



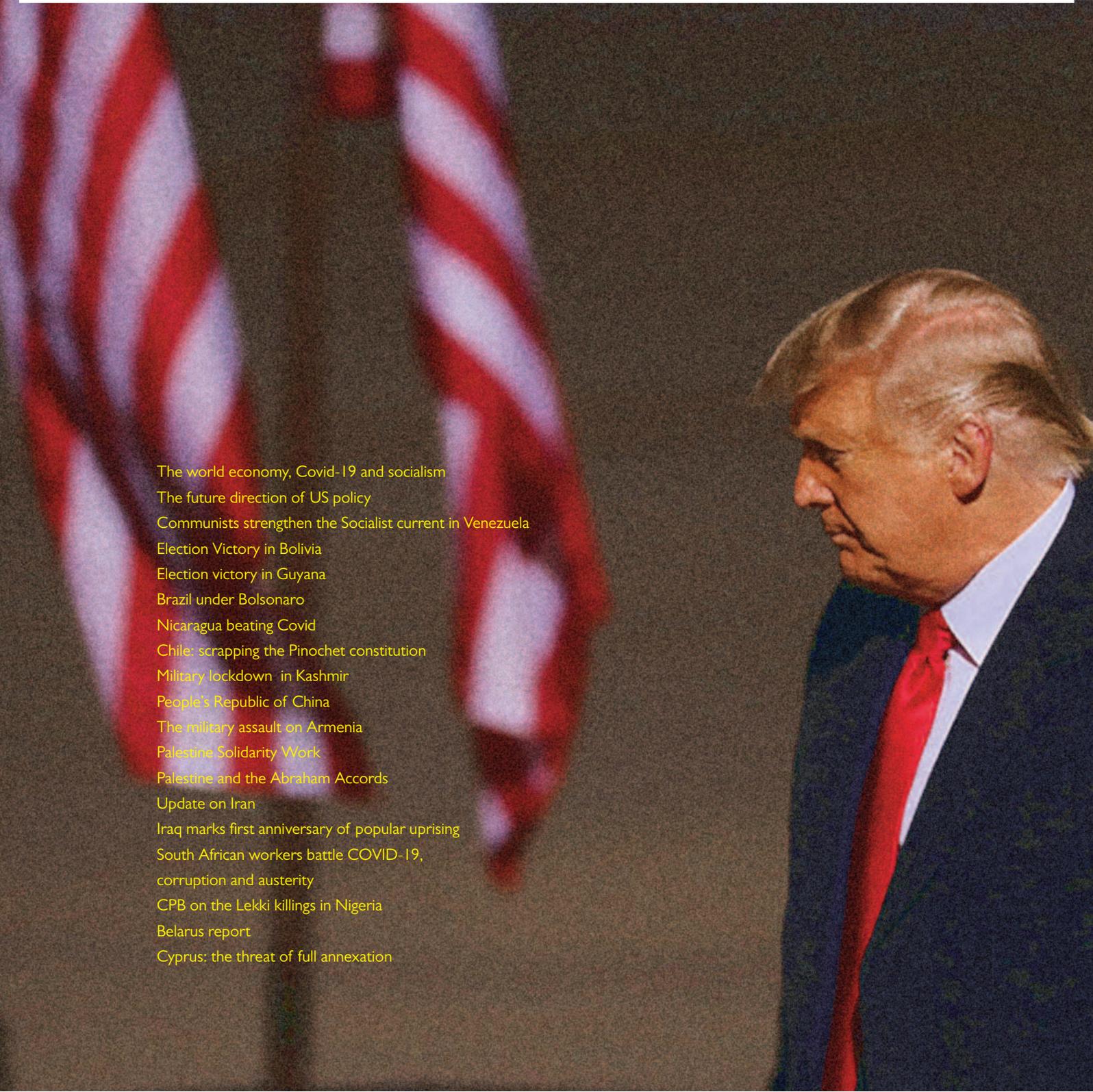
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International Bulletin



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Welcome to Issue number four of the 2020 series of the International Bulletin published by the Communist Party.

We have changed the format to make our expanding bulletin more easy to handle on personal devices and to carry a greatly expanded variety of material.

THE WORLD ECONOMY, COVID-19 AND SOCIALISM

As of early November Covid19 continues to ravage the world. There are, however, very sharp differences in the severity of its incidence and these appear to be quite closely related to the overall dominance of capitalist market forces. Regardless of size or levels of development, socialist countries have managed to cope with the disease far more effectively. There have been no deaths in Laos (which has twice the population of Wales) and only 0.04 per hundred thousand in Vietnam (which has a bigger population than Germany). China has had only 0.3 per hundred thousand. Cuba has 1.0 per hundred thousand. These can be compared with 108.0 per hundred thousand in Peru, 109 in Belgium, 77 in Brazil, 76 in Britain, 72 in the US and 45 in Iran (although here, as in a number of other countries, the real figure is likely to be higher). The contrast also applies to countries which have to some degree or other sought to move in a socialist direction: Nepal with a Communist government has 4.8 per hundred thousand while India has 9.0 (and the Indian state of Kerala, with a Communist government, also half that). Venezuela has 2.8 while its neighbour Columbia has 69.0. In Central America Nicaragua has 2.0 while Mexico has 74.0.

Studies of the relative severity of the disease in Europe have highlighted the following factors: the underlying health of the population (closely related to poverty and social environment), effectiveness and speed of lockdown (related to both influence of private business and the effectiveness of social infrastructure and levels of trust vested in it), the speedy provision of protective equipment, testing and track and trace (again related to social organisation) and finally the effectiveness and speed of treatment (China, Vietnam and Cuba, despite being developing countries, have more doctors and hospital beds per head than Britain) [analysis, but not comparisons, from Health Foundation].

The differing impact of Covid is also likely to have a significant politico-economic over the coming years. Of the major economies, according to the IMF's October Global Report, only China will have net growth over the two years 2020 and 2021. Its economy is forecast to grow by 10.2 per cent. The US economy will contract by 1.2 per cent, India by 1.5, Brazil and Japan by 3 per cent, the Euro Area by 3.1 per cent, Britain by 3.9 per cent. For China and the US this will bring forward the date at which China will surpass the US as the world's largest economy by at least two years (it is already larger by purchasing power parity).

The future economic impact of Covid in terms of unemployment and social dislocation remains difficult to estimate. Already, however, massive differences are opening up in the EU, exacerbating the existing unevenness of development resulting from monopolisation and the EU's neo-liberal regime. In August Germany had only 4 per cent of its labour force unemployed while Greece had 16.8, Spain 16.2 and Italy 9.7 per cent. It is also already clear that the central bank policies in the EU, US and Britain, of pumping money into the banking system, have led to an increasing

centration of capital ownership and wealth. The notional (stock market) value of global capital has increased in 2020, despite the real loss of production, by 10 per cent to over \$110 trillion – while just 2,000 of the richest billionaires have increased the value of their share from 8 per cent to over 10 per cent (the richest being the owner of Amazon).

The future direction of US policy

Biden has now secured enough votes to become the next American president – although legal challenges at state and possibly Supreme Court level can be expected. Biden is likely to make major changes in the character of US foreign policy – but not necessarily in a progressive direction and will pose almost as many challenges as Trump.

Biden can be described as a ‘Cold War liberal’. His formative period was in the late 1970s and 1980s. He was Under Secretary in the State Department under Clinton and was instrumental in the military intervention by the US and NATO in the Balkans. As Vice President under Obama he worked with Victoria Nuland to engineer the coup in Ukraine – and when Crimea declared for re-unification with Russia urged Obama, unsuccessfully, to action NATO military intervention.

In the coming year he is therefore likely to make some fundamental shifts in US policy. He will seek to re-engage with the European Union, downgrade conflicts over trade (though these will continue) and seek to redevelop NATO as an active diplomatic and military bloc uniting the US and the EU. There will be no let-up in the US offensive against China although its character is likely to change. It will become more ‘ideological’, bring ‘human rights abuses’ centre stage, seek joint action with the EU and, if possible, return to an earlier US strategy of seeking to develop links with ‘liberal, democratic elements’ – effectively owners of capital - inside China and characterise the rule of the Communist Party as ‘totalitarian’. He forefronts the defence of ‘democracy’ in Hong Kong and in Tibet. He claims a policy of persecution against the Uighur people. Nor will there be any let up in preparations for a military stand-off – particular in the South China sea.

In the Middle East Biden will work more closely with the EU and reinstate US support for the nuclear energy limitation with Iran negotiated under Obama. In doing so he is likely to shift away from the financial and diplomatic understandings reached between Trump and the Arab gulf dictatorships – and possibly, though this is by no means certain, back away from the very close relationship established between the Trump family and Netanyahu. He had some hand in the Oslo Accords under Clinton and on paper at least still defends them.

In Europe Biden will back the EU position on the status of the North of Ireland and has already committed himself to re-establish US support for the Paris Accords on Climate change. He will have an uneasy relationship with the current British government.

- Step up support for CND, Stop the War and No to the New Cold War
- Win an understanding in the labour movement of the provocative role of Britain and the US in Hong Kong and other provinces of China

THE AMERICAS

Contributions from Ben Lunn, Wendy Emmott, Abbey Rhodes, Steve Johnson, Robin Talbot

Communists seek to strengthen the Socialist current in Venezuela



The Communist Party of Venezuela will be contesting the 6 December National Assembly elections in an alliance with other left-wing parties under the banner of the Popular Revolutionary Alliance. They see this as a way of reasserting a socialist agenda in an election in which the anti-Bolivarian Right is split and disorganised and at a time when the PSUV government has not carried forward its seventeen point agreement with the Communist Party made in 2017. This agreement was intended to ensure that the government gave much greater priority to taking the commanding heights of the economy out of private hands, driving forward industrialisation, ending the country's dependence on imports and reducing landlord power in the countryside. Venezuela's Communists see this contest as a way of strengthening the country's overall anti-imperialist stance and call on Communists across the world to maintain their solidarity with Venezuela in face of sanctions from the US, Britain and the EU and continuing attempts by the US and EU to promote the extreme right-winger Gaido.

Venezuela, like many nations in Latin America, continues to fight the pandemic with the resources they have and with the best intentions. It was reported that on the 26 October that the IVIC managed to discover a highly effective treatment to Covid-19. The IVIC claimed that their six month trials using DR-10 antigen have proven to be a 100 percent effective tool without causing any toxic side effects. President Nicolas Maduro has taken the IVIC plans to the World Health Organisation in the hopes of it being ratified and authorised for mass production. If true, this would be a truly welcome development, especially from a nation that is combating the virus internally as well as the impacts of the economic blockade placed upon them by the US and their allies.

Venezuela, alongside Nicaragua, remain some of the least-affected nations by the pandemic which is ultimately testament to their socialist-inclined economies and their effectiveness at putting humanity before profit.

The lead up to the election on the 6th December continues and it was reported that the 'dry run' was successful. There have been promises by Maduro and the PSUV to legalise same-sex marriage, which is most likely off the heels of the Pope's ratification of it, however critics have pointed out this may just be another un-kept promise, and merely window-dressing in comparison to their other failures to meet the demands on which they were elected previously.

- Continue to highlight the successes achieved by the Venezuelan people, especially to counteract the lies thrown in regards to their competence to handle the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Highlight the concerns raised by the CP Venezuela's Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APR) on the need to strengthen the momentum of Venezuela's advance on a socialist road.
- Continue to build opposition to the economic blockade and expose its impact on the availability of basic medical and humanitarian supplies for its people.

Election Victory in Bolivia

On 18 October 2020 the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) achieved a resounding victory in the Bolivian general elections. MAS candidate for the presidency Luis Arce was elected with 55 percent of the vote against 28 per cent for the far right

candidate. MAS now has strong majorities in both parliamentary houses. The turnout was 87 percent.

This electoral victory comes almost a year after the "legal coup" in November 2019 that installed the regime led by far-right Christian fundamentalist Jeanine Anez, sanctioned by Bolivian corporate and military interests, the United States, the Washington-aligned Organisation of American States (OAS) and other imperialist interests.

This electoral victory is a step in the direction of recovering Bolivia's damaged democracy, with the new president's promise to continue and deepen the progressive and socialist orientated policies of former MAS president Evo Morales, in particular, welfare and relief from COVID-19, industrialisation and food and debt sovereignty.

The victory is thanks to the long-term popular mobilisations and resistance of the Bolivian people, especially the indigenous people, and MAS and other progressive political forces against the coup regime. Resistance against Anez's illegitimate government had been met with persecution and police brutality, including the massacres of hundreds of indigenous people such as at Senkata and Sacaba, responsibility for which are now being investigated by Bolivian courts.

Some sections of the right wing in Santa Cruz, the commercial capital where reactionary ruling class forces had concentrated, have responded to the recent left victory with counter-protests and calls for the military to intervene. Terrorist violence, echoing that which happened under the coup regime and the "guarimbas" in Venezuela, has also continued. Orlando Gutierrez, FSTMB miners' union leader, died on 28 October after being attacked by fascists. Bolivia has a quarter of the world's reserves of lithium, the main component for electric car batteries: the other main sources are Chile, Australia, Argentina and China.

Election victory for the People's Progressive Party in Guyana

The election of 2 August 2020 in Guyana saw the return to power of the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) and opens up the possibility of a new era of people based political, social and economic change. Elections had been held on 2 March following a no confidence vote 18 months prior in which the incumbent administration lost its majority in parliament. Elections should have been held 3 months after that but the government dominated by the People's National Congress (PNC) refused to abide by the constitution until a combination of legal challenges and international pressure forced them to concede.

The PNC however has a long history of election rigging through its control of the state machinery including the electoral commission (GECOM) and used different means to thwart the election result but five months after the election GECOM finally declared the PPP/C the winners.

The PPP has of course a long history of struggle for the rights of the people of Guyana against the machinations of British and US imperialism. The first PPP government led by Cheddi Jagan was elected in 1953 but the radical social reforms led to Britain sending in troops to remove the government from office. Subsequent electoral victories in 1961 and 1964 were also thwarted by British and CIA destabilisation. However, the PPP did come to power in 1992 and remained in office until 2015.

Five years of PNC government has done much to undermine the gains made during this period with closures of factories (mainly in the sugar industry) and job losses. The immediate tasks of the government are to reverse some of the hardships caused through the creation of new jobs and reduction of taxes, and improving housing, health and social care and education. The government has also sought to bring in more young people and women into the cabinet as well as representatives of the indigenous community.

The new PPP/C government does face many challenges including ongoing attempts by the PNC to undermine the election result. There is also the ongoing border controversy with Venezuela. However, the transition to government is clearly positive for progressive forces in the region and we have a particular responsibility in the former colonial power to demonstrate solidarity.

Brazil under Bolsonaro

Brazil has seen record unemployment of 14.4% – the highest in its history. The ‘Emergency Employment and Income Preservation Benefit’, which was created in April and allows companies to suspend employment contracts and reduce hours and wages, was extended by the government to run until December, indicating this drastic unemployment level will only increase. In addition to a general cut in workers’ wages, The Bolsonaro regime is seeking to link the readjustment of the basic salary of basic education teachers to inflation, which eliminates the real gain guaranteed by the current law – a move condemned in parliament by Brazil’s communists.

With the municipal elections approaching in November, smaller parties including the Communist Party are expressing concern in regard to campaign strategies during the pandemic which favours wealthier, online-oriented parties. It will be the first set of municipal elections under the Bolsonaro presidency, and his allies are strengthening in the polls particularly in the north east. They are, however, losing traction in major cities such as Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo.

Government forces consisting of around 300 police and soldiers blockaded an alleged Maoist camp in the Porto Velho region organised by the Poor Peasants Union (LCP), following claims – bolstered by Bolsonaro – that members of the camp were involved in the killing of a police officer. The LCP deny these claims and have pleaded to the international community for solidarity, in the wake of the Bolsonaro regime’s continued assault on left wing organisations.

- Solidarity with the LCP in Porto Velho and their right to live on their land peacefully.
- Support for PCdoB and associate parties in the November elections.
- Demand for extended protections to employment and wages during the pandemic, particularly for teachers as a targeted sector.

Nicaragua beating Covid as a result of advancing social reform

Nicaragua is one of the countries that has dealt well with the Covid 19 pandemic. At the 24th October there were 5434 cases and 155 deaths, an infection level far below that of Panama (105,000 cases), Guatemala (85,000), Honduras (71,000), Costa Rica (63,000) or El Salvador (27,000). These figures have been challenged in the western media but even the so-called ‘independent’ Citizens Observatory, which is closely linked to Nicaraguan right-wing opposition, only reports around 10,000 cases – still well below the incidence in adjoining countries. What has happened in Nicaragua is not what was supposed to happen according to opposition media and the international media which gave more credibility to the Citizen’s Observatory than the government’s own figures.

Nicaraguan government policies have differed from those of its neighbours. Preparing early – equipping hospitals, training health staff in dealing with the virus, maintaining strict health checks at frontiers with quarantine for new arrivals, making house-to-house visits with health brigades dispensing advice, and tracing contacts. All these measures are in line with the well- integrated community health care model that the current government has invested in since returning to power in 2007.

The majority of Nicaraguans work in the informal economy and agriculture. For

many in this sector their livelihoods are dependent on their daily earnings. Because of this, and unlike neighbouring countries, Nicaragua never imposed a total lockdown, recognising the devastating impact this would have had for hundreds of thousands of people, particularly women.

International bodies that have constantly criticized the Nicaraguan government, most recently following the failed coup in 2018, and have used the pandemic to renew their attacks. For example, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights concluded by expressing ‘their concern over the Nicaraguan population’s access to ‘the right to health’ apparently unaware that Nicaragua has far more free, public hospitals than neighbouring Honduras, many built since 2007 when the Sandinistas returned to power and that Nicaragua spends a bigger proportion of its government budget on health than practically any other country in the Americas. The Inter-American Development Bank recently ranked Nicaragua second in Central America and fourth in all of Latin America in health investment. Nicaragua’s response to the pandemic is in contrast to the experience of most other Latin American countries as well as that of the US and the UK. Opinion polls show that Nicaraguans trust their health service. Nicaragua is resuming its economic recovery.

Ahead of the elections announced for 7 November 2021 we must be vigilant and answer attacks in the British media and elsewhere

Chile: scrapping the Pinochet constitution

Progressive forces across Chile are celebrating the victory of the new constitution. With approximately 80 percent support for the constitutional change, Chile has managed to remove the final echoes of the Pinochet regime. The Communist Party of Chile welcomed the positive news, and also highlighted how this success was in part due to the political upheavals witnessed in 2019.

The new constitution manages to remove almost all of the neo-liberal elements which were initially imposed by Pinochet, and kept in place by those who benefited from neo-liberalism in the guise of ‘transitioning to democracy’, and in turn shifts the constitutional make up of Chile to reflect the pluri-national nature of Chile, as well as hopefully creating other progressive advances both socially and politically.

The Communist Party of Chile calls for unity among the anti-neo-liberal forces to be able to cement the new-found dignity and sovereignty of Chile. Progressive forces in Chile are positive but admit there is still a fight ahead.

In Britain the Party and the Trade Union movement should strive to support the progressive elements in Chile in the following manner:

- Highlight the successes gained via the new constitution i.e. removal of neo-liberal and combatting racism
- Highlight attempts by US, UK, EU, and other pro-Capitalist elements attempts to hinder progress

What can Britain learn from the situation in Chile

- Mass unity, despite differences in goals and visions, is the quickest and strongest force in overthrowing neo-liberalism
- Mass antagonism against the state infrastructure alone cannot defeat the state apparatus; it needs leadership to steer it in the correct direction

ASIA PACIFIC

Reports from Tony Conway and Kenny Coyle

Kashmir

Military lockdown and suspension of democratic rights in Kashmir – one aspect of the advance of extreme right-wing religious populism on the Indian subcontinent

Members of the CPB International Commission and the Association of Indian Communists in Britain met over the summer to discuss the crisis in Jammu and Kashmir and the Indian government's unilateral ending of the special status of the territory. On 5 August 2019 the Modi government in India abolished Clause 370 of the Indian Constitution which guaranteed the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, its internal autonomy under an elected Assembly with powers, within a secular constitution, to ensure the domiciliary rights of all persons irrespective of religion. Jammu and Kashmir has been under military rule since – with conflict also developing over the territorial claims advanced by Pakistan.

Arising from the discussions between the CPB and the AIC a seminar was held on 27 September involving the AIC and the Awami Workers Party of Pakistan as well as members of the CPB. This stressed that the current crisis was symptomatic of the wider trend, across the Indian subcontinent, and the use of right-wing religious populism as a cover to attack the working class movement in the interests of big business domination and the imposition of neo-liberal policies in both India and Pakistan. The seminar emphasised the need for unity of progressive forces in both Pakistan and India to oppose these policies. The immediate demand should be for the restoration of democratic rights and the ending of martial law in Jammu and Kashmir, the holding of a plebiscite, the return of article 370 to the Indian Constitution and the development of common campaigns in both Pakistan and India for secular institutions that can protect the interests of working people and minorities. Any immediate assertion of demands for 'independence' and 'the right to self-determination' based on religious and national identities was, it was considered, counterproductive in current circumstances.

The seminar on 27 September was recorded and copies are available from party centre. Branches, districts and nations are asked to consider using the recording as a basis for joint meetings with the AIC, Bangladeshi Organisations, the AWP in their localities and in liaison with Comrade Tony Conway. The key contributions are summarised below.

Comrade MY Tarigami, CPIIndia Marxist MLA, Kashmir.

The comrade noted that much of the world was currently in lockdown as a result of the pandemic. Jammu and Kashmir, a previously semi-autonomous region of India, has been in lockdown and military curfew since 5 August 2019. Hundreds have been arrested. Communications have been largely blacked out. This followed the decision of the Parliament of India to remove article 370 of the Indian constitution guaranteeing the autonomy of the State of Jammu and Kashmir in terms of its internal affairs. This decision struck directly at the secular and federal character of the Indian State guaranteed during the independence negotiations of 1947.

The change in law had been undertaken without consultation. The leaderships of the elected parties had been arrested. The previously autonomous state had been downgraded to a colony. New emergency provisions have been introduced that deprive, on the basis of religious belief, many people of their domiciliary rights.

This attack on the autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir should not be seen in isolation. It is part of an attack on Indian democracy as a whole and directly

threatens it. It is part and parcel of the imposition of a chauvinist Hindu nationalism in defiance of India's secular constitution by the current prime minister Modi – a nationalist narrative designed to destroy the Republic of India as created at liberation. Ultimately it is a legacy of British colonial rule which had been based on the manipulation of religious identities and which left two states vying for control.

It is for the working class and progressive movements of both India and Pakistan to work together to resolve and restore the previous freedoms of the people of Jammu and Kashmir as part of a joint fight against communalism and for full democracy.

Comrade Akhtar Hussein, General Secretary of the Awami Workers Party of Pakistan

The problem of Kashmir goes back to the original partition of India by the British which left two states at virtual war. Pakistan today spends 50 per cent of its budget on its military and only 3 per cent on health. 50 per cent of the population remain below the poverty line. Pakistan is a country struggling for peace and economic development but itself dominated by a religious autocracy since the 1950s.

The Pakistan enclave of 'independent' Kashmir is an entity entirely controlled by Pakistan. It has no autonomy and a puppet government. The proposal now is to make it into a full province of Pakistan. And the 'disputed area' occupied by Pakistan remains under military rule.

The decision of the Modi government to remove clause 370 and end the autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir was a blow against the people of the whole Indian subcontinent and will make it still more difficult to resolve outstanding conflicts. So equally was the removal of clause 35A which gave the legislature of Jammu and Kashmir to define citizenship.

The Left in both India and Pakistan needs to work together to demand a democratic solution, the withdrawal of military forces on both sides enabling the people to exercise their rights in a plebiscite.

People's Republic of China

A Biden Presidency offers little hope of major changes in US-China relations. The election campaign highlighted the fact that anti-China stances are the default positions of both Democrats and Republicans, with some nuances between the Democratic "lefts" and the Republican right.

However, on trade, militarization of the Pacific, bogus human rights campaigns on Hong Kong and Xinjiang, Taiwan etc, there are few discernible strategic differences on China policy between the two parties. During the election campaign both sides tried to present the other as soft on Beijing. Biden even described Chinese leader Xi Jinping as a "thug". This will make it difficult for US foreign policy to adopt more realistic approaches. Chinese media hold out little hope for anything other than a gradual long-term improvement of diplomatic and economic relations. The faint praise for Biden is simply that he will be "predictable".

The belief is simply that the US will eventually have to dial down on a confrontationalist approach to maintain relations with its own partners.

Biden is more likely to succeed in intensifying US-led multilateral actions against China, re-linking with European Union and Nato allies as well as its clients in Asia in contrast to Trump's unilateralism. However one particular "achievement" of the Trump administration was its dialogue with the DPRK, which stalled due to considerable bipartisan hostility to this move including from within his administration. There is every likelihood the situation on the Korean peninsula will worsen as Biden reverses course.

The adoption of the new 5-year plan (2021-2025) as well as its long-range objectives (to 2035) by the CPC comes with the expectation that China's development is in any case no longer dependent on foreign exports but will be driven by the

increased living standards of China's 1.4 billion people. Having said that, China's foreign trade volume figures for the first 9 months of 2020 have actually registered growth.

While there are continued debates about the precise date, there seems little doubt about China's direction, (See China's economic recovery quickens as consumption returns (Reuters, 19 October) <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-economy-gdp-idUSKBN27404Z>). Given that the major capitalist economies are continuing to be rocked by the effects of the Covid crisis, China's recovery in Q4 is likely to provide an even starker contrast.

In Hong Kong, the National Security Law has acted like a bucket of cold water on the most radicalized elements of the opposition as has a number of high profile arrests (most independent of the NSL). In particular, the charges of money-laundering against Apple Daily publisher Jimmy Lai and others suggests there could be explosive revelations about the contacts between the US right, Taiwan and the "pro-democracy" movement.

Lai's company was recently exposed as being involved in a potential "dirty tricks dossier" directed at Biden's son. (See "Jimmy Lai distances himself from report on Hunter Biden's alleged China links. Hong Kong media tycoon says he was not personally involved but his firm paid for research" (Guardian 31 October, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/oct/31/jimmy-lai-distances-himself-from-report-on-hunter-bidens-alleged-china-links>)

Xinjiang – As if on cue, the propaganda push on Xinjiang seems to have been put on ice temporarily following the Islamist-linked terror attacks in France and Austria. We can expect it to resume

MIDDLE EAST

Contributions from Carol Stavris, Navid Shomali and Charlie May

The military assault on Armenia

Statement issued 14 October

The Political Committee of the Communist Party of Britain condemns Azerbaijan's unprovoked attack on Nagorno-Karabakh, its subsequent and continuing military assault on Armenia and the direct military involvement of NATO member Turkey. The CPB associates itself with the call of the CP of Armenia for an immediate ceasefire, the involvement of the UN in finding a negotiated settlement and the avoidance of any ethno-sectarian mobilisation.

The CPB condemns in particular the role of Turkey in providing hi-tech weaponry, air power, regular forces and jihadi fighters as part of an aggressive expansionist policy that has already seen military involvement in Syria, Libya and, in conflict with Greece and Cyprus, its continuing attempt to seize the oil and gas resources of the East Mediterranean. This external aggression has been combined with an abrogation of Turkey's internal democracy and the recent arrest of most opposition MPs, including all representatives of the HDP.

Turkey's action as a NATO member exposes the hollowness of that organisation's proclaimed objectives of securing 'lasting peace in Europe, based on common values of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law'. We also note that much of Azerbaijan's hi-tech weaponry and military drones are supplied by Israel. We call on the British government to condemn Turkey's actions and use its membership of the UN Security Council to demand an immediate cessation of attacks on Armenia and a negotiated settlement of disputed land.

On 6 November the following communique was received from the CP of Armenia

The Communist Party of Armenia supports peace and calls for an unconditional ceasefire

We call on communists from all parties across the world to join us in demanding an end to the war and for the resolution of all outstanding disputes between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Republic of Armenia through dialogue and diplomacy based on the UN Charter and respect for the rights of nations to self-determination.

The war that began on the morning of 27 September 2020, following an Azerbaijani military offensive directed against Armenian civilian targets, is now four weeks old and has had catastrophic consequences. Hundreds of civilians have been killed. Ancient towns and monuments of important heritage significance have been deliberately targeted and bombed. The city of Stepanakert, the capital of Armenian-populated Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), is now largely deserted by its civilian population as a result of extensive Azerbaijani drone attacks using cluster munitions. There is also mounting evidence that the Azerbaijani forces have used white phosphorus in their bombardments.

On 28 October, Azerbaijani forces struck Stepanakert and nearby Shushi several times in deliberately targeted attacks against civilian and residential infrastructure throughout the day - including the shelling of Stepanakert's Maternal and Child Healthcare Centre.

Since its very start, the Communist Party of Armenia has steadfastly opposed this war - and analysed it as being against the interests of the peoples of the two neighbouring countries, a threat to peace in the region, and has repeatedly called for a ceasefire.

The Armenian Party also noted that materials have been distributed internationally to IMCWPs by an organisation described as the Communist Party of Azerbaijan. Its content is phrased in very similar language to a press release issued

by the Azerbaijani government and gives full support to the attack. The Armenian party points out that this statement was not sent to the Armenian Party, that there has been no communication of any kind with a party of this name and that the dictatorial regime in Azerbaijan has long outlawed independent parties.

Palestine Solidarity Work

The PSC AGM has been postponed due to Covid. A provisional date has been set for 24 April 2021 for a virtual conference possibly over more than one day.

The PSC Branch Forum for 5 November reports as follows:

PSC has issued a statement on the EHRC Labour Party ruling:

<https://www.palestinecampaign.org/pscs-response-to-the-publication-of-the-ehrc-report/>

There has been ongoing pressure on universities to adopt the IHRA definition and they have been largely resistant. Universities have listened well to arguments about freedom of expression but pressure on them is increasing. A report by the Union of Jewish Students (UJS) expressed horror that only about 25 out of 151 HE institutions have agreed to adopt IHRA. Gavin Williamson has threatened universities funding if IHRA definition isn't adopted by Christmas. PSC, working with others, has written to every vice chancellor and every branch of UCU. They are meeting the UCU general secretary tomorrow. They have also met Universities UK who are sympathetic and appalled by pressure the government is putting on them. This isn't helped by the fact the shadow education team say they won't oppose the government's policies on this. PSC is helping universities find a way forward to maintain freedom of expression. Williamson doesn't have legal powers to take funding away but universities are not minded to fight it in the courts. He may try and seek the relevant powers in the new year. The outcome is likely to be significant adoption by universities. Only one university has had an event prevented citing IHRA because it is not legally enforceable. But it does lead to indirect pressures e.g. local authorities using other excuses but actually barring political events because of IHRA as happened in Tower Hamlets. Under intense pressure Warwick University has adopted IHRA, but without the examples.

An initiative by John Mann, with global support, means all European football clubs have been written to asking them to adopt IHRA. PSC is working with others across Europe to agree a statement to send to all European football clubs. Though the IHRA statement won't really impact on what football clubs do it is of great concern as it is all part of the process of normalising adoption of IHRA.

The IHRA definition of Antisemitism (as on the organisation's website) is *Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.*"

There is a further clarification on the website:

'To guide IHRA in its work, the following examples may serve as illustrations: Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.'

Eleven examples are given of which two concern the State of Israel

- *Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour.*

- *Applying double standards by requiring of it a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation*

Update on Iran, 7 November 2020

In Iran the ruling regime struggles to convince the population there that it has much control over the direction of developments marking the country's future. Indeed, it seems that external changes and developments exert a disproportionate impact on key policy areas internally. On Saturday 7 November, the news of Joe Biden winning the US presidential election immediately reduced the exchange rate for Iranian currency against the US dollars by 32 percent in favour of Iranian consumers.

The theocratic regime's credibility - and that of its 'political Islam' brand - has been shattered - not only in Iran but also in Iraq, Lebanon, and Afghanistan. The regime is seen as weak and having lost confidence in its own future. Economic collapse, the catastrophic impact of coronavirus, the regime's inability to solve vital socioeconomic issues, and the unending oppression of any dissent, are all testament to this.

The regime's capacity to continue its extraterritorial military activities in the region (especially in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon) is severely diminishing - and with it, the financial and moral influence to continue under the banner of "Exporting Islamic Revolution".

There are reports that the Russian government has raised the issue with the regime in Iran of removing its military forces and ceasing its operations in Syria. Since 2011, the regime has annually spent between 5 and 11bn US\$ in Syria in pursuit of its strategic plans. Russia envisages a different future model for Syria which is far from what the theocratic regime in Iran has had in mind.

The progress of the much debated 25-year strategic agreement between Iran and China has recently been affected by a proposal by the Chinese side that could make the deal subject to other regional influences. On 10 October, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi proposed the formation of a forum in the Middle East to foster multilateral engagements with "equal participation of all stakeholders." The forum seeks to "enhance mutual understanding through dialogue and explore political and diplomatic solutions to security issues in the Middle East." Considering Iran's frosty relations with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the UAE, this may hamper the progress of the deal with China. There seem to be only lean prospects of even neutral states like Oman getting on board right now.

It is likely, in light of the result of the US presidential election, that there will be an increased willingness for negotiations with the US and expediting of the process. The regime's objectives through any negotiations with the US will have two priorities:

- 1) Continuation of the existing political system inside Iran (i.e. the domination of political Islam).
- 2) Preservation and indeed expansion of accumulated capital, and the vast concentration of private wealth - which, in turn, the survival of the regime depends upon.

No briefing on Iran would be the complete without mention of the restive population and the expanding protest movement. The country has been hit severely by COVID-19, which has killed around 40,000 people officially. The entirety of the country is declared as red for infection. Iran has been the epicentre of the pandemic in West Asia. Industrial actions across the country have become a fact of life. Since May, prolonged strike actions in major industries - including oil and gas productions, petrochemical complexes, and the 7-Tappeh Sugar Cane Complex in Southern Iran - have forced the regime to certain retreat. With the presidential election due in May/June 2021, the room for manoeuvre by the regime's leaders is extremely limited. The election turnout is also a key sign of political stability. In the March 2020 parliamentary elections, the regime failed to get more than a 40 per cent turnout. The prospects for 2021 do not look good.

Iraq marks first anniversary of popular uprising

Tens of thousands of Iraqis took to the streets in Baghdad and several other provinces on 1st October 2020 to mark the first anniversary of the Popular Uprising that shook the foundations of the corrupt political system. Despite succeeding in overthrowing the government and forcing the ruling groups to succumb to the demand for early elections, other demands for radical reform and change remain unfulfilled. Key among the demands is investigating the killing of more than 700 young protesters and bringing the criminals to justice.

The all-encompassing structural crisis gripping Iraq, on political, economic and social levels, that led to the eruption of the Uprising on 1st October 2019, continues. It has been further aggravated in recent months by the coronavirus pandemic and the financial crisis caused by the fall in world oil prices. The country relies heavily on oil revenues which make up more than 90 percent of its budget.

The essence of the deepening crisis lies in the policies pursued by the ruling political blocs that continue to perpetuate the sectarian-ethnic quota system ('Muhasasa') that was installed after the US invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003.

Rampant corruption and plundering public money have been endemic features of this political system.

Among other grave challenges is the growing role of militia-type armed formations and organized crime, undermining the state's sovereignty and its ability to assert the rule of law. The relationship between the federal government and the Kurdistan regional government also continue to be fraught with tension. The terrorist ISIS, that had suffered a big military defeat three years ago, has been rearing its ugly head again in some areas.

Many political forces continue to rely on external support, opening the door to regional and international interference in Iraq's internal affairs, serving foreign agendas and interests. This situation threatens to turn Iraq into a battlefield to settle scores at the expense of its own independence, national sovereignty and people's interests.

All these factors have contributed to deepening the political deadlock and social tensions and polarization. The gap between extreme affluence and abject poverty has deepened, with high unemployment especially among the youth who have lost faith in the ability of the ruling blocs to offer solutions to the chronic problems and crises bedevilling the society.

Popular anger exploded in a heroic Uprising on 1st October 2019, on a scale unprecedented for many decades in the country's modern history. Mass demonstrations and sit-ins were met with bloody repression, resulting in more than 700 protesters killed and thousands injured. It demonstrated the burning desire of the people, especially the youth, for change and getting rid of the existing corrupt and sectarian political system, to build a better life and achieve a secure and prosperous future.

The previous Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mehdi was forced to resign in late November 2019 after refusing to respond to the demands of the peaceful protesters, resorting instead to brutal repression and giving militias a free hand to kill, kidnap and torture young protesters and civil activists. After 6 months of deadlock, fierce disagreements and infighting and among the ruling political blocs, an interim government headed by a new Prime Minister, Mustafa al-Kadhimi, was approved by the parliament in June 2020.

Interim Government

The new government's programme included a number of these tasks: Investigating the killings of protesters and bringing the criminal to justice, early elections, investigating corruption cases, tackling the coronavirus pandemic, and tackling

urgent economic and social issues to alleviate the suffering of the people.

US-Iran Consensus

However, the approval of Kadhimi's nomination was a result of an America-Iranian consensus and came as a compromise among the dominant ruling blocs.

This precarious equation, with all parties concerned, whether internal or external, exerting pressure to ensure that Kadhemi's government serves their agendas or prevent it from threatening their interests, has led to vacillation in its measures.

Escalating Protests

During recent weeks, protests have escalated on various issues, including demonstrations by hundreds of unemployed graduates and engineers in Baghdad.

One other main cause of mounting popular anger is the deterioration of health services and the deep concern that hospitals are losing control as coronavirus cases surge. According to latest official figures, the total number of deaths is 10,254 and there are 427,000 confirmed cases.

Early Elections

The Prime Minister Kadhimi declared that early elections will take place on 6 June 2021. Early elections, that are fair and credible, was a principal demand of the October Uprising and the protesters. It is seen as a principal constitutional means for peaceful democratic change. However, this requires reforming the whole electoral system. The early election is therefore another arena of fierce political struggle.

The factors that triggered the Uprising on 1st October 2019 continue to exist. There is, therefore, a very real possibility of the renewal of protests. A peaceful mass protest movement is essential to achieve the just demands of the Uprising, defeat the sectarian quota power-sharing system and corruption, and bring about radical change by asserting the will of the people and move towards a democratic civil state, based on citizenship and social justice.

AFRICA

Reports from Liz Payne and John Hunter

South African workers battle COVID-19, corruption and austerity

South Africa continues to be acutely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic as the end of the year approaches. The country has proven to be more vulnerable compared to the rest of the continent given its closer integration to global transport and trade systems, notwithstanding its more developed healthcare system.

Although the response of Cyril Ramaphosa's Government has been more determined and coordinated than in many more developed economies, longstanding issues of corruption and private sector profiteering have also been exacerbated. An anti-corruption probe is currently ongoing into more than 600 companies awarded over \$300 million USD in contracts to supply PPE for health workers and to distribute relief aid.

According to conservative estimates, there have been over 740,000 cases of COVID-19 in South Africa with circa 20,000 deaths, as at mid-November 2020. The national state of emergency declared by the African National Congress (ANC) government, originally due to end on 15 June but repeatedly extended, is set to lapse on 15 November 2020. There have been rumours that some lockdown measures could be reimposed in the coming weeks.

As the world lurches towards a global economic recession potentially on the scale of 2008, South Africa is not immune, with a projected GDP contraction of 6% or more and real unemployment, already at crisis levels circa 42%, set to increase sharply. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), part of the tripartite alliance along with the South African Communist Party (SACP) and ANC, called strike action and demonstrations last month to denounce economic hardship, corruption and unemployment intensified by the pandemic.

International lenders and debt ratings agencies have pressured the government to avoid increases in borrowing and spending as South Africa emerges from the pandemic. This is likely to lead to intensified conflict between ANC politicians and COSATU. The SACP have called for a major structural transformation programme — not structural reform as so often demanded by the International Monetary Fund in the developing world, slashing of public health budgets, undermining of worker rights, but the end of austerity.

South Africa's communists are also calling for serious land reform in the immediate term - treated as controversial by Britain's ruling class media – to finally begin to abolish health-risky and unproductive apartheid urban settlements, rural destitution and food insecurity. If implemented this can reasonably be expected to lead to claims of so-called 'white genocide' by right wing media and politicians in Britain.

CPB statement concerning the Lekki killings in Nigeria

The CPB condemns the arbitrary killings of young peaceful protesters in Nigeria yesterday, protesters who were demanding the disbanding of a militarised police unit that has previously used unwarranted violence. The CPB offers its solidarity to all working people and trade unionists in Nigeria who have for two generations been struggling against the legacy of colonialism and the continued dominance of external corporate interests of which the biggest are the British-based oil multinationals. The CPB offers its condolences to the families of those killed and urges support for progressive and labour movement forces in Nigeria.

EUROPE

Belarus

Full briefing notes were issued in September. These are still on the party web and remain valid. A general strike was called by opposition activists for 26 October. This received considerable coverage in the Western press on 25 and 26 October. There was little or no coverage on the following day.

Cyprus: the threat of full annexation

Comrade Loucaides' speech outlines the acute crisis currently facing the people of Cyprus. Turkey is urgently pushing forward an agenda of partition in violation of UN resolutions to secure a federal bizonal state. It is doing so to underpin claims to the ownership of oil and gas in adjacent waters and to enable the settlement and ultimately annexation of northern Cyprus. It has held an election for a new pro-partition leadership in its occupied territories in violation of UN agreements and begun a policy of harassment of trade union and left leaders in the north who defend the UN position.

Intervention of Giorgos Loucaides, AKEL Political Bureau member, at the teleconference organised by the Group of the Left (UEL) in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and GUE/NGL in the European Parliament

“On the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean” 21st October 2020

Instead of being an area of peace, cooperation and stability, the Eastern Mediterranean has become one of the most conflictual areas in the world. This has come as a result of intensified, international and imperialist competition for the hegemonic control of the region.

Alongside the long-standing suffering of Palestine and Cyprus, brought about as a result of external military aggression and occupation and the violation of human rights, one can add numerous new conflicts and issues in the area such as: the external manipulation of the internal situation in Libya, the foreign interventions and the proxy war of regional and international actors in Syria, the direct involvement of external actors in Lebanon, the illegal activities of Turkey against the maritime and sovereign rights of Greece and Cyprus and the massive neglect of humanism and international law in the treatment of refugees and immigrants.

In all the aforementioned cases, there is one essential common denominator: the submissive response of the international community to the violation of international legality and human rights. This eases the creation of new, illegal, destabilising and unjust faits accomplis, to the detriment of course of the peoples concerned.

Palestine stands as the most explicit example, as it clearly demonstrates how imperialist forces entrench new realities and then seek to sustain them. More precisely, the unacceptable so-called ‘Deal of the Century’ reveals exactly how the US are trying to facilitate ex-post, the legitimisation of Israel’s illegal faits accomplis as regards the territorial and property rights of the Palestinian refugees.

Equally troubling is another observation: that of Turkey’s central role in exacerbating and escalating tensions and warmongering in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Not only is Turkey trying internally, to impose a total crackdown and mounting pressure on the opposition - through the systematic and increased violation of human rights, democracy and the rule of law - it is also perpetuating instability externally, through the regression of human rights and the violation of the sovereignty and sovereign rights of neighbouring states.

Focusing on Cyprus, it is evident that through numerous illegal activities, Ankara is seeking to enforce its hegemonic plans by interfering in the maritime zones of the

Republic of Cyprus thus creating new, damaging faits accomplis as regards the Cyprus problem.

Concerning its intrusions in the maritime zone of Cyprus, there is no doubt that Turkey is violating the international Law of the Sea. If Ankara's main concern, as it alleges, is the interests of the T/Cypriots, then why not resume negotiations for the comprehensive solution of the Cyprus problem on the agreed basis of BBF which is the most effective means to safeguard these interests?

Allow me to underline that the convergences, agreed upon since 2010, include an agreement on the federal competence over the EEZ, as well as over the natural resources- thus including hydrocarbons- and the allocation of revenues between the two communities. All these signify that the issue of hydrocarbons will be resolved with the solution of the Cyprus problem. The only pending issue will be the delimitation of maritime zones with Turkey but even this, according to the said convergence, will be handled under the UNCLOS provisions.

Regarding the creation of new faits accomplis that damage the prospects of reaching a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem, the violation of the status quo in Varosha, is a stark provocation. This act is in flagrant violation of international law, relevant UN Security Council resolutions, prior decisions and resolutions of the CoE and the EU.

Turkey's opening - even partial opening of Varosha - and its intention to illegally settle the area by people other than its lawful inhabitants, violates all relevant UN Security Council Resolutions that provide the framework for the return of Varosha to its lawful owners under the temporary administration of the UN. The UNSC in its last statement, reaffirmed all previous resolutions on Varosha.

It is important to understand that the illegal activities of Turkey in Cyprus are not only adding to the tensions, but are also undermining the prospects for meaningful peace negotiations. The recent election of a partitionist politician to the leadership of the Turkish Cypriot community with the full support of Ankara, also amounts to a very negative development.

Turkey should immediately show restraint and terminate any activities which undermine the resumption of substantial negotiations.

If, contrary to our hopes and current efforts to resume political dialogue, Turkey's intransigence and aggressiveness perpetuate, then there can be no other option for the the international community, the UNO, EU, the Council of Europe and other regional organisations, but to proceed with the adoption of political and diplomatic measures that will force Ankara to face, in concrete terms, the fallouts of its policies.

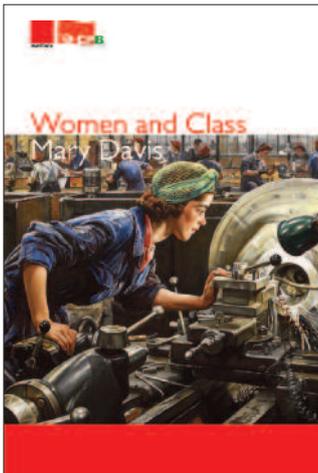
Biography of Demetris Chistofias

General Secretary of AKEL 1988-2008

President of Cyprus 2008-2013

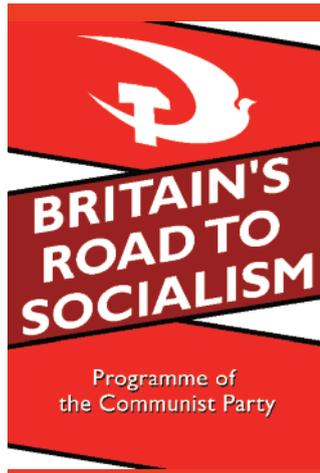
Demetris Chistofias was elected as President of Cyprus in 2008, the first Communist Head of State in the EU. As President he committed himself to work for the reunification of Cyprus as a Bizonal Federal Republic. Following the financial crisis of 2010-2012 he led opposition to EU austerity plans and the imposition of widespread privatisation. He died in 2019.

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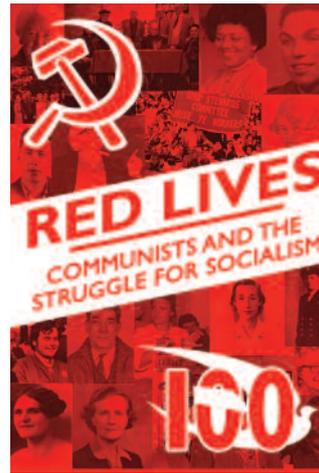
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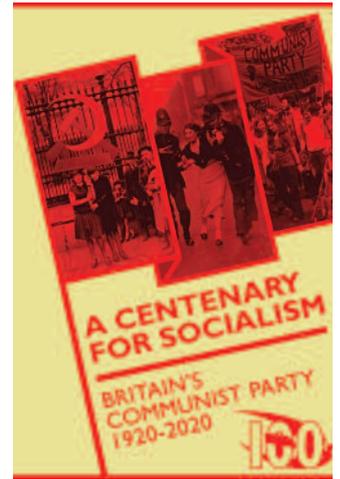
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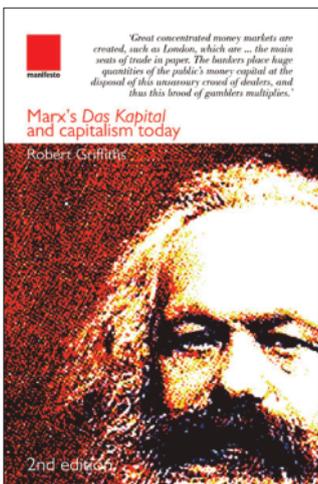
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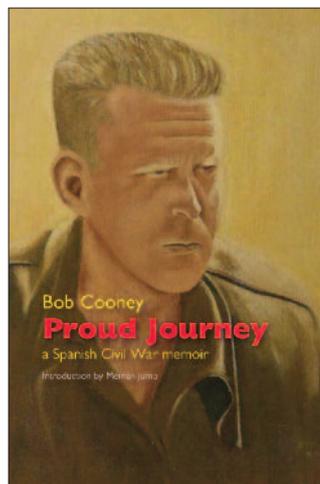
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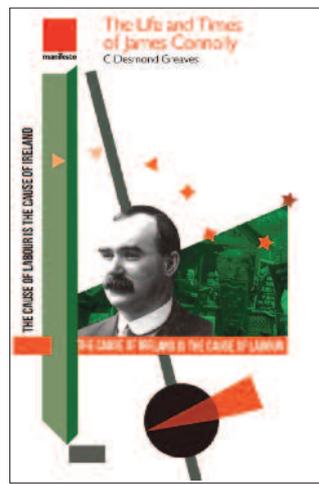
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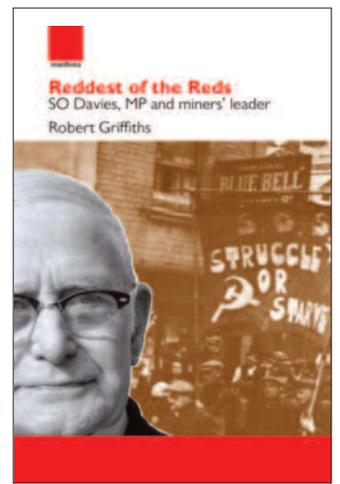
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