

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!

BELGRADE, 1999



KABUL, 2001



Irony dies a tragic death as USA accuses Russia of 'war crimes'



BAGHDAD, 2003



BENGHAZI, 2011

Environment



Demonising fossil fuels will not tackle the environmental crisis

Only nationalisation of the energy sector will allow us to make rational plans to safeguard both our energy supplies and our future.

The environmental pressure group Extinction Rebellion (XR) has issued what it terms an “open call” to “take a stand against the fossil fuel economy”.

It asserts that the British public is “beyond ready to get rid of fossil fuels”, but that governments “lack the courage and imagination to do what’s necessary”. In which case, XR urges, the public must “choose not to be complicit in the destruction that is decimating communities around the globe”, and concludes breathlessly that its own brand of activism is “the most empowering thing”.

The problem for XR is that it misidentifies the real enemy, sending its supporters off on a wild goose chase against any and every use of fossil fuels

whilst diverting attention from the true culprit: imperialism.

In conversations with XR enthusiasts there may be ritual sideswipes at corporate greed and short-sighted capitalism, but what is never seriously addressed is the fundamental role of government and state in preserving the interests of a tiny minority of monopoly capitalist exploiters – interests which stand in *irreconcilable contradiction* to both the interests of the vast mass of workers and the interests of a healthy natural environment.

It’s the profit system, stupid

It is not a ‘lack of courage and imagination’ that stops the government implementing rational measures to limit or reverse harm to the natu-

ral world. Rather, it is the fact that such measures would be bound to put a dent in the profit margins of BP and the rest – and no government that runs directly counter to the amassing of maximum profits by monopoly capital will survive for long.

Commodity production is driven by the thirst for maximum profits. Any satisfaction of social needs that happens to occur along the way is a purely secondary consideration, whilst any satisfaction of environmental needs ranks a poor third.

The short-sighted and planless anarchy of production obtaining under capitalism has devastating consequences for both the human and natural world, with irrational and wasteful use of all resources. Commodities are shunted around the planet on convoluted supply chains, travelling hundreds of miles to link production in low-wage economies to consumption in the affluent west.

From the social perspective, this way of organising things is completely mad, but from the capitalist perspective, it makes perfect sense. And it is the latter perspective *that must of necessity always prevail* – unless and until the working class wins state power, socialises the means of production and establishes a planned socialist economy capable of taking decisions driven by the satisfaction of social and environmental needs rather than by the greed of a tiny group of exploiters.

It will be argued that such radical social change is either an unattainable dream or will prove impossible to effect in time to avert catastrophe. Yet unlike the phony sense of ‘empowerment’ (which encourages XR activists to believe that by putting *moral pressure*

on our exploiters we can *persuade* them to turn their backs on the profit system in an unprecedented act of self-liquidation as a class), the successful pursuit of state power by the organised working class has been proven possible more than once by history and is set fair to be proven so again in the future.

Just how long this will take in Britain rather depends upon how long the mounting anger of the working class is misdirected into rabbit holes like the one being promoted by XR.

Only under a national energy plan can society in a common sense way weigh up the best mix of energy resources to bring to bear in any given social context. Dismissing out of hand the possible advantages offered by one or other resource, without reference to the concrete situation at hand, achieves nothing.

For example, we are told that the British public is ‘beyond ready to get rid of fossil fuels’, but the fact that thousands of tons of coal are imported from Australia to fuel British steel production whilst vast indigenous coal resources remain locked underground sins against common sense.

Whether this anomaly is best tackled by (a) further scaling back the steel industry (thereby accelerating the deindustrialisation of Britain and turning yet more areas into post-industrial wastelands), (b) reopening some of the deep coal mines shut down by Margaret Thatcher and ending coal imports, or (c) pioneering some new clean technological fix to bridge the gap as fossil fuel use is phased out, can only be rationally decided by reference to a national plan geared to social and environmental need.

Fixating on fossil fuels as the root of all evil just lets capitalism off the hook.

Social



Nationalise the buses!

Workers outside of London and the south east are set to lose as much as a third of their local bus services this spring, as private bus operators move to protect their profits now the government's Covid subsidies are drying up.

Bus usage reduced sharply through lockdown, when people were advised where possible to avoid public transport. Government responded by granting emergency subsidies to the operators to keep them afloat during the crisis. But on 5 April, even though passenger numbers still only stand at about 70 percent of pre-Covid levels, the government plans to scrap the special subsidies. As a result, as many as 5,000 provincial bus routes are for the chop.

In fact, the underinvestment in bus services in England and Wales predates the pandemic by a long way: the period 2010 to 2018 alone saw a 45 percent decline in funding. And what funding there has been has been concentrated in London, with provincial cities and rural areas starved of investment.

"Transport spending per person in London is £1,019 a year, figures show. But in the 'Northern Powerhouse' – the north west, the north east, –Yorkshire and the Humber – it is £417. In the 'Midlands

Engine' – the East and West Midlands – it is just £337. The East Midlands had the lowest level of investment per person (£245), followed by the south west (£290) and then –Yorkshire and the Humber (£315)." (Thousands of bus networks 'have been wiped off the map' thanks to Tory cuts by Keir Mudie, Daily Mirror, 27 January 2019)

At a time when the government is supposedly committed to getting people out of cars and onto public transport it is simultaneously pulling the plug on bus services, using 'Covid' as a convenient smokescreen to cover up a longstanding failure to invest in public services.

The impact on many people's lives of losing bus services is incalculable, especially the elderly and infirm and those living in isolated areas.

The private bus operators are agitating for a temporary extension of the pandemic subsidy, with the implied threat that if this is not forthcoming thousands of bus routes will be sacrificed.

The real solution to the crisis, however, would be to *renationalise the bus* industry and fund it as an essential national public service for all, neither as a playground for private operators nor a special preserve of the metropolis alone.



Poverty stalks the land as ultrarich count the spoils

Inequality is rising in Britain and in the world, the inevitable outcome of the workings of our much-praised market economy.

Families struggling to hold things together as wages stagnate, inflation lets rip and energy bills go through the roof will be cheered to hear that at least *some* British people are doing well out of the crisis.

A report by property consultants Knight Frank has calculated that the number of 'ultrarich' people in the UK (defined as those with assets in excess of £22.1m) increased last year by 11 percent to 25,771, doubling the number since 2016.

Britain, where three out of ten children are living in poverty, has the second-fastest rate of growth of ultrarich in the world, second only to the USA.

The 'country' with the most

ultrarich people per capita is the joke 'city state' of Monaco, now home to tax dodger Sir Philip Green. No less than 199 out of Monaco's total population of 39,000 are classified as ultrarich.

Such is the desperate frenzy to invest in real estate that Monaco's tinpot 'monarch', Prince Albert II, is reportedly supervising a hare-brained \$2bn scheme to reclaim 15 acres of land from the sea with a view to luring in yet more of the ultrarich.

As more wealth crystallises at one extremity, the mass of social misery coalesces at the other. There can only be one solution.

Quick index

Yugoslavia 1999	p04	Mariupol hospital	p12
The forgotten European war		'War crimes' lies exposed	
Nazis on the retreat	p06	Russia imperialism?	p15
Russian encirclement		A Trotskyite myth	
International law	p10	Chris Mullins	p19
Who is guilty of aggression?		Another journalist hounded	

Europe



Belgrade forum reminds the world: 'Never forget' what was done to Yugoslavia

It is the height of hypocrisy for the west to be crying about war in Europe while remaining silent about the blitzkrieg carried out by its own air force 20 years ago.

The following statement was issued by the Belgrade forum for a World of Equals and is reproduced here with thanks.

Twenty-three years since the beginning of Nato's aggression on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), the Belgrade Forum for a World of Equals is marking 24 March, remembering this day back in 1999 when the Nato alliance launched its illegal and criminal aggression against the fallen defenders of our motherland and its murdered civilians.

This aggression was the first war on European soil waged since the end of World War 2. As the bombs and cruise missiles thrown by the most powerful military machinery in the history of civilization were busy destroying a small European country, they also destroyed the European and global security system based on the United Nations charter, the OSCE final act and the Paris charter. To

this day, Europe and the world still suffer the severe consequences of that destruction.

In the process, Nato allied with the so-called KLA ('Kosovo Liberation Army'), a separatist-terrorist formation, as its infantry wing, thus boosting separatism and terrorism.

Hypocrisy of the imperialist aggressors

At present, we are witnessing cynical calls by the USA, Britain, Germany and Nato for the observance of international law, condemning other countries for violating it. This from the countries and bodies which themselves illegally attacked the FRY without a UN security council resolution; the ones who intentionally used missiles filled with depleted uranium and other banned weapons to deliberately and indiscriminately bomb our country's infrastructure and civilians; who killed children, women, hospital patients and civilians, and who openly conducted smear campaigns against the Serbian

people in the global media.

The marking of the beginning of the 1999 Nato aggression against our country is another opportunity to recall all these crimes and atrocities and to remind our public, especially the youth, of the horrors and damage the aggression caused, as well as of the many consequences that are yet to be remedied.

The precedent of aggression carried out without UN security council approval was reused in the subsequent aggressions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria. Nato's aggression against Yugoslavia in 1999 was a stepping stone in bringing to life the strategy of military expansion to the east, closer to the Russian borders, which is the root cause of the Ukrainian crisis.

A genocidal attack aimed at maximum destruction

During 79 days of unrelenting attacks on the FRY, from 24 March to 10 June 1999, the mass-scale assaults of Nato warplanes and missile systems sent weapons flying from the air, the waterways and the land, with the collaboration of

the KLA terrorists, the regular army of Albania, the mercenaries recruited and financed by western states, and the instructors and special operation units of the leading western countries, indiscriminately killing members of the Yugoslav armed forces and the law enforcement agencies of the Republic of Serbia, alongside civilians including children.

The onslaught destroyed cultural monuments, churches and monasteries; it devastated military, economic, strategic and traffic infrastructure, business facilities, civilian facilities and institutions, schools, kindergartens, hospitals, and even the public broadcaster – the Radio Television of Serbia, killing 16 employees there.

Over the course of its aggression, Nato carried out 2,300 airstrikes on 995 facilities across the country. Its 1,150 fighter planes launched some 420,000 projectiles with a total mass of 22,000 tons, including depleted uranium weapons.

About 4,000 casualties were estimated, of whom some 3,000 were civilians and 1,031 were members of the army and the police. Eighty-nine children were killed. In total, more than 12,000 people were wounded, of whom about 6,000 were civilians, including 2,700 children, and 5,173 were soldiers and police officers. Twenty-five persons are still listed as missing.

Since the precise list of civilian casualties has not yet been established, the Belgrade Forum reiterates its appeal to the state authorities to finally complete this sad task.

In their attacks on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Nato's forces employed approximately a thousand aircrafts (fighters, fighter-bombers, bombers, spy planes, etc). The largest share in these air attacks was taken by forces from the USA, the UK

Europe

and Germany, with significant roles in the aggression also played by other members.

The air assaults destroyed and damaged 25,000 residential buildings, disabling 470km of roads and 595km of railways. They also inflicted damage on 14 airports, 19 hospitals, 20 health centres, 18 kindergartens, 69 schools, 176 cultural monuments and 44 bridges, while leaving another 38 totally destroyed.

Among the latter, of special significance are the destruction of two oil refineries (in Pančevo and Novi Sad), the Avala broadcasting tower, the Petrochemistry complex in Pančevo, bridges in Novi Sad, the Zastava automobile factory in Kragujevac, the embassy of the People's Republic of China in Belgrade, and many other civilian targets.

Estimates are that some 38 percent of targeted facilities were purely civilian in nature, and that some \$100bn of war damage was inflicted by the bombardment.

During the bombing of the territory of the Republic of Serbia, ammunition banned under the Geneva Convention was routinely used. In total, 15 tons of uranium were dumped on Serbia. As a direct consequence of these depleted uranium missiles, Serbia was announced in 2015 to be the top-ranking country in Europe in terms of mortality from malignant tumours.

In addition, about 1,000 cluster bombs were dropped on 219 locations on an area of 23,000km², killing a large number of civilians. From the end of the aggression until 2006, six more people died by setting off unexploded cluster bombs in Serbia and Montenegro, and another 12 were wounded.

In all likelihood, the full ex-

tent of those who fell victim to the delayed effects of depleted uranium, unexploded cluster bombs and other toxic weaponry will never be precisely known. The Belgrade Forum invites the competent state authorities to ensure that work continues to be done that can determine the consequences of the use of depleted uranium weapons and other toxic weapons employed during the Nato aggression.

The aggression ended on 10 June 1999, upon the signing of the military-technical agreement in Kumanovo and the subsequent adoption of UN security council resolution 1244, which established the truce and temporarily transferred the administering of Kosovo and Metohija to the United Nations. Pursuant to this agreement, Yugoslavia's army, police and administration withdrew on an interim basis to the territory of central Serbia.

Along with the withdrawal of the army and police, about 250,000 Serbs and other non-Albanians from Kosovo and Metohija fled to central parts of Serbia. This made Serbia the country hosting the largest number of refugees and internally displaced persons in Europe, after this and other wars that marked the violent and forcible breakup of Yugoslavia.

It is cynical to the extreme for Nato to be accusing other countries of crimes that its own leading states have continuously committed themselves. It would serve them well if, even now, as they stand accusing others, they were to halt for a moment to remember their own misdeeds, to repent and remedy all the injustices they have done to our country as well as to others – most notably, to Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya and others.

Never forget.



Ukraine calls for Nazi-era tribunal against Russia

But if the USA backs this call, the tables could well be turned.

Not since the 1940s has there been a successful prosecution of the war crime of aggression. However, in 2022, the imperialist powers – and the Ukrainian government – are scrambling to figure out a way to bring this charge against Russia.

The main institution by which this could be accomplished would be the International Criminal Court. Ukraine is calling for an ad hoc tribunal to bring President Vladimir Putin to account, and the ICC has already launched an investigation into the matter.

One might think that the USA would immediately jump on board this latest instance of the let's-accuse-everyone-but-us-of-war-crimes bandwagon. One might even suppose that it would be a little proud of its fledgling puppet government's toeing of the line.

But wait ... The USA never joined the International Criminal Court (ICC). And to call out Russia and join the ICC now would undoubtedly lead to an examination of the new member's track record.

The Financial Times tells us that the USA's absence from

this institution is not a *good enough* reason to fail to hold Russia to account. In a stunning display of mental gymnastics, it goes on to tell us that international law "must apply to *all equally*".

Beneath that authoritative FT masthead and the distinct salmon-coloured paper, the reader might pass over this glaring FT doublethink. A Marxist analysis, however, brings it into focus.

The FT's editors are very happy to most liberally criticise the enemies of imperialism. But the moment one tries to apply the same standards to the imperialist powers themselves? Well, suddenly that veneer of a 'balanced' and 'rational' publication falls away.

The FT serves one master and one master only: the bourgeoisie.

If we are to have any perspective at all, we must be informed of US imperialism's aggressive wars of conquest over the last century. Only then can we even begin to consider the so-called 'imperialist invasion' of Ukraine.

Ukraine war



Nazis on the retreat as Russian encirclement bites in Ukraine

President Putin's declared objectives of demilitarisation and denazification look likely to be fulfilled.

The imperialist media are working flat out rubbishing Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, one minute pretending to detect signs of the intervention getting bogged down and the next claiming that a rapid advance of the Russian military is multiplying civilian casualties. Judging from the few glimmers of light that penetrate the fog of war, neither scenario is valid.

The 'failure' of the Russian army to enter and occupy cities in fact follows a plan familiar from the Syrian liberation war: cities are encircled, humanitarian corridors opened up for civilian evacuation and the terrorists (Islamic State then, Azov fascists now) isolated and dealt with, with the minimum harm caused to innocent civilians.

Sadly, as was also the case in Syria, the terrorists do their utmost to 'dissuade' evacua-

tion, especially evacuation to the Russian Federation, preferring to hang on to would-be evacuees for use as human shields. And the imperialist media stand ready at hand to blame the failure of evacuation efforts on Russian shelling, 'further proof' that Russia is subscribing to a 'genocidal campaign' against the Ukrainian people.

A blog posted by Slavyanograd, a source sympathetic to the Donbass cause, notes: "Only foreign hostages were released by the terrorists in Sumy. They are trying to prevent anyone from going out in the direction of the Russian Federation. The Russian ministry of defence estimates more than four million people are being held hostage by Ukrainian terrorists."

Wherever they are able, the fascists have continued to target civilians. On 14 March,

for instance, Ukrainian armed forces attacked Donetsk city centre with a Tochka-U tactical missile carrying a cluster warhead, which exploded to kill and wound dozens of shoppers. Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova described the bombing as "a barbarous act of terror" in which "the Kiev radicals have again shown their true face".

The devastating results of this cynical tactic have been playing out in Mariupol, where the sabotage of evacuation plans is resulting in a mounting toll of human misery. As *we go to press, however, the tide would seem to be turning* even in this stronghold of the Azov fascists, who are turning tail and being routed under the encirclement and persistent advance of Russian and Donbass troops.

Time and again we see that it is the Banderist 'nationalists', and the imperialist puppet masters who stand behind them egging them on, who are the true enemies of the Ukrainian people, happy to see

them dragged into a civil war stirred up by foreign imperialist powers in order to keep them bound to the west both economically and militarily.

These latter-day followers of the notorious Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera want to reverse history. Instead of the Red Army beating the living daylights out of the Nazis, they hope for a rematch, only with the opposite outcome. They will fail.

Contrary to all the 'ultranationalist' bluster of Azov and the Right Sector, it is not Bandera and his stunted progeny who best represent the proud history of Ukraine, but the millions of Ukrainians who fought cheek by jowl with the heroes of the Red Army to rid the world of fascism.

They are the true patriots, and this is well understood by most if not all Ukrainians – just not the ones selected to dribble russophobia down BBC microphones. When Soviet war memorials are desecrated, this is an attack upon the revolutionary legacy, not alone of the 40 percent for whom Russian is the mother tongue, but of all decent Ukrainians.

Demilitarisation and denazification

Moscow has clearly stated just what it plans to do in Ukraine, and what it does not.

"Moscow is not aiming to overthrow the current leadership in Ukraine, Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said, amid the ongoing military campaign in the neighbouring state. 'Its objectives don't include occupation of Ukraine, destruction of its statehood, or the toppling of the current government. It's not directed against the civilian population.'

"The spokeswoman reiterated that Moscow wants to

Ukraine war

defend the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics, which broke away from Ukraine shortly after the 2014 coup in Kiev. She added that Russia seeks the 'demilitarisation and denazification' of Ukraine."

Demilitarisation is relatively straight forward, systematically destroying or expropriating all concentrations of heavy weaponry. Denazification is a more complex operation, given the fact that the fascist militia of Azov and Right Sector have long since been amalgamated with the regular Ukrainian army, fascists occupy many high government posts, and at the street level the youth are targeted for brainwashing at nazi summer camps and the like.

The Slavyanograd blog reports: "Pacification measures similar to those conducted in the Caucasus are being carried in Kherson and Zaporozhe provinces – collecting arms, identifying demonstration organisers, and arresting Ukrainian military and intelligence officials and agents," affording us a glimpse of the painstaking efforts being made to separate the sheep from the goats – a process which is unfolding even as the war is at fever pitch.

Propaganda from the west is now trying to paint puppet president Volodymyr Zelensky as a heroic figure, the plucky leader of a democratic Ukraine standing up against the Russian bear. The west carefully airbrushes over the western-backed fascist overthrow in 2014 of the elected president Viktor Yanukovich, which gave rise first to the Poroshenko presidency and then in 2019 to that of Zelensky.

The passage of time and serial charade of sham elections have done nothing to restore democracy since the people of the Donbass are simulta-

neously denied their right to secede from Ukraine and yet remain disenfranchised within a country that claims them as citizens but denies them civil rights. Worse, a country which doesn't think twice about subjecting men, women and children to eight years of artillery attacks against hospitals, schools and basic infrastructure, with over 14,000 deaths so far.

Zelensky won the presidential election on a peace ticket, promising to talk to Moscow and end the war, but it soon became evident that, when push comes to shove in Ukraine, real political power rests, not with parliamentarians, governments or even presidents, but with the fascists who infest every corner of the state as well as mobilising at street corner level.

Imperialism has helped to foster fascism as the ideology best suited to act as catspaw against Russia. But having lost 27 million souls to the Nazis in the Great Patriotic War, Russia has no illusions about how to deal with them now.

Shortly after Zelensky became president, Dmytro Yarosh, cofounder of the Right Sector and commander of the fascist Ukrainian Volunteer Army, boasted that the Minsk Accords, rather than being a diplomatic route to a peaceful solution to the war, securing a genuine ceasefire and opening the way for negotiations about autonomous status for the people's republics in the Donbass, were only of any use as a delaying tactic.

Minsk, he said, was just "an opportunity for manoeuvre. But no more. The implementation of the Minsk agreements is the death of our state. They are not worth a drop of blood of the guys and girls, men and women who died in this war. Not a drop."

He went on to offer what amounted to a direct death threat to the new president: "Zelensky said in his inaugural speech that he was ready to lose ratings, popularity, position ... No, he would lose his life. He will hang on some tree on Khreshchatyk – if he betrays Ukraine and those people who died in the revolution and the war." (Zelensky and the fascists: 'He will hang on some tree on Khreshchatyk', Moon of Alabama, 5 March 2022)

By Autumn 2109, it was becoming clear that Zelensky was effectively under the thumb of nazi pressure. A piece on Grayzone tells the story: "In a face-to-face confrontation with militants from the neo-nazi Azov Battalion who had launched a campaign to sabotage the peace initiative called 'No to Capitulation', Zelensky encountered a wall of obstinacy.

"With appeals for disengagement from the frontlines firmly rejected, Zelensky melted down on camera. 'I'm the president of this country. I'm 41 years old. I'm not a loser. I came to you and told you: remove the weapons,' Zelensky implored the fighters.

"Once video of the stormy confrontation spread across Ukrainian social media channels, Zelensky became the target of an angry backlash. Andriy Biletsky, the proudly fascist Azov Battalion leader who once pledged to 'lead the white races of the world in a final crusade ... against semiteled Untermenschen', vowed to bring thousands of fighters to Zolote if Zelensky pressed any further ...

"Though Zelensky achieved a minor disengagement, the neo-nazi paramilitaries escalated their 'No Capitulation' campaign. And within months, fighting began to heat up again in Zolote, sparking a new cycle of violations of the Minsk

agreement. By this point, Azov had been formally incorporated into the Ukrainian military and its street vigilante wing, known as the National Corps, was deployed across the country under the watch of the Ukrainian interior ministry, and alongside the national police." (How Ukraine's jewish president Zelensky made peace with neo-nazi paramilitaries on front lines of war with Russia by Alexander Rubinstein and Max Blumenthal, 4 March 2022)

And whilst nazi cut-throats pressured Zelensky from one side, secretary of state Antony Blinken and his notorious under-secretary Victoria Nuland kept up the pressure from Washington, so the president was ground between two stones, constantly urging him onward.

By the spring of 2021, the Ukrainian president was poking the Russian bear in earnest, announcing that Ukraine intended to take Crimea back by force. He quietened down in the face of Russian military manoeuvres. But in December that year he was in parliament pinning a Hero of the Ukraine medal on a Right Sector leader. And Dmytro Yarosh popped up again to brag that he had now been elevated to the position of advisor to the commander-in-chief of the armed forces of Ukraine.

In February 2022, OSCE observers reported a sharp increase in ceasefire violations in the Donbass, corroborating reports suggesting a build-up of artillery consistent with a new all-out war against the Donbass. And on 19 February, Zelensky gave a speech at a security conference in Munich, dropping broad hints that Ukraine might pull out of nuclear weapon talks, raising the spectre of a nuclear-armed fascist threat right on Russia's border.

Ukraine war

Nazis retreating

◀ **page 7** Three days later, the Russian president finally recognised the Donbass people's republics and a few days after that the special military operation began.

Sanctions

Once the invasion came, the USA declared economic war on Russia, slapping sanctions on prominent figures in the Russian leadership.

By ratcheting up sanctions against Russia the west is certainly having an effect on its target. Yet even before Russia has spelt out the full scope of its own counter-sanctions, the unintended consequences of the west's declaration of economic war are already starting to be felt, sowing the seeds of further dissensions within the imperialist camp.

The sanctions campaign, habitually presented as common to the whole international community, is in fact the preserve of a global minority. Not only are China, the DPRK, Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela not joining the economic siege, but to date no countries in Asia, Africa, the middle east or Latin America want any part in it.

Banning Russian planes from US and European Union airspace will certainly dislocate the steady flow of Russian commerce, but the tit-for-tat closure of Russian airspace to western air traffic will mean that US and EU flights to Asia, normally routed via Russian airspace, will be forced to make a time-consuming and expensive detour. This in turn will give a competitive edge to the Asian airlines that are welcome to carry on using Russian airspace – an own goal for the sanctions warriors.

Banning oil imports from Russia promises to be a spectacular example of shooting

oneself in the foot. Not only will the subsequent price hikes hit the US public hard, it will also deepen the divide opening up between the US and the EU – countries whose economies depend on oil and gas from Russia.

In particular, it is questionable how long Germany can afford to persist in cutting off its nose to spite its face before buckling under pressure from industry to open the delayed Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

Jihadis, resistance and biological weapons

Despite all the wishful projections of the bourgeois media, it soon became clear that this was not a classic case of a homegrown resistance movement confronting a foreign invader, but rather of a fascist state confronting an anti-fascist army.

Reported sightings of jihadis assisting the Banderites suggest that Kiev is happy to draft in mercenaries from anywhere, but will they be enough?

Western politicians and media are certainly desperate to create the conditions for a prolonged war of attrition by what they present as 'Ukrainian resistance forces' against Russian occupation. To this end, the Russians are being presented as imperialists of the worst kind, and their careful ground operation is being dressed up as an aggressive bombardment of the type we are used to seeing imperialist forces conduct in the middle east – accompanied by a barrage of fake stories and faked photographs of their supposed 'atrocities' to dupe those in the west who have not yet become inured to such tactics.

The truth, however, is quite otherwise. Russia's methodical ground invasion has been carried out in such a way as to preserve both infrastructure and

life. The armed forces are its clear target and are slowly but steadily being surrounded and neutralised. All army personnel who lay down their weapons and refuse to fight with the fascists are being facilitated in returning to their homes. Known fascists and war criminals will be taken to Russia and put on trial, at which point evidence of their infamy will no doubt be made available to the world.

In such a situation, no amount of armaments thrown at the citizens is likely to succeed in transforming them into a united national force against their not-so-evil occupiers, and attempts to beef up Ukraine's committed nazis with international recruits have been similarly unsuccessful.

Just as the flood of European arms into Ukraine has served merely to transfer funds from western treasuries to western arms dealers, with the weapons themselves being regularly captured and destroyed by Russian forces, western volunteers have turned out to be a gaggle of drugged-up bully-boys, without discipline or organisation, turning tail as soon as they come face to face with a well-equipped and organised opponent.

A decade of exposure to ultra-nationalist russophobic propaganda may have duped some in the western parts of Ukraine into believing that Bandera is their national father, the EU is their friend, and Russia is their enemy, but such sentiments are by no means universal. Across the territories still held by the fascists, the beatings of 'collaborators' show plainly that even in the Galician heartlands the people are not united in their hatred of Russia.

Meanwhile, the Russian presence on the ground has brought to light the existence of US-controlled biological research laboratories on Ukrai-

nian soil.

When Russia called a session of the United Nations security council to expose this, the USA at first denied the very existence of such laboratories, and then said okay, but they are for research not warfare. Yet Russia was able to publish documents showing that Kiev had been ordered urgently to eliminate traces of what was deemed as a biological weapons programme, financed by the Pentagon!

Russia told the security council that the Kiev regime has permitted its own people to be treated as guinea pigs for biological weapons research, spreading viruses via birds and bats. Clearly, Russia is more concerned about the health of Ukrainians than are 'their own' fascist leaders.

Nato and the EU to blame for suffering

Moscow made it clear that its objectives, whether by diplomacy or combat, were simple: the freedom of the Donbass people's republics to secede, respect for the decision taken by the Crimeans to join the Russian Federation, a guarantee that Ukraine would give up on Nato membership and a commitment from Nato to cease its eastward expansion.

The failure of the west to seriously discuss these security needs since they were articulated by Russia last December, with Blinken blustering that it was up to Ukraine if it wanted to apply for membership, was what made Russia's military intervention inevitable, alongside Zelensky's threats to acquire nukes and his massing of Ukrainian troops for a full-scale invasion of the Donbass republics. (What I got wrong and why by Patrick Armstrong, Russia Observer, 18 March 2022)

War could have simply been avoided had Zelensky's gov- ▶

Ukraine war



Ukraine's President Zelensky: 'It's time to meet'

Are western leaders and their local stooges ready to recognise Russia's legitimate security concerns?

On 19 March, Ukrainian actor/president Volodymyr Zelensky appealed for meaningful talks with Moscow to end the war in Ukraine, saying: "This is the time to meet, otherwise Russia's losses will be such that several generations will not recover."

This bizarre show of concern for the welfare of Russian troops aside, if Zelensky is now ready to engage seriously in

peace talks this is much to be welcomed. If Zelensky and his masters in the west are now prepared to discuss how the security needs of both Russia and the west can be guaranteed by the establishment of a neutral Ukraine, then the world could be a safer place.

It was last December, in what seems a world away, that Moscow called on the west to sit down and have a serious talk

about establishing mutually agreed guarantees to preserve the peace in Europe. This invitation did not come out of nowhere, but proposed concrete measures to defuse a crisis in international relations that had been brewing for 30 years and could no longer be ignored with impunity.

In February 1990, President George Bush and his secretary of state James A Baker made a deal with Moscow. If Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev agreed not to veto the reunification of Germany, Washington would make a solemn undertaking that Nato would not further expand its membership eastward. In Baker's striking phrase, "not one inch" would Nato advance to the east.

For the next 30 years, Nato proceeded to break that promise, extending membership to some 30 countries. These countries, which had played the part of a natural buffer zone protecting Russia, now played host to Nato military exercises, were armed by the west, and were cultivated as potential launchpads for aggression against Russia.

In 2008, egged on by the west, Georgia initiated a war against South Ossetia, which

had seceded from Georgia rather than live in a country that had degenerated from a multinational soviet republic into an intolerant ethnic state. Russia came to the rescue and quickly restored peace – to the chagrin of the imperialist meddlers who had hoped to catch fish in troubled waters.

It was at this juncture that Nato dangled the possibility, one day, of both Georgia and Ukraine becoming Nato members, with all that membership entailed, including military assistance. At Nato's summit in Bucharest, where it was decided to grant Georgia and Ukraine a "roadmap" to membership, Vladimir Putin made it clear that this step was a "direct threat" to Russian security.

This warning was not heeded in 2008 and still was not heeded in December 2021, when President Putin urged the west to undertake guarantees never to accord Nato membership to Ukraine and at once to cease Nato's push to the east.

The west answered this urgent plea for diplomacy by stepping up the transport of heavy weaponry to Ukraine, stoking the fires of war, and cheering on the genocide unfolding in the Donbass.

Government refused to listen to the gung-ho advice coming from Washington, egging him on to confrontation with Moscow.

How much disruption and suffering might have been avoided had Zelensky only piped up a little earlier with the suggestion that neutral status with security guarantees for Ukraine could be an alternative to Nato membership – not a million miles from what Moscow required in the first place. He confided to his TV audience: "Regarding [join-

ing] Nato, I have cooled down regarding this question a long time ago, after we understood that Nato is not prepared to accept Ukraine."

But it would be unfair to put all the blame for this fatal refusal to deal with reality on Zelensky. In the run-up to the invasion, he had already started trying to dissuade his US backers from making a hot war out of a diplomatic crisis. But while Zelensky was edging towards negotiations on security guarantees, Blinken and Nuland would not take yes for an

answer and pulled the rug out from under his feet.

Hindsight also prompted a similarly belated concession from senior EU minister Josep Borral: "There are moments in which we could have reacted better. For example, we proposed things that we could not guarantee, in particular Ukraine's accession to Nato. This was never realised. I think it was a mistake to make promises that we could not fulfil."

Little comfort to the Ukrainians who had to live with the consequences.

As this war sputters to a close, it is Nato and the EU that should be called to account by the Ukrainian people for the devastation it has caused.

America has used and abused Ukraine, reducing the former powerhouse of the USSR to the role of a servile imperialist catspaw against Russia – no more than a stick with which to poke the Russian bear.

It is now a broken stick, no longer fit for imperialist purposes.

Ukraine war



Western presstitutes rediscover international law after decades of dissembling

Will this admission turn out to have been a massive own goal?

On 24 March this year, the Financial Times editorial board printed an exceptionally revealing article headlined ‘Holding Russia to account for war crimes’.

Revealing because it gave away something that has been missing from the imperialists’ discussion of international affairs for (at least) the entirety of the post-cold war period – the key information that the Nuremberg tribunals which followed the second world war set *legal precedents that were globally accepted* and which constitute, along with the Geneva Conventions, most of what is referred to as ‘international law’.

For the first time in decades, an imperialist mouthpiece has displayed a knowledge

of these laws and where they came from – a knowledge the entire western establishment has kept silent about during the last 30 years of aggressive warmongering by the imperialist powers.

Let the Financial Times’s editors speak for themselves: “Efforts are now afoot to create a special tribunal to investigate whether Russia has committed the *particular war crime of aggression* ...

“A strong argument for an ad hoc tribunal focusing on the crime of aggression – dubbed the *‘accumulated evil of the whole’ of war crimes* – is that Ukraine is calling for it. The crime is recognised in both Ukraine’s and Russia’s penal codes; *it was a Soviet jurist who helped to introduce the*

concept to international law in 1945, and it has remained on Russia’s statute books.

“The crime of aggression is contentious because of its political dimensions; it has not been successfully prosecuted internationally since the 1940s’ *Nuremberg and Tokyo tribunals*. But its attraction is that it allows prosecutors to target Putin and his inner circle ... *It is a ‘leadership’ crime that can be pinned to those devising strategy, not just executing it. It could also be quicker to indict, without recourse to in-the-field investigations.*” (Our emphasis)

So our rulers and their spokesmen are absolutely aware that there is such a thing as international law. They know where it originates; they know what it holds to be the supreme crime (ie, aggressive war); and they know that *it is*

leaders and not foot soldiers who should be held responsible for such crimes.

This important admission by the FT is greatly to be welcomed, and must be brought to the attention of workers everywhere. But if international law is to mean anything, it must apply all the time, and not only when it suits (or appears to suit) a particular interest.

If our rulers do indeed acknowledge the necessity of holding to account those who launch unprovoked and aggressive wars, why have no calls been made to try the warmongers who brought us Palestine, Korea, Vietnam, Angola, Mozambique, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Iran, Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Yemen and all the other criminal operations that humanity has endured over the last 77 years?

Moreover, by disappearing the context for the present situation in Ukraine, the FT has turned reality on its head. It is not Russia but Nato (the international wing of the US military) that, in Ukraine as elsewhere, is guilty of the supreme crime of aggression. It is not Vladimir Putin but Joe Biden, Donald Trump, Barack Obama and their war ministers and warmongering media mouthpieces who should be in the dock.

Who is really guilty of aggression in Ukraine?

Ukraine’s war did not start last month but in 2014, when the imperialists sponsored a fascist coup to remove the government of Viktor Yanukovich. His crime? Attempting to maintain friendly relations with both east and west, and to strengthen rather than sever his country’s trade links with Russia – an approach that was wholeheartedly endorsed by the majority of Ukraine’s popu-

Ukraine war

lation.

The war that followed Yanukovich's overthrow was a defensive war by the parts of the country that would not accept the imposition of this fascist junta – a regime that was determined to facilitate the total transformation of the country into a neocolony of western imperialism, and of the USA in particular, and to scapegoat and demonise Ukraine's sizeable Russian-speaking population into the bargain.

The 2014 coup was not the first such event in modern Ukraine's history. In 2004, another government was toppled by the west in an operation dubbed the 'Orange revolution', and for much the same reasons.

Nor did Ukraine's significant neo-nazi force appear from nowhere. Today's Azov battalion, Svoboda, Right Sector and myriad other fascist and 'ultra-nationalist' parties and militia are directly descended from the traitorous Ukrainians who fought with the Nazis in WW2, enthusiastically assisting in the massacre of Jews, gypsies, communists et al.

It is no accident that the hero of today's Nazi thugs is the Ukrainian Nazi Stepan Bandera, a war criminal who has been rehabilitated and elevated to national sainthood by the post-2014 regimes.

After the defeat of fascism in 1945, Bandera's forces were sponsored by the west to engage in ongoing anti-Soviet guerrilla warfare that lasted nearly a decade. Their leaders were then given comfortable exile in the west, encouraged to keep their 'traditions' alive, given access to western media for the purposes of rewriting their history as 'freedom fighters' rather than collaborators, and then brought back to Ukraine in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The success of the coup put the nationalists' efforts to divide the Ukrainian population along ethnic lines onto steroids. They have worked assiduously to rehabilitate Bandera and his Ukrainian Nazis by rewriting the country's history, in the process reopening old wounds that go back to Ukraine's years in the white hot crucible of the antifascist war and even before those to the early 20th century and to the post-WW1 revolutionary period.

Most living in Ukraine before 1991 would have considered these wounds to have been successfully healed by the prosperity and fraternity of the Soviet era, but the immiseration of the population caused by imperialist looting of the country's resources and super-exploitation of its people, and by the destruction of the its once thriving industry and agriculture, have created fertile ground for a culture of grudge and grievance to take root where once there was fellowship and harmony.

The war of the fascist junta against the people in the eastern Donbass region has been going on for eight years. Some 14,000 people have died under the bombardment of Ukrainian fascist-aligned forces, the vast majority of them civilians. The peace agreement signed in Minsk seven years ago turned out not to be a path to ending the war but a means for stalling those who genuinely wished to work for peace.

So why did the Russians finally take military action? Because seven years of trying to facilitate the peace process had got them nowhere and meanwhile Russians in the Donbass were dying.

Because they saw a massing of Ukrainian forces on the border of the besieged eastern breakaway republics of Do-

netsk and Lugansk, threatening the lives of the people there and a spill-over of the assault onto Russian soil.

Because alongside the massing of troops, there was a huge new injection of armaments and advisors from the west, making clear the intention of the comprador government to tear up the peace process and retake the Donbass by force.

Because proxy president Volodymyr Zelensky was making repeated declarations about Ukraine's intention to join not only the European Union but also to become a member of Nato, and its aspiration not only to be a base for Nato's weapons but to become a nuclear power itself – to possess nuclear weapons that would be aimed squarely at Russia just a few minutes flying time from Moscow and in the hands of madmen who would be more than willing to use them.

This operation by Russia is therefore not an unprovoked war of aggression, but a manoeuvre in defence of its own people as well as those of the Donbass against the ceaseless aggression of the west.

Rediscovering Nuremberg

In their attempt to find a justification for the further vilification of President Putin, the imperialists may well have scored a tremendous own goal.

The admission by the FT editorial board that they are *perfectly well aware* of the existence and the content of international law is of far more value to their enemies than to themselves. Ever since the illegal aggression against Yugoslavia in 1999, our rulers have sidestepped the issue of universally recognised international law by talking instead about a unilaterally imposed 'rules-based order', about their

'right to protect', the 'defence of human rights' and so on.

They have buried the precedent of a truly international tribunal and tried to replace it with imperialist-controlled kangaroo courts (the ICC et al) – puppet institutions that only ever prosecute the enemies of imperialism, but which the USA still refuses to sign up to, for fear of public pressure being brought to bear against itself through even these tame and toothless mechanisms.

Given the great efforts being made by western powers to reverse the 1945 victory over fascism in Ukraine, we should not be surprised that they also want to reverse the outcome of the postwar trials, attempting now to put the aggressors on the judge's bench and the defenders in the dock.

But in so doing, they are drawing attention to a history that, in their own interest, it would be better to keep buried. To paraphrase the great Chairman Mao, they may find they have lifted a rock only to drop it on their own feet.

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Ukraine war



Faking 'war crimes': Mariupol maternity ward witness exposes imperialist lie machine

The accounts of those on the scene clearly contradict the atrocity narratives the west is spinning to whip up support for an escalation of the war.

The following article is reproduced from the *Grayzone* with thanks.

A key witness to the widely publicised incident at the Mariupol maternity hospital has punctured the official narrative of a 'Russian airstrike' on the facility, and raised serious questions about western media ethics. Meanwhile, news of a 'massacre' in the city of Bucha contains suspicious elements.

On 9 March, shocking news of a deliberate Russian airstrike on a maternity hospital in Mariupol, eastern Ukraine, began spreading widely via social media and news outlets.

Fiery condemnation from western officials, pundits and journalists was immediate. Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky, for his part, claimed the act was proof of the "genocide" Russia was perpetrating against the civilian population, and urged European leaders to condemn the "war crime" and "strengthen sanctions" to stop the Kremlin's "evil" deeds

in the country. NPR [the USA's National Public Radio] suggested the attack was part of Russia's "terrible wartime tradition" of purposefully targeting health facilities and medics during conflicts, dating back to Chechnya.

But newly released testimony from one of the incident's main witnesses punctures the official narrative about a targeted Russian airstrike on the hospital. The witness account indicates that the hospital had been *turned into a base of operations* by Ukrainian military forces and was not targeted in an airstrike, as western media claimed. Her testimony also raised serious questions about whether at least some elements of the event were staged for propaganda purposes – and with the cooperation of the Associated Press.

Eye-witness speaks out

The new testimony (see video here) comes on the heels of evidence strongly suggesting that the destruction of a dramatic theatre in Mariupol on 16

March was staged by the Azov battalion, and that nearly all civilians had evacuated a day before. And as we will see below, new reports of a Russian massacre of scores of civilians in the town of Bucha also contain suspicious details, suggesting a pattern of information manipulation aimed at triggering western military intervention.

Mariana Vishegirska, a pregnant resident of Donetsk who was present at the maternity hospital during the widely reported incident, has been evacuated from Mariupol and is now speaking out. Photos showing a bloodied Vishnevskaya fleeing the building with her personal belongings became a centrepiece of coverage of the attack, along with a photo of another woman being carried away pale and unconscious on a stretcher.

In the wake of the incident, Russian officials falsely claimed the pair were the same person, citing Vishegirska's background as a blogger and Instagram personality as evidence she was a crisis actor and the incident a false flag. Though that assertion was not true, as we shall see, the hospital had been almost completely taken over by the

Ukrainian military.

In a video reviewed by The Grayzone which began circulating via Telegram on 1 April, Vishegirska offered a clear and detailed account of what took place on and in the days leading up to 9 March. The witness began by noting how many residents of Mariupol attempted to evacuate following Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, but says authorities ensured it was "impossible to leave".

On 6 March, with the birth of her child imminent, she checked into maternity hospital number three, the city's "most modern" facility. She was not there long before the Ukrainian military arrived and evicted all the hospital's patients, as they sought access to the building's solar panels, one of the last remaining sources of electricity in the besieged city.

"We were moved to the only small maternity hospital left. It had only one small generator ... Husbands of women in labour settled in the basement and cooked meals for us on the street. Residents of neighbouring houses also brought us meals," Vishegirska says. "One day soldiers came. They didn't help with anything. They were told the food is for women, how could they ask for it? They replied they hadn't eaten in five days, took our food and said: 'You can cook some more.'"

On the night of the 8th, the pregnant women "slept peacefully" as there were "no shoot-outs". The next day, the soon-to-be mothers heard a shell explode outside. Vishegirska "instinctively" covered herself with her duvet, but still, shattered glass from a nearby window cut her lip, nose and forehead, though she says it was "nothing serious".

"After the second explosion, we got evacuated to the base-

Ukraine war

ment,” Vishegirskaia recalled. “We proceeded to discuss whether it was an airstrike. They said it was no airstrike. So our opinion got confirmed. We didn’t hear the airplane, they didn’t hear it either. They told us it was a shell. After the first two explosions there were no other explosions.”

As she waited, she noticed “a soldier with a helmet” taking pictures of her, and demanded he stop, “because obviously it was not a good time for that”, and she did not want to be photographed in her current state. The soldier complied. Back upstairs, the same individual began filming her and others again, refusing to stop until his subjects had demanded several times he do so.

Vishegirskaia’s husband later told her the man wasn’t a soldier, but an Associated Press correspondent, one of many on the scene at the time. She believes these journalists had been there “from the beginning”, as they were ready and waiting outside to snap the woman being led away on a stretcher, the first to emerge from the building in the wake of the shell attack, “as soon as she came out”.

The next day, after her baby was delivered via caesarean section, the same Associated Press staffers interviewed her, asking her to describe what had happened. They enquired point blank if an airstrike had taken place, to which she responded: “No, even the people who were on the streets didn’t hear anything, nor did anyone.”

Later, when she was in safer “living conditions”, Vishegirskaia began scouring the internet, attempting to track down the interview. She found “everything else” the Associated Press staffers recorded – but not her denials that an airstrike had occurred.

AP’s hospital incident narrative grows shaky

The Associated Press’s initial report by Evgeniy Maloletka on the 9 March incident provided the primary foundation and framing of all mainstream coverage thereafter. It categorically asserted the hospital was targeted by a deliberate “airstrike”, which “ripped away much of the front of one building” in the hospital complex and left nearby streets strewn with “burning and mangled cars and trees shattered”.

The report suggested that the heinous act was a testament to Russia’s invasion force “struggling more than expected”.

Countless western news outlets recycled this content, with particular emphasis on the claimed ‘airstrike’. These outlets served as eager conduits six days later when Associated Press issued a follow-up, revealing that the pregnant mother being stretchered out of the hospital had died, as had her unborn child. A doctor stated her pelvis had been crushed and “hip detached”, which the agency attributed to the hospital having been “bombarded” by the Russian air force.

However, the Associated Press made no mention in its follow-up report of any part of any building being “ripped away”. In fact, the words attributed by the AP to Vishegirskaia indicate that she was completely unaware of how the damage was actually caused.

“We were lying in wards when glass, frames, windows and walls flew apart,” she told the AP. “*We don’t know how it happened* (emphasis added). We were in our wards and some had time to cover themselves, some didn’t.”

Did the Associated Press insert ambiguity and uncertainty into Vishegirskaia’s mouth in

order to maintain the bogus narrative of an airstrike? Even if quoted accurately, she could easily have been describing an explosion nearby which inflicted shockwave damage on the building.

Reinforcing that interpretation, an Associated Press video purporting to document the aftermath of the ‘airstrike’ showed a large hole in the ground within the maternity hospital complex grounds, said to be “a blast crater” from the wider assault. Was this merely the impact zone of a shell that intentionally or not landed near the building, rather than one vestige of a targeted aerial onslaught?

Whatever the truth of the matter, other aspects of Vishegirskaia’s newly released testimony relate to major mysteries surrounding the Mariupol maternity hospital bombing.

For example, she affectingly attests that the pregnant woman stretchered out of the building died. Yet for all the superficial damage inflicted, no photo or video evidence yet to emerge from the scene – bar a seemingly blood-soaked mattress – indicates how and where the fatal injuries could have been inflicted.

Even more curiously, the Associated Press implausibly claimed that due to “chaos after the airstrike”, no one on the ground learned the dead woman’s name before her husband arrived to collect her body – her identity remains unknown to this day. Still, doctors were “grateful” the nameless woman did not end up buried in one of the mass graves dug for Mariupol’s dead.

AP embeds with the Azov battalion

The number of people who lost their lives in the maternity hospital incident, and precisely how, are likewise conundrums.

In a televised address that evening, Zelensky claimed three individuals, including a child, had been slain via “airstrike”, while others remained trapped under rubble. The next day, though, Donetsk regional government chief Pavlo Kyrylenko said zero deaths had been confirmed, and there were no confirmed injuries among children.

By contrast, numerous media outlets have since reported, or at least heavily implied, that several children were killed, and their bodies deposited in the aforementioned mass graves on the “outskirts” of Mariupol. Why it would be necessary or sensible to transport corpses far away from the city centre, and why a child’s parents would consent to such an undignified burial, remains unclear.

We know about these supposed mass graves thanks to Associated Press correspondent Evgeniy Maloletka, who has published photos and authored articles detailing their construction. His content has been widely repurposed by other western outlets, the grim images travelling far and wide.

Maloletka also happened to be an eyewitness to the maternity hospital incident; he took the infamous shot of the pregnant woman being stretchered out of the building. Maloletka, in fact, has managed to place himself in the vicinity of many dramatic events instantly portrayed as titanic Russian war crimes.

A glowing 19 March Washington Post profile of Maloletka praised him for sharing “the horror stories of Mariupol with the world”. The article described the Ukrainian as a “long-time freelancer” for Associated Press, previously covering the Maidan “revolution” and “conflicts in Crimea” for the agency. There ▶ **page 14**

Ukraine war

Mariupol maternity

◀ **page 13** was no mention of the fact that Maloletka was a fervent supporter of the ‘revolution’ however.

In a lengthy multimedia presentation on the coup and resultant war in Donbass featured on his personal website, Maloletka claims to be “indifferent to the situation in my country”. However, his affinities are abundantly clear. He frames the US-backed regime-change operation as a courageous fight against “corruption and social injustice”, while making no reference to both the Maidan protesters and their leadership being riddled with neo-nazis.

This may be relevant to consider, given Maloletka has also been a key source of photos of training provided to Ukrainian civilians by Azov battalion. Whether he sympathises with the paramilitary’s fascist politics is unclear, but there can be little doubt he has been in extremely close quarters with the neo-nazi regiment since the war began.

Maloletka’s protection, that of his Associated Press co-workers, and their collective ability to provide western media an unending deluge of atrocity propaganda can only be guaranteed through the Azov battalion, the primary defence force in Mariupol. This has obvious ramifications for the objectivity and reliability of all Associated Press coverage of the war.

As the Grayzone’s Max Blumenthal revealed in his investigation of the suspicious 16 March Mariupol theatre incident, Associated Press published photos of the site bearing Azov battalion’s watermark and a link to the neo-nazi unit’s Telegram channel.

The dubious narrative of the

explosion at the Mariupol theatre bears strong similarities to the official version of the maternity hospital incident, particularly the wildly conflicting estimates of casualties and purported presence of the same people at both sites. Sky News alleged on 26 March that pregnant women rescued from the hospital had been moved to the theatre “for safety”, being coincidentally housed at “exactly the point” later said to have been bombed by Russian forces, of all places.

The perishing of eye witnesses to the real events at the maternity hospital is convenient for the Associated Press and Azov battalion alike. After all, dead people tell no tales. Having anyone able to testify to the on-the-ground reality of incidents such as the dubious theatre bombing or the maternity hospital ‘airstrike’ is inherently problematic to the Ukrainian cause.

And though the AP has had reporters on the ground in Ukraine throughout the conflict with Russia, the organisation remains silent about transgressions unfolding right before the eyes of its staff.

Case in point: the presence of an AP photographer at the hospital gave it a front row seat for the Azov battalion’s occupation of the facility and its transformation of the site into a base of operations. But the agency avoided any mention of this critical piece of context, showing western audiences what Azov battalion wants them to see – and what its overtly pro-Kiev staff deem fit for public consumption.

Information war escalates in Bucha

Hours before the publication of this article, on 2 April, claims of Russia’s most hideous alleged war crime to date erupted across social media.

Footage and photos of scores of dead bodies – some with their hands tied – littering the streets of Bucha, a small city near Kiev, testified to an apparent massacre of military-aged men by Russian troops, as they retreated from the battered city two days earlier.

The gruesome visuals have triggered intensified calls for direct western military confrontation with Russia. But, as with the incident at the maternity ward in Mariupol and numerous other high-profile events initially portrayed by Ukrainian authorities as Russian massacres, a series of details cast doubt on the official story out of Bucha.

Within hours of Russia’s withdrawal from the Bucha on 31 March, its mayor announced that his city had been liberated from “Russian orcs”, employing a dehumanising term widely used by the Azov battalion. An accompanying article noted the Russians had “mined civilian buildings and infrastructure”, but no mention was made of any mass killing of local citizens, let alone scores of corpses left in the street, which one might reasonably expect would be top of any news outlet’s agenda when reporting on the event.

On 2 April, within hours of the publication of photos and videos purporting to show victims of an alleged Russian massacre, Ukrainian media reported that specialist units had begun “clearing the area of saboteurs and accomplices of Russian troops”. Nothing was said about dead bodies in the streets.

The national police of Ukraine announced that day that they were “cleaning the territory ... from the assistants of Russian troops”, publishing video that showed no corpses in the streets of Bucha and Ukrainian forces in full control of the city.

A clip of the reported ‘clean-up operation’ published by Sergey Korotkikh, a notorious neo-nazi Azov member, shows one member of his unit asking another if he can shoot “guys without blue armbands”, referring to those without the marking worn by Ukrainian military forces. The militant stridently responds: “Fuck, yeah!” Korotkikh has since deleted the video, perhaps fearing it implicated his unit in a war crime.

Whether real or fake, and whoever the perpetrators are, the alleged extermination of civilians comes at a critical time for the Ukrainian government. Evidence of atrocities and war crimes committed by Ukrainian troops against civilians and captured Russians – including the shooting of helpless Russian POWs in their knees, and other heinous forms of torture – has come to light for the first time.

What’s more, Russia has virtually eliminated Ukraine’s fighting and logistics capabilities in much of the country, including its entire navy, air force, air defences, radar systems, military production and repairs facilities, and most fuel and ammunition depots, leaving Kiev unable to transport large numbers of troops between different fronts, and consigning what forces remain in the east to encirclement and almost inevitable defeat.

As Zelensky has made clear, Ukrainian forces are desperate for direct western intervention – in particular the so-called ‘closing of the sky’ [a no-fly zone that could only be enforced by Nato shooting down Russian planes].

With compelling but highly questionable atrocity propaganda filtering from media operations of the Azov battalion and the Associated Press, *public pressure for a major escalation is rising.*

Ukraine war



“Typical of the old capitalism, when free competition held undivided sway, was the export of goods. Typical of the latest stage of capitalism, when monopolies rule, is the export of capital.”

– VI Lenin

Who benefits by falsely labelling Russia as ‘imperialist’?

There is a growing and disturbing trend for self-styled ‘communists’ to join the Nato bandwagon in denouncing ‘Russian imperialist aggression’.

In his recent video ‘The War in Ukraine Explained’, YouTuber the Finnish Bolshevik makes many reasonable points about Nato in the context of the current war in Ukraine, rightly pointing out the western imperialist alliance’s escalating provocations aimed at Russia. This line of argument is in direct contradiction to the stance he goes on to take towards Russia, however.

With regards to Russia, he talks about its “annexation” of Crimea and its “invasion” of Ukraine as signs of *imperialist aggression*, declaring that Russia is an “imperialist power”.

His justification for making this claim is that Russia is capitalist. He claims that the Russian operation in Ukraine has been launched for “geo-strategic reasons” – ie, in the interest of Russian monopoly profits – and that Russia wants to take over Ukraine in order to control its markets and exploit its labour. No evidence is given to back up any of these assertions.

In support of this line of argument, the Finnish Bolshevik re-

fers his viewers to the equally dire positions taken by the revisionist communist parties of Greece (KKE) and Sweden (SKP). He does not mention the very different narrative of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), also a revisionist party but one operating outside Nato’s sphere of influence.

(As a side note, the CPRF won 19 percent of the vote in the 2021 Russian legislative election. Not bad in a country that our Finnish Bolshevik claims is guilty of “repressing communists, just like the Nazis do”. The communists in Ukraine, on the other hand, were outlawed several years ago and have been subject to persistent persecution ever since the Maidan coup.)

As Marxist-Leninists, we must hold firm to the understanding that a country can only be classified as imperialist if it *really meets all* (and doesn’t just *appear* to meet one or two) of the criteria laid out so carefully by VI Lenin a century ago.

To be an imperialist power it is not sufficient just to en-

gage in international trade or to have a meaningful defence capacity. It is not trade but a *reliance on the superprofits brought in through the export of capital by monopolist financiers* that indicates that an economy is moving from the lower stage of capitalism to the higher, monopolist stage (imperialism). And it is not a military capability *per se* that proves aggressive intent, but the use that military is put to. (See the end of this article for Lenin’s full definition.)

An extremely useful article by Stansfield Smith written for the Monthly Review in 2019 was titled ‘Is Russia imperialist?’ Smith made an excellent and detailed analysis of this question, providing facts and figures to demonstrate that Russia fails to meet even one of the five criteria given by Lenin.

For those wishing to make their own serious study of this question (as opposed to wanting to back up an uninformed viewpoint with a cherry-picked quotation or two), Lenin’s *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism* must be their essential starting point.

Anyone who tries to allege this or that country’s ‘imperialism’ without making a convincing, point-by-point case for arriving at such a conclusion should be treated as a provocateur; as someone who wants to sow confusion amongst the workers and demobilise their ability to act in opposition to the criminal aggressions of our rulers.

As a quick rule of thumb, if a country outside Nato is being targeted by countries within Nato, we can be pretty sure it’s *not* imperialist. And if one finds oneself on the same side as the Trotskyist purveyors of imperialist misinformation on such an important question, it’s probably time to do some soul-searching.

A reminder: Lenin’s definition of imperialism

To be considered imperialist (monopoly capitalist), a country must fit the following five criteria:

1. the concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life [*where are the Russian monopolies dominating our lives today?*];

2. the merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this ‘finance capital’, of a financial oligarchy [*Russia’s richest capitalists are involved predominantly in industry not finance; only one of the world’s top 100 banks is Russian, the state-owned Sberbank*];

3. the export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance [*Russia’s biggest exports are raw materials, not capital; where are the Russian finance capital trusts and monopolies exploiting the labour of the world and repatriating their wealth to Russia?*];

4. the formation of international monopolist capitalist associations which share the world among themselves [*such cartels do of course exist, but they do not include Russian monopolies*];

5. the territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed [*such division has indeed taken place, but Russia was not a party to the division and does not reap the spoils of imperialist domination and war; indeed, its main crime is to come to the defence of those fighting off imperialist attack (Syria, eastern Ukraine) and to try to keep its own territory free of imperialist domination and superexploitation*].

North America

Freedom convoy

◀ **page 20** bilateral nature of vaccine agreements between countries precludes the possibility of any single state having unilateral say-so on who gets to enter what country, meaning that even if the Canadian government were to revoke this requirement, it would make no real difference to Canadian truckers needing to cross the border for work.

So why are the protesters holding their ground?

According to former conservative parliamentary and leader of the western separatist Maverick party Jay Hill: “This thing has really taken on a life of its own. The vast majority of the people that have either come on board to participate in the truck convoy or those donating to support it financially have just reached a point of frustration and exasperation with these lockdowns and continuation of restrictions that they want someone to speak up and say ‘enough’ to the federal government.”

The validity of Hill’s claim about the diversity of motivations behind the protests – not merely as a reaction to the vaccine mandates – is confirmed when one sees the level of anger amongst the Canadian public at revelations that many of their politicians broke pandemic-related guidelines. This anger is sure to find a great deal of sympathy amongst the British public after revelations of the ‘partygate’ scandal, a telling testimony to the hypocrisy of our political elites.

As the New York Times reported: “When Ms Khera revealed she had flown to Seattle over the holidays to attend a small family memorial, the public reaction was swift and bruising.

“Denounced on social me-

dia as ‘selfish’, ‘arrogant’ and a ‘cheater’, she was forced to step down from her parliamentary role as secretary to the minister of international development.”

And further: “The fury started in late December, when it was discovered that Ontario’s then finance minister, Rod Phillips, was in the French territory of Saint Barthelemy, commonly known as St Barts, while his Twitter account issued a Christmas Eve video message showing him sitting by his roaring fire at home, thanking constituents for the sacrifices they had made ‘to protect our most vulnerable’.” (Canadian politicians face ire after taking trips during the holidays by Catherine Porter, New York Times, 7 January 2021)

Although breaking guidelines is not as serious as breaking the law (as the Johnson government did in Britain), this flagrant hypocrisy could not but spark fury amongst a public that had been through the hell of repeated lockdowns and long-running restrictions on normal life. The last thing they were ready to tolerate was the sight of their own ‘representatives’, having implored them to celebrate Christmas and Thanksgiving at home and alone, taking glamorous holidays abroad.

A few token resignations and sackings will not do. Canadians clearly feel that this hypocrisy and contempt for the masses is a manifestation of a much deeper problem in the political system.

Equally clear is that elected politicians see themselves as being above the people, and their job as being not to serve the masses but to shift the burden of every crisis onto the workers’ shoulders. It is becoming clearer by the day that the livelihoods of ordinary Canadians are secondary to the

profit margins of multinational monopoly corporations.

Truckers fight back with superior methods

The GoFundMe page for the Freedom Convoy raised over C\$8m, leading many leftist commentators to dismiss the protests as having been ‘astroturfed’ by right-wing billionaires.

Whilst there is no doubt that the convoy has been reported with a great deal of sympathy by right-wing conservative media, this was also the case in regards to the Gilet Jaunes (yellow vest) demonstrations in France. Yet there was not nearly the level of ‘leftist’ opposition to such demonstrations as is now being shown to the Freedom Convoy.

Perhaps a better parallel would be the Capitol Hill riot in January 2021, which instigated a wave of panic amongst the American ‘left’ and led to hysterical accusations of an attempted ‘fascist coup’ rather than a recognition that this had been a poorly organised but fairly spontaneous outburst of working-class anger. A key difference between Capitol Hill and the Freedom Convoy is the admirable level of organisation, solidarity and orderly conduct on the part of the latter.

The Canadian truckers have distinguished themselves as a militant and disciplined section of the working class, demonstrating tactical expedience and an intolerance of agent provocateurs. For instance, there is video footage of a protestor who chased off what he believed to be a state-sponsored provocateur, who was calling on the protestors to storm parliament before he was summarily dismissed by the protestors.

The trucker who saw off this troublemaker went on to explain that their strategy is to

hold the line and provide no grounds for further public condemnation.

A lack of majority support amongst Canadians overall has been used by the left as a stick to beat the truckers in struggle. Such Canadian ‘leftists’ would do well to remind themselves that their duty is to win over the advanced workers in struggle, no matter what the wider public attitude might be, and to do whatever they can to imbue such protests with class-consciousness.

But perhaps they think that communists should sit aside from the class struggle until such time as they have won over 50 percent of the vote in a referendum on whether people feel ready for socialism?

Only after winning over the advanced workers to their cause will Canada’s Marxists have a chance at building an organisation of mass propaganda and agitation to win over further sections of the Canadian public. Instead, the Canadian ‘left’ has decided to dismiss the struggling truckers as ‘right-wing’, ‘fascist’, ‘anti-worker’ and ‘petty-bourgeois’ – whatever makes a scintilla of sense to their readers – to absolve themselves of the responsibility of reaching out and trying to bring them a class analysis.

Without the help of the Canadian ‘left’, the protestors are digging in for a protracted struggle and counting on the Canadian government to dig its own grave. In light of the government’s having refused to engage the protestors diplomatically – as suggested by the more intelligent conservative opposition; in light of the determination of Trudeau’s merry gang of liberals to crush the demonstrations with force; in light of the resignation of Ottawa’s police chief after having used the most cruel and inhu-

North America

man tactics to try to quell the protests; in light of the invocation of authoritarian 'emergency' powers, the truckers' strategy is working beautifully!

Violent and cruel reaction of the 'liberal' Canadian government

From confiscating firewood used by the protestors for warmth in the freezing Canadian night all the way to threatening anyone – with prosecution and tear gas – who attempts to provide the protestors with food or fuel, the so-called 'liberal' regime in Canada is using every authoritarian measure in the book.

The latest development has been Trudeau's passing of emergency measures which give the Federal government the right to freeze the bank accounts of anyone sponsoring or supporting the protests in any way. This injunction has caused friction between the federal government and regional state leaders, exacerbating contradictions among Canada's rulers.

As the Financial Times reported: "I was very clear: we do not want a federal state of emergency on the territory of Quebec," premier François Legault said.

"Now is not the time to put oil on the fire ... I can understand that after more than two weeks, the federal government and the Ontario government want to put an end to this blockade, which has nearly become a siege. But we do not have these problems in Quebec."

"Jason Kenney, Alberta's premier, said he told Trudeau that invoking emergency powers 'could make the situation even more complicated'.

"Saskatchewan's Scott Moe said: 'If the federal government does proceed with this mea-

sure, I would hope it would only be invoked in provinces that request it.'" (Justin Trudeau invokes emergency powers to clear trucker protests by Matthew Rocco and Charlie Mitchell, Financial Times, 14 February 2022)

As Trudeau continues to impose his will on the autonomous states of Canada, his mishandling of the political crisis is bound to reignite separatist strife, perhaps to the extent of what was seen in the Quebecois uprising of October 1970.

Progressive Conservative leader in Ontario Doug Ford has decided it would be a good idea to threaten the demonstrators in some 'bad cop' performance to contrast with Trudeau's softly-spoken demeanour, issuing the following blunt ultimatum to the truckers: "[You would] lose your [commercial] licence for life, lose your car indefinitely. We're going to throw every tool we've got at you."

This desperate threat, combined with Trudeau's implementation of dictatorial emergency measures, can only be interpreted as a declaration of war against the truckers, but such open class conflict could well backfire, leading to the collapse of Trudeau's liberal government and to a considerably weakened Canadian state machinery.

Left betrayal of the truckers

Sadly, the truckers have not only been spurned by the fringes of the far left but have also been betrayed by their very own unions and associations.

Francois Laporte of Teamsters Canada, for instance, made the following shameful statement: "The so-called 'freedom convoy' and the despicable display of hate led by the political right and shamefully encouraged by elected Con-

servative politicians does not reflect the values of Teamsters Canada, nor the vast majority of our members." (Canada's truckers and the politics of anti-vaccine protests by Charlie Mitchell and Kiran Stacey, Financial Times, 11 February 2022)

Mr Laporte's statement flies in the face of the evidence. One need only look at the sheer scale of the protests – and at the fact that, when called upon to do so, tow-truck drivers *refused to remove* the trucks that are blocking roads in Ottawa.

It is true that the convoy has received positive press coverage from right-wing populist media outlets and financial support from wealthy donors. But it is important to bear in mind that it ultimately owes its success to mass participation, to the militance and discipline of the truckers, and to the logistical support of local sympathisers.

The truckers' restraint and self-policing has meant that overall their gatherings are more like a festival than a violent skirmish against the state – or even (because the liberal left seem to lose the plot when they see isolated individuals holding unsavoury flags, some even remote from the demonstration) an occupation of Ottawa by Wehrmacht or Confederate forces!

Sadly, the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) has joined in chorus with Trudeau's liberal regime. Since the beginning of February, the CPC has published two statements on the matter, the first entitled "Freedom Convoy": a dangerous movement for the working class, but useful for the ruling class."

The convoy seems to be so 'useful for the ruling class' that the gangsters of Washington were the first to suggest that

the Canadian government use federal measures to curtail the demonstrations! This was followed by the ostensibly progressive "No to the Emergencies Act", which included the very confused slogan "Defend civil liberties – enforce hate laws".

In its first statement, the CPC describes the convoy as "a public expression of the increasingly organised and assertive far right. The clear links between the organisers of the convoy and far-right networks indicate that this is not a spontaneous working-class demonstration."

Such a smugly dismissive statement flies in the face of the mass working-class participation in the convoy (not petty-bourgeois, as has been argued by those keen to dismiss the phenomenon). There is no doubt that the 'far right' – or, more accurately, right-wing populists – have supported, funded and helped to organise events, but the biggest problem for the convoy is not right-wing participation, but *left-wing abstention*.

The CPC's statement continued with the dishonest claim that "The convoy is filled with Nazi and Confederate flags, election signs for Bernier and all sorts of far-right symbols." (Our emphasis)

This tired and lazy attempt to dismiss thousands of demonstrators as fascists, racists and neo-Nazis can only be an attempt to frighten people away from assessing the demands of the protestors critically and seriously. Isolated individuals posing with fascistic symbols have long been used as ammunition by bourgeois governments to dismiss such protests – including the mass yellow vest phenomenon in France.

The statement went on: "This is a convoy of hate which has threatened and at- ▶ page 18

North America

Freedom convoy

◀ **page 17** tacked the civilian populations in Ottawa and everywhere it has passed through.”

Claims of trucker violence have been repeated throughout the bourgeois media without a shred of substantiating evidence. Indeed, the considerable video footage available online overwhelmingly shows the protestors to have been peaceful, behaving cordially to both police and bystanders. They have even been seen distributing hot chocolate and doughnuts.

Meanwhile, the CPC complains that the protestors “don’t say a word about the central issue of defending and expanding our public services, especially our public healthcare system; about raising wages and controlling the prices of basic necessities; not a word about nationalising the pharmaceutical industry to stop big pharma’s profiteering (which is contributing to the proliferation of variants), about military spending and the danger of war to guarantee corporate profits”.

These are, of course, important issues, and such crimes committed by the ruling capitalist class in Canada should certainly be brought to the attention of the truckers. But instead of taking ownership of the situation and doing their duty as self-proclaimed ‘communists’, the CPC’s leaders have withdrawn from the fray, covering their retreat with self-serving excuses.

Communists must go wherever there are workers in struggle – no matter how backward, no matter how ‘right-wing’, and no matter how hostile or anti-communist. They may well be abused for their pains, but that must not be allowed to stop their work. This process must

be repeated again and again if we are to win workers over to the cause of socialism despite all the prejudices with which they have been imbued.

The CPC statement finished with a treacherous conclusion: “We also know that it will take mass political action by the labour and people’s movements to force Parliament to legislate hate groups as criminal organisations, to enact and enforce hate speech laws, and to defeat the rise of the ultra-right.

“This is why we call on the most conscious workers [apart from the ones in the Freedom Convoy!], the trade union movement, but also on all progressive and democratic forces to block these reactionaries by unmasking them, and to oppose them by fighting for a genuine people’s recovery.”

We cannot but conclude that the CPC is advocating for the Canadian state to bolster its machinery of repression against one section of the working class in the blissful hope that such repression will not in turn fall upon itself. While *calling* for the repeal of emergency measures in Canada, the CPC is advocating for some imaginary ‘mass movement’ (the very one it has so far failed to build) to appear and ‘block’ the Freedom Convoy – the only force in Canada that could *actually* force the government to repealing those measures.

The only people the CPC has succeeded in unmasking are its own leaders: a treacherous and cowardly bunch who, along with the teamster associations and union leaders, are holding back the advance of the Canadian working class. If the CPC is serious about building a vanguard of the Canadian working class it must take the initiative and go to the protestors demonstrating support and solidarity.

Communists in Canada, as elsewhere, cannot be content to sit on the sidelines, but must work to wrest the convoy’s political hegemony away from such right-populists as Maxime Bernier and the People’s Party of Canada, doing everything in their power to imbue the convoy with socialist consciousness and politics. This will prove to be much more effective than puerile name-calling. If they cannot change course, they will ultimately be replaced by a group that is serious about leading the Canadian working class to socialism.

Our position

The CPGB-ML stands in solidarity with the Freedom Convoy, as we do with all workers struggling against the vaccine mandates that are being used as a way to justify further repression against (and scapegoating of) the working class. People are right to be angry about the gross mishandling of the pandemic by imperialist governments, which at every step of the crisis have prioritised corporate profits over the health, livelihoods and wellbeing of their workers.

Nor are workers to be blamed for their increasing distrust in governmental institutions and the monopoly capitalists our governments serve (in particular big tech and big pharma, both of which have profited mightily from the people’s distress over the last two years). Nor do we blame workers for striking back against the iniquities of their governments.

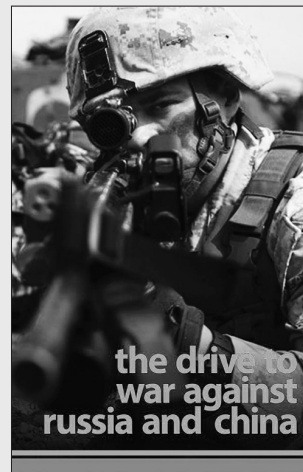
We stand by the right of workers to make their own decision regarding the vaccines on offer, especially since the opportunity to tackle the pandemic through a *social* solution was blown early on by all the imperialist governments.

We unreservedly condemn those who describe themselves as ‘socialist’ or ‘commu-

nist’ but who in practice side with imperialism – albeit in a disguised way – in its efforts to coerce workers to take the vaccine, and to scapegoat those who refuse as being to blame for the ills of the pandemic. We unilaterally reject any attempt to pass the burden of dealing with either the health crisis or the financial crisis from the shoulders of the rich and powerful to the poorest in our societies.

As communists, our duty is clear: to use every opportunity to help workers understand that it was *the capitalist system itself* that precluded any meaningful and effective response to the health crisis, and which stands in the way of solving every other pressing problem of humanity.

The Drive to War Against Russia and China



Why do the US and British ruling classes seem so set on war with Russia and China? What has the economic crisis of capitalism got to do with it? And what kind of anti-war movement do workers need to build if they wish to stop the juggernaut in its tracks?

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Society



Chris Mullin: Is another honest journalist about to find himself behind bars?

West Midlands police are still pursuing a vendetta against the veteran reporter who revealed their corruption and incompetence.

With Julian Assange still in Belmarsh prison for dishing the dirt on US war crimes and Craig Murray now free again after his recent four month spell in Saughton prison after conviction on trumped-up charges relating to the Alex Salmond case, it's looking increasingly like the only real home of honest journalism these days is behind bars.

And now it's the turn of the septuagenarian journalist and one time MP Chris Mullin, whose only 'crime' is his obstinate refusal to divulge his sources, every honest journalist's credo.

The same West Midlands police (WMP) force that bungled the hunt for those responsible for the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings, employing 'coercive' methods to extract false confessions from six innocent Irish lads who just found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time (and with the wrong accents), is now baying

for the blood of the journalist who dared to expose their incompetence.

The Birmingham Six were wrongly convicted of the bombing (which took place during the war against the British occupation of the north of Ireland, aka 'the Troubles') and spent the next 16 years of their lives in jail. Without enjoying any of the advantages afforded to the police for the investigation of crimes, Mullin pursued his own long struggle to unearth the truth.

His efforts finally bore fruit and in 1991 the appeal court ruled that the Birmingham Six's convictions were unsafe, and finally freed them.

But rather than learning from Mullin's example and having a crack at some investigating of their own (that is after all on their job spec, no?), it seems that the West Midlands police have been nursing a grievance against Mullin for shining a

light on their corruption, prejudice and incompetence. And now, with the climate for honest journalism getting steadily colder, they are out for his blood.

Mullin had succeeded in identifying four people involved in the bombing, of whom only one is still alive. He kept notes of his conversation with him, and some time ago let the WMP see those notes, minus the man's name and any other identifying details.

But now the WMP are demanding that Mullin hand over the unedited version of his notes, breaking the bond of confidentiality. They got a knock-back last year when the Crown Prosecution Service refused their bid to prosecute Mullin under the Terrorism Act.

But the WMP haven't given up their vendetta, and now they have applied to Judge Mark Lucroft for consideration at the Old Bailey.

According to the NUJ: "there is every chance that he will rule in his favour. In that eventuality, the possibility increases dramatically that one of Britain's most significant investigative journalists will go to prison."

Chris Mullin is clear just where he stands:

"Journalists do not disclose their sources. I interviewed many of those who were active in the IRA's West Midlands campaign. To gain their cooperation I gave repeated assurances, not only to the guilty, but to innocent intermediaries, that I would not disclose their identities.

"I cannot go back on that now, just because it would be convenient. My purpose at the time was to help free the six innocent men who had been convicted of the bombing. I was never under the illusion that I could bring the perpetrators to justice."

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



Solidarity with the Freedom Convoy of Canada

The arteries of the Canadian capital are clogged to the point where Canada's whole rotten capitalist system is having a heart attack.

Since 29 January, truckers have been descending on the Canadian capital of Ottawa, clogging up the streets and bringing the city to a standstill, sparking panic within the ranks of Canada's ruling class.

At first, the streets were glutted with private cars and pickup trucks, which were then supplemented by a huge HGV truck convoy that had travelled to eastern Ottawa all the way from the western province of British Columbia. As the con-

voy approached the capital, it gathered mass like a Canadian snowball poised to strike Parliament Hill itself.

The sheer scale of the demonstration has led president Justin Trudeau to flee the capital with his family to an undisclosed location while the rest of his government and MPs remain in the city. Indeed, the demonstrators are unequivocal in their opposition to the liberal government, with slogans including 'F*ck Trudeau' and

'Truck off Trudeau'.

It would seem that the protests were sparked as a reaction to the newly introduced requirement for truckers to be vaccinated for Covid-19 before being allowed to cross the US/Canadian border, although there is more evidence that points to this as being the straw that broke the camel's back rather than the be all and end all of the protestors' grievances.

After all, as the Canadian Trucking Alliance (CTA) and Trudeau himself have pointed out: 90 percent of Canadian truckers have been vaccinat-

ed, a far higher proportion than the Canadian national average of 77 percent. (Canadian trucker convoy descends on Ottawa to protest vaccine mandates by Ian Austen and Vjosa Isai, New York Times, 29 January 2022)

It seems unlikely, then, that truckers, a hard-working and disciplined segment of the working class given the demanding nature of their job, would be the most ardent 'anti-vaxxers'.

Furthermore, as of 22 January, the US government had also mandated that Canadian truckers entering the USA must be vaccinated. The ▶ page 16