



international bulletin

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CUBA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN STATEMENT

SOLIDARITY

The Cuba Solidarity Campaign calls on the US government to suspend the blockade of Cuba to allow emergency medical and humanitarian aid into the country in order to ease the economic and health crisis the island is experiencing.

The current emergency is a result of the ongoing US blockade, an additional 243 sanctions imposed by the Trump administration, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cuba has shown incredible resilience in the face of six decades of economic warfare by the US government in the form of a blockade intended to strangle the economy and create hunger and hardship in an attempt to destabilise the country.

The Cuba Solidarity Campaign opposes any calls for foreign intervention coming from those in the US who seek to exploit the current difficulties and provoke unrest. The solution to the challenges Cuba faces must be resolved by the people of Cuba and we support the efforts that the Cuban people and their government are making to fight the pandemic in the face of ongoing sanctions and provocations from the US.

On Sunday 11 July, some street protests took place against the scarcity of food, medicines and power supplies. The vast majority of these protesters have genuine concerns regarding these shortages. President Miguel Díaz-Canel travelled to San Antonio de los Baños, site of the original demonstration, and spoke to people about their grievances.

Some groups are seeking to exploit and provoke this difficult situation. They called for people to protest in other locations, resulting in protests in some towns and cities. In response, thousands of Cubans supporting the government have taken to the streets across the island in counter-demonstrations against US interference.

Now right-wing, pro-blockade, and regime-change politicians and groups in the US are also seeking to manipulate the situation. They have called for a so-called "humanitarian corridor" (a pretext for US intervention) to be set up. Anyone genuinely interested in helping the Cuban people at this time should instead be calling for the US government to ease the crippling sanctions.

The calls for US aid delivered through a US-imposed "humanitarian corridor" are disingenuous and fraudulent. These are the same people who hypocritically call for humanitarian intervention while supporting blockade policies which have caused shortages of food, fuel and medicines.

CSC condemns those in the US and internationally who are cynically using the situation to destabilise Cuba, and supports Cuba's right to self-determination.

The Cuba Solidarity Campaign appeals to the Biden administration to observe the recent United Nations General Assembly vote on 23 June 2021 which voted 184-2 for an end to the blockade of Cuba. It is immoral and dangerous to seek to exploit the current struggles of the Cuban people to serve the political objectives of a few hardliners in Miami.

Genuine efforts to support the Cuban people are welcome. Individuals and organisations can directly help by becoming members of CSC. Donations can also be made to CSC's COVID-19 Medical Appeal here:

COVID-19 Medical Appeal for Cuba
<https://cuba-solidarity.org.uk/emergency-appeal-for-cuba/>

COMMUNIST PARTY OF BRITAIN



REJECT NEW COLD WAR AGAINST CUBA

SOLIDARITY

The new Cold War against China and Russia is being widened in an effort to destabilise Cuba, Communist Party chair Liz Payne told the party's political Committee on Wednesday 14 July.

She condemned calls in the US, including from Miami mayor Francis Suarez, for military intervention and slammed Western media coverage of recent protests in Cuba as 'blatantly distorted' and 'wholly one-sided'.

Ms Payne pointed to the false portrayal of an enormous pro-revolutionary, pro-government May Day march in Havana in 2013 as an anti-communist, anti-government protest in July 2021. In another example, a pro-government rally last Sunday has been described by the *Guardian*, *Fox News*, the *Financial Times*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Times* and *Voice of America* as a demonstration demanding the resignation of Cuban president Miguel Díaz-Canel and his regime.

The Communist Party political committee noted that some far left groups in Britain such as the Socialist Workers Party have also rushed to express their support for counter-revolution in Cuba.

Liz Payne said the recent NATO summit confirmed that the new Cold War was underway with the full backing of the British government and the big

business interests it represents. She specifically condemned the huge military build-up of imperialist forces over the past 18 months in the South China Sea.

Liz Payne spoke of the hidden agenda behind the alleged 'withdrawal' of US, British and other forces from Afghanistan.

'This was no defeat for Western imperialism', she insisted, 'because it will put a reactionary Islamist regime in power on the border with Tajikistan-- a member of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation - and very near to China's Xinjiang autonomous region.'

'As well as creating another huge refugee crisis, a Taliban takeover would enable the stay-behind US and British special forces to help drive jihadi destabilisation into the republics of the former Soviet Union and across the border into western China', she said.

The Communist Party political committee condemned the Conservative government's decision - backed by MPs on Tuesday - to cut foreign aid at the same time as Britain's nuclear arsenal and military budget are set to rise substantially. This decision comes on top of the withdrawal of £130m from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), a cut from which women across the globe will suffer the most.

ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

CAPITALISM

Sharp divergencies are developing between the core imperialist countries and the rest of the world. In the rich countries the pandemic appears to be retreating. In the poor it remains rampant. In the rich vaccination generally ranges between 30 and 60 percent. Elsewhere it rarely rises above 10 per cent. Biden's promise of 500m doses to poor countries over two years will only vaccinate an additional 5 per cent by mid-2023. G7 promises will only vaccinate 5 percent more. No agreement was reached on relaxing patent rights on German or French vaccines. Only China promises significant aid. Further waves seem inevitable.

This divergence will shape economic recovery. Figures for investment, debt, inflation and food security already diverge sharply. The recently released 2020 UNCTAD report on investment flows shows a massive fall to developing countries - far steeper than that between the developed economies and reversing the recent trend of investment in 'emerging markets' where labour is much cheaper. The only exception is China. Equally with the costs of borrowing. In the core imperialist countries, US and Germany, governments borrowing pays minimal interest. In developing countries the cost of government borrowing is now up to 10 per cent - making any investment in recovery, or even paying for mass vaccination, far more difficult.

Inflation is also rising sharply. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation reported wholesale prices for basic foods up 40 percent in May on April - again penalising poorer countries. Already for May the US was reporting a 5 percent retail inflation rate and Germany 2.5 percent - reversing the deflationary trend of the last decade. In many indebted countries with depreciated currencies, such as Lebanon and Sudan, retail food price inflation is already out of control. These sharply rising prices are partly the result of the impact of the pandemic and the disruption of global supply chains - but it is also a product of the intensification of corporate takeover and monopolisation over the past two years.

Even within blocs of nominally rich nations, such as the EU, disparities are sharply increasing. Germany, with only 4 percent unemployment, has been able to provide a massive 3.1 trillion euro in state aid grants to its firms, 51 per cent of all state aid grants allowed by the EU Commission. By contrast, the Spanish government, with 16 percent unemployment, has only been able to afford a minimal amount, 4 percent of the EU total. The same is the case in Italy with over 10 percent unemployment. Italian government borrowing costs are now between 1 and 2 percent higher than Germany. Disparities within the EU, already very high, are therefore likely to grow bigger.

Rising inflation, and the expectation of even sharper rises, is also impacting on commercial interest rates - now rising from previously minimal levels and likely to have serious consequences even in the richest nations. The level of corporate debt to GDP in the US reached an unprecedented 46 per cent at \$7T in 2020 - well over the previous high of 44 percent which immediately preceded the 2009 crash. This is the context for Biden's \$6T economic boost mainly directed at infrastructure spending via major corporations. In Britain corporate debt is even higher as a percentage of GDP. In Turkey corporate debt (excluding banks) is 80 per cent of GDP and medium-term interest rates around 10 per cent. The same is the case in South Africa and Brazil. At the minimum these trends will see a serious worsening of global disparities between rich and poor countries and between monopolies and the rest. At worst, it could produce another crash on the same scale as 2008-2010.



Daily paper of the left www.morningstaronline.co.uk

ASIA CONGRATULATIONS TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA



Letter from Rob Griffiths to General Secretary Xi

The Communist Party of Britain sends its congratulations to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the occasion of your party's 100th anniversary.

These hundred years have seen the comrades of your party taking a series of steps that have transformed both China and the future of humankind.

A hundred years ago, a small group of Communists met in Shanghai to form a party based on the teachings of Marx and Lenin. The new party took this revolutionary understanding into both the working class and the working peasantry. Very quickly the resulting revolutionary organisations were challenging British, French and US imperialists and the warlords they financed.

By the 1930s your party, under the leadership of Mao Zedong, had established a secure military base among the working peasantry in southern China and was developing successful struggles against both the Chinese agents of British and US imperialism and the invading Japanese fascists. At this stage some members of our own party journeyed to China to learn from your struggle.

In the 1940s Chinese Communists led the liberation of China from Japanese control and then created a wider people's alliance of patriotic forces that finally drove imperialist armies out of China and in 1949 created the People's Republic of China.

In the 1950s your party mobilised working people across China to lay the foundations of a socially planned economy, created a major industrial base and stood firm against attempts by the United States to overrun People's Korea.

In the 1960s and 70s your party sought, in difficult circumstances, to maintain a popular mass base for Marxist ideas and in the 1980s set out on a new path of development that opened your economy, under strictly defined conditions, to external capital – using this capital to transform the material base of the economy, develop new technologies, raise living standards and to do so by understanding the specific national circumstances of China and under the broader collective control of the Chinese people.

In the 1990s your party learned the lessons of the implosion of existing socialist societies in Europe on the need to maintain the vigour of a mass party, rooted among working people and actively mobilising for socialist objectives that served their needs.

Over the past two decades your party has continued to materially transform the well-being of the Chinese people, lifting hundreds of millions out of absolute poverty and by 2021 creating a moderately prosperous socialist society. This achievement has no equal in human history.

At the same time your party has adhered closely to the principles of working-class internationalism at a critical and dangerous juncture in world history – when imperialism sees itself as directly challenged by the economic achievements of socialism.

In response, and under the leadership of General Secretary Xi Jinping, Chinese communists have led the People's Republic of China on a path of peace, dedicated to ensuring that the world's peoples become, in their cooperation, a wider community with a shared future. In doing so Chinese communists have also led the way in sharing technologies that protect the environment of our planet and the well-being of future generations.

These, dear Comrades, are achievements without parallel in human history. They give hope and inspiration to Communists everywhere including those, working in very different circumstances, in Britain.

We therefore send you every good wish in celebrating the hundred years of the Communist Party of China. It is a celebration also for the peoples of the world.

With comradely greetings from Communists in Britain

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TAIWAN AND HONG KONG THE US RAISES THE STAKES



From Kenny Coyle

FOR THE sixth time since the inauguration of President Biden in January, the US Navy has sent warships through the Taiwan Strait, which separates the island of Taiwan from the Chinese mainland.

This is the latest in a series of maritime provocations directed against the People's Republic of China and is designed to show support for the anti-mainland government of Tsai Ing-wen in Taipei. British Royal Navy ships may repeat these actions during their voyage later this year.

The move comes at a time when Tsai's government has come under fire for its refusal to accept mainland China's offer to help provide vaccines to counter a recent surge in Covid cases. Taiwan had been hyped in Western media for its supposedly model response to the initial Covid pandemic. This was also used to politicise the issue of Taiwan's status in regard to the World Health Organisation.

However, Tsai's government failed to prepare for a mass vaccination programme, leaving the island's 23 million inhabitants at risk during the new wave, according to official reports the island has suffered 605 deaths – however, more than 590 of these deaths have happened since April.

As of 25 June just 0.1% of the population had been vaccinated, a batch of 2.5 million vaccine doses from the US arrived the same week with great propaganda fanfare. This however, represents only a fraction of the 35 million or so doses Taiwan needs to achieve reasonable immunity levels.

Again Tsai's administration has been prepared to risk the lives of its own citizens rather than collaborate with mainland China.

In Hong Kong, the closure of the extreme right-wing Apple Daily newspaper has seen renewed Western claims about attacks on press freedom. The paper's murky financial dealings (the paper has lost money every year for the past decade and has been bailed out by its sister Taiwanese operation) and those of its proprietor the Trump-loving Jimmy Lai will be centre stage in upcoming trials in Hong Kong under the new National Security Law.

Lai and several of his newspaper executives are charged with using the paper and the company as a means of channelling funds to the anti-China forces in Hong Kong and of calling for US intervention against China and the HK local government.

Lai's second-in-command Mark Simons left Hong Kong for Taiwan abruptly last year just before the NSL was introduced.

It has been revealed that Simons, a 'former' US military intelligence agent, used money from Lai's company to an investigator in China to dig up dirt on Joe and Hunter Biden's business dealings in China to assist Trump's presidential campaign.

Lai maintains that he did not know about the payments, which ironically would breach US national security legislation on foreign interference in US elections.

Lai will be a key figure in the trials given his extensive financial and political connections in Taiwan and the US (he employed the neo-con strategist Paul Wolfowitz on some projects, including with the Myanmar military).

While the role of US funding and political interference in Hong Kong is an open secret, that of Taiwan has often been overlooked.

Last year's introduction of the National Security Law in Hong Kong provoked a major propaganda campaign in Western media describing its measures as "draconian" and an attack on the city's freedoms. However, recent events show why the NSL was considered necessary. First on 1 July itself, the anniversary of Hong Kong's return to China, a man armed with a knife attacked a policeman stabbing him seriously, the attacker then stabbed himself fatally. A police search of the attacker's home turned up notes showing his determination to kill police officers and his computer history showed his links with radical anti-China groups.

The second event has been a police raid on a bomb factory in Kowloon, with the arrest of 9 people, some school children. Quantities of the explosive TATP, used by the London bombers, were found along with documents showing that alongside police targets, the terrorist cell had planned to attack public areas, the cross-harbour tunnel and court rooms. This is the second bomb factory that has been raided in little more than a month, suggesting that the most extreme wing of the anti-China movement had indeed made a turn towards terror tactics.

AFTER THE PEOPLE'S WAR ON COVID

From Andrew Scanlon

Andrew has been working in Sichuan Province, China, as a teacher in a major government-managed high school since mid-2019. He has previously written for the Hong Kong political blog Harangue.

"Thank goodness I'm not in the UK, they would simply let me die."

—my partner's grandmother in the outskirts of Chengdu, at a lunch in the summer of 2020

THE EXPERIENCE of being a foreigner in China during the COVID-19 pandemic is a strange one, but uniquely eye-opening. The week before I returned to the UK for my Chinese New Year vacation, I saw a video on Douyin (TikTok for the Chinese Domestic Market) of an apparently-contagious patient being dragged off a plane in the city of Wuhan, and the airport's quick dismissal of this as fake news—I thought nothing of it. In the few weeks I was in the UK I saw that this 'fake news' turned out to be not only true but set to engulf China. In the days leading up to my flight I was beseeched by friends and family to just cancel it and stay in the UK, that my safety was more important than my job etc. etc.

My flight back to Chengdu arrived on the 11th of February 2020, as the country was deep into lockdown and the situation was still an 'epidemic'. My choice to go back was very much a leap of faith. The virus had barely spread

outside of China and the news sources around me were very certain that China's situation was the most horrific it could be, and that the numbers were fudged, and sometimes even that people were being executed instead of quarantined! Even as I was boarding my near-empty flight and wearing a face mask for the first time I had thoughts that maybe this was not the wisest decision. It was. One month later most foreigners have been banned from entering China, and thus I am still here after more than a year.

The Chinese epidemic response had a strangely fervorous feel to it. Even as the streets lay ghostly-silent, banners lined the roads carrying slogans that either appealed to the good sense of people or admonished the recklessness that could allow the virus to spread. Highlights from various parts of China include the Cultural Revolutionary appeal of "those who don't report their fevers are class enemies among the people" to more jokey messages like "[even the] Chinese gods have to wear masks now". China essentially had developed a kind of COVID culture. The TV had been full of quarantine-themed variety shows for the whole family to watch, and music streaming services were overflowing with songs titled variants of 'Wuhan, jia you!' [Come on, Wuhan!] There was a sense of militancy too. Xi Jinping had declared a 'people's war on the coronavirus', mask wearing was mandatory in many places, no exceptions. Residential compounds were guarded and you would not be allowed out for the duration of your 14-day quarantine, and even after that you would be allowed out once per day. Western news sources talked about this as if it were authoritarian and oppressive, but most of us experiencing it felt determined and protected. When the epidemic

turned to pandemic, I was shocked that China's response had turned out to be rather exceptional.

As COVID-inspired attacks on Chinese people, and those perceived to be Chinese, quickly crept up in many western countries—a theme was already established. While Chinese people took many efforts to avoid 'blaming' Wuhan for the virus, and criticising people for thinking that way; many people in western countries took to playing the blame game, as was encouraged by the US's Trump regime. I will spare readers from any more storytelling from the western side of the pandemic, as it is likely burned into our collective memories. After only a few weeks when British people became statistically more likely than Chinese people to be carriers of the coronavirus, I noticed that there was no 'equivalent' response in China to me. As of yet, nobody has given me a suspicious look, called me a 'virus', attacked me, or told me to go back to my own country. The worst I had experienced was a look of worry from security personnel at train stations who cautiously looked for the entry stamp in my passport to see that I hadn't arrived in the last couple weeks (many Chinese people remain unaware about the ban on foreigners entering the border).

At the time of writing (end May 2021), the vaccination drives in many countries are proceeding and lockdowns look set to end soon. Among recent news I have seen that China's vaccination drive has been criticised for its perceived slowness (though even this is changing now). While I have not yet been vaccinated, it is not a source of worry for me. While vaccines have been many countries' *dei ex machinis*, China's victory in the people's war on COVID needs only to be consolidated.

PALESTINE A NEW STAGE IN THE STUGGLE

From Evan Pritchard

THE RECENT period in Palestine and Israel has been characterised by the development of what appears to be a new Inifadah, an uprising of the Palestinian people against historic oppression by the State of Israel and by the electoral defeat of the Netanyahu government and its replacement with a wide coalition of diverse political forces.

Although the attention of the media has been focussed on the recent grossly unequal exchange of fire between Hamas in Gaza and the Israeli Defence Force, with characteristic destruction and slaughter of Palestinian homes, infrastructure and civilians, it's important to see this in the overall context of a Palestinian response to the step up of ethnic cleansing both in Israel itself and in the occupied Palestine, particularly in East Jerusalem. And that the reactionary racist elements leading this process were encouraged more or less explicitly by Netanyahu in part to divert attention from the legal and political problems that led to his final demise as leader. This can probably be said in respect of the scale of the response to the rockets from Gaza.

Mass arrests have taken place and there has been significant mistreatment even of Arab members of the Knesset, including members of the Communist Party of Israel (MAKI). Needless to say this contrasts with the relative impunity of the fascist gangs who have been marching through Palestinian areas in Israel and East Jerusalem calling for ethnic cleansing and massacre of Arabs.

The new government does not in and of itself promise much change. The new prime minister, Bennet, is an ultra Zionist who boasts of how many Arabs he has killed while in military service and has recorded his utter opposition to the existence of a Palestinian state. The inclusion of a Muslim party provides little hope, as this party itself was a right wing split from the Joint List, which includes MAKI. The MPs of the Joint List itself give no support to Bennet's government.

Annexation of more Palestinian land and homes is direct threat to the meaningful existence of a Palestinian state as recognised by international law, particularly in the form of UN Resolution 242. There are encouraging signs of the rebirth of a significant movement of progressive Israeli Jews who are prepared to stand with the Palestinian people, both their fellow Arab Israeli (second class) citizens and those in the occupied territories and Gaza) which acts as a small but vital counterbalance to the fascist/racists.

Recent demonstrations of support in Britain for the Palestinians have been huge. Not to mention the breakthroughs that have occurred in public opinion (including amongst significant sections of Jewish communities) in the United States, where President Biden is under some pressure to break with the traditional policy of giving unconditional support and often outright encouragement to Israeli governments in their denial of rights to and oppression of the Palestinians, a policy that was taken to new levels by his predecessor Donald Trump.

Actions have been taken by workers against ships taking weapons to Israel in ports in a number of countries including the USA and Italy. And activists in Britain have carried out high profile direct action against factories manufacturing arms for use against the Palestinians.

Communists in Britain have given platforms to our sister parties, the Palestinian People's Party and MAKI and will continue to do so.

As always, one of the keys to the liberation of the Palestinian people is international solidarity, which means to continue to demand boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel until meaningful progress is made towards settling the just demands of an end to occupation as a prerequisite for the establishment of a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel, release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails, an end to the siege of Gaza and justice for Palestinian refugees.

The other key is the resistance of the Palestinian people themselves.

SOLIDARITY ONLINE

On 24 May CP Britain organised a video conference with the People's Party of Palestine international secretary Aqel Taqas and Ofir Cassif MK (Communist Party of Israel) analysing the current crisis and jointly stressing the immediate importance of the international campaign for the implementation of UN resolutions for the creation of a Palestinian state, with full rights of statehood, beside the state of Israel. The alternative 'one state solution' was, they said, in current circumstances simply an endorsement of Israeli government plans for the integration of all territories within a Jewish-confessional state. Branches, districts and nations are urged to use the video of the meeting to get this message across. It can be found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=991wZL2t9gA&ab_channel=CommunistPartyofBritain

INDIA THE STRUGGLE AGAINST AUTOCRACY AND NEO-LIBERALISM BY INDIA'S FARMERS



ON 26 JUNE 2021 tens of thousands of Indian farmers gathered in front of the government offices braving water cannons and detentions across Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Karnataka, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana among other states. The farmers were continuing their seven month struggle under the banner 'Save Agriculture, Save Democracy'.

They submitted a memorandum to the President of India and also to the Governors. The farmers' struggle has faced continual attempts at suppression but it has stood firm with the participation of lakhs of farmers from all over the country, of every religion, caste, creed, sex and language.

"Attempts are being made to ignite communal hatred through mob lynchings and similar attacks on the minorities. Atrocities

against dalits, adivasis and women show an alarming increase," AIKS leader Hanan Mollah, senior leader of the Save Democracy Forum said.

The demonstrations were part of a nationwide protest against the extreme right Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and were part of a long cycle of protests that started on 26 November 2020. Since November, tens of thousands of farmers, or kisans, have surrounded India's capital, New Delhi, forming a Kisan [Farmers'] Commune. What provoked them was the passage of three laws in September 2020 that delivered Indian agriculture firmly into the hands of a small group of mega-corporate houses.

The farmers and agricultural workers knew immediately when Modi's government passed

those laws that the mega-corporate houses would take control of the mandis, the marketplace for farm produce. The laws weakened the intervention of the state and handed over price mechanisms to powerful monopoly firms that have a close relationship to Modi and his party. The survival of agrarian life is at stake. The farmers know the impact of neoliberal policy: since 1991, when India adopted such policies in all aspects of economic life including for agrarian India, over 300,000 farmers have committed suicide.

The 2011 Census says that 833.1 million people out of a population of 1.2 billion live in rural India. Not all of them are farmers or agricultural workers, but all of them are in one way or another connected to the vitality of the rural economy. There are artisans and weavers, forestry workers and carpenters, miners and industrial workers. An entire social world premised on a sustainable and healthy agricultural economy is in danger of being wiped out. This is what the farmers know: that the capitalist attack will undermine the existence of India's rural workers and their ability to feed the country's growing urban population.

Two months into the protest, the farmers swarmed into Delhi. The date they chose for their entry into the city was 26 January, Republic Day, when the newly independent India adopted its Constitution in 1950. Farmers rode 200,000 tractors towards the heart of their capital city, while others arrived on horseback and on foot. The police stopped them at barricades along the major highways.

Further information can be found in the research dossier commissioned by the Tricontinental Research Services (New Delhi) dossier, The Farmers' Revolt in India (Dossier no. 41, June 2021) <https://thetricontinental.org/dossier-41-india-agriculture>.

AFGHANISTAN THE US HAS NO PLANS TO ABDICATE CONTROL

Based on Pierre Marshal's interview with an Afghan politician of the Left

THE SITUATION in Afghanistan since the former US president, Donald Trump, announced the phased withdrawal of US forces from the country, from May to September 2021, has been one of further chaos and instability. Although Biden has revised this timetable, the main plan of pushing for a coalition government between the current administration and the Taliban has remained the same.

It should be noted that the current government of Afghanistan is a puppet administration that depends entirely on the whims of the US State Department - it has no room in which to manoeuvre, either domestically or internationally, independent of these confines.

Since 2001, the US has created a fake democracy designed to keep the ruling elite in power and there has been zero opportunity for the left to participate, express itself, or shape the discourse in Afghanistan. This was deliberate on the part of the US, which did not want any left organisations or resurgence in Afghanistan.

The forces advocating for peace and progress in Afghanistan are not under any illusion about the US/NATO supposed retreat or withdrawal... The military bases are all still maintained and the country is still occupied regardless of troop levels. The US policy-wise has ensured it will still control the country:

1. It has overseen the creation of a social base - essentially former mujahedeen and pro-US administrators - which is entirely dependent on US capital, comprising the majority of US aid and the country's wealth. Major economic sectors are contracted to private interests with the spoils

shared amongst the pro-US strata, thus ensuring its commitment to protecting US interests.

2. A system of administration has been created which specifically guards against the emergence of national or progressive forces.

3. Shoring up the above, there exists a military pillar - a security force which does as it is instructed by the US.

Thus, US/NATO "boots on the ground" go, while the whole system of occupation remains.

It should be noted that those currently installed in Doha, Qatar, are the 'Official' Taliban. They comprise of previous Taliban commanders and notables who were captured by the US and then processed through Bagram or Guantanamo Bay. Upon release, they did not return to the frontline and now reside in luxury hotels in the Gulf countries where they are maintained at US expense. This contingent is at the full disposal of the US and completely removed from the Taliban militants who continue the fight on the ground in Afghanistan without constituting an organised political force as such.

Thus, the US actually presides over a fairly well-controlled conflict and negotiation process between two puppets... the Afghan national government on the one hand and the 'Official' Taliban on the other.

When either of the parties stray outside of these 'red lines', they can expect to be taken out - as happened when one Taliban commander journeyed to negotiate with officials in neighbouring Iran and was assassinated by drone strike soon afterwards.

As is evident, the peace agreement signed in Qatar made no difference whatsoever to the escalating levels of violence on the ground in Afghanistan. The US will not allow the Taliban to sweep back to power without some limits and a safeguard to guarantee the US's ultimate control of Afghanistan - and, of course, the keeping-out

of Russian and Chinese influence.

The US wants a pliant model for Afghanistan similar to those in countries like Saudi Arabia or Morocco. There is also an active manipulation of the conflict going on in Afghanistan vis à vis the ethnicity angle. Thus, an insurgency previously concentrated in the particular arenas of the south and east of Afghanistan has been allowed to shift north - bringing the conflict to the borders of Russia, China, and Tajikistan. It is in this context that the spectacular fall of 60 provincial cities to the Taliban (non-indigenous insurgents without any local support) took place. The US seeks to weaponise the Taliban insurgency to threaten and destabilise Central Asia and pressurise Russia and China.

The Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) was formed by the Russian Federation specifically to prevent the Taliban from spreading into Central Asia. It is telling that Russia has recently bolstered its long-established military bases in Tajikistan, equipped with state-of-the-art technology... These are not measures taken with the lesser threat of the Taliban insurgency in mind - they are to guard against the US/NATO designs for the region. For Russian surely comprehends it is the US/NATO that is pushing the Taliban into Central Asia.

Britain has long had a significant role in the destabilisation of Afghanistan via Pakistan. The British government continually aligned itself with Islamabad's stance on Afghanistan, which pitched one ethnic group against another. The British government must recognise the true nature of Afghanistan as a secular multi-ethnic country. Likewise, the peace movement in Britain should do the same and continually campaign against any move that deepens these divisions - as well as defend those courageous and steadfast activists within Afghanistan who face grave threats as a result of their campaign for peace, sovereignty, and progress.

IRAN THE 'DIPLOMATIC DANCE' WITH THE THEOCRATIC REGIME CONTINUES

Negotiations for the revival of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action assessed

THE ONGOING Negotiations and brinkmanship in Vienna to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) and the 5+1 group, continues slowly but steadily. The two sides are due to begin their 6th round of open negotiations that opened back in April.

Although there are conflicting press releases and statements from the diplomats involved - particularly from the US and IRI - experience has shown that such statements do not necessarily reflect what is going on behind the scenes. It is worth remembering that around ten years ago, while the US and IRI were engaged in the crucial top-secret negotiations in Oman that ultimately led to the JCPOA, both sides publicly exchanged fiery rhetoric and political insults for domestic consumption.

There are good reasons for this secrecy, particularly from the IRI side. For internal reasons, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, the absolute ruler of the IRI, needed to hide behind a veil of constant anti-US rhetorical belligerence so as to maintain the discredited 'anti-imperialist' image of the IRI and himself personally. All factions of the regime are keen to revive the JCPOA and remove the crippling sanctions.

The undisputable reality is that all significant matters with regards to Iran, whether domestically or internationally - including implementation of three decades of neoliberal economic restructuring - come under the direct control of Khamenei. And, it is his position, within the framework of the 'Political Islam' state ideology, that is the pivotal power-point uniting all the key regime factions, the security apparatus, and the interests of the country's influential and powerful bourgeoisie.

The fact remains that behind closed doors, the Supreme Leader and his direct envoys are only too aware of their extremely weak position with regards to the state of Iran's economy and the key requirements of big capital interests in Iran for access to global financial currents - a weakness that has and will be exploited ruthlessly as part of the US imperialist calculations, given the overwhelming dominance of the US and the dollar within the global economy.

The political economy of Iran and the vested interests of huge finance-mercantile capital have been and will continue to be a major determining factor in how the IRI's relationship with the West, particularly the US, will be shaped. Decades of

neoliberal economic restructuring based on IMF prescriptions have vastly increased the private wealth of the upper layers of the bourgeoisie, while producing a weak and hollowed-out national economy. This unproductive import-oriented and dollar-based rentier economy - which is fully reliant on the export of crude oil - has been taken hostage by the US financial sanctions regime. The effects of these sanctions are double-edged for the regime; spurring on the growing disaffection of the ordinary Iranian on the street (increasingly encompassing even those from the regime's support base), while being wholly incompatible with the interests of the finance-mercantile capitalist class which is a major force in the regime's power structure. Therefore, the IRI's leadership is forced to negotiate with the US from a weak position. After all, every decision made by the IRI leadership is ultimately about the survival of the theocratic regime while adapting to - and being prepared to work with - the US hegemony.

The IRI will in turn look to leverage Iran's massive import-oriented consumer market in conjunction with an abundance of cheap deregulated labour, shorn of trade union influence, at the negotiations in Vienna and thereafter. Meanwhile, human rights issues will not even factor into the equation and future relations - just as Saudi Arabia's barbaric and reactionary regime is tolerated as long as it remains business as usual.

The outcome of the upcoming sham election (18 June 2021) is unlikely to impact upon the IRI's external politics. However, the more unpalatable the face of the regime after the election; the more fraught with difficulty its negotiating position with the US will be. (By assenting to Ebrahim Raisi - a figure directly targeted by international sanctions and technically unable to travel abroad - becoming its frontman, the regime would be effectively tying its own hands further in negotiations with the US.) The IRI leadership is faced with two existential dilemmas that must be managed simultaneously: a) the rising threat of mass protests by the people, which are growing and becoming more cohesive; and b) the lifting of the financial and economic sanctions through a revived form of the JCPOA and behind-the-scenes negotiations with the US. And, in the short to medium term, all major decisions of the Supreme Leader as the IRI tries to manoeuvre with the US and the West will be based accordingly.

concerns. While neither of these companies have controlling interests in their Kazakh ventures, their participation in this deal would implicate them in a clear breach of US sanctions on Belarus. The US government has made no public effort to discipline its own multinationals, nor to criticise the oil deal, suggesting tacit approval. This aspect deserves a more critical understanding of the sanctions as not just a means of pressuring the Belarusian government, but also a tool to pressure the market in order to benefit particular commercial interests.

Finally, it's necessary to highlight the ongoing plight of Kazakh oil workers, whose legitimate attempts to organise continue to face harsh repression both from police and company thugs. As of 1st June the whole workforce (1,200 people) of the KEZBI oilfield operator has gone on strike in Zhanaozen. The oil workers at KEZBI demand to be paid the legally-recognised overtime pay, higher injury pay, the hiring of more assistants to increase safety, basic medical provision for workers in hazardous environments, and more training for new workers. One of the recognised leaders of the strike, Bolat Satybaliev, complained of threats and persecution from the company.

AFRICA



LEFT
Kenneth Kaunda
in Moscow

KENNETH KAUNDA

April 1924 – June 2021

The Communist Party of Britain pays tribute to the life and work of Kenneth Kaunda, a renowned proponent of the struggle for liberation from colonial rule across the African continent, who passed away on 17 June in Lusaka, aged 97 years.

Kaunda was the first president of Zambia, formerly part of Rhodesia, when it secured independence from Britain in 1964, and headed a government whose strategy focused on central planning and the nationalisation of its hitherto plundered mineral resources.

He made a never to be forgotten contribution to the support of freedom struggles, including in Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. As news of Kaunda's passing was headlined around the world, the South African Communist Party (SACP) praised both him and the people of Zambia for the enormous practical support and solidarity they offered the people of South Africa during their long struggle against the apartheid regime.

NEVER FORGET THE CHILDREN

From Liz Payne

EVEN BEFORE the pandemic, although there had been significant improvement in the survival, health, safety, and wellbeing of children worldwide in the three decades since 1990, the statistics had begun to present a gravely concerning picture. Even countries which had previously seen a gradual improvement were now looking at a decline in children's wellbeing across a spectrum of measures. The outlook for the world's youngest citizens in 2019 was increasingly grim.

Of particular concern were the children of sub-Saharan Africa, where, according to UNICEF, the death rate for the under-fives was 1 in 13, compared with Australia's 1 in 264. Those deaths were mostly from preventable causes such as infections, pneumonia, diarrhoea, and malnutrition - directly caused by insanitary conditions, lack of access to healthcare, medicines and immunisation programmes, and poverty.

With the arrival of COVID, hundreds of thousands more have been thrown into poverty as their parents, and especially their mothers, have lost their jobs and livelihoods. According to the World Population Review 2021, official unemployment rates are now over 40% in Kenya, Djibouti, Senegal, and Burkina Faso. In Burkina Faso 77% are unemployed. The statistics do not include those who still pick up a few hours work but have lost most of the income on which they depended. Neither do they include many migrants without papers and large sections of the marginalised and unregistered poor. Millions of children in Africa are now, according to aid agencies, in need of humanitarian assistance.

Hundreds of thousands have had their schools closed, losing not only their education but often a safety and security network. Family poverty and education stoppages have seen an increase in children being set to work, from street vending in Lagos to toiling in the mines of Uganda. Estimates suggest that progress in eradicating child labour has been set back some two decades in the past year alone.

When we think of COVID-19, we may not picture children as primary victims, but we will need to look again. In Africa,

over-stretched and often collapsing hospitals and health services have been unable to provide for the basic welfare needs children - both preventative measures such as continuing immunisation programmes and nursing of the very young who fall sick. There have been polio cases in more than 20 African countries in 2020 and 2021 and this year has seen cholera in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Somalia. Several outbreaks of the deadly Ebola have also taken place in the DR Congo during the pandemic. COVID has simply overwhelmed the already under-resourced and creaking systems. They cannot provide even basic paediatric care.

So many too have been orphaned by the pandemic. Lack of vaccine has led to the unnecessary deaths of parents, grandparents, and other family guardians. At the same time, pharmaceutical giants have engaged in price and supply wars in pursuit of mega-profits. Globally, at the time of writing, the vaccination rate is 150 doses per 1,000 people. In sub-Saharan Africa it is just 8 per 1,000. The UN says that Africa has received only 2% of the world's vaccine. It is home to almost 17% of the world's population.

Before and during COVID, wars and conflicts have brought death, injury, homelessness, and destitution to thousands of children. Jihadist insurrection continues to wreak havoc with children's lives in north-east Nigeria, Chad Cameroon, and Niger. In Mozambique 191,000 children are internally displaced. Children are increasingly the intended targets of attack.

The above constitute only part of the burden of difficulties facing the very youngest generation in Africa. What is shocking is that most of the suffering, disease, death arise from the legacy of colonialism and the present-day hegemonistic strategies of imperialist countries. They are preventable - and a halt to the plundering of African resources by the multinationals of Britain would make an immediate and large contribution. This is what we must demand and, in doing so, we must pledge to the Africa of tomorrow that we will never forget the children of today.

KAZAKHSTAN

From Pierre Marshall

AT THE end of June 2021, Kazakhstan concluded an agreement to supply Belarus with oil, motivated by a demand for diversification in the face of US-EU sanctions. On April 19th, the US announced sanctions on Russian oil companies supplying oil to Belarus. Early in May both the Belarussian Prime Minister affirmed that all the country's oil contracts were being upheld and that there was no cause for alarm. However, in late May, the main Russian state-owned oil companies drastically reduced oil supplies to Belarus, without actually cutting off the country altogether. This was the context for rapid negotiations between Belarus and Kazakhstan on an oil deal. Along with the deal Belarus agreed to increase imports of other Kazakh products, and to provide Kazakhstan with 590 tractors, trucks, as well as other machinery. In all other respects Belarus is a preferential customer of Russian oil, paying no customs duties, and it is not clear on what terms Belarus will be buying Kazakh oil, or under what customs regime the oil will be transported across Russian territory.

As another complicating factor, US oil companies Exxonmobil and Chevron both operate joint partnerships with Kazakh oil

EUROPE CONFERENCE OF COMMUNIST AND LEFT PARTIES 30 JUNE 2021

Most parties denounce the EU as neo-liberal, pro-big business and unreformable

The conference took place under the auspices of the GUE/NGL group in the EU Parliament. It was notable for the number of parties that now describe the EU as unreformable and call for a new formation based on the democratic sovereignty of nation states and covering all nations in Europe on the same basis as the Council of Europe.

Parties taking this position included the Communist Parties of Portugal, France, Germany, Spain, Denmark, Britain, AKEL (Cyprus) and the Workers Party of Belgium. A number of others described the EU as now fatally dominated by big business forces and systematically unequal but still talked, in same way, of working within the EU for change. These included the United Left Spain, Rifondazione Italy and CP Bohemia and Moravia (Czech Republic). All denounced the increasingly aggressive integration of EU defence structures with NATO. The French Communist Party noted that it had doubled its regional representation of councillors in last month's regional elections.

A further conference is planned later in the year.

BELARUS From Mick Costello

WESTERN IMPERIALISM'S attacks on Belarus must be seen in the context of its attempts to destroy the legacy of the Soviet Union in the only one of its republics which has not succumbed to the counter-revolution that swept through eastern Europe three decades ago. That the current rulers of Russia aid Belarus in their own geopolitical interests should not be allowed to obscure the issue.

A good resume of the background to current events was written for the Morning Star by Kristian Carter (August 24, 2020).

The onslaught on Belarus by the USA, NATO and the EU follows a pattern that has been successful in neighbouring Ukraine and ex-socialist Baltic states: direct economic and political intervention, and financing anti-socialist movements. Operating largely from Lithuania the anti-socialist movement organised months of street demonstrations principally in the capital, Minsk, in which there is a concentration of higher educational and scientific centres and briefly drew in some industrial workers. The president of the EU council in June of this year offered "solidarity and practical support" to the anti-government forces that want an extraordinary election in the hope of removing President Lukashenka, and on June 24 the EU introduced economic sanctions on Belarus in a big way.

Within the Soviet Union Belarus obtained its first statehood and was freed from the Polish yoke that held sway over half the country from 1921 until 1939. It industrialised and underwent a cultural revolution. The Nazis failed to mobilise serious anti-Soviet forces during its occupation. Indeed, Kirill Mazurov, the leader of the Communist Party led a massive resistance to occupation and is still honoured throughout the country. By contrast SS troops recruited especially in Lithuania carried out massacres of Belarus resistance fighters and wiped out whole villages and their inhabitants. The identification of its national interests with those of Russia remains strong. The Belorussian

Communist Party today is in coalition with President Lukashenka's government and in parliament, where the overwhelming majority of seats is occupied by "independent" MPs, has more seats than any other party. It favours unification with Russia. Belarus has inherited from its membership of the USSR, as well as by pursuing its own independent policies, one of the most egalitarian societies in the world. It has not carried out the massive privatisation of industry that was begun under Gorbachev in the Soviet Union. Such privatisation has made of Russia the most corrupt country in Europe and brought the most catastrophic decline in any industrial country in peacetime in history.

Lukashenka was first elected president of Belarus in 1994 on an anti-privatisation platform and halted privatisation by 1998 after which the economy boomed. The government rejected profitability as the sole criterion for judging success of industry, extraction and farming and protected jobs, housing and social services. The crisis of 2011 affected Belarus and since then the pro-capitalist lobby for each company's profitability to be its lodestar has grown. Lukashenka has argued that this would mean deindustrialisation and depopulation and power being put into the hands of thieves and oligarchs. Belarus industry is largely dependent on processing Russian oil and gas and transit for Russian goods westwards, apart from its own advanced technology, science-based research, phosphates and other industries. Bargaining with its Russian partners has always been tough but Belarus has largely held its ground. It was partly disagreements on the price of Russian oil and gas that produced an economic hiccup in Belarus earlier on this year and led to workers in a small number of industrial centres (outside of Minsk) joining the anti-government demonstrations until Lukashenka went straight to the factories and the workers returned to normal working.

The Belarusians, their state and Communist Party need solidarity and contacts.

Kristian Carter's Morning Star article can be accessed here:
<https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/belarus-nationalised-industries-or-eu-privatisation>

AMERICAS NICARAGUA

Elections will take place on 7 November. A press campaign is already well underway against the FSLN government of Daniel Ortega. In the campaign is led in Britain by the Guardian. Earlier this month Telesur detailed Washington's use of the international media.

"On 9 June, CNN reported on a series of arrests of leading opposition figures in Nicaragua. It claims that this forms part of a long-established pattern within the Central American country, stating that "Ortega's government has in the past not shied away from cracking down on the opposition".

A week later on 15 June, the Washington Post and the Guardian both reported on further arrests made by Ortega's government. The Guardian characterized the arrests as an "unprecedented crackdown on the country's opposition" that forms part of "an apparent attempt to crush any serious challenge in November's elections".

Both the right-wing opposition and dissident Sandinistas alike have received substantial funding from groups such as the Washington-based United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Ever since Ortega's party, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FLNS), was brought back to power via an election in 2006, Washington has channelled tens of millions of dollars through USAID to help opposition groups destabilize the country and overthrow the government. All those arrested received money from these sources (receiving such external funds for electoral purposes is illegal in both Britain and the United States).

- Felix Maradiaga, founder of the Civil Society Leadership Institute, an NGO that has received money from the NED
- José Adan Aguerri, former president of the Superior Council for Private Enterprise (COSEP), which has received money from USAID
- Violeta Granera, a member of the political council of the Blue and White National Unity (UNAB) movement, which journalist Ben Norton has described as "an integral part of the US- and EU-backed efforts to form an opposition alliance"
- Arturo Cruz, who is believed to have received money from the US government as part of an effort to impose sanctions on Nicaragua".

Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group

(sponsored by a range of trade unions including Unison, Unite, GMB, CWU and NEU)
Warning issued on 11 June.

Corporate media such as the Guardian, Daily Mail, Washington Post and New York Times are now awash with accusatory articles about Nicaragua. Dancing as ever to the tune of the United States and Nicaragua's right-wing opposition, the articles claim among other things that the government is disqualifying political opponents in order to give Daniel Ortega and the FSLN an easy win in this year's elections and that the elections will not be free and fair.

At a time when the Nicaraguan right-wing opposition has been riven by internal squabbling and can barely muster 20 percent popular support (as opposed to an approval rating of around 60 percent for the FSLN and Daniel Ortega), this could not be further from the truth. The fact is that the US is now becoming increasingly anxious that its regime change agenda will fail and is now turning up the heat in order to sabotage the elections. They are continuing to pour millions of dollars into Nicaragua's right-wing opposition and have just imposed even more sanctions on Nicaragua's government and Sandinista officials. There are fears that the US may even be planning another coup see here and the US has now stated that it is prepared to review 'trade-related activities' with Nicaragua, including Nicaragua's participation in the Central America free trade agreement 'if the country's coming elections are not free and fair'. As far as the US is concerned, the elections will only be considered free and fair if the US-backed right wing opposition wins.

The Nicaraguan government has published a statement on recent events and explaining their context. This can be found here. An article just

published on the Alliance for Global Justice website by Rita Jill Clark-Gollub sets out in detail what's really happening in Nicaragua. The article U.S. Cries Foul Because Nicaragua Stops It from Buying This Year's Elections – is available here. A briefing produced by NSCAG in January also sets out the context to what's happening in Nicaragua and details the achievements of the FSLN government since 2007 - you can read it here.

PERU From Ben Lunn

Pedro Castillo of Peru Libre party won the Peruvian elections with 50.2% of the vote. The victory marks a sizeable victory for progressive forces in the nation, and quite a blow for neo-liberal influence in the region. Keiko Fujimura has cried foul of the results, and even openly declared a defeat for her is a victory for communism. The victory also follows a very similar pattern to Bolivia, with the rural and indigenous populations massively coming out in favour of Castillo and were ultimately the force that pushed him into the majority.

The coming weeks and months will be vital for Castillo, as his party will need to secure themselves to make sure they can push through the progressive agenda they pledged during the election. A tight margin of .5 shows that the first real challenge for Castillo is to try and earn favour within the populace areas like Lima, where his vote was at its smallest. With Peru Libre's anti-austerity politics, neo-liberal elements are set to lose out which puts a major challenge to US influence within the region. Like Bolivia, Peru is a mineral rich region, which the US has tried to rob for monetary gain and influence, a challenge to this order of things will invite criticism and intense responses from Biden's regime.

With gains in Ecuador, Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, and Mexico progressive forces in Latin America are producing a strong contest against the US's hegemony in the region. In Britain, we must do everything we can to see that democracy is observed and national sovereignty remains sacrosanct.

Peru has made the first major step, the toughest battle is yet to come.

CHILE From Robin Talbot and Summaya Hassan

Since late 2019, Chile has been reaching the point of profound social and political transformations, with the economic hardship in Chile only intensified by the COVID pandemic and encouraging this awakening.

Trade union, student and other progressive forces, including the decisive role of the Communist Party at all levels, sparked the so-called Social Revolt that started in October 2019 (with over a million in one demonstration) and to some extent continues, combining dissatisfaction with the inequality and injustice in Chile with the political struggle for a New Constitution, Constituent Assembly and other rights, such as representation and dignity for indigenous people and against police brutality.

In October 2020, a majority of Chileans agreed to elect a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution, doing away with the repressive Pinochet-era constitution. This new constitution will hope to enshrine basic rights and continue the struggle for social and economic rights – housing, education, healthcare, land, water and reproductive rights.

Once agreed by popular vote, the new constitution will hopefully end the failed neoliberal experiment in Chile that was cooked up in Washington, abetted by Thatcher and driven by Pinochet's bloody dictatorship.

In the "super-election" of May 2021, Communists and other left-wing groups swept into the new assembly, which has 78 men and 77 women, workers like teachers and engineers, and seven LGBT members. Indigenous activist and linguist Elisa Loncon has been elected president of this new body.

Meanwhile, the Communist Party of Chile candidate Daniel Jadue is the frontrunner for November's presidential election.



Unity!

is the Communist Party's mass distribution monthly. It is available monthly in pdf and online versions and at mass demonstrations, public events, trade union conferences and daily at the TUC in print versions.

www.communistparty.org.uk

COLOMBIA

Statement from the National Political Department of the Colombian Communist Party, June 2021

THE CURRENT popular rebellion expressed by the National Strike movement is a product of the collapse of neo-liberalism and the exacerbated violence of the state. In the face of violent repression, extermination and the pandemic, the response is popular resistance.

The national government's response to the pandemic has strengthened financial capital and pushed the Colombian population deeper into poverty. The privatised health system was incapable of dealing with the health emergency. Its contracts for vaccines favoured private pharmaceutical transnationals, which together with quarantines, restrictions on mobility and the absence of a comprehensive health system, caused a crisis of the informal economy, massive layoffs and the closure of small and medium-sized enterprises.

The community and popular civic movement for the National Strike has demonstrated that rising citizen protest is now taking on a political character, a form of unarmed and democratic resistance to state violence.

This strike, which began on 28 April, has been treated as a war by the government which called on military assistance under decree 575 - an undeclared state of emergency legitimising all violation of human rights.

As of the 4th of June, Indepaz had reported 75 homicides, 47 of which have been perpetrated by the security forces and 365 people disappeared. #SOSCOLOMBIADDDH has registered 1,246 injured people, 2,808 detentions, 20 raids and a total of 106 complaints of gender-based violence. On a daily basis, the paramilitaries backing the national government threaten any popular mobilisation.

Added to this is the fact that since the signing of the Final Peace Agreement on 24 November 2016, 1,182 social leaders and 274 signatories of the agreement have been assassinated. The government of Iván Duque explicitly renounced dialogue leading to the suspension of peace talks with the ELN, the EPL and the dissidents. We have therefore denounced Duque for refusing to provide a Security Guarantees Policy that allows politics to be conducted and that provides guarantees for the non-repetition of state violence.

The extreme right is responsible for the crisis which, with the complicity of the majority parties in Congress, uses corruption to maintain its domination. Its stigmatisation of the 'internal enemy' exposes its hatred of the people and democratic sector and is being used to try to prevent a change in the direction of the state. Its rule currently constitutes a civilian dictatorship combined with militarisation.

According to Colombia's National Administrative Department of Statistics, 3,600,000 people were living in poverty in 2020 and 2,780,000 in extreme poverty. 21,020,000 people live on less than \$360,000 pesos a month and 7,470,000 survive on less than \$145,004 pesos, just over US \$40, a month.

The situation is so serious that sectors of the business community now understand that the conditions of poverty have to change and there are even members of the military forces who heed the constitutional mandate not to fire on the people demonstrating in the streets. Important sectors of the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations understand the justice of the national protests.

A broad spectrum therefore supports the National Strike and its demands for the right to work, the need for a basic income, zero school fees, universal vaccination, the fulfilment of the Peace Accords, the defence of life and guarantees that there will be no legal reprisals against leaders or against the mobilised organisations.

The struggle has not been in vain. Nor is it over. The movement of the people has confronted official and paramilitary terror. It has succeeded in forcing the withdrawal of the Tax Reform, the bill 010 to reform the health system and also the resignation of Carrasquilla and the Foreign Minister Claudia Blum. The mobilisation won the Zero Tuition for young people in strata 1, 2 and 3 and the employment subsidy in SMEs. The visit of the OAS's IACHR to the country was also a result of the mobilisation. A huge amount of audiovisual information and interviews was collected that will allow the commission, which is an intergovernmental body of the OAS, to take a position on what is happening in Colombia.

We value the role of the young people. They were on the front line. It is equally important to highlight the role played by the neighbourhood communities, workers, students, trade unionists, the Indigenous Minga, the black communities and the compatriots abroad who have made the national situation visible throughout the world.

This now represents a new basis for people's unity and has refreshed the struggle for a democratic peace in Colombia, for a democracy without genocide and with social justice.

As the Cali agreement with the Union of Resistance, Primera Línea Somos Todos y Todas (We Are All, First Line) points out, the movement has to move on to a new stage in its development. It must expand its action to include a permanent assembly, pedagogy, political training, cultural activities, differential approaches (gender, ethnic, age, sexual orientation) new forms of mobilisation, specifying demands, slogans and the processes of articulation in resistance.

- We must not lose sight of the basic income, mass vaccination, the right to work, zero tuition fees, and the vital minimum for students.
- In the violence unleashed by the authorities and the paramilitary and para-police groups, aligned with state terrorism the defence of life is the main point of resistance around which the broadest network of solidarity and accompaniment must be gathered. Preventive measures of vigilance and preservation, legal assistance and solidarity must be studied by the leaderships.

- It is necessary to win those mobilised in the current actions understand that it is necessary to secure a government and a parliament that serve the people's interests using the VOICE weekly and the website.
- To guarantee the freedoms and rights to life, to work, to health, to universal and free education, we need a state that takes weapons out of politics, completely dismantles paramilitarism, rebuilds a police force with a human security approach and abolishes the ESMAD.

- We endorse the idea of collective ownership of the country ending privilege and corruption in Congress and in government. A dignified Congress and a democratic and popular government of which we all form part are possible with the unity, convergence and broader participation of the alternative forces.

In sum, a National Democratic Project - with a programme of social, cultural, economic, agrarian, labour, education, health, housing and climate change reconstruction - is the axis of the transformation that will make democratic peace possible.

The Historical Pact is ready to contribute in that direction and symbolises the real possibility of change.

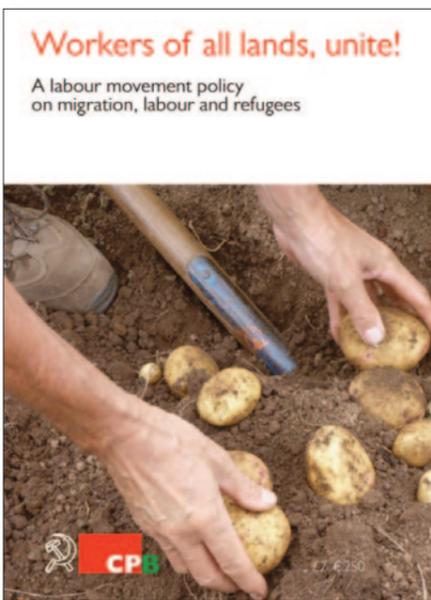
AGITATION & PROPAGANDA FOR SOCIALISM FROM THE PARTY OF WORKING CLASS POWER & LIBERATION



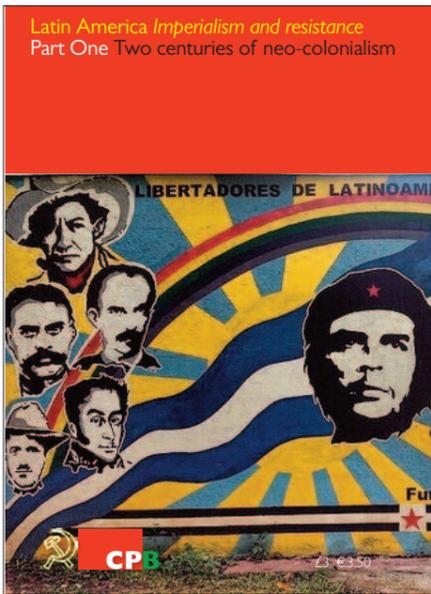
No racist immigration laws

A ground-breaking pamphlet by the late Vishnu Sharma, published 1979, has been reissued with an introduction by Tony Conway convenor of the Communist Party's Anti-racist, Anti-fascist Commission.

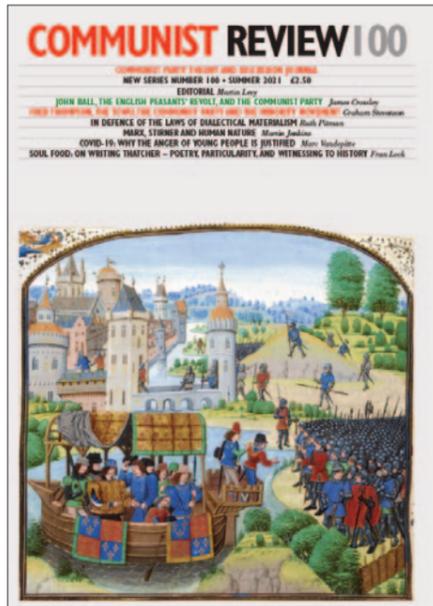
The pamphlet, by the leading Indian communist in Britain, who resigned from the Commission for Racial Equality in protest is a scorching condemnation of the racist immigration and nationality policies of the Tory and Labour



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