abysmal prospect of existence for any aquatic-based lifeforms. Mass die-offs of marine life have occurred in the north of England, sparking

suspicious that there may have been a massive government cover-up of a leak of something rather more serious than 'algae bloom'.

Nitrates in fertilisers used by farmers cause eutrophication in almost every pond and lake. Spot-on routine medical treatments for pets, who then are allowed to swim in natural waterways, cause catastrophic loss of microorganic life. Our river systems are taking a hammering – as are the dwindling number of wild animals that still use them as a drinking source.

Sewage dumping provokes indignation but no action

Recent protests at beaches across the country have chosen to focus on the dumping of sewage. In lieu of any meaningful political action from supposed 'regulators' like Ofwat or the Environment Agency, disgruntled workers have come together to bang pots and pans, wave placards, pose for photos and then pen letters to MPs – all of which are subsequently

filed in the draw marked 'ignore' or simply binned.

Reported figures vary depending upon source, measurement and period, but there really is no way to spin or downplay them. As a Guardian article pointed out in November: 'nine million hours of raw sewage have been spilled in the UK since 2016'.

Nine million hours is 1,027 years. That's a steady stream.

The Guardian article cited above was documenting a 2,000-strong demonstration on Tankerton beach in Whitstable, Kent. Water quality had been the most frequent concern raised by constituents in the nearby Gorrell ward by-election in 2021 – a concern that led to the election of Green candidate Clare Turnball to the parish council, for all the good that will do anyone.

The beach at Tankerton retains its 'blue flag' status despite local residents and Green party campaigners testing the water themselves and finding positive results e-coli and other harmful bacteria.

On a website littered with grammatical errors, the local Labour council has 'called for' the adoption of a five-point 'action plan': More data, better signage, hold some meetings, include water quality in the coastal management plan, and ask new housing developments to do more to deal with rainwater.

'Action' taken since then has amounted to nothing more than the installation by Southern Water of a real-time monitoring buoy, which so far has yielded precisely no data.

Also in November, the Times ran an article showing Cornwall's Trevaunance Cove in St Agnes awash with effluent.

This pristine 'blue flag' beach is at the bottom of the hill from

the headquarters of Surfers Against Sewage, which offers the other half of every keen surfer's pre-splash routine: Magicseaweed.com for the surf report, SAS's Safer Seas Service for the shit report.

Surfers Against Sewage's 20 years of determined existence is a sad testament to capitalism's priorities, this spillage a real personal slap in their faces.

During his short stint as environment secretary in Liz Truss's ill-fated cabinet, Ranil Jayawardena demanded that every water company boss write to him with plans to reduce storm overflows. Letters to Defra from water company executives, released under the Freedom of information act, complained of failures to bring in new laws to help them (CEOs) deal with their sewage discharges.

A recent motion to amend an environmental bill, tabled by the Duke of Wellington, which would have placed a legal duty on water companies to end the discharge of untreated sewage from storm overflows, was thrown out by the House of Lords like jetsam – the upper house desperately trying to keep this moribund profit-driven system afloat, no matter what the cost to people or planet.

Misdirection and myopia: fiddling while the Titanic goes down

As blame in the mainstream corporate media flows from one sea of ineptitude to the next, from water companies to politicians to crumbling Victorian infrastructure to wet wipes to the House of Lords and back again to the water companies, protestors are left rudderless and confused, unable to work out where they should be directing their justifiable discontent.

Social

Water pollution

◀ **page 7** Environmentalist George Monbiot's tactic is to rely on the chance of a revelatory miracle appearing to wake the political system to the reality of its sins like the Ghost of Christmas Future. He has pinpointed capitalism as the problem, but lacks the ability to extend his search for solutions beyond the capitalist system and its social-democratic safety-net.

The University of Greenwich released a paper at the beginning of this year reporting in detail on the dire situation in Britain's water system. Its authors noted how the water companies work to hide the extent and source of their astronomical dividends:

"The English regulated water and sewerage companies (WASCs) have paid shareholders a total of £18.9bn in dividends since 2010 to 2021 – an annual average of £1.6bn.

"These dividends have increased the cost of water and sewerage to consumers by an average of £69 per household per year over the last 12 years – over £1.30 per week from every household in England.

"In reality, investments have been entirely financed from customer payments, almost every year. Investments have been paid for by consumers, and have not involved any finance from shareholders."

This author is running out of water puns, a playful homage to those found in all the mainstream media articles on this topic. But there was one obvious pun *not* found sloshing around: not a single author tried to make the case for these obscene CEO payouts 'trickling down' to Britain's workers.

Meanwhile, the fines levied against water companies by toothless regulators are simply

being absorbed as a cost of doing business – witness the recent 'record-breaking' £90m slap on the wrist to Southern Water for its 6,971 'unpermitted' (as opposed to permitted?) polluting incidents.

No individual has been held accountable, and business continues in the same way regardless.

According to the same Greenwich university report, the parasitism is worse even than it appears:

"The companies have nevertheless borrowed large amounts of money, building up a large pile of debt and large annual bill for interest. *This debt has not been taken on to finance investment, but to finance the payment of dividends.*" (Our emphasis)

The report further calculates that the privatisation of the water companies costs households in Britain £93 more every year than if the system was in public hands. Such evidence points away from capitalist efficiency and towards a freeloading contempt for the working class.

Those who are educated in the science of Marxism understand that the blame for the degradation of our water system lies nowhere in the swirling vortex of mainstream media misdirection, but with the economic system itself.

The water system was privatised in 1989 by the Thatcher government under the guise of 'opening it up to investment'. However, the exact opposite has been the result. Hardly surprising for a regime whose leader declared that "society is dead".

The death of society is often mistaken for the rise of the individual; in reality, it is no such thing, since we sink or swim together, whether we realise it or not. As the 16th- ▶ **page 10**

Prepay scandal

◀ **page 6** inside".

People die when it is cold. The excess winter mortality index (EWMI) for the 2020/1 period showed that over 30 per cent more deaths occurred in the winter months in England and Wales compared with the non-winter months. That was a period when heating and eating was more affordable than it is now. Many more people will die this winter.

Calls for change

These are just some of the immediate, terrifying and deadly outcomes of a system that only produces goods and services for sale rather than to ensure the wellbeing of the people. Workers must push back against them these depredations here and now; without a serious movement of resistance, death and destitution will be the result of the capitalist crisis for many thousands of workers.

Movements like Enough is Enough and Don't Pay UK have gained some support across Britain, and their demands including pay rises, cutting energy bills, ending food poverty, decent homes and increasing taxes on the incomes and wealth of the rich. If achieved, these measures would make a short-term concrete improvement in workers' living standards.

Such demands, while moving us a step in the right direction, concentrate purely on increasing the *proportion* of the wealth created by our collective labour with which workers are compensated (as opposed to the proportion that goes in profits to the capitalists).

Exploitation itself remains. And, of course, even if granted, such concessions can also be removed in the future when our rulers feel the balance of

forces to be more favourable to their interests – either openly or in countless gradual and more or less hidden ways.

Thus this is a quantitative change only, one that leaves the current relations between the workers and the owners of production intact – and allows for the same problems to recur again in the future.

The Don't Pay UK campaign goes further, demanding that the energy companies, among others, should be brought into public ownership: "The solution cannot be found in more corporate monitoring, control and profiteering, but instead the answer is to take back control of our resources from the private corporations, invest in them properly, and run these public resources for the common good."

This implies a qualitative change, since the ownership of the means of production in one sector would shift from control by a few individual capitalists to control by the British state.

But this too falls short of what is really needed. The British state is a capitalist one, it is the organisation of the dictatorship of the capitalist class. Public ownership under such a system, run through with a thousand threads of capitalist control, can never truly serve the workers' long-term interests, and often only lasts for a short while – most usually until the public has paid to rescue service from indebtedness and to invest in infrastructure that the profiteers are reluctant to pay for.

Meanwhile, our own experience of nationalised services in the postwar era was that they tended to be perpetually underfunded, as British Rail and Royal Mail both notoriously were, for instance. In part, this was owing to our rulers' aversity to putting too much public money into activities that yield-

Social

ed no profit, and in part it was owing to their need to create a bad reputation for these essential services, manufacturing 'crises' that were claimed to be the result of state ownership (rather than of underfunding) and which could allegedly only be 'solved' by reprivatisation ('market efficiencies').

True change

The way to get out of the endless cycles of crisis and the forcing down of workers' living standards is for *all production* (including energy) to be owned not by a *capitalist* state, but by a *workers'* state, a proletarian state that is run, maintained, planned and expanded by the working class in accordance with plans they themselves draw up for the benefit of the mass of the people.

Without the parasitic drain of profits being constantly extracted, which increases costs and takes away surplus that could be used to raise the pay and conditions of the workforce and invest in improving and developing these industries, we could guarantee access to life's necessities through a truly *qualitative* change – a change from capitalist ownership and production to a planned socialist economy; from capitalist inhumanity to socialist sanity.

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Communist responds to patronising BBC advice for a 'budget' Christmas

Naughty? Nice? It's time workers stopped believing the fairy tale that we get what we 'deserve' and organised to fight for what we need.

A series of articles has appeared on the BBC food website aimed at passing on tips for saving money on both ingredients and cooking techniques so as to keep Christmas dinner 'within budget'. The articles are presumably aimed at those who now find themselves in the rapidly swelling ranks of struggling families.

Saving money is a full-time job if the BBC's advice is anything to go by. And it seems to require possession of an array of expensive gadgets like microwaves, slow cookers and air fryers. For those not blessed with the full panoply of kitchen accoutrements, the advisers are curiously silent.

With titles like 'Energy saving Christmas', 'Budget Christmas dinner recipes' and 'Christmas dinner hacks to reduce your energy spend', the section abounds with tips for 'energy efficiency' and 'using ingredients wisely'.

This patronising collection of 'seasonal' articles is part of a concerted campaign on the part of our rulers and their media to persuade workers that the present situation is

their problem to be dealt with individually, and that the key to squaring the impossible circle of unaffordable energy and food prices and low wages is simply a matter of being sensibly organised. Not so much 'inform, educate and entertain' as 'lie, patronise and blame'.

We reproduce below the response of one of our party members to these seasonal lumps of coal so thoughtfully delivered to a shivering British public by our benevolent state broadcaster.

This is a systemic failure

Merry, frozen, hungry Christmas from the BBC.

The BBC serving its purpose once again to try and minimise the unrest caused by soaring poverty and spiralling cost of living through patronising articles that push the responsibility for the crisis onto individuals.

This is a systemic failure, it isn't something we can solve by being thrifty or being savvy, nor can the system be put right through tweaks using the increasingly ineffective eco-

nomics levers like austerity and adjusting interest rates.

Setting up production and organising society in the pursuit of profits, rather than to meet people's needs, will always tend towards increasing poverty for the many and nearly unimaginable wealth for the few.

To the ones who are still 'doing okay', there are hundreds of thousands of people entering poverty yearly, and things have got leaner for you, too. The comfy niche you've carved out is vulnerable; ask the upwards of half a million businesses that go under in Britain every year.

You are either a worker, with no other choice than to sell your labour to the owners of the means of production (factories, farms, shops, warehouses, refineries etc), or you are those owners. If you are reading this, chances are you aren't one of those owners, or are a small owner that has to work and is vulnerable to fluctuations of the market you have no say in.

Capitalism holds nothing for us workers, nothing but increasing poverty, dwindling healthcare and war.

Wars like the dozens raging around the world right now, and greater wars like the ones we haven't seen in generations that we are screaming towards.

We can sit by and watch this descent, put our trust in the 'elected' MPs (representatives of the same big businesses causing these ever-recurring crises), or we can organise together, learn economics, politics and how to set up production and ownership in a way that meets the needs of the producers of everything: the workers.

**The choice is:
socialism or barbarism?**

Ukraine war

Water pollution

◀ **page 8** centry poet John Dunne so memorably put it: *No man is an island.*

The cause of the ‘death’ about which Thatcher opined so stupidly was illuminated long ago by Marxism. Engels’s explanation of the role of socialism captured the heart of the matter: a new society is needed in which the material conditions are created that allow people to function as true human beings; only then can humanity’s true potential finally be unleashed.

The ‘death’ of society, death by a thousand cuts, is what happens when capitalism is allowed to cling on, long past its sell-by date, turning each one of our essential life-support systems in turn into a transactable commodity.

Proceeding from privatisation to the point where private companies are sucking out dividends as debt, their surety underpinned by the ‘too necessary to fail’ status of their ‘investment’, is surely a sign of the utter inability of this economic system to offer anything useful to humanity.

The only way to fix our devastated water system, according to the University of Greenwich, is to renationalise the water utilities. The question of compensation – either to the shareholders or the public – is left completely out of the question.

Prison sentences for those individuals responsible for poisoning our waterways and accruing £53bn of debt would seem to us to be perfectly justified, but are unlikely to be delivered under capitalist law.

Business is business, after all, and that is just the way the system works.



Bakhmut: Russia breaches crucial Ukrainian defence line

With Ukraine’s defeat in this pivotal battle now certain, western media are rushing to assure their audiences the town holds no significance.

The importance of the Russian capture of the Donetsk town of Soledar, and probable imminent capture of neighbouring Bakhmut (known to Russians by its Soviet name of Artyomovsk), can hardly be overstated.

This victory successfully breaches the crucial Ukrainian north-to-south defence line that stretches from Siversk, passes through Soledar and Bakhmut, and then follows the old ceasefire line of the Donetsk People’s Republic. Three out of the four main roads out of Bakhmut are already controlled by Russian forces, as are the rail links, preventing the transport of Ukronazi troops or materiel.

Puppet president Volodymyr Zelensky’s view of war, fixated less on military logic than on public relations optics, favours

a series of do-or-die last ditch stands, hoping thereby to shame his imperialist sponsors into sending yet more military hardware. But this tactic of trying to hang on to inflexible lines pinned to major cities is counterproductive, needlessly sacrificing untold thousands of men every week.

Even the Wall Street Journal felt moved to sound a warning to Kiev, noting: “Western – and some Ukrainian – officials, soldiers and analysts increasingly worry that Kiev has allowed itself to be sucked into the battle for Bakhmut on Russian terms, losing the forces it needs for a planned spring offensive as it stubbornly clings to a town of limited strategic relevance.” (Russia claims success in Ukraine’s Soledar by Yaroslav Trofimov, 11 January 2023)

In other words, even before

the fate of Bakhmut has been decided, the disproportionate death toll of the defending Kiev forces has already seriously compromised the planned ‘spring offensive’.

And the WSJ might want to reconsider its description of Bakhmut as of “limited strategic relevance”, as evidence emerges of what lies beneath the surface of Soledar and Bakhmut – literally. Wagner private military force leader Evgeny Prigozhin had this to say:

“Bakhmut is the central point of the eastern front and a serious logistics centre. And our task there is to die as little as possible, and to destroy the enemy as much as possible.

“Bakhmut’s feature is in its unique historical and geographical defence capabilities, which include, first, the division of the city into several parts by water barriers. Secondly, the neighbourhood of Bakhmut is a complex of settlements that create a unified defence system. Thirdly, this is a unique landscape, ravines and heights, which are natural tunnels.

“And the icing on the cake is the system of Soledar and Bakhmut mines, actually a network of underground cities. In which there is not only a cluster of people at a depth of 80-100 metres, but also tanks and infantry fighting vehicles move. And stockpiles of weapons have been stored since the first world war.” (What is hiding in the Bakhmut salt mines? by Larry Johnson, 7 January 2023, Sonar 21)

If this testimony is accurate, we could shortly be witnessing another Mariupol, only this time with a gigantic salt mine instead of a steel works. We can be sure that the outcome for the die-hard defenders will prove no happier.

Middle east



Qatar at the crossroads?

Can US pressure force Qatar to sever its economic ties to Iran and Russia?

At what point does a country cross the line from being 'protected' to being occupied? This is a question which many Qataris must be asking themselves as they witness the supposed US 'protector' of Qatar's security flood their country with military trainers, advisors and consultants to 'protect' the country from an 'unnamed foreign enemy'.

Tensions in the GCC

Back in 1996, when Qatar built the gigantic Al Udeid air-base, the country was a key member of the Saudi-led Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and a trusted US satellite. Come 2001, the USA could count on use of the base to get its war-planes in place for the genocidal war against Afghanistan. And in the wars that followed, Doha appeared to remain a loyal servant of the US.

Again in June 2019, when President Donald Trump scrambled F-22 stealth bombers in reply to Iran's successful shooting down of a US drone, it was the Al Udeid base that was designated to serve as the launchpad for aggression against Iran.

As it turned out, Trump

backed down in the face of unflinching Iranian resistance, but for many the incident raised a question mark over the base, which is owned by Qatar, acting as host to US Central Command for its attacks on Iran, an ally of Qatar.

Tensions within the GCC broke to the surface in 2017 with the suspension of Qatar, accused of 'supporting terrorism'. In fact, all the corrupt feudal sheikhdoms of the Gulf were up to bankrolling one or other of the jihadi gangs which flourished across the middle east under the tolerant gaze of US imperialism. It seems that Qatar's real sin was its friendly relationship with Iran.

The GCC mended fences with Qatar in 2021, but the closer ties Qatar had generated with Iran and Turkey during the breach endured after the reconciliation. In the view of some commentators, the end result was to augment its military strength and increase its independence, in the process firming up its relations with both Iran and Turkey.

'Major non-Nato ally': a poisoned chalice

It was in this context that,

in January 2022, the USA announced that it was "inviting" Qatar to embrace its elevation to the dubious status of a "major non-Nato ally" (MNNA) of the USA – shortly before Russia began its special operation in Ukraine.

The US pressed its 'ally', in its role as host of the Fifa World Cup, to join the campaign to ban Russia from participation in the event. Further, the Pentagon entered into a 'military cooperation agreement' with Qatar – another offer which was hard to refuse.

The MNNA brand of alliance is not so much an alliance between equals as a humiliating affirmation of imperialist tutelage running counter to Qatar's (or any other country's) own best interests. Many Qataris are wary that Qatar will find itself being used willy nilly as a launchpad for aggression against Iran.

Working with Iran provokes US hostility

In particular, the fear is that US meddling will screw up crucial economic relations between Qatar and Iran. This is brought into sharp focus now that the global energy crisis is being exponentially aggravated by the backfiring anti-Russian sanctions regime.

Iran and Qatar jointly own and manage the South Pars North Dome natural gas field, the largest such maritime field in the world. It holds an estimated 50.97tn cubic metres of in-situ gas and some 50bn barrels of condensates and covers an area of 9,700 square kilometres. Now that the collective west has initiated a war of economic sanctions against Russia, thereby throwing the energy markets into turmoil, the question of who ultimately has control of such a major energy asset is the elephant in the room.

Development of the Iran-administered South Pars sector has been hampered by sanctions imposed on Iran, whilst the Qatar-administered North Dome sector has seen intensive investment from Exxon-Mobil, Total, Mitsui, Shell and other corporate giants.

Whilst Doha and Tehran have a common interest in seeing more of the revenues of the shared resource bolster their own economies, US imperialism has a quite contrary interest: to control and plunder the entire field to the exclusion of all others, further to its last-ditch defence of its shredding hegemony in the middle east.

An obvious way to advance this aspiration would be to force a split in relations between Doha and Tehran and draw Doha closer to the USA. Seen in this light, the seemingly friendly gesture of making Qatar a MNNA is more likely motivated by the cynical dictum: Keep your friends close, but your enemies closer.

But Qatar has other friends to whom it can turn, friends whose amicable relations do not come with such onerous conditions. In 2009, Qatar, Iran and Russia, collectively the largest holders in the world of natural gas reserves, formed a 'gas troika' to cooperate on joint projects.

Qatar has signed a 27-year deal to supply China's Sinopec with gas. And Qatar's customer base has broadened to south Korea, India and Japan.

For the moment, Doha continues to ride two horses, seemingly happy to write the USA a cheque for \$1bn to buy the latest drone-busting piece of kit for use against an 'unnamed foreign enemy'. But as the geopolitical plates continue to shift, it may become harder to discern who is Qatar's friend and who its enemy.

Americas



Solidarity with the people of Peru against US aggression

Another president falls to a US-backed coup in Latin America – but the people are resisting.

Since 7 December, when the Peruvian congress voted to remove elected president Pedro Castillo from office, arresting him on charges of sedition and high treason and replacing him with vice-president Dina Boluarte, Peru has been on fire. With widespread protests across the country, airport operations disrupted, railway services suspended and road-blocks in several regions, the coup government is facing a rapid escalation in civil unrest.

The people's demands are simple: the resignation of Boluarte, the closure of the corrupt Peruvian congress, fresh elections, the convening of a new assembly to replace the Fujimori-era constitution, and the release of Pedro Castillo. The answer from Boluarte's government has been fierce repression. The regime declared a nationwide state of emergency, using state security agencies to raid the offices of labour unions and social movements.

After four weeks, the repression had left 50 dead, 800 wounded and thousands incarcerated, while the mass media and the governments that sup-

ported the coup have ignored the abuses and the murders 'in the name of democracy'.

Who's on whose side?

As expected, the USA and the US-dominated Organisation of American States (OAS) have openly supported the coup, while the EU countries, Britain and right-wing regimes in the region (Canada, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Uruguay, Chile) all moved immediately to recognise 'President Boluarte'.

Conversely, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Honduras, Cuba, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines all continue to recognise Pedro Castillo as the only legitimate president of Peru. Newly-elected President Lula of Brazil has not yet shown a strong opposition to the coup.

On 12 December, the governments of Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia and Mexico stated that "Castillo and his political allies has been subjected to illegal 'judicial treatment' by Peru's right-wing opposition

from the first day in office", and called on "all actors involved in the previous process to prioritise the citizens' will that was expressed at the ballot box". After the coup, Mexico offered Castillo and his family political asylum. Boluarte's government promptly expelled Mexico's ambassador from Peru.

Former Bolivian president Evo Morales called on the UN, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and others to stop the bloodshed, saying: "In the name of the sacred right to life, of the rights of indigenous peoples recognised by the UN and international organisations, in the name of peace and social justice, we demand that they stop the massacre of our brothers in Peru."

The response of the Boluarte government was to ban Evo Morales from entering Peru, alleging that he was behind some of the unrest against the coup regime.

Meanwhile, at its recent summit, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (Alba) "rejected the political framework created by the right-wing forces of Peru against constitutional president Pedro Castillo, forcing him to take measures that were later used by his opponents in parliament to remove him ... repudiating the repression against the Peruvian people, who are defending an elected government".

Huge inequality

Pedro Castillo is a rural teacher from Cajamarca region who won the June 2021 elections with a narrow margin and is supported by the poorest people in the country, winning the presidency on a progressive platform. The coup against him is a new blow to the long-running fight of the Peruvian people for a better future.

While Peru is considered

one of the top ten mineral-rich countries in the world, being the world's second-largest producer of copper, silver and zinc, and Latin America's largest producer of gold, still "some 16.6 million people – more than half the population – now find themselves without regular access to enough safe and nutritious food". (UN report, 2022)

Both foreign monopolists and Peru's ruling class benefit largely from this hugely unequal wealth distribution. Using their control of the media and of the right-wing majority in congress, these forces boycotted any measure by the government aimed at reducing this inequality – something that President Castillo had promised to address.

USA in Latin America

The removal of an elected president who fails to be 100 percent subservient to US interests is nothing new in Latin America. This is part of the current US strategy aimed at managing the 'back yard', known as 'golpe blando' – a 'soft' coup d'etat, as opposed to the heavy military interventions of the past.

It consists of two stages: first, the ruling class uses its power and the hegemonic media to develop conditions for a general crisis in the country; second, US-aligned politicians and judges remove the president from office using false accusations of corruption, replacing him or her with someone loyal to USA's interests.

In recent years, a number of democratically-elected presidents have been removed from office in this way, including President Zelaya of Honduras (2009), President Lugo of Paraguay (2012), President Rousseff of Brazil (2016) and President Morales of Bolivia (2019). However, presidents

Americas



Cuban president: 'We must strengthen and deepen the integration of Our America'

Heads of Latin-American and Caribbean agree to reinforce economic and political that can help free their peoples from US domination.

The following speech was delivered by Cuban president Miguel-Díaz Canel to the seventh summit of heads of state and government of the Community of Latin-American and Caribbean States (Celac) on 24 January 2023.

Dear President Alberto Fernández

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government and other heads of delegation

Dear Latin-American and Caribbean friends

Returning to Buenos Aires for this meeting of nations is a reason to rejoice, especially after days of massive euphoria that overflowed its enormous avenues over a triumph that we feel is our own in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The joy is completed and honoured with the full reinstatement of Brazil by decision of our beloved Lula, to whom we express our full support and solidarity in the face of the vio-

lent and anti-democratic acts that attempted to create chaos and disrespect the majority will of the Brazilian people, who elected him as president.

We are united and summoned by the necessary Latin-American and Caribbean integration, in this diverse and inclusive mechanism; based on a deep calling for independence.

In Washington, the determination to divide us, stigmatise us and subordinate us to their own interests persists, almost 200 years after the enactment of the Monroe Doctrine. This became evident at the exclusive meeting held in Los Angeles, where, abusing its power as host and closing its eyes and ears to the demands of the majority, the USA excluded, fractured and ignored us.

The political failure of that meeting demonstrated the isolation of the hegemonism and domination strategies, against the feeling of unity and sovereignty shared by our nations.

Cuba continues to reiterate in all international forums the dangerous actions that seek to prolong imperialist hegemonism by undermining multilateralism and peace.

The stubborn reality will always be stronger than any attempt to divide us, because we share challenges brought about by an unjust, plundering and anti-democratic international order, which prevents us from overcoming alarming levels of poverty, unemployment, food insecurity and exclusion that define the economic and social panorama of the region, still the most unequal on the planet.

It is therefore urgent to join forces and set out a strategic vision for economic, social and cultural integration, which will enable us to move towards sustainable development.

What is preventing us from complementing each other, promoting inter-regional trade and boosting investment in areas of common interest?

It is urgent to find fair solutions to the foreign debt problem; and it is essential to demand the end of unilateral coercive measures and illegal blockades.

In the face of a hegemonic cultural model, it is necessary to defend our extensive and rich culture, the genuine result of centuries of tradition and miscegenation, and the cornerstone of the emancipation and integration process of our peoples.

In a complex and challenging post-pandemic world, which suffers from the serious economic, political and social repercussions of military conflicts and the unstoppable impacts of climate change, the only possibility for those of us who come from a common colonial and neocolonial past is unity.

In this sense, Cuba supports as an interesting and useful project the idea of establishing the Latin-American Pharmaceutical Agency.

Dear colleagues

The government of the United States insists on destroying the development model that we Cubans decided sovereignly to build, through a cruel, illegitimate, illegal and immoral policy of economic asphyxiation.

It uses its technological hegemony and control of the media and digital platforms to carry out destabilisation operations, an unprecedented media war, to promote the so-called 'regime change', with the support of tens of millions of dollars from the federal budget.

Its unfounded and unilateral decision to include Cuba in the bogus list of states that allegedly sponsor terrorism severely impacts our development goals.

I thank once again this community and its member states for their forceful call to remove Cuba from the list and lift the blockade.

Cuba will not be intimidated by such aggressions. We will not betray the history of resistance, dignity and defence of social justice that made the Cuban Revolution an emancipating force for human beings.

We do not limit ourselves to resist. Cuba has not stopped creating, in the hard years of dealing with the pandemic and the blockade, worsened by 243 measures applied by the Trump administration. Vaccines, dozens of new medicines and disease-care protocols, as well as new equipment and treatments, confirm the value of that creative resistance.

Distinguished colleagues

We are encour- ▶ page 14

Americas

Cuba at Celac

◀ **page 13** aged by the changes in the regional political landscape, guided by social justice and the search for peace and sovereignty.

At this time, the Peruvian people deserve our attention and solidarity. It is up to our Peruvian brothers and sisters to find solutions to their challenges on their own.

With plenty of arguments that history gives us, I also say that we do not recognise, nor will we recognise any authority whatsoever in the OAS, which is the organisation that, at the service of the USA, supported and supports military interventions, coups d'état and interference in Latin America and the Caribbean against popular and legitimate governments. The OAS is the organisation that did nothing against the murders, torture, forced disappearances and persecution of social, progressive and leftist leaders of the region, which will remain forever in our memory.

Cuba reiterates, but it goes without saying today, its support for and firm solidarity with the legitimate governments of Venezuela, Nicaragua and Bolivia, which are subject to persistent destabilisation attempts.

Likewise, we support the just demands for reparations concerning the damages caused by slavery and colonialism of our Caribbean brothers, who need and deserve a fair, special and differentiated treatment.

We will always support the noble causes: the independence of Puerto Rico; stability and peace in Haiti, based on full respect for its sovereignty; the peace process in Colombia; and Argentina's right over the Malvinas, South Georgia and the South Sandwich is-

lands, and the surrounding maritime areas.

We condemn the actions and threats against the delegation of President Nicolás Maduro, denounced by the Venezuelan government.

And from the beloved Argentina, whose women gave outstanding heroism to the history of the region, I convey all our solidarity and support to Vice-President Cristina Fernández.

Latin-American and Caribbean friends

Under the leadership of Argentina and its president, Alberto Fernández, Celac achieved remarkable progress in 2022, which we must continue to consolidate. We extend our full support to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and to Brother Ralph Gonsalves during his presidency of Celac in 2023, always guided by principles of unity in diversity, solidarity and cooperation, in full compliance with the goals set forth in the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace.

You can also count on Cuba as chairman of the Group of 77 plus China during this year, in which we will work tirelessly to worthily represent the interests of the nations of the south.

We are inspired by the ideals of integration of the Latin-American and Caribbean heroes. Celac is the work of all of us. Strengthening it is an urgent necessity and a shared duty to achieve the integration of Our America.

Thank you very much.

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SPEAKERS FROM FRATERNAL EMBASSIES AND SOLIDARITY ORGS

With the capitalist economic crisis deepening every day, workers in all corners of the globe are suffering an acute cost of living crisis.

Instead of trying to address the people's desperate needs, the rulers of the neo-Nazi imperialist alliance, especially the USA and Britain, are responding to the crisis with austerity and repression for the masses at home.

At the same time, they are throwing huge resources into their rampant drive towards war, through which they aim to boost corporate profit-margins by dominating the world and suppressing all resistance to their looting.

With this war drive threatening to engulf the world, the World Anti-Imperialist Platform is bringing its focus to Latin America, where an international antiwar conference and mass rally will be held in Caracas, home of the Bolivarian Revolution and one of the centres of Latin-American resistance to imperialist domination.

On the same day, workers will be meeting and demonstrating all over the world, standing in solidarity with the forces of resistance in Latin America and elsewhere on the front lines of Nato's wars.

**From Caracas to Paris, from
Belgrade to Santiago, from London
to Seoul, we demand:**

US BASES OUT! YANKEES GO HOME!

Asia Pacific



Covid: China changes gear

As the People's Republic moves on from the era of zero-Covid, western media are desperate to portray its decision as a sign of failure.

For the last three years, the imperialist press has been lambasting China for the vigorous measures it took to stem the flow of infectious cases of Covid-19.

The policy of zero tolerance, adopted as a temporary measure to slow down the rapid transmission of the disease, was caricatured by the west as the work of an authoritarian regime, with the necessary curtailment of civil liberties and the lockdown of specific neighbourhoods, factories and even whole cities painted in the most lurid colours.

Many governments in the west, ever eager to persuade their own populations to get the jab, suddenly became the most confirmed anti-vaxers when China unrolled its own mass vaccination programme, portraying this heroic effort to vaccinate its entire population as just one more proof of the dictatorial character of the government.

The practice of quarantining areas where the disease was prevalent was translated into further proof of Beijing's supposed penchant for building concentration camps. And, worst of all, crowded the gleeful imperialist media, all these efforts to beat Covid would in any case be destined to miserable

failure.

Three years later, it turns out that China's policy of zero-covid has in fact resulted in far lower percentage mortalities, has curbed the negative socioeconomic damage wrought by the pandemic, and has left the country in a good position now to moderate its approach to fighting Covid, taking into account the shifting epidemiological landscape.

Over the last three months of 2022, Beijing shifted the focus from "stemming infection" to "protecting health and preventing severe cases". Whereas in 2020 it was decided to treat Covid as a Class-A serious infectious disease, putting the emphasis on mass vaccination and lockdown, two things have changed: the Omicron variant has become relatively more infectious, but also relatively less dangerous.

Accordingly, whereas previously the main thrust of China's response to the illness has been mass vaccination and lockdowns ('stemming infection'), the emphasis is now to maximise overall public health, whilst identifying and treating more serious cases of Covid as they crop up ('protecting health and preventing severe cases').

Thanks to the efforts and sacrifices made by the Chinese people throughout the zero-covid period, the infection and fatality rates in China were amongst the lowest in the world. And throughout the breathing space afforded by zero-covid, China has been able to dedicate its efforts to the development of vaccines, rapid testing and treatments, enabling the country to launch the largest vaccine rollout programme in the world, in which over 3.4bn doses of Covid vaccines were administered and vaccination coverage exceeded 90 percent of the population.

Nor has the government limited itself to serving the Chinese people. China has actively offered humanitarian assistance to the international community, especially to countries and regions with a weak Covid response capacity. China shared Covid prevention, control and treatment protocols with more than 180 countries and international organisations, sent 38 medical expert teams to 34 countries, and provided over 2.2bn doses of vaccines for more than 120 countries and international organisations.

This same spirit of internationalism has throughout prompted China to be open and transparent in sharing relevant data and information with the international community, including with the World Health Organisation (WHO). Most recently, China has shared Covid genome sequence data from recent cases in the country, giving the lie to malicious portrayals of China as a 'secretive', inward-looking country.

We are confident that the science-based, flexible, people-oriented approach that has so far characterised China's battle with Covid will continue to serve the people well in the new period.

Coup in Peru

◀ **page 8** Correa of Ecuador (2010) and Maduro of Venezuela (2020) have survived repeated coup attempts of the same type.

Support the people

Despite heavy repression, Peru's people are continuing their fight against the Boluarte government and the corrupt congress on the streets, and continuing to demand fresh and free elections.

On 15 January, the coup regime declared a state of emergency in Puno, Cusco and Lima departments, in several regions across the country, and on the national road network – including on the Pan-American highway.

But it is clear that this will not be enough to stop the spreading protests, in which workers and peasants have established more 120 roadblocks across the country and from which they have marched on the capital, Lima.

Thousands arrived in the city from the poorest regions on Thursday 19 January, joining students from two major universities, Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería (UNI) and the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (UNMSM), who opened their campuses to receive demonstrators.

Despite obstacles being placed in their way and heavy repression being meted out to demonstrators, they continue to arrive in the capital and their anger shows no sign of subsiding.

Those who are bravely fighting US imperialism in Peru are on the right side of history. They deserve our full solidarity in their struggle for independence and freedom. We have no doubt that they will ultimately be victorious.

Media



BBC's crocodile tears over 'mass graves' in Mariupol are a sick farce

Another example of the way that fabricated 'news' aims to baffle rather than inform, and to get workers onside for the imperialist war drive.

Navigating the iPlayer to watch the BBC's latest documentary on Mariupol, you'll find it sandwiched between their other documentaries Hong Kong's Fight for Freedom and Iran: Women Rising, so you can be sure to know what to think on those British foreign policy directives also.

The Hong Kong 'freedom fighters' are almost exclusively funded by foreign powers and run by the National Endowment for Democracy (a CIA cut-out). (The NED strikes again: How neo-con money is funding the Hong Kong protests by Mnar Adley, MintPress News, 9 September 2019)

The Iranian protests, similarly, are funded by the CIA. (Is the CIA supporting another colour revolution in Iran – like the one that installed the shah in 1953? by Jeremy Kuzmarov,

Global Research, 11 October 2022)

Nevertheless, upon viewing the documentary you'll be greeted with disinformation, sad music and egregious lies to tug at your heartstrings.

'Mass graves in Mariupol' – another MSM fake

The claim of 'mass graves' in the Ukrainian city of Mariupol was started by Ukrainian officials and parroted without question by western media, which, from the start of the war, have parroted everything the Ukrainian government has said with no critical eye. The rumours were started by Mariupol Mayor Vadym Boichecko, who branded the city the "new Babi Yar" – a reference to a ravine outside of Kiev where 33,000 Jews were massacred by Nazis in 1941.

Boichecko claimed: "The invaders are concealing evidence of their crimes. The cemetery is located near a petrol station to the left side of a circular road. The Russians have dug huge trenches, 30 metres wide. They chuck people in."

It is cruel irony for an Azov-supporting mayor to be rewriting history so as to present World War 2 Nazis and their collaborators as heroes of the Ukrainian nation. Eva Bartlett was able to visit the supposed 'mass grave' site, where she found 400 individual plots including 100 empty ones. (Western claims of Russian mass graves near Mariupol another fake news hoax – I know, I went to see by Eva Bartlett, 24 April 2022)

This is contrasted to the nonsense the Washington Post reported:

"The Mariupol city council said in a statement on Telegram that officials believe up to 9,000 civilians could be buried in the mass grave, where authorities said Russians forces 'dug new trenches and filled them with corpses every day throughout April'. The council added that it has information indicating the bodies

were 'buried in several layers'. There was no immediate independent verification available of those claims." (New mass grave points to war crimes in Mariupol, Ukrainian officials say by Paulina Villegas, Washington Post, 21 April 2022)

At least the Washington Post was honest enough to admit it could not verify the claims. Because, in fact, they are lies that its editors are only too willing to reproduce in service of the Ukrainian junta.

In her video, Eva Bartlett spoke to one of the gravediggers at the cemetery.

"According to them, they bury each person in a coffin and separate grave, details are logged in the morgue, and when any documents regarding name and age are given, the plot is marked with a placard containing those details. Otherwise a number is used.

"Interestingly, they also noted that a section of the new graves included buried Ukrainian soldiers. 'They're human, too,' one of the men said." (Here's what I found at the reported 'mass grave' near Mariupol by Eva Bartlett, Monthly Review, 2 May 2022)

Debunking imperialist lies against China

Much of the western media narrative relied on supposed 'satellite imagery' to 'prove' that mass graves had been dug in Mariupol. Similar propaganda tactics have been used by the imperialist lie machine in its reporting on Xinjiang in China to justify western support for its jihadi proxies of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement. The west supports the ETIM because it wants an independent state severed from China called 'East Turkestan'.

To manufacture its narrative about 'genocide', 'internment camps' etc, imperialist media

Media

have made much use of alleged ‘satellite’ imagery, using grainy pictures of nothing in particular as a justification for endless and baseless speculations about buildings being used as ‘concentration camps for Uyghurs’ etc.

On further investigation, these ominous buildings were found to be administration buildings, nursing homes, logistics centres or schools. (Xinjiang offers real-site photos to debunk satellite images ‘evidence’ of ‘detention centres’, Global Times, 27 November 2020)

But, as the saying goes, a lie can travel halfway round the world before the truth has got its shoes on. By the time these claims were disproved, the corporate media narrative had already played its part in disseminating its dehumanising atrocity propaganda – lies which will eventually be used to justify a world war against China.

Many of the claims about Xinjiang were laundered through a CIA-sponsored far-right organisation called the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. (‘Forced labour’ stories on China brought to you by US gov, Nato, arms industry to drive cold war PR blitz by Ajit Singh, The Grayzone, 26 March 2020)

The general formula used by such agents is to find some far-right nutcase, whether it be Adrian Zenz for the Uyghurs or a neo-nazi mayor in Ukraine, to make some ridiculous and far-fetched claim. The western propaganda machine will then do the work of endlessly repeating those claims until they are transformed into unquestioned ‘facts’ that ‘everybody knows’.

Atrocity propaganda – a western forte

In order to maintain the sys-

tems and governance of imperialist oppression, the imperialist media machinery needs to act as a tool of manipulation on the unsuspecting public. The favoured technique is to insist that it is beyond doubt that the ‘enemy’ has committed the most heinous of crimes – painted in the most lurid colours possible. This is followed with a chorus of insistence that ‘something must be done NOW’.

Time is the enemy of these propaganda blitzes, because if anyone is allowed time to investigate, question or think critically, the stories start to fall apart, and the agents of imperialism are unable to achieve their foreign policy objectives.

We saw this on full display in the case of the supposed ‘gas attacks’ in Douma, Syria. The claim that the Syrian government had gassed its own people in Douma was quickly used as justification by western governments to bomb the country. (Theresa May wins second vote on Syria action as Jeremy Corbyn demands new war powers law by Joe Watts, Independent, 17 April 2018)

It did not matter that a year later a BBC producer would denounce the Douma hospital scene shot by the BBC as staged.

“BBC Syria producer Riam Dalati on Wednesday claimed in a series of Twitter posts that the video footage, aired by BBC, showing people being treated after the alleged 7 April 2018 chemical weapons attack in Douma was staged. He arrived at the conclusion after six months of investigations.” (Analysis: Was ‘staged’ gas attack footage used to bomb Syria?, CGTN, February 2019)

Even the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) originally came to conclusions that undermined the allegations of a

chemical attack. It was only after documents were leaked to Wikileaks that those who were paying attention discovered that those original findings had been censored and investigators booted off their teams.

The OPCW’s second report, which was released to the media and public, had been doctored to fit the western narrative, concluding the *opposite* of what the original inspectors had claimed: that there were “reasonable grounds” to believe that a chlorine gas attack had taken place. (Corrupting science: Shunning forensic expertise, OPCW left Douma murders in Syria unsolved by Aaron Mate, The Grayzone, 6 December 2021)

Ian Henderson was a team leader on the OPCW team and detailed how his report was changed:

“The last week of June saw the incident of ‘last-minute’ unexpected modifications to the FFM interim report, contrary to the consensus that had been reached within the team. The report had been changed to reflect a conclusion that chlorine had been released from cylinders, as well as other significant changes in content.” (Ian Henderson’s statement on the OPCW Douma scandal, 18 January 2020)

Even at the time of the supposed Douma ‘attack’, no reasonable case was ever put forward as to why the Syrian government would have decided to use chemical weapons against its own people. President Barack Obama had recently insisted that chemical weapons use would be a “red line” that might pull the United States openly into the conflict.

Meanwhile, Douma itself was occupied by the Saudi-backed jihadi militia Jaysh-Al-Islam, which was coming under punishing bombardment from the Syrian army. After lots of

propaganda featuring dead bodies, strange gas cylinders and bizarre BBC propaganda footage, the USA, Britain and France bombed Syria – without any international inquiry and without UN authorisation.

It certainly would have been strange for the Syrian government to have used chemical weapons, given that it was winning the war. On the other hand, the hard-pressed western-backed jihadis had every motivation for staging a false flag attack in order to facilitate the open entry of western forces into the conflict.

These details are safely memory-holed by a corrupt western media whose aim is not to inform but to brainwash their populations.

Fake rape allegations

Given all the above, it should come as no surprise that workers in the imperialist countries were bombarded with a slew of fresh allegations against Russia in May, this time claiming that Russian soldiers were raping “daughters in front of mothers” amongst other heinous atrocities.

As it turned out (and as almost no one who read the original headlines is aware), these stories all stemmed from a single Ukrainian official, Lyudmila Denisova. As ever, they were uncritically and endlessly repeated by western corporate media. Denisova worked as ‘ombudsman for human rights in Ukraine’ from March 2018 to May 2022. She described the alleged rapes of two 11-year-olds, a girl and a boy, and a 14-year-old. (Rape allegations against Russian troops in Ukraine were fake, Moon of Alabama, 31 May 2022)

Here is just one example of Denisova’s sensational claims that were foghorned through ‘mainstream’ imperialist media. (She was later ► [page 19](#))

Europe



Medieval inquisition returns to Europe

Josef Skála and two others are on trial in Prague, charged with 'expressing doubts' about the approved narrative of the Katyn massacre

The following article by Andrea Catone is reproduced from Italian Marxist website Marx21.it with thanks.

On 31 October 2022, Tomáš Hübner, single judge of the Prague 7 district court, sentenced Josef Skála, a well-known Marxist intellectual and former vice-president of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM), together with Vladimír Kapal, and Juraj Václavík, to eight months' imprisonment for having challenged the version of history that attributed the Katyn massacre (the murder of thousands of Polish POWs on the territory of the USSR, occupied by the Wehrmacht in the summer of 1941) to the Soviet leadership.

Two years earlier, on 2 July 2020, the three had participated in a public discussion forum – organised, at the request of the listeners, by Svobodné radio – on the Katyn massacre, which had become one of the main topics of the anti-Soviet and anticommunist crusade of the political and social forces that came to power

in 1989, whose version of the facts blames the Soviets for the premeditation and execution of the crime. This version is disputed by many researchers and scholars, who attribute it to the Nazi occupiers.

In the July 2020 forum, neither Josef Skála nor the other speakers denied or questioned the massacre of Polish prisoners, nor did they endorse or justify it in any way. They simply entered into a debate, which has lasted for over three-quarters of a century, regarding who was responsible for the massacre.

They were guilty of opposing the version that is now passed off as inviolable canon, arguing with reference to sources and documents, including those that emerged from the archives in the period after the collapse of the USSR. The broadcast received many positive comments and did not raise controversy.

But on 18 March 2022 – almost two years later – all three forum participants were summoned by the Czech police's 'National command for com-

bating organised crime' and asked to explain themselves. This was the initial stage of the criminal proceedings, which culminated in an eight-month sentence being handed down on 31 October, against which they appealed.

Trial begins on 1 February

The association PRAK (Against Repression and Criminalisation) has highlighted some 'coincidences' that reveal the instrumental political use of Article 405 of the Czech criminal code.

A month before the criminal proceedings began, Josef Skála had announced his intention to run in the presidential elections. The indictment hindered him in the collection of the 50,000 signatures needed to submit his candidature.

Moreover, he is among the most active supporters of the peace and anti-Nato movement, which took part in the massive autumn demonstrations in Prague and other centres of the country last autumn. The criminal code was used to target him and the opposition political movement of which he is an active member, in order to inhibit his political work.

In 2000, following the entry of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic into Nato (March '99), Article 261a was added to the 1961 criminal code, lumping together Nazi and communist 'crimes': "Whoever publicly denies, questions, approves or tries to justify Nazi or communist genocide or other crimes against humanity committed by Nazis or communists shall be punished by a term of imprisonment from six months to three years."

This became Article 405 in a new criminal code that came into force on 1 January 2010. This wording – like those introduced to the penal codes of

former socialist countries such as Poland, Lithuania, Slovakia and Hungary – leaves a wide margin of discretion to the judicial authority, which is thus transformed into the supreme scientific authority and repository of an indisputable truth – the doubting of which can lead to imprisonment.

It would seem that in the countries of the 'free' European Union, the medieval Inquisition has returned.

The criminalisation of the historical experience of communism was able to implant itself in the new political-legal (lawfare) approach of some western countries in the 1990s – France, Austria, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg – which began to oppose 'holocaust denialism' via the legal system instead of in universities and in public debate.

This was heavily criticised by many researchers and historians, who pointed out the predictable perverse effects. Stefano Levi Della Torre, for example, wrote that it is "aberrant to punish by law crimes of opinion, also because this indirectly proposes that there is an official truth sanctioned by law.

"Falsehood by law presupposes a truth by law, and this is an idea familiar to inquisitions and totalitarianisms, and hostile to democracy and scientific research. Striking down a malicious lie by law also opens a breach in the field of constitutional rights and one does not know where it will end up. Aberrant and ill-intentioned opinions and theories must be fought on the terrain of cultural battles, actively." (Punishing denialism?, Hakeillah, October 2010)

In the three decades since 1989, through an uninterrupted and increasingly harsh media hammering by the anticommunist and anti-Russian nationalists of the former so-

Europe

cialist countries of eastern Europe and the extremist Nato ideologues, a new historical narrative regarding WW2 has imposed itself in the EU, overturning the previously existing accepted narrative which – despite all the harshness of the cold war confrontation – recognised the great historical value of the allied anti-Nazi coalition and the fundamental and indispensable contribution of the Soviet Union to the victory against Nazi-fascism.

The seal on this new narrative was the European parliament's resolution of 19 September 2019 on the 'Importance of European memory for the future of Europe', which officially removed any value from the international anti-Nazi-fascist alliance in order to unite in a condemnation without appeal Nazi Germany and the USSR, pointed at as co-responsible (with some heavier emphasis against the Russians) for the outbreak of World War 2 and all the mourning that followed.

On this basis, the new Inquisition of the 21st century can thus operate, jailing anyone who raises even a well-founded doubt about the history that is written and sanctioned by the political forces in power.

The incrimination and conviction of Josef Skála and the other speakers at the Katyn debate on 2 July 2020 goes far beyond the broad meshes and great discretion (with plenty of room for slipping into arbitrariness) that the Czech criminal legislation gives to the police authorities and the judge.

A group of Czech democratic lawyers and jurists has pointed out that in the radio programme in question, there was not the slightest emotional excess. Nor were any statements made that could insult or humiliate anyone today, or threaten their rights or the values and norms of a democratic

society.

The radio discussion on a crime committed 80 years ago referenced publicly-available research carried out by serious scholars. None of the arguments put forward were without a documentable source, meaning that the programme was entirely consistent with what the current Czech constitution and the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms guarantee to freedom of expression.

The indictment and conviction of the three rapporteurs sets an alarming precedent. It is a further step towards an EU that is less and less tolerant of dissent, and increasingly at odds with those principles of freedom that its leaders so loudly proclaim at every turn.

Solidarity with those on trial in Prague and the struggle for their full exoneration is in the front line of a more general battle in the EU for the defence of freedom of expression and political activity, against repression.

Postscript

Let it be noted in passing that the perpetration of the Katyn massacre was one of the long list of charges brought against the Nazis at the Nuremberg Tribunals in 1946. It was only with the decline and demise of the Soviet Union that the imperialists began to revisit this universally-accepted truth and to reward historians on both side of the so-called 'iron curtain' for producing 'evidence' that the Soviets had done it after all – evidence that is entirely based on the Nazis' wartime anticommunist propaganda.

For more information, read *The Katyn Massacre*, a presentation given to by Comrade Ella Rule in July 2002 and available on the Stalin Society website.

Mariupol

◀ **page 17** fired for spreading rumours of “unnatural sexual crimes” and “rape of children” which could not be confirmed by evidence – another fact that most of those who blasted out the original lurid headlines never bothered to broadcast.)

“Deputy chairman of the standing committee the Verkhovna Rada Pavlo Frolov also noted that since the beginning of the war and the great suffering of Ukrainians, Denisova has hardly exercised her authority to organise humanitarian corridors, protect and exchange prisoners, oppose the deportation of people and children from the occupied territories, and other human rights activities.

“The incomprehensible concentration of the ombudsman’s media work on numerous details of ‘unnatural sexual crimes’ and ‘rape of children’ in the occupied territories, which could not be confirmed by evidence, only harmed Ukraine and distracted the world media from Ukraine’s real needs.

“After 24 February, the current Verkhovna Rada commissioner for human rights spent time abroad, but not in Russia or Belarus, where her status and powers could help prisoners, deportees and victims of the occupation of Kherson, but in Davos, Vienna, Warsaw” and elsewhere. (Ibid)

Contrast these fictitious rape stories with the grim reality that saw the Kiev junta recruiting convicted child rapists and sadistic torturers into the notorious ‘Tornado’ battalion. So vile was that battalion’s behaviour that the government had to concede: “This unit is out of control.”

Ukrainian officials and US state department-sponsored human rights reports detailed

Tornado’s unbelievable sadism:

“Tornado recruited a mix of far-right fanatics and hardened criminals. Its ranks included the Belarussian extremist Danil Lyashuk, who went by the call-sign ‘Mujahed’ and has made claims about converting to Islam and supporting Isis. While it is unclear whether Lyashuk actually served in Isis, he has openly emulated the Islamist militia’s appetite for unhinged sadism. In one 2015 audio recording, Lyashuk proclaimed: ‘Without torture, life isn’t living.’ This became his motto.” (‘These are animals, not people’: Zelensky frees convicted child rapists, torturers to reinforce depleted military by Esha Krishnaswamy, The Grayzone, 30 July 2022)

One commentator summed it up: “With western media, you can be sure that whatever they accuse Russia of, they themselves are guilty.” (Josep Borrell’s European ‘garden’ is built on the plunder of the ‘jungle’ by Joseph Massad, Middle East Eye, 19 October 2022)

As imperialism suffers new defeats, and its propaganda machine chokes on its own lies, there are good reasons to believe that workers living in the belly of the imperialist beast will start to see who are their friends and who are their enemies. A straw in the wind is a recent poll suggesting that only 55 percent of Britons currently trust the BBC, whilst 26 percent don’t trust it at all. (Trust and interest in news falls in UK with Sun, Mail and Mirror bottom of table by Andrew Kersley, Press Gazette, 15 June 2022)

It would be interesting to know how many Britons would trust the RT news channel – that is, if the rattled British establishment could ever feel safe enough to lift its ban.

Anti-Imperialist Platform



British delegates in Belgrade: Nato is trying to expand the war in Europe

The imperialists desperately hope they can win out in the end by wearing Russia down and causing her economy and society to collapse.

On Saturday 17 December, CPGB-ML vice-chair Joti Brar spoke at an international anti-imperialist meeting attended by representatives of more than 30 organisations from across the world, organised by the New Communist Party of Yugoslavia (NKPJ) and the Union of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia (SKOJ) in cooperation with the World Anti-Imperialist Platform.

At the meeting, the second meeting to date of the members of the World Anti-Imperialist Platform, Comrade Joti delivered our party's position on how we should understand the current imperialist crisis, and how we should be responding to the imperialists' efforts to resolve this crisis through a global war.

Comrades, greetings from Britain. It is a great honour to be participating in this important meeting, which is bringing together anti-imperialist forces from around the world at a time when great hardships are being endured by our peoples as a result of the global capital-

ist crisis of overproduction.

We are coming together in a historic city, one in which the scars of imperialist aggression are still visible, and where the ongoing war drive threatens once more to engulf not only Serbia, but much of the world.

The Yugoslav war

Standing here today in Belgrade, it is impossible not to recall the fascistic, genocidal war that was waged by the imperialist powers against the Yugoslav people. We cannot forget that that war, which was waged in the name of 'humanitarianism', caused the worst humanitarian disaster in Europe since the second world war.

We cannot forget that that war, which was waged in the name of 'democracy' and 'human rights', was in reality a war to destroy what remained of the pride and independence of the Yugoslav people; to finish the job of breaking apart their country, which had begun in Slovenia in 1991, and to impose puppet regimes throughout the former Yugoslavia's territory.

We cannot forget that that war, waged in the name of defending the 'sovereign rights' of the Kosovan people, was in reality a war to establish a narco-terrorist Nato protectorate on your country's soil.

We cannot forget that, besides wanting to establish a base for its military aggression against Russia and its subjugation of eastern Europe, the imperialists wanted the Kosovo region for its own sake. The mineral wealth contained in its lignite, lead, zinc and coal mines alone are sufficient to explain imperialism's wish to prise Kosovo out of Serbia's grasp.

We cannot forget how, to achieve its ends, US and European capital directed millions into creating the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), just as they are today pouring billions into the training, arming and support of their proxy army in Ukraine.

We cannot forget that the war against Yugoslavia was aimed not only at the people of the Balkans, but as a warning to all independent-minded nations. Like a mafia punishment beating, it sent a message from the USA to the world: keep in line or you will be next!

US hegemony

Today's war in Ukraine is the latest in a string of aggressive wars that were launched at a time when US imperialism felt confident in having no serious military or economic opposition to its global domination, and was determined to use that power to destroy every vestige of independence or resistance. In every one of these wars, the imperialists wanted to control and dominate vital resources, to make vast superprofits through looting other countries rather than allowing them to use their natural wealth as a source of develop-

ment and prosperity to their own people.

For imperialism, in its never-ending and desperate quest to find new sources of profit, money spent in developing the infrastructure and raising the living standards of ordinary workers is money wasted.

Having completed the destruction of Yugoslavia in 1999, the warmongers moved on to Afghanistan in 2001, to Iraq in 2003, to Libya and Syria in 2011. These open aggressions have been accompanied by a string of economic and proxy wars in other countries – against Cuba, Iran and the DPRK; against Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan; against Zimbabwe and Congo; against Palestine, Lebanon and Yemen; against Venezuela, Colombia and Nicaragua.

In fact, there is hardly a country in which the USA is not exerting military, economic or political pressure in order to maintain its domination of the planet. Wherever a movement arises that represents the masses' striving for independence and freedom, a corresponding movement of imperialist suppression, sometimes open sometimes covert, is bound also to appear.

In every one of these wars it is the imperialists and their functionaries in the media, political and military machines who are the real criminals. Those who rained cluster bombs and depleted uranium on Yugoslavia in 1999 are the ones who should have been indicted, not the leaders who dared to stand up to imperialist bullying and defend their people's right to independence. Likewise in Ukraine today, the criminal aggressors against the people of the Donbass, mercilessly bombarding civilians for the last eight years, are the ones who should be on trial, along with those who fund, train and arm

Anti-Imperialist Platform

them in the west.

Clarifying the question of imperialism

The essence of every country's struggle against these Nato-led wars has been their just defence of sovereignty and independence against imperialist aggression and domination.

As socialists, our role is to understand this and to help workers understand it too. Our job is to explain to the masses that they have no interest in supporting the aggressive actions of their own class enemies, and every interest in working actively for the defeat of the imperialist war machine and the victory of the anti-imperialist forces of resistance.

This contradiction between the imperialist powers and those who oppose them is the defining feature of today's world. This means we have a duty to side with all those who are objectively fighting imperialism, no matter who is leading or involved in those forces, and no matter what ideology they claim to be guided by.

We cannot fall into the trap of conceding legitimacy to those who have enrolled themselves as proxies in the imperialist war drive. From Kosovo to Ukraine, from Poland to Taiwan, from Kurdistan to south Korea, many workers have been groomed into becoming willing foot-soldiers in the various fronts of a war which is ultimately aimed at saving the crisis-ridden imperialist economic system from total collapse by destroying the independent existence and territorial integrity of all those who oppose its hegemony, in particular Russia and China.

These two countries are seen as a mortal threat to imperialism because they have the military, economic, industrial and technical strength to withstand the bullying of US imperi-

alism; because they are home to vast resources the imperialists want to loot; because they are home to vast numbers of workers the imperialists want to exploit; and because they are increasingly working together and acting as a pole of attraction to other countries who wish to break free of imperialist economic and military control.

There are those in the international working-class movement today who are failing in their task of clearly identifying the nature of the war that is unfolding; who are failing to explain this essence to the workers in their countries. They are failing to identify the real aggressor, and instead are finding socialist-sounding excuses to justify the actions of this or that imperialist-aligned proxy force, some of which are being hurled against Russia and China, others of which are being used against smaller nations around the world that have the temerity to resist US imperialist control, such as Syria, Iran, Venezuela and the DPRK.

In making these vital concessions to imperialist war propaganda, which long ago learned to cloak its aggressive intent behind popular-sounding phrases, they are betraying the interests of their own working classes.

Those who join with prestigious bourgeois economists in opining about the 'aggressive' and 'expansionist' aims of Russian and Chinese 'imperialism', who join with imperialist politicians in branding every leader who stands up against imperialist brigandage as a 'dictator', are, whether they mean to or not, facilitating the imperialist war drive.

They are helping to spread confusion where they should be bringing clarity, and they are disarming the forces that they should be mobilising to join

the fight against the imperialist war machine.

Opposing the spread of Nato's war

As we stand in Belgrade today, we are well aware that the imperialists will bring war to these streets once again if they can. Our party stands in solidarity with our comrades in the New Communist Party of Yugoslavia, who are under increasing attack from EU-backed fascist thugs.

We condemn the neo-nazi attacks against the Yugoslav communist headquarters, and we condemn the ongoing provocations in Kosovo, which aim to turn the country into another front of the war against Russia.

We condemn the creation of a two-tier apartheid in Kosovo, where ethnic Serbs are discriminated against and oppressed by the fascistic west-backed junta just as ethnic Russians were being persecuted by the fascistic west-backed junta in Ukraine.

As in other parts of eastern Europe, the Serbian state has facilitated the rise of these imperialist-aligned fascistic forces. It has implemented EU legislation and allowed CIA-imposed historical revision across media and education, which is rebranding WW2 fascist collaborators as 'heroes' and Soviet liberators as criminal oppressors.

Comrades, neither the Azov battalion in Ukraine nor any of the other fascistic thugs strutting around the streets of eastern Europe appeared out of nowhere; fascism has been the imperialist tool of choice across this region since the 1930s – aimed at misdirecting workers' anger, dividing their resistance and suppressing the rise of socialism.

Neo-nazi forces, reintroduced into Ukraine in the 1990s,

were unleashed in full force during the 2014 Euromaidan coup. They targeted the most progressive elements of the Ukrainian working class to facilitate the imperialist acquisition of Ukraine's huge natural and industrial resources – and, as Angela Merkel herself recently admitted, to prepare the ground for Nato's proxy war against Russia.

As they come to terms with the inevitable defeat of the Kiev regime and the destruction of their proxy forces in Ukraine, Nato's leaders are doing everything they can to extend and prolong the war. Workers in Poland and the Baltic states are being prepared to provide further cannon fodder for this effort as the west tries to find a way to keep Russia fighting.

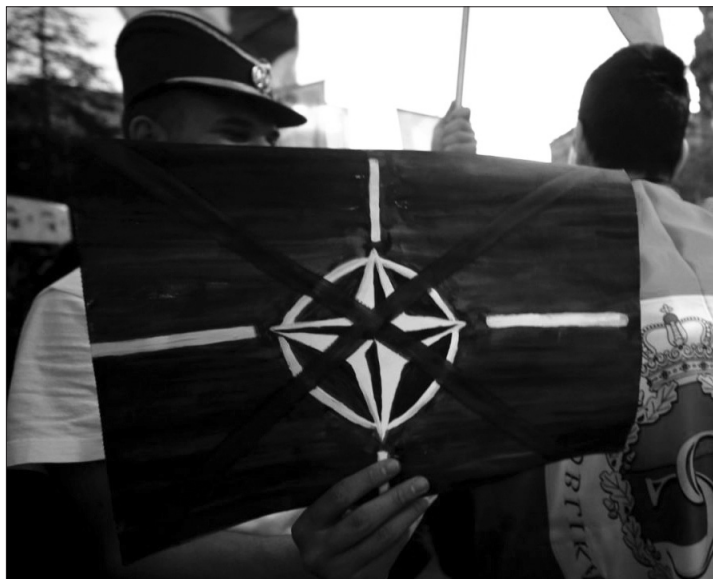
The imperialists desperately hope they can win out in the end by wearing Russia down and causing her economy and society to collapse.

The imperialists' hypocritical talk of 'freedom' and 'democracy' is being exposed for what it is – talk, and nothing more. We cannot forget that Nato imperialists defending 'freedom of speech', bombed Yugoslavia's state-run broadcaster here in Belgrade, describing its patriotic journalists and presenters as "legitimate targets".

Comrades, our best defence against the rising tide of fascistic forces, trained to be used as shock troops in the defence of a failing imperialist system, is the building of a strong anti-imperialist movement, which can explain the true nature of the system to workers and unite their efforts in standing against it.

All imperialist intervention in Kosovo must be vigorously opposed. As Lenin put it more than a century ago: "The powerful European bourgeoisie are afraid of real freedom

Anti-Imperialist Platform



Anti-imperialist unity in the Balkans is pivotal for all Europe

Only by standing together can workers and oppressed peoples find the strength to defeat Nato's bestial neo-nazi war machine.

With ongoing provocations in Serbia and the endless flood of armaments into (and often back out of) Ukraine, socialists and anti-imperialists in the Balkans are aware of the urgent need to take unified action to defend their peoples and to halt the war machine in its tracks.

The following message was sent by the organisers of the World Anti-Imperialist Platform to a meeting of anti-imperialists from the Balkans region that took place in Athens on Friday 27 January.

It is with great pleasure that we greet comrades from the Balkans who are meeting in Athens today.

Following on from our conference in Belgrade in December, we are enthused to see this regional initiative beginning to extend the reach and improve the organisation of anti-imperialist work in south-east Europe at this critical time.

The Balkans is a region steeped in revolutionary and anti-imperialist history and traditions. The Greek, Yugoslav, Albanian and Bulgarian masses all fought revolutionary wars against Nazi fascist occupation and for socialist liberation.

While Greece's revolution was drowned in blood, other Balkans nations were able to break free, for a time, from the stranglehold of capitalist-imperialist oppression and to pursue a path of independent socialist development.

Whatever the differences in their approach to the implementation of socialism, whatever the trials brought about by revisionism and the Sino-Soviet split, the fact remains that for four and a half decades, most of the people of the Balkans had a respite from the poverty, insecurity and endless war that had been their lot before 1945, and which all returned with a vengeance after the collapse of the socialist

states.

In all parts of the Balkans, this proud tradition and historical memory have not disappeared. Suffering under the crushing heel of western monopoly corporations, whose economic brigandage is backed up by the armed might of Nato bases and by the debauched rampaging of the imperialists' local neo-nazi gangs, the people of the Balkans, as elsewhere in the former eastern European and Soviet states, look back with increasing nostalgia to the too-brief time of their freedom from capitalist exploitation and fratricidal warfare.

As the world market spirals deeper into crisis, the financial overlords of the monopolist countries are fighting to survive – at the expense of the workers and of each other.

On the one hand, they are trying to pass the burden of the crisis onto the workers by crushing living standards and wringing every last ounce of profit from our labour.

On the other hand, even as they compete with one another over who should receive what share from the spoils of the globe, they are uniting to try to destroy every country that resists their drive to plunder and domination.

As Nato's war against Russia grinds on and reality forces its way through the propaganda lies, it is becoming very clear to workers in the oppressed countries that *they have a side in this war.*

Russia is not an aggressive imperialist power trying to control and superexploit the globe, and nor is China. These are simply countries whose socialist revolutions have left their people with both the will and the ability to stand up for themselves against the marauding Nato beast.

In doing so, they have drawn

a line of demarcation across the entire globe.

All of us who wish for freedom from imperialist domination understand that in order to defeat so mighty an enemy we must maximise the unity of our forces – we must stand together with all those who are also facing the same enemy.

This is the principal question facing humanity today: will you stand on the side of the imperialists or on the side of those who oppose imperialism?

There is no neutrality in this war, whose tentacles are felt in every corner of the globe. The overwhelming economic, military and media might of the neo-nazi Nato alliance means that to be 'neutral' is to allow the powerful to act unhindered.

Workers who cannot be mobilised – or at least persuaded into a position of sympathy – for the cause of anti-imperialism will remain as a reserve for the exploiters. This is why they are so keen to spread the revolutionary-sounding lie about Russian and Chinese 'aggression' and 'imperialism' – our class enemies understand even if the workers themselves do not, the importance of our failing to take a side in this pivotal conflict, which will decide the fate of humanity for decades to come.

In the Balkans, where national-liberation and socialist forces fought valiantly to gain independence and freedom for their peoples in the first half of the 20th century, struggles that were of central importance in WW1 and WW2, we once again see that your stance can greatly affect the outcome of a war that is on the verge of spilling over into WW3.

Just as the imperialists have used every trick to break the peoples of the Balkans into tiny warring groups, endlessly

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pitted against one another, at this crucial moment in history, the anti-imperialist forces must exert all their power to create a unifying force, for it is only by standing together that we can win through to freedom.

Disunited, we are the stupid tools of our oppressors. United, there is nothing that can stop us.

This is the task the Platform has set itself: to be a driving force in bringing together all those genuine anti-imperialist forces from around the globe so that their voices can be amplified in each country and region and their message can be understood by workers and oppressed peoples everywhere:

Defeat for the neo-nazi Nato warmongering alliance!

Unity and victory to the resistance!

British in Belgrade

◀ **page 21** both in their own countries and in the Balkans; their only aim is profit at other people's expense, they stir up chauvinism and national enmity to facilitate their policy of plunder and to impede the free development of the oppressed classes of the Balkans."

Comrades, we must unite the maximum possible forces to oppose Nato's war drive, which is against the real interest of every worker. That is why we say:

Solidarity with the progressive, anti-imperialist forces in Serbia!

Defeat for Nato imperialism!

Victory to the resistance!

Platform statement

◀ **page 24** Bondsteel – the USA's largest military base in eastern Europe.

The conflict in Kosovo is being endlessly stoked, creating the potential for its eruption at any time. Meanwhile, the puppet authorities of the so-called 'Republic of Kosovo' (a Serbian province broken by force from Yugoslavia) continue to terrorise the remaining Serbian population in the territory they control, creating an ethnic apartheid regime much like the one against which the people of the Ukrainian Donbass rose up in revolt.

Just as in Europe, so in Asia the tide of war is rising as the USA and its allies try to inflict the same fate on China as they want for Russia. Meanwhile, their attempts to keep down the rising people and to retain control of the world's resources is causing them to interfere in country after country across Africa, Asia and Latin America. Truly, as their economic crisis deepens, the imperialists' desperate quest to save their system by any means necessary threatens to engulf the whole world in flames.

Here in Belgrade, as elsewhere, we declare that the workers have no interest in serving this cause. Our task is to join together with all those who oppose the imperialists and work with them for the defeat of the Nato alliance, and for an end to this bloodthirsty and rapacious system, which offers nothing but poverty and war to the masses of the world.

Defeat to the Nato-led imperialist alliance!

No cooperation with imperialist war!

Victory to the resistance!

Join the communists

Not only do we need to campaign against the bad conditions and lack of prospects for working-class people in Britain today, but we need to work for a completely different type of society – one where people's needs decide everything.

So many problems face this world: environmental catastrophe, poverty, disease, racism and war. They'll never be solved while capitalism remains, but they could all be sorted if society was set up for the benefit of the majority rather than the private gain of a few billionaires.

The Communists refuse to be intimidated by the barrage of lying propaganda that fills Britain's corporate media. It is the capitalists' job to try to stop us from building a socialist society; it is our job to do it anyway!

Our aim is to revive revolutionary Marxism and popularise it amongst the broadest possible sections of our class. Combining knowledge with disciplined organisation is the key to success in the fight against capitalism.

Our membership is youthful, while our leadership is experienced. We may be small, but we are growing. We welcome anyone who is serious and committed to working for a socialist future.

Become a supporter at thecommunists.org



Proletarian



Nato's war drive threatens to engulf Europe

Rather than admitting defeat, the imperialists are doing everything possible to prolong and extend the war in eastern Europe.

We reproduce below the joint statement issued by participants in the international conference, held under the title of 'The rising tide of global war' and organised by the World Anti-Imperialist Platform in Belgrade on 17 December.

The statement was delivered to a demonstration organised by the New Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which took place in the city immediately following the conference.

It must be clear for anyone with eyes to see that the Nato imperialist bloc is losing its proxy war in Ukraine. Yet, rather than admitting defeat, it is doing everything possible to *prolong and extend* the war. Clearly, it hopes to find a way to wear down its opponent – if only the conflict can be stretched out for long enough, and if only enough men and material can

be found to hurl into the inferno.

Unable to accept a world in which their ability to dominate is shrinking, the imperialists will be satisfied with nothing less than the complete destruction of Russia as an independent state, its dismemberment into hostile and controllable parts, the subjugation and superexploitation of its people, and the free looting of its resources by imperialist corporations.

For decades now, the USA and its allies have been grooming peoples across eastern Europe to be ready to serve as their willing foot soldiers in this mission. Just as in Ukraine, workers from every former socialist state have been fed an unremitting diet of pro-impe-

rialist Russophobia and anti-communism. At the same time, they have been divided by ultranationalist poison and persuaded to blame this or that group of workers for the impoverishment that followed the fall of socialism in the USSR and eastern Europe, the restitution of unbridled gangster capitalism, and the reimposition of economic recolonisation by the west.

In Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Romania, Moldova, Yugoslavia and elsewhere the same tactics have been employed as have served imperialism so well in Ukraine – and which have been the ruin of the Ukrainian people. Laws have been passed declaring communism a crime and rehabilitating the fascists and collaborators of World War 2 as 'national heroes' and 'defenders of the people'. From kindergartens to universities, from museums to public memorials, history has been falsified, fratricidal nationalism has taken the place of social-

ist fraternity, and every means possible used to confuse and divide the working class.

With opposition to this anti-worker agenda ruthlessly crushed, a significant proportion of workers in eastern Europe have been fooled into believing that serving as cannon fodder in the imperialists' proxy war against Russia is somehow in their interest. They are preparing themselves to die, and their countries to be destroyed, not in the cause of their own freedom, but in order to defend the waning hegemony of US imperialism.

Here in the former Yugoslavia, people are faced with a most blatant example of imperialism's destructive drive for dominance over the region: Nato's occupation of the Serbian province of Kosovo. Ever since the bloody war of destruction against independent Yugoslavia in 1999, Kosovo has been a hotbed of violence, where crime and drug trafficking flourish, under the military domination of Camp ► **page 23**