

# Proletarian



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



## **Economic crisis and war as capitalism hurtles towards the abyss**

# Industry



## Defy the anti-trade union laws!

It is time we turned the struggle for decent wages into a struggle for socialism.

The failure of wages to keep pace with galloping inflation, alongside insane hikes in rents, food prices and energy bills since 2008, and reaching unprecedented heights in recent months, have been driving desperate workers across the country onto picket lines for more than a year now.

For a time it seemed as if this spirit of widening resistance might grow roots, and that there was a chance that union leaders would be pressured by their members into overcoming such crippling divisions in the labour movement as multiple unions for the same jobs (three unions in the rail industry, twelve in the NHS), separate deals being cut in different regions etc, that so weaken the movement.

Rousing speeches from the RMT's Mick Lynch and others also raised hopes that the strike wave would endure and spread, uniting workers in their common struggle. Perhaps, who knows, we might even

begin to move on from the fight for a 'fair day's pay' to the fight against the wages system (capitalist exploitation) itself.

Sadly, it seems these old divisions are not going to be so easily overcome. Rank opportunism and class-collaborationism have grown deep roots in the working-class movement, distilled in the imperialist Labour party and poisoning all working-class politics for more than a century. Even when the strike wave was at its height, the usual suspects were banging on about how our salvation would come with the election of a new Labour government.

Now, with the strike wave in decline, the collapse of the Tories in the local elections has been greeted by this gentry with an orgy of wishful thinking about a revival of Labour fortunes, all in the hopes of taking workers' minds off class struggle.

### Nurses' leader reveals true nature of British unions

In a way, the most illuminating example of misleadership by a union bureaucracy came from a union that was not one of the big guns

of the TUC, had never previously called a strike, and therefore lacked the opportunist experience of more seasoned players who know how to play the game.

This standard formula consists of talking a good enough game to win the trust of union members, judging when to re-brand a slightly less awful deal as a 'victory', and judicially combining a reputation for occasional militancy with the position of having both feet stuck firmly in the bog of Labour party social democracy.

Poor Pat Cullen of the Royal College of Nurses. At first it seemed that the nurses' struggle to win back some of what has been lost through 15 years of below-inflation pay deals – a fight that was enthusiastically supported by the public – was carrying all before it.

But Cullen almost from the outset was searching for the exit. Initially, the nurses demanded a pay rise of 19.2 percent, by way of partial compensation for a real-terms pay cut since 2010 that is officially acknowledged to have been at least 20 percent, but has, in reality, been far higher. Before a shot had even been fired, Cullen inexplicably distanced herself from this demand, casually declaring her willingness

to meet the government "half way" at about 10 percent.

After many more well-supported strikes and growing public fury at the boneheaded refusal to pay the nurses a decent wage, the government offered an insulting pay deal that amounted to a roughly 5 percent rise. Pat Cullen jumped at the deal and recommended acceptance by RCN members in fulsome terms and with a hefty dose of blackmail.

What happened next was that the nurses, who had had it up to here with being kicked around, rejected Cullen's advice and voted overwhelmingly to keep striking and get the job done. If nurses had never been on strike before, they certainly made up for it now.

The RCN, thwarted in its attempt to soft-soap the membership into accepting a shabby offer, now zigzagged between acting as a tool of the government and putting on a show of militancy. Cullen underwent a dizzying about-face, belatedly donning her militant mask again and announcing that strikes would carry on, vocally spurning the very offer she had so recently commended to her members.

But sure enough, when the next push-back by the government came in the form of a pettifoggery legal technicality, curtailing one of the strikes by four hours through the courts, Cullen once more snapped to attention, ordering the nurses to comply with the ruling and hastening to tell the world that they would not *dream* of breaking the (bourgeois, anti-union) law!

### Bowing down before the anti-union laws

Yet this is precisely what is most urgently needed if any workers are actually to win the pay rise they so desperately need. Strikers must ▶



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## Bank of England 'economist' tells workers: accept poverty, stop asking for a pay rise

**BoE makes its position in the class war abundantly clear.**

The Bank of England 'chief economist' Huw Pill announced recently that workers should stop seeking pay increases and pushing prices higher".

For information to those who don't yet read Marx, this hoary old myth about high wages being the root cause of inflation

was debunked 150 years ago.

All bourgeois economists since Marx's time have been engaged not in furthering our understanding of how capitalism and economics generally work, but in *hiding* the fact that the system's secrets have been revealed – and that the truth is not compatible with

continued bourgeois rule.

What a colossal waste of human energy and activity. What a colossal waste of human potential.

Imagine if we lived in a world where scientific discoveries could simply be acted on, in the interests of the people, with no concern about whose vested interests or profit margins might be affected ...

Meanwhile, workers are dealing with 17 percent grocery inflation in supermarkets – across the board. And we know that the prices of budget essentials are rising faster than those of the higher-end staples. So real inflation for the poorest workers is far higher than that average figure, and it's rising all the time.

### Wages or profits?

The truth about wage rises is that they reduce profits – they effect a *change in the proportion* of wealth (wealth which has all been produced by workers' labour!) that is allocated to workers' wages as opposed to the proportion that is allocated to capitalists' profits.

When they tell us not to struggle for higher wages, the employers are telling us to accept impoverishment in the interest

of the 'greater good' of capital accumulation.

When we struggle for higher wages, we are not bringing down the whole system, we are merely fighting for our right to survive in something approximating human conditions. If we don't fight for that, starvation level is where we will inevitably end up – with our whole families working 12-14 hour days and dying from exhaustion at the age of 35, as was common in British industry before the passing of the various factory acts in the mid-19th century.

If we want to escape this endless battle of the classes; if we find it ridiculous to endlessly fight merely so that we can sink lower at a slightly slower rate, then we have no choice but to organise ourselves to bring down the whole rotten edifice.

The only escape from such irrational and antihuman conditions is a workers' state with a planned economy. That's called socialism.

Start by reading what Marx revealed in 1865 about the relationship between wages and profits.

### And then join us!

◀ refuse to confine their struggles within the bounds of a set of anti-trade union laws that were specifically designed to hamstring working-class power; they must do whatever is necessary to win, whether secondary action, flying pickets, wildcat walkouts or anything else, creating facts on the ground by independent class action.

We have no personal animus against Pat Cullen, and dwell on her case only because it exposes so clearly the limitations of trade-union politics when faced with a class war assault

launched by capitalism to force down the workers' standard of living. The same class-collaborationist practice is just as rife across the rest of Britain's unions, only not always quite so crassly expressed.

In Cullen's case, the gear changes were so clunky that everyone could hear them and wince. The nurses, as all working people, deserve better leadership than this, and the grit and determination shown by their struggle makes it clear that, once even a fraction of that spirit is able to connect itself to scientific socialism,

nothing will be able to hold them back.

As the global economic crisis of capitalism deepens at breakneck speed, as our rulers indulge in endless money-printing to prop up the failing banking system yet again, galloping inflation and a rampant war drive are only going to make an already dire situation infinitely worse for workers everywhere.

The sooner workers ditch their affiliation to organisations that are institutionally bound to the Labour party in

particular, to social democracy in general, and to the capitalist system in toto, the sooner will we be able to mount a meaningful resistance to the war being waged against us, turning the tables on our rapacious rulers and their decadent and dying system.

### Break the link with Labour; Defy the anti-trade-union laws!

### Turn the struggle for decent wages into a struggle for socialism!

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# Joti Brar: We are heartened and inspired by the French workers' fighting spirit

Unfortunately, even the most militant of Britain's trade union leaders seem keen to end the strikes here as quickly as possible.

*The following interview was given by our vice-chair Joti Brar to communists in France (PRCF). You can read the French version on the Communist Initiative website. It has also been translated into Spanish and reproduced on the New Revolution website.*

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**What is the situation in Britain from the perspective of the social movement? What impact have the recent protest and strikes had? What is the influence of the Enough Is Enough campaign?**

In the last year, Britain has seen the largest rise in strike action for 30 years. In 2022, 2.4 million working days were lost as a result of strikes, and it seems likely that the number will be higher this year.

As in many other countries, workers are facing a huge inflation crisis, with enormous rises in energy costs (67 percent rise in electricity prices and 129 percent rise in gas prices in the last year alone) to add to the rapidly rising costs of rent, food, clothes and other necessities. Grocery inflation is now at 17.5 percent compared to last year, and the prices of many staple goods needed by the poorest have risen the most. For example, a can of Heinz baked beans is 70 per-

cent more expensive now than it was in 2019.

This inflation crisis came at a time when workers in Britain, especially in the public sector, have had real-terms pay cuts imposed every year since the economic crisis of 2008. Combined with huge cuts in public spending on everything from schools and hospitals to roads and public spaces, this 'austerity' programme was demanded in order to service loans that had been taken out by our government to prevent Britain's banks from collapsing.

Since workers' pay has been steadily cut over the last 15 years, the inflation crisis has caused a further and very steep decline that has left many workers with pay packets that simply don't cover the basic necessities of life. Living standards are sharply declining for all employed workers, but for those on benefits and

for those workers at the bottom end of the pay scales in the health service, in teaching, on the railways etc, life is becoming insupportable. Single parents in these roles are increasingly unable to manage, turning to food banks and other emergency charitable organisations to try to feed their children.

This explains why those areas of the economy where union membership is still high (mainly transport and public sector, with some utilities, logistics and communications) have all experienced a sharp uptick in strike action. Workers in all sectors are desperate for pay restitution; in sectors where union membership is still common, this is pushing the union leaders into reluctant action.

All the railway, health and teaching unions have been out on strike. So too have the postal workers, Amazon workers, dockers and civil servants. Even the traditionally very conservative Royal College of Nursing had to bow to pressure from its hard-pressed members, calling the first strike in its 107-year history. Mick Lynch of the RMT (a railway union with a reputation for radicalism, since it broke its 100-year connection to the Labour party in 2004) gained huge public support when he appeared on mainstream media standing up for the aims of the strikers and vigorously defending the right of workers to strike.

Lynch and other union leaders also led the formation of the Enough is Enough campaign, whose five-point programme demands a meaningful pay rise, a cut in energy bills, an end to food poverty, decent homes for all and higher taxes for the rich. Action on any of these points would be extremely popular.

Unfortunately, those who



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are in charge of these movements are not prepared to offer the kind of leadership that is needed at a time of severe economic crisis, where the ruling class is united in trying to pass the burden of the crisis onto the backs of the workers. Even the most militant of our trade union leaders (of whom there are very few in Britain) seem only to be interested in ending the strikes as quickly as possible.

None of them wants to show workers how to use their power to win even a basic battle for better wages. Every union has either settled, or tried to settle, for far less than the workers are demanding – and really need – in terms of pay, recommending ‘deals’ to their members that don’t cover even half of this year’s inflation, never mind making up for the last 15 years of real pay cuts.

At the same time, those running the ‘Enough is Enough’ campaign, after organising a couple of impressive opening rallies at which militant speeches were made to large crowds, have proven to be totally uninterested in mobilising workers to fight for their own programme. Instead, they are focusing the attention of their declining audiences and lacklustre meetings on asking workers to believe that voting Labour at the next election will bring about the changes they so desperately need.

## **What is the position of the CPGB-ML on the situation in Britain?**

As well as taking out loans to bail out the banks in 2008, our rulers resorted to a huge increase in money-printing. The prime minister of the time, Gordon Brown, was credited with an act of heroic genius for implementing this programme of what bourgeois economists

called ‘quantitative easing’, but which was in reality a *huge theft* – a direct transfer of wealth from the poorest to the richest in our society.

As Karl Marx explained in *Capital*, money circulating in the economy reflects the value of the commodities in circulation. To print more money without increasing the value of goods in circulation simply means that each note or coin that circulates will be exchanged for a smaller amount of commodities – it will be worth less. The more money that is printed in this way, the more the currency is devalued. The effect may not be noticed straight away, but sooner or later this reality has to come into force.

The rulers of imperialist countries thought they had discovered a magic trick when the inevitable inflation crisis *did not hit immediately*. This feeling was reflected in the world of petty-bourgeois academia, too, with the invention and promotion of the ‘modern monetary theory’ (known by its critics as the ‘magic money tree’).

What all these observers failed to realise was that the apparent ability of countries like Britain and the USA to print money *without suffering adverse economic con-*

*sequences* was based not on some new rule of economics, but on the reality of their *being imperialist countries*. The fact that so much world trade is conducted in the currencies of a few dominant countries allows them to *spread out and export* the inflationary effect of their money-printing, and thus to *water down and delay* the inflationary effects in their home economies.

**Since workers’ pay has been steadily cut over the last 15 years, the inflation crisis has caused a further and very steep decline that has left many workers with pay packets that simply don’t cover the basic necessities of life. Living standards are sharply declining for all employed workers, but for those on benefits and low pay, life is becoming insupportable. Many single parents are unable to manage, turning to food banks and other emergency charitable organisations to try to feed their children.**

But this watering down and delaying, facilitated by their position as dominant imperial powers, could only last so long. And when the effects finally started to be noticed, the train was already racing at a runaway speed.

Our rulers got themselves out of their systemic crisis in 2008 by printing money. While the national debt skyrocketed and the people’s pay and pensions lost their value, the banks were saved and asset and share prices ballooned. The rich became fabulously richer. Meanwhile, pay and pensions were steadily eroded.

When the next systemic crisis hit in 2020, our rulers masked its existence by declaring national lockdowns ‘to respond to the health emergency’ (although an effective health response would have been localised and would have taken place far earlier). In this way,

they were able to camouflage the huge subsidies they paid to the monopoly corporations by calling it a ‘Covid bailout’ and also subsidising many workers to stay at home. The government once again took on more debt and the Bank of England once again printed huge sums of money, which once again inflated asset prices and devalued wages.

The disruptions in global supply chains caused by the Covid shutdowns exacerbated this inflationary spiral further by creating artificial shortages of many goods. They also showed the fragility of capitalist ‘efficiency’, which has pushed for the removal of every piece of contingency planning (‘just in time’ delivery replacing warehousing, for example) in the interests of maximising profits. We saw during Covid how this efficiency drive has left the poorest workers everywhere most at the mercy of shortages and price rises that arise whenever these globally spread supply lines are interrupted. Three years after the first Covid lockdowns, this fragile web of connections has still not stabilised, and many small businesses all over the world have ceased trading or gone bankrupt as a result.

With the launch of the imperialists’ sanctions war against Russia in February 2022, the high inflation and steeply rising energy prices were shifted up to an even higher level, once more hitting the poorest workers everywhere the hardest. The imperialist plan to destroy Russia’s economy by cutting it off from the world market spectacularly failed, but it did have the result of cutting Europe off from the cheap energy on which it has depended since the 1980s, leaving us with unpayable utility bills and uncompetitive industry.

With inflation rising rapidly, the Bank of England ► **page 6**

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## To French workers

◀ **page 5** had officially declared a plan to end its money-printing programme, but the need to 'stand with Ukraine' led it to print more billions to pay for weapons, while the need to keep social peace led it to do the same in order to subsidise energy costs for individuals and for businesses. These open-ended subsidies have delivered huge bonanzas to the arms and energy monopolies while further reducing the purchasing power of the masses.

In such a situation, the performance of Britain's trade union leaders has been a grave betrayal. Instead of fighting for pay restitution and the rights of their members to live in dignity, they have been looking for the exit, repeating employers' (and Labour leader Keir Starmer's) assertion that to ask for better is 'unaffordable' (unreasonable) and trying to scare members into accepting further real-terms pay cuts with assurances that these 'deals' are the 'best that can be achieved', and with dark threats that if the deals are rejected, the members will be sorry.

All the same, despite this lack of leadership, and despite the division of each profession into several unions that divide the workforces in each workplace and weaken their fighting spirit, the strikers are not doing as they are told. Nurses recently voted to reject a government pay offer despite huge pressure from their union leaders to accept. It seems likely that at least some of those striking will continue their fight, therefore, but it's hard to see how much they can achieve with leaders who have made it abundantly clear they have no heart for the struggle and are anxious to come to terms with the employers.

Meanwhile, the Enough Is Enough campaign has dwindled from promising beginnings into yet another toothless and diversionary organisation whose main programme (like too many supposedly 'resistance' organisations before it) is to persuade workers to vote Labour at the next election.

The truth is that we have over a century of experience to tell us that the Labour party is a loyal servant of British imperialism, and plenty of more recent experience to show that the party's present leader Keir Starmer is an impeccably establishment figure (having previously served as head of the public prosecution service) whom the ruling class would be only too happy to instal as their next prime minister.

**Two things have been made very clear by the experience of the last year. The first is that there is a great desire and willingness amongst workers to fight for pay restitution. The second is that the present trade union structures, institutionally tied to the Labour party and loyal to British imperialism, are completely unwilling and unable to lead this struggle.**

The ruling class hopes very much that the union leaders will be successful in persuading their members to accept below-inflation offers of 5 per cent with occasional one-off lump sums on top, and into giving up the fight to defend pay, pensions and public services (all of which are suffering crises of recruitment because of the terrible pay and conditions that now prevail everywhere). It is also doing what it can to

sell the illusion that a Labour government will bring 'change' and workers should simply resign themselves to pay cuts, go home and wait for the next election.

Without new leadership, new unions, or both, it is hard to see whether the pressure from members will be able to overcome their own leaderships' resistance to leading a real fight for pay restitution and defence of public services. The present leaders have shown very clearly that their loyalty is to the system and not to the workers.

### **What is your perspective on the ongoing war in Ukraine and the politics of the new Sunak government?**

I would sum up our position on the war in Ukraine by saying that the conflict was started by the USA and Nato when they instigated a fascist coup in 2014, and that Russia was forced to intervene by the refusal of the western powers (France and Germany) to implement the terms of the peace treaty they guaranteed in Minsk in 2015, and refused to recognise the need for a new security framework in Europe that could guarantee peace for all and stop Nato's aggressive expansion to the east – an expansion that has been aimed at Russia for the last 30 years.

Russia's war, in our view, is a just and necessary war of national-liberation for the oppressed Russians in the east of what was formerly socialist Ukraine, and of self-defence against Nato, which is using the Ukrainian people as its proxy army in the hope of bringing down Russia's independent government. When the imperialists use pseudo-Marxist academic phraseology like 'decolonisation', what they

are really referring to is their long-time desire to break up Russia's vast territory and loot its huge mineral wealth.

As regards our latest prime minister, Rishi Sunak, he has shown himself to be another impeccable member of the establishment. He is ready to continue the war for as long as the British ruling class desires it, and ready also to start the process of reversing Brexit, which the ruling class never accepted, but which has taken some time for them to be able to start unpicking.

### **How do the British people and working class see the social uprising in France?**

The true extent of the uprising in France is kept hidden from the majority of British workers, just as the yellow vest protests were a few years ago. Our rulers do not allow meaningful coverage of your actions in their media because they are terrified that the example of French militancy might spread across the Channel and inspire workers in Britain to organise the same kind of action over here.

It is clear that workers in France are facing essentially the same problems as those we face in Britain: rising inflation, crippling energy costs, rapidly falling wages and pensions, constant rises in the pensionable age, cuts in public service provision of all kinds. In Britain, our pay and services are in a worse state than in France precisely because we have not taken such spirited action in defence of them. From the great miners' strike of 1984/5 until today, very few meaningful attempts have been made to resist the ruling-class programme of dismantling the welfare state, and workers have in general been demoralised and resigned.



# Environment



## Demand renationalisation of Britain's water system without compensation

**Growing public outrage has forced a mealy-mouthed apology from Water UK, but the profiteers deserve jail sentences, not a wrist-slapping.**

Feelings of discontent are rising amongst even the most reclusive of British working-class communities as word spreads about the severe situation created by regular sewage overflows, about the greed and unconcern that allows them, and about their long-lasting ecological ramifications.

The power of this discontent has even begun to reverberate amongst the bourgeoisie, the capitalists, many of whom also want clean water in their taps, clean rivers running through their estates, clean food produced by their local farms, and clean seas lapping the shores they may from time to time honour with their presence.

In the Sunday Times, Rod Liddle recently penned an article which, with biting sarcasm, related a string of heinous sewage-related facts and variously pinned the blame for this

disastrous situation on profiteering, ineptitude and (rather unconvincingly) immigration. Interestingly, given the establishment credentials of the paper for which he was writing, Liddle openly called for the renationalisation of Britain's water network.

The Times has carried a whole series of in-depth investigations on the issue of sewage dumping, putting some hefty promotion into its 'Clean it up' campaign, while referencing calls by former Environment Agency chairwoman Emma Howard-Boyd for prison sentences for CEOs and board members of the most seriously offending companies.

This in turn has led water company CEOs to embark on some frantic virtue-signalling in an attempt to stem the rising tide of anger by refusing their latest bonuses.

Privatised back in 1989, 34

years of profit maximisation by ten separate water companies has led to what FT writer Martin Wolf described recently as "conflicts of interest too great to be managed".

Mr Wolf credited water companies with having "outwitted" regulators and said that their critics believe them to have "used clever financial engineering to boost rewards to shareholders".

He described concerns over "environment and health" as business "externalities" – but ones which have ended up being the deciding factor, and which may ultimately lead to the renationalisation of the water system.

Offering up alternative models such as those currently operating in Scotland and Wales (which don't seem to be having any troubles at all), Wolf asked his readers: "Was it all a terrible mistake? Whether or not it was, what should be done now?"

Never mind what happened then, old chap, what shall we do moving forward?

Doggedly, in the face of almost universal disapprobation, Water UK chairwoman Ruth Kelly is trying to save the day for the profiteers by warning people that it will cost them a lot of money to put things to right if water is renationalised. In response to the question about why so many people favour renationalisation, she had the temerity to answer that many appear to think of nationalisation as "free money".

"Obviously it is not," she told reporters, and went on to explain how difficult it would be under a nationalised sector to get the investment that is so desperately needed because there would be "competition from investment in hospitals and schools".

Not so difficult, however, Ms

Kelly, as getting the privatised water companies to pay for the maintenance of infrastructure that they have been neglecting for years in the interests of paying out large dividends to shareholders and correspondingly eye-wateringly large emoluments and bonuses to their so-called 'management'. These people manage only their own profiteering, entirely at the expense of the service that they are supposedly paid to provide.

"Nationalisation is not a free-win scenario," Ms Kelly continued. "That money has to come from somewhere. Shareholders stand ready to invest hundreds of billions of pounds in the water sector to really improve it." Well, they had plenty of chances to do that in the past, but they haven't. They just profiteered and are in business just to profiteer, so why should anybody imagine they will change?

The reason we are where we are, quite literally swimming in our own faeces, is because the private companies have, in a mere three and a half decades, run Britain's water system into the ground and shown their true parasitic nature.

Not only have water companies borrowed £56bn against the fixed capital of the water system and handed it over as 'rewards' to shareholders ('saviours' in Ruth's world), but they have also helped themselves to the proceeds of sale of property belonging to the nationalised water industry at the time they took it over.

This is not the result of individual greed or 'complacency', as the Times and Financial Times would have us believe: it is the nature of the capitalist system itself. The short-sighted drive to maximise profit no matter what is what has caused this catastrophe, and will continue inexorably to **page 11**

## Social



# Anti-immigration propaganda stirs up anger and rioting in Knowsley

**As the cost of living crisis brings suffering to workers, our rulers are once again using immigration to distract from their failures**

The recent riot in the Merseyside town of Kirkby was stirred up by the activities of a new right-wing organisation called Patriotic Alternative. With the usual demagogic trick of appearing to address the real concerns of workers, it promotes anti-immigrant hysteria, mixing this activism with litter-picking and help-the-homeless initiatives. The group also promotes a home-schooling syllabus.

It is hardly surprising that far-right groups are achieving traction when the working class is surrounded by wall-to-wall hysteria blaming immigrants for their difficulties. Especially as access to a class analysis is deliberately cut off. This is the challenge that communists must rise to meet if we are to wean workers away from false prophets who aim to perpetuate the rule of the exploiters.

*The following article was sent to Proletarian by a worker in Liverpool.*

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On Sunday 12 February, a fire blazed in a burnt-out riot van

outside the Suites hotel in Kirkby following a protest against the housing of 'illegal' immigrants.

The mainstream media's constant bombardment of the narrative that 'immigrant hotels' are places of feather beds and luxury, and their endless hype about an 'invasion' of refugees in dinghies, had stirred up people's fears and frustrations, and erupted into anger and violence.

### The incident

Two sides positioned themselves outside a hotel housing poor migrants. Angry residents who had been roiled by emotive and incendiary social media posts and leafleting campaigns faced off against left-wing groups including the Merseyside Pensioners Association, the Socialist party, the Merseyside BLM alliance and members of Unite the Union.

The left-wing groups were massively outnumbered by the local protesters, while the good intentions of those who came to defend the hotel residents was lost on the angry crowd.

Locals described the protest

as having a carnival-like atmosphere. One video shows protestors face to face with police as a member of the crowd shouts: "Get those Isis bastards out."

Once again, the harnessed rage of the worker was being pointed at the wrong enemy: another poor worker. The media coverage of imperialist wars, the manufacturing of consent for the Nato invasions of Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, etc, has all fuelled bigoted opinions that any middle-eastern-looking person must be a muslim fundamentalist 'enemy', most likely 'Taliban' or 'Isis'.

Irish immigrants who came to Merseyside over the decades were similarly accused of stealing people's jobs and of being terrorists. But poor workers do not undertake treacherous journeys to foreign lands out of desire; they do so out of desperate economic need precipitated by imperialist looting and by imperialist wars for profit and power.

### Why the anger?

Understanding our history and its relevance today can often bring people a better understanding. Media outpouring, especially over immigration, completely ignores the British history of migrant work-

ers performing most of the toughest jobs in building our nation's infrastructure, from the canals of the 18th century to the motorways of the 20th.

Liverpool, a city built for and by shipping, has attracted and made use of a vast migrant population over the centuries of its existence. And the nearby town of Kirkby has taken in much of the overspill as the city grew.

The postwar rural population of Kirkby was around 3,000 people, and the industrial estate built there in the 1950s provided more jobs than the small population could fill. Liverpool had long suffered from overpopulation, with many workers living on top of each other in cramped courts.

Scotland Road (known as Scottie) was one of those heavily-populated areas. It was filled with Irish immigrants who had left their homes to escape famine and provide a cheap labour force to the busy ports of Liverpool. The area was so heavily Irish that it provided Britain's first Irish National parliamentarian, TP O'Connor.

With a vast army of surplus labour available, and with the expansion of the city centre into the outskirts, the Scotland Road community was torn down. Many of its inhabitants moved to Kirkby, swelling its 3,000 population to well over 50,000 over the course of a decade.

While Scotland Road has dwindled into a set of fast roads for dock traffic, Kirkby has grown exponentially. New housing estates have been built and the population has settled into the community we see today. What was once an agrarian village has grown into a busy town as a result of the postwar movement of migrant labour.

Modern-day Liverpool is a



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city split in two: the famed city centre, with all the trappings of a capitalist consumer-driven metropolis, and the outskirts, where neglected Scouse workers have been left to rot.

North of Liverpool, electoral wards such as County and Everton are some of the poorest in the country, while Knowsley, the wider borough in which Kirkby now sits, although not officially part of Liverpool, suffers from the same economic and social abandonment – just another working-class Merseyside town struggling after decades of underfunding, underdevelopment and underemployment.

The neglect of these ‘post-industrial’ working-class areas has created a malaise that’s been exacerbated by the economic ‘cost of living’ (inflation) crisis. This discontent, bubbling under the surface for years with no readily available outlet, is being tapped into by right-wing groups that seek to direct the pent-up anger of workers towards other unfortunate victims – poor immigrants imprisoned in hotels – and to divert it away from the true perpetrators – the ruling elite of the capitalist system.

There’s a mantra being beaten by those in the area who agree with the protestors when the ‘far right’ is mentioned. “It’s just normal people who are fed up.” Whilst true, the fact is that their anger is being manipulated.

Years of media coverage focused on ‘just’ wars in the middle east, while the organisations of the far right scream about ‘Johnny foreigner taking our jobs’, has worked to divert anger away from the true scourge of the working class. It is the ruling elite that profits from keeping wages low and utility prices high. It is their imperialist wars for profit that cause the displacement of so

many.

## The far right

Activists from a group calling itself the ‘Patriotic Alternative’ (PA) were busy in the weeks running up to the demonstration distributing leaflets around Kirkby. These informed locals that asylum seekers were staying in the local hotel and spewed racist rhetoric that was designed to elicit an emotional response. “Five-star hotels for migrants whilst Brits freeze” blared one of their headlines.

The company that houses the migrants in these hotels, under an ‘asylum seeker initiative’ (one might rather call it a fundraising initiative for private capital), is Serco UK & Europe, an allegedly ‘private-public’ (oxymoron) company.

This is the same company that was responsible for the London Olympics security fiasco and which presides over the notoriously atrocious conditions endured by prisoners in many British jails. On past experience, the likelihood that there is any truth behind the ‘feather bed’ accusation is vanishingly small.

The catalyst for the protests in Kirkby were assertions that the hotel residents represented a danger to local children, backed up by an inconclusive but incendiary video circulating on social media. This well-used establishment trope did as it was supposed to: stirred up the most primal fears of its audience and directed them against their immigrant neighbours.

Then came an escalation in the social media assault. Video footage of a young girl being approached by a ‘brown’ man was followed by a spate of unsubstantiated posts accusing a middle-eastern-looking couple of “taking pictures of people’s babies” in Walton Asda, Liverpool. The migrant hotel

has been described by Britain First as being “full of young men”, and such is the illogical but emotional pull of this propaganda that even pictures of a couple, miles away from the hotel, inflamed locals to riot.

This is a classic demagogic tactic of fascists, who manipulate workers by preying on their poverty and fear and point the finger of blame at immigrants.

## Capitalism needs immigration

You can’t blame workers for wanting a better life. They don’t come to Britain for the cuisine, the ecstatic welcome or our inadequate welfare system. Imperialist wars waged by the US-led west have destroyed whole nations, depriving people of the means to build a sustainable life.

All humans are entitled to a decent and secure existence, and if that’s not possible where they live, then migration is inevitable. Anyone forced to leave their own country will head towards places of commonality in language or family. Hundreds of years of colonial exploitation has made the English language common to the peoples of many nations, thus attracting them to our shores.

The Tories’ recent posturing about getting ‘stricter’ over immigration is all pantomime. With Labour crawling closer in the polls and the economic crisis deepening by the day, the usual competition over who can most convincingly blame immigrants for the declining living standards of British workers, and who can be correspondingly ‘tougher on immigration’, is being intensified.

In actual fact, it makes no difference to capitalists who the worker is or where they come from as long as they can be exploited. Capitalism needs a surplus of labour to keep workers in competition with

each other as they push wages down in their desperate attempt to ride out the crisis and keep profits up.

Many of the workers seeking asylum are running from Nato bombs, western-backed coups or IMF austerity programmes that have left their home economies in tatters. For them to travel to Europe or Britain can be just as deadly, and their willingness to do so reflects of how desperate is their need to leave their home and try to find security somewhere else.

‘Globalisation’ (imperialism) feeds off an unlimited supply of workers in the imperialist countries and the mass migration of labour to where it is needed. Capitalist governments, who act on behalf of the capitalist ruling class in each country, will never *really* attempt to stop immigration, but they *will* use racist anti-immigration rhetoric to divide workers and divert their attention from their true enemy.

As communists, we fight against the exploitation of *all* workers and against our common enemy: the capitalist exploiter of wage-labour. We fight against imperialism (capitalism in its monopoly stage), which decimates the homelands of the world’s people in the name of profit, forcing them to leave their homes to survive.

It is not poor people, regardless of where they come from, who are the cause the world’s problems. They have no such power or authority within the present economic system. Our enemy is the capitalist. And the solution to our problems is to remove the conditions in which a small class of super-rich exploiters lives by sucking the lifeblood of the world’s people, living high while those who create their wealth are left to sink deeper and deeper into the mire.

# Social



## Ulez: a green greed initiative

**Not so much an environmental measure as a tax on driving and an effort to keep the car monopolies in profit. “**

The ‘ultra-low emission zone’ (ULEZ) was introduced in central London in April 2019 by London mayor Sadiq Khan, and expanded in October 2021 to cover central London between the North and South Circular roads. Khan intends to further expand the zone to cover all of London by August 2023.

The stated aim was to reduce air pollution in London by penalising vehicles that don’t meet emissions standards. Khan claimed that the Ulez is “also about social justice”, saying it would help “the most deprived parts of London”.

Under the Ulez scheme, vehicles that don’t meet emissions standards must pay a daily £12.50 fee to be driven through the zone, or £100 for buses and lorries. Surely if, as according to Khan, “toxic air is an invisible killer responsible for one of the biggest national health emergencies of our generation”, these dangerously polluting vehicles should be banned entirely, rather than allowing whoever can afford it to drive through the zone regardless?

And, if Khan really wanted

not to “stand by and watch children grow up with underdeveloped lungs in our city”, why allow vehicles that still pollute, only somewhat less? Is his aim to watch children grow up with *slightly less* underdeveloped lungs? Hardly a heroic stance!

### Does the Ulez work?

The reality is that air quality in London had been improving even before the Ulez was dreamt of, and vehicle emissions standards keep improving. The Ulez is just one of many policies introduced to reduce pollution, but is it a necessary, or even effective one?

Researchers from Imperial College London disagreed with its effectiveness in one paper, finding that *only a minimal decrease in pollution* occurred during the introduction of the zone, countering claims from the mayor that “there has been no single policy that’s improved the air as much as the Ulez” and that “we’ve managed to reduce toxic air by almost a half”. In reality, other measures have had much greater effect, especially replacing the London bus fleet with less polluting vehicles.

It seems that Khan and the London Assembly are hell-bent on expanding Ulez to cover the whole of London, with the associated costs of cameras, signage and management systems. But those costs will surely be quickly recouped: the Ulez netted £226m in fines in 2022!

### Who does the Ulez hurt?

The mayor is offering a ‘car scrappage scheme’ to Londoners on benefits, sole traders, companies with fewer than ten people and registered charities. This means all those earning just enough to get by, but not enough to go out and buy an Ulez-compliant car, along with sole traders and small companies based outside of London but commuting to the capital for work, are facing one more unaffordable expense.

In essence, it is yet another tax on driving in a world where driving for all too many has been rendered unavoidable.

The idea that the mayor would try to push through the expansion of the Ulez during a cost of living crisis seems more like madness than environmental concern. It’s a move that could fatally undermine the ability of many to commute into and around London, and bankrupt many small and even medium-sized businesses at a time when margins are already severely strained.

For anyone ineligible for the scrappage scheme, TfL suggests a range of paltry discounts for private vehicle hire or purchase.

### What is the Ulez really for?

It could be argued that the Ulez is just one part of a wider environmental strategy to reduce pollution in the capital. But why does it shift the burden onto ordinary workers,

forcing people to sell or scrap working vehicles and shell out for (most likely getting into debt for) newer cars?

London is one of the most expensive cities in the whole of Europe for public transport, and one of the only cities in the world without public funding for the transport system. Combined with the drop in fare receipts during the lockdowns, this means that TfL has been unable to plan any service upgrades, and would instead have had to cut services, had it not been for the slow drip-feed of emergency funding keeping the capital’s transport network on life support.

All of which makes the Ulez scheme seem like a punishment rather than a cure.

However, the new rules achieve one thing very well – they create *more demand for new cars*. In 2019, the global car market was shrinking faster than it had done during the financial crisis of 2008. April 2020 saw only 1,000 new cars sold in the whole country. For the past decade, growth in car sales hovered around 0%. Naturally, during a financial crisis, the majority of people tend to spend less, keeping their cars for longer and buying older cars when they need to.

The Ulez scheme creates an upsurge in demand for (and therefore an artificial scarcity of) cars, helping car manufacturers to keep prices and sales, and therefore profits, up. This ‘environmental’ scheme, then, essentially boils down to encouraging the *growth in production of new cars*, instead of maintaining the ones we have and only replacing them when necessary.

What the mayor never talks about is that producing a new car also produces around 720kg of pollution per £1,000 spent, so that a new car that costs £25,000 to buy



## Sewage crisis

◀ **page 7** do so. One may as well ask a Zebra to forgo its stripes as expect the capitalists to forgo one percentage point of their profits.

In short, capitalism doesn't work, and the dire situation now afflicting our seas and rivers is the living (or, sadly, mostly dead) proof. As a political and economic system, capitalism cannot be trusted with any of our life-sustaining systems because it will always drive them into crisis through parasitism and pillaging for profit.

The Times's call to renationalise the water system, even at a moment when the capitalist class is desperately trying to find and exploit profit opportunities amidst a deepening global crisis of overproduction, is testament to the power of the workers' collective voice – a voice that is heard through protest and organisation.

The Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) charity, for example, has been highlighting pollution in Britain's seas for more than 20

◀ has already produced 18 tons of carbon dioxide emissions – hardly a 'green' move, even before we consider the scrapping of perfectly serviceable vehicles and the far shorter lifespan of the electric vehicles we are relentlessly told will 'save the planet'.

### What should be done instead?

Rather than penalising a minority of drivers who are still driving older cars, people should be encouraged to use public transport. This can only be done by making it cheap, accessible, reliable and convenient. Any schemes aimed at cutting pollution from private vehicles should focus on forcing big companies (which have

years, recently gaining some traction with its countrywide 'Paddleout' protest on 20 May. We would add that under no circumstances should renationalisation result in any compensation being paid to the predatory water companies!

Moreover, even a capitalist economy is dependent on certain services being reliable, such as transport, education, public health, utilities, etc. Traditionally, this meant sheltering these services from profiteering through nationalisation. However, as the crisis of overproduction engulfs the world, avenues for profitable investment have been drying up, which led the predatory bourgeoisie to seek to denationalise in order to open up for themselves a stream of profitability.

The end result, inevitably, was total loss of reliability as the necessary investment was eschewed in favour of maximum profit. Now even the bourgeoisie is crying – other than those who stand to have their money tree snatched away, of course.

been posting record profits during the cost of living crisis) to update their car fleets.

Unfortunately, much like the NHS and every other aspect of life in Britain, successive governments have shown that they are only interested in stealing from ordinary workers in order to keep subsidising the profit margins of the giant corporations.

The only way we will get a rational transportation system, one that works for people instead of against them, is if we own and manage it ourselves. It is quite clear that such important matters cannot be left under the control of politicians, all of whom serve the interests of big businesses.

## To French workers

◀ **page 6** Those of us who are aware of the French uprising feel very inspired by your actions and hopeful of a positive outcome. While we understand that trade union action on its own cannot fix the deep crisis of the capitalist system, we do believe that such actions can be a great school for the workers. The more the current actions spread and the longer they are prolonged, the greater will be the opportunities for communists to spread their influence and education, helping workers to expand their programme from a simple struggle with the government over pension reform to a broader one against the capitalist class as a whole, and an understanding that it is the capitalist system that is ultimately responsible for inflation, poverty, inequality, economic crisis and war.

In the meantime, the real experience of physically resisting the power of the state will be a great education for workers in understanding the true nature of the capitalist system and the class enemy, and all of this will provide important opportunities for communists to work and to extend their influence – which is an essential precondition for any successful class struggle to be waged.

***Do you have a message you wish to send to the working class and the people's struggles in France?***

We are greatly heartened and inspired by the fighting spirit of the French workers, and especially by those who combine the demands for decent pay and conditions with the demands that France should leave the imperialist Nato alliance and European Union bloc. The French work-

ers' enemy is not in Russia or China, but in Paris! The same bankers who want to break Russia into pieces in order to loot its mineral wealth and exploit its people want to privatise French public services, reduce French wages and raise the age of French retirement.

It is instructive to note that even militant workers like the French find themselves condemned to fight the same battles over and over again. Advantages they had previously secured by struggle come under attack as soon as the ruling class feels itself strong enough to push back, and our positions are once again under fire. We see that the best we can achieve by trade union action is, in general, and despite occasional advances, only to retreat less slowly than we would if we had no unions to fight within.

In order to secure real and lasting change, trade union action will not be enough. Ultimately, our struggle for decent pay and conditions, for the dignity of the working class, must be joined to the struggle to overthrow the rule of the blood-sucking exploiters and replace it with the rule of the working class – with a planned socialist economy.

***We have every faith that the French will bring to the fore a leadership that understands this urgent necessity and is prepared to help the working people direct their powerful blows against the enemy's fortress, which is already being weakened by the fatal flaws within the system itself.***

# Anti-imperialist Platform



## Global capitalist system teetering over the abyss

**The drive towards World War 3 is being impelled by the mother of all economic crises; a revolutionary crisis will be the result.**

*The following speech was delivered on behalf of our party at the fourth conference of the World Anti-imperialist Platform in Seoul on 15 May 2023.*

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Comrades, we began our party's contribution to our conference in Caracas two months ago by saying that our event was taking place at a time of crucial importance for the world struggle against imperialism.

We said then that our struggle is becoming more significant every day, that people everywhere are being faced with the hard truth that they simply cannot obtain a secure supply of basic necessities under their present economic conditions – never mind being able to achieve for themselves the peaceful enjoyment of a useful

and fulfilling life.

What was true two months ago is even truer today. The contradictions of the global capitalist-imperialist economic system are becoming deeper every day. The economic crisis is becoming ever more acute and problematical for the imperialist financiers, and as a result their drive to war is becoming ever more desperate and urgent.

Since we last met, we have seen – those of us who pay attention to such things – the collapse of several important financial institutions in the heartlands of imperialism. Our rulers are desperate to hide from view this slow-motion (for now) collapse of their financial system, which is rotten to its core. They do not want us to understand that the banks are collapsing as a result of bad

debt, which is itself a symptom of the deep and inescapable crisis of capitalist overproduction.

Information about these bank collapses has not been printed on the front pages of the popular press in the west. Each bank has been quietly bailed out by imperialist governments, while their chief economic spokesmen continue to reassure themselves and each other that everything is fine: nothing to see here.

Our rulers hope to avoid contagion and panic by guaranteeing every deposit in every bank, no matter how large the deposit or how insolvent the bank. *They have guaranteed unlimited support to every bank everywhere.*

How can they do this?

Only by printing the money required to bail out the banks.

In this way, the imperialists hope to avoid the social unrest that would arise from allowing

the banks to collapse in an uncontrolled way.

And what will be the effect of this action?

That the social unrest that they are trying to avoid will simply be postponed for a little while, until the money-printing they are now indulging in has compounded the runaway inflation they have already produced by printing huge amounts of money over the last 15 years – in particular following crises in 2008, 2020 and 2022 – to bail out failing banks, rescue stock markets and subsidise monopolies.

The imperialists indulge this reckless response because it is in their nature to 'kick the can down the road'. Because they are hoping that if they can postpone this social explosion, something will occur to rescue them in the meantime.

But what is this something?

The miracle they are awaiting is the longed-for destruction of the territorial integrity and economic and political independence of the great territories of Russia and China.

They want to repeat the orgy of looting that saved their failing system in the 1990s after the fall of the USSR and the European socialist countries.

But the imperialism of today is not the imperialism of 1991. Its economic foundation is infinitely weaker, its technological dominance is likewise coming to an end, and its social cohesion is being destroyed along with the destruction of the welfare provisions that were granted to its workers at home after 1945.

As a result, the imperialists' ability to dominate the world has been fatally undermined.

**Today, the US-led Nato imperialist bloc faces a rapidly growing and**



# Anti-imperialist Platform

**increasingly united anti-imperialist counterweight, whose united forces the USA and its allies, even with all their financial and military resources, simply do not have the power to defeat.**

And the powers at the heart of that alliance – China, Russia and the DPRK – have made it absolutely clear that they will fight to defend themselves and are prepared for any war the imperialists might launch against them.

In Europe, this war has already begun. Comrades of the Platform are united in describing Russia's special military operation as a just and defensive war for the Russian people and a war of liberation for the antifascist population of the Donbass and other resistance regions of what was once the Soviet Socialist Republic of Ukraine.

We are united in opposing the imperialist propaganda – and those who repeat this propaganda within the working-class movement – about 'Russian aggression' and 'Russian imperialism'. Such an analysis, instead of enlightening people, relies on the people's ignorance about the background and context to the war and reinforces bourgeois lies. It is profoundly ahistorical and anti-materialist.

We are likewise united in opposing the same imperialist propaganda – and all those who repeat it in our movement – about 'Chinese aggression' and 'Chinese imperialism'; or even about 'North Korean aggression' and 'North Korean expansionism'.

We understand, and pledge ourselves to do everything possible to bring this under-

standing to the people of our countries and to masses of the world, that China and the DPRK are targeted by the US-led imperialist bloc not as 'imperialist rivals' or even because they are socialist, but because they are independent states with governments that are effective in preventing the imperialist superexploitation of their people and resources.

Standing today in colonised Seoul, we see that we are in a city dominated by the obscene presence of the world's largest military base. That this 'south Korea' is a state entirely constructed by the power and under the diktat of US imperialism. That the national-liberation struggle of the Korean people has been frustrated; that the political and economic life of this territory has been subordinated; that the army and state forces here are under the complete control of the USA.

We cannot but remember the extreme historical injustice perpetrated against the Korean people. These are people who fought valiantly against Japanese imperialist occupation from 1910 to 1945; who emerged from the second world war on the side of the victors. The Japanese had been defeated by the Korean forces of national liberation when the Soviet soldiers of the Red Army arrived in the north of the country and the US army arrived in the south.

But whereas the people were allowed to freely organise and determine their future in the area under Soviet supervision, in the south it was quite otherwise. Despite their talk of being 'liberators', the US imperialists refused to leave at the agreed time. Instead they stayed and set up a puppet regime, through which they continue to rule – only alternating between fascistic or 'reformist' frontmen as the times have de-

manded, and the better to fool the people.

The division of Korea into two parts – the occupation of the south, the brutal separation of families, the forcible rupture of ties between compatriots who have shared a common territory and culture for thousands of years – is a historical injustice that must be rectified.

United Korea would have the resources, the manpower, and the military, industrial and technological strength to be a social and economic powerhouse. Rather than allow such a strong and independent country to develop in east Asia, on the borders of both Russia and China, US imperialist interference has forced war, division and subjugation onto the Korean people.

But, in Korea as elsewhere, the contradictions of the capitalist economic crisis are becoming acute, and the conditions that will enable the people to bring an end to their humiliation at the hands of US imperialism are developing fast.

Not only are the economic and war crises manifesting with particular sharpness in your country, but the presence of the DPRK with its strong military in the north, and the existence of such a revolutionary force as the People's Democracy Party in the south, create a high possibility that the war that the imperialists are working hard to provoke on your territory will result not only in the defeat of the imperialist forces, but in the rapid completion of your national-liberation struggle, the reunification of your divided country and the emergence of a strong and united Korea under revolutionary anti-imperialist leadership.

Comrades, with the war drive intensifying at an accelerating speed, communists and anti-imperialists everywhere must

form the strongest possible union in order to ensure the sympathy and support of the masses for the wars of reunification and self-defence that are being forced onto China and the DPRK.

We have been asked by some comrades why the Platform insists on creating so much work. Why so many conferences? Why so many actions? Why so many speeches and statements? Are we not just keeping ourselves busy?

No, comrades, we are not simply keeping ourselves busy to no purpose. The rapidly developing war situation, and the rottenness at the heart of much of what calls itself the world communist movement, impels our action.

We must travel to different parts of the world in order to draw as many parties and organisations as possible into unified action. At the same time as we bring our founding document, the Paris Declaration, to the attention of organisations and workers all over the world, we must also develop and refine our message to embrace the specific conditions in different regions and to reflect the rapidly developing world situation.

We must do everything in our power to strengthen the forces of socialism and anti-imperialism, whose fates are intertwined and who face a common enemy.

**We must do everything possible to ensure that the coming battles are decisive, that the imperialist enemies of humanity are finally defeated, and that our people are at last able to progress towards true, socialist peace and civilisation.**

# Ukraine war



## Odessa after the massacre: nine years later the wounds are still fresh

**The west continues to ignore, downplay and misrepresent the trade unionists who were burned alive in Odessa by Nato's fascist stormtroopers.**

*This exclusive interview with an Odessa massacre survivor was carried out for Proletarian by Steve Sweeney in Russia.*

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Sasha gently rolls back the sleeve of her jumper to reveal scarred and damaged skin.

"It still hurts me sometimes even now," she tells me as we sip coffee in a Moscow cafe. "Doctors said it would be like this for some time. But it has been nearly ten years."

Sasha [not her real name] was one of the hundreds injured in the Odessa Trade Union House massacre on 2 May 2014.

"I was lucky, I managed to escape. They tried to burn us all alive. The police stood and watched as they shot at us and beat us.

"Many jumped from the windows and were attacked as they hit the ground. It was like hell," she says.

At least 48 people were killed as far-right Ukrainians set the building alight after pro-Rus-

sians took shelter there from a baying mob.

### Fighting for the truth

Nine years later, the survivors and the victims' families are still seeking truth and justice for their loved ones amid a cover-up by the state and the connivance of western institutions including the Council of Europe, the European Union and others.

In fact, the only criminal cases that have been opened by the Kiev administration are against those who were attacked, as Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov explained earlier this year.

"We know the truth," Sasha says. "We know who did this and they are being protected. But we will not give up. Those who died deserve justice. We need to heal the pain."

She was on the streets of Odessa just months after the democratically elected government of President Viktor Yanukovich was overthrown in a US-backed coup after he

refused to sign a deal integrating Ukraine more closely into the European Union.

"We objected to this meddling, this was not what we wanted. Fascists were taking over the country because of the west. They were helping

them to control Ukraine and to kill us," she says.

"I will never forget that day for as long as I am alive. The Banderists and fascists were killing people and the whole world looked away," Sasha continues. "All we wanted was to be treated like humans, but they treated us like animals, cockroaches. This was terrorism."

### Fascist pogrom by Nato's puppets

The pogrom was coordinated by the Right Sector, a coalition of ultranationalist forces founded by Dmytro Yarosh, a virulent antisemite and supporter of Ukrainian wartime Nazi-collaborator Stepan Bandera.

They took advantage of a football match held between Odessa and Metallist Kharkiv on the day of the massacre, rallying the support of right-wing ultras from both teams' supporters.

"We knew there was going to be trouble on the day of the match. These teams had a reputation for violence, but police did nothing to stop them. It started when they marched in the city," she explains.

There had been an agreement reached to peacefully clear the Kulikov field, the site of a pro-Russian encampment that had been set up in the months after the Maidan coup.

This was reportedly to make way for Victory Day celebrations on 9 May, the date which marks the Soviet Union's defeat of Nazi Germany.

But as the violence started, the camp was set ablaze, causing people to flee to the nearby trade union building for shelter.

It is ironic we agreed to move out of the camp but then it was attacked by the Ukrainian nazis, the same people defeated [in 1945]. But here [in Ukraine] they did not go away," Sasha says

Hundreds gathered there, and soon after it too came under attack.

"I was in a room that was filled with smoke very quickly. We could hardly breathe. As I left there were bodies on the floor. I could not help them.

"Some people started jumping out of the windows. I heard the sound of their bodies hitting the floor and they were beaten to death.

"On the ground [outside] people stopped us from leaving. I could hear the football fans chanting, singing Ukraine's anthem ...

"Nobody was coming to help. The fire was spreading and there was shooting too. I thought I was going to die," she recalls.

The Ukrainian police were not passive bystanders – although they did nothing to help, *they were filmed firing their guns into the trade union building.*

Crowds below chanted "Burn, Colorado, burn", a reference to the pro-Russian colours of ribbons worn by some of the protesters. As the fire tore through

# Ukraine war

the building, the Ukrainian national anthem was sung by those gathered outside, taunting those trapped inside as they burned to death.

The Nazi-era slogan – *Slava Ukraini*, now frequently to be heard on the lips of Kiev’s western sponsors – was shouted as people were dying inside the building, whose walls were daubed with swastikas and the name “Galician SS”.

“We escaped, but nobody helped us,” Sasha says, adding: “It was terrifying. After the attacks people were afraid to leave their homes. We didn’t want to go outside for weeks.”

No retribution for the perpetrators

Despite the admissions and footage clearly identifying many of those responsible, the perpetrators remained free.

In the aftermath of the fire, the Right Sector celebrated the deaths, describing the massacre as “yet another bright page in our fatherland’s history”.

Yarosh, whose organisation claimed responsibility for “coordinating” the attack, even became a candidate for the Ukrainian presidency and later an MP. He was never investigated by Ukrainian authorities – and he was not alone.

Svoboda party MP Irina Fari-on declared: “Bravo Odessa ... Let the devils burn in hell” – yet she also was not charged.

Fatherland party lawmaker Lesya Orobets published a statement on her Facebook page on 2 May celebrating the “liquidation” of the oppositionist *kolorady* – a derogatory term for those who hold pro-Russian views. She accompanied her post with several photographs of headless corpses.

Aleksey Goncharenko, who took part in the Odessa protests, was later elected to the parliamentary assembly of the

Council of Europe.

These are the so-called democrats backed by the west.

Sasha made her way to the roof as the blaze spread. Exactly what happened inside the building is unclear. Many died there, some of them outside, their bodies found riddled with bullets.

“They [Ukrainian authorities] did nothing while these people celebrated the burning. They hate us and do not have respect for life. We know who our killers are. They are the government.”

The United Nations has criticised Kiev for its unwillingness to carry out proper investigations into the massacre. But, unsurprisingly, there has been a concerted effort to cover up the truth by western powers, which have tried to shift the blame onto Russia.

Petro Poroshenko, who was later to be installed as Ukrainian president, led the charge accusing ‘Russian provocateurs’ and supporters ‘shipped in from Transnistria’ of coming to Odessa to foment violence.

He even accused Moscow of placing gas canisters in the trade union building to deliberately increase the number of casualties. But this has been widely dismissed, including by those not allied with Moscow.

An eyewitness report for the CIA-backed Radio Liberty said: “On 2 May, 48 people died. None of them were ‘Russian saboteurs’ or ‘Transnistrian fighters’ or ‘bussed-in Bandera anarchists’. All were residents of Odessa and the surrounding suburbs.”

Sasha confirmed this and said the only outsiders were the hundreds that had been bussed in the night before the provocations started, along with the football supporters who had been urged to join in

with the attacks.

## Western media and politicians continue to look the other way

On today’s anniversary, commemoration events have been banned in Odessa once again, as pro-Kiev forces seek to erase the event from memory. Ukraine’s western backers have also colluded in order to downplay the role of far-right Ukrainian forces in the attack.

The Council of Europe’s international advisory panel described the events of May 2014 as “clashes”, as if both groups were equally responsible for the massacre.

But the IAP drew its conclusions from the May 2 Group – made up of journalists and others – many of whom justify the actions of the Ukrainian government while denouncing criticism of Kiev as “pro-Russian propaganda”.

Solidarity for the victims of this heinous massacre has also been in short supply from ‘Ukrainiacs’. Last year passed without a mention from most of those displaying the yellow and blue flag in their social media profile pictures.

The British-based so-called ‘Ukraine Solidarity Campaign’ – in reality a front for the social-imperialist Alliance for Workers Liberty – has gone so far as shamefully to recycle claims that describing the attack as a massacre is “Russian propaganda”, blaming the victims for their own deaths.

It was, of course, these opportunists that organised the poorly attended demonstration last year which saw a handful of trade unionists chanting “Arm, arm, arm Ukraine!” as they marched through the streets of London – just as then prime minister Boris Johnson was in Kiev promising to do exactly that.

We now also know that he was there to strongarm puppet actor-president Volodymyr Zelensky and prevent him from signing a peace deal or entering negotiations with Russia to bring an end to the conflict.

Of course, these supporters of the Kiev regime cannot draw attention to the massacre, or admit who was responsible – to do so would blow a major hole in the narrative that there are no fascists or neo-nazis in Ukraine, which they hail instead as a beacon of freedom and democracy.

Nine years on from the attack, the victims of the Odessa massacre have largely been forgotten by the west, sacrificed as pawns in its proxy war against Russia and abandoned by those who claim to stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

The events in Odessa were just one part of an orgy of far-right violence unleashed in the wake of the western-backed Maidan coup.

The Ukrainian neo-nazis – emboldened after the Odessa massacre – carried out another attack in the city just seven days later on Victory Day, shooting dead an unknown number of unarmed demonstrators in an incident that was not even reported in the west.

The rest is history. Today the conflict continues, having escalated into a Nato proxy war and the battle being waged in the areas now incorporated into the Russian Federation.

But for those who lost loved ones in the Odessa Trade Union House massacre, and for those who survived, the struggle for justice continues.

“Please raise our voices. Tell the world not to forget the people of Odessa and our struggle for justice,” Sasha says. “Only then can we put out the flames that continue to burn.”



# Ukraine war



## Desperate for a 'win' in Europe, USA mulls merging fascist Ukrainian rump with Poland

**The war in Ukraine once more reveals imperialist hypocrisy over its alleged defence of the 'rights of nations'.**

Whilst the collective west hypocritically chides Russia for supposedly disrespecting the rights of sovereign nations, misrepresenting Russia's justified measures to defend its own borders as a war of aggression, it is imperialism itself that continually tramples underfoot the sovereign rights of other nations. And this is nowhere better illustrated than in the gross disservice it has done to Ukraine itself.

By persistently interfering with Ukrainian elections and repeatedly conspiring to overthrow elected governments in favour of the west's own leadership choices, imperialism flagrantly disregarded the sovereign right of Ukrainians to determine their own fate. This process culminated in the western-backed fascist coup of 2014, installing a government for which nobody had voted and whose first act on seizing power was to strip Ukrainian Russians of their language rights, heralding an era of publicly promoted russophobia and the drive to an 'ethnically

pure' Ukraine.

Owing no allegiance to an unelected fascist junta installed in Kiev, and effectively disenfranchised, the populations of Crimea, Donetsk and Lugansk declined to live under the rule of the jackboot and seceded, with those in the Donbass (Donetsk and Lugansk regions) fighting a courageous resistance war under constant shelling by Kiev's forces.

It was the Kiev junta and its western backers, now getting hammered by the Russian resistance forces, that fatally undermined the unity and sovereignty of Ukraine.

It was imperialism's gross interference in Ukraine's internal politics that compromised Ukraine's independence, not Russia. What has fatally destabilised Ukraine's sovereignty is the use to which that country has been put to fight a proxy war against Russia: a stick with which to beat the independent government of Vladimir Putin.

Now that the stick is bro-

ken and Ukraine torn apart, it is somewhat late in the day for the 'international community' to get into a lather about 'violations of sovereignty' for which they themselves bear sole responsibility. Behind all the hot air and protestations declaring that We Stand With Ukraine, the imperialist architects of war in reality could not give a damn about the sovereignty of Ukraine or the rights of its citizens, currently being slaughtered by the thousand in defence of finance capital's quest for the total domination and unbridled looting of the globe.

With doubts multiplying about what to expect from Kiev's much-trailed 'spring offensive', there are signs that western minds are already concentrating on a postwar settlement that salvages something for the west out of Kiev's predicted humiliating failure – and some of these plans appear to juggle with existing borders with scant regard for anybody's sovereignty.

Under the arresting headline, 'It's time to bring back the Polish-Lithuanian union', Dalibor Rohac recently asked the readers of US Foreign Policy magazine to imagine that "at the end of the war, Poland and Ukraine form a common federal or confederal state, merging their foreign and defence policies and bringing Ukraine into the EU and Nato almost instantly.

"The Polish-Ukrainian union would become the second-largest country in the EU and arguably its largest military power ... For the United States and western Europe, the union would be a permanent way of securing Europe's eastern flank from Russian aggression.

"Instead of a rambling, somewhat chaotic country of 43 million lingering in no-man's land, western Europe would be buff-

ered from Russia by a formidable country with a very clear understanding of the Russian threat.

"Without an independent Ukraine, there cannot be an independent Poland,' Poland's interwar leader, Jozef Pilsudski, famously claimed, advocating a Polish-led eastern European federation including Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine."

Rohac went on to point out that early on during the war "Poland passed legislation allowing Ukrainian refugees to obtain Polish ID numbers, giving them thus access to a host of social and healthcare benefits normally reserved for Polish nationals. The Ukrainian government vowed to reciprocate, extending to Poles in Ukraine a special legal status not available to other foreigners."

And on cue, on his recent visit to Warsaw, puppet actor-president Volodymyr Zelensky delivered himself of some fulsome flattery of all things Polish, exclaiming "Great Polish people! Great Ukrainian people! Side by side here – united on this square, by the spirit of freedom, great history and glorious victory, which we are bringing closer together!"

Perhaps Zelensky has received fresh instructions from Washington and London?

Underneath all the pious flannel about the 'inviolable sovereignty of nations' (a right that has only ever been meaningfully recognised and defended by the communists), it all comes down to imperialism, armed with an atlas, scissors and paste, trying to stitch up the world to its own advantage.

But attempts to return to the days of the infamous British colonial prime minister Lord Palmerston are in vain. Today's world is being shaped by quite other social forces.

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## Zelensky piling up his millions as Nato tries regime change via assassination

Washington continues to stoke the fire in Ukraine, but the blowback may refuse to remain safely in Europe.

The failed bid to assassinate Russian president Vladimir Putin in May, whether directly ordered by the west-backed junta in Ukraine or the work of freelancing fascists, signalled a new level of provocation and threat against Russia.

The drone attack on the Kremlin, taken together with the supply by Britain and others of long-range weapons capable of striking deep into Russian territory, and especially the announcement that the Challenger tanks sent by Britain had been equipped with depleted uranium warheads, all confront Russia with a level of provocation that cannot be tolerated.

Russian ambassador to the USA Anatoly Antonov responded to the botched assassination bid, saying: "Russia will respond to this insolent and presumptuous terrorist attack. We will answer when we consider it necessary. We will

answer in accordance with the assessments of the threat that Kiev posed to the leadership of our country."

Defence minister Sergei Shoigu, recognising the deployment by Britain of depleted uranium shells as tantamount to an invitation to nuclear war, noted that Britain's decision left the world fewer and fewer steps away from a "nuclear collision", adding for the sake of clarity: "Naturally, Russia has something to answer this with."

As a first provisional response to the failed assassination Moscow unleashed a massive barrage of drone strikes on Kiev the like of which had not been seen since the early days of the war.

And from the deputy chair of Russia's security council, Dmitry Medvedev, came this blunt assessment: "After today's terrorist attack, there are no options left except for the physi-

cal elimination of Zelensky and his clique." (Zelensky regime's fate is sealed by MK Bhadrakumar, 5 May 2023)

Ignoring all these warnings, the west continues to pour more weapons into Ukraine, staking everything on the much trumpeted 'spring offensive', which, when it arrives, will supposedly strike a blow that will alter the course of the war to the west's advantage.

Kiev has been dangling this much delayed offensive in front of its imperialist sponsors for months, using it to keep the money and materiel flowing. When put under pressure to name the day on which the promised offensive will eventuate, actor-president Volodymyr Zelensky pushes back, saying that the sooner the allies come up with more weapons, the sooner Kiev will be able to deliver the long-awaited offensive.

This moral blackmail delivers diminishing returns, though. When Zelensky came to visit British prime minister Rishi Sunak, he received promises of lots of drones but no fighter

jets, scotching his grand plan of a "jet coalition".

And the symbolic potency of the do-or-die spring offensive drained pretty rapidly when Ukrainian foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba blabbed to *Das Bild*: "If Ukraine does not succeed in its counteroffensive against the aggressor country Russia, it will prepare for the next one," lamely advising everyone "not to consider this counteroffensive as the last one because we do not know what will come of it".

These words were not reassuring to European governments whose economies have already been sacrificed on the altar of sanctions, and who are now faced with the prospect of going through it all again, with no end in sight. (Ukraine SitRep: Delayed counteroffensive, Russian defence lines, weapon efficiency, Moon of Alabama, 11 May 2023)

Still less reassuring for the USA's allies was hearing top brass General Mark Milley expressing doubt to Foreign Affairs magazine that Kiev would even launch its 'counteroffensive' at all. Other voices have suggested slowing the supply of weapons to Kiev to delay an offensive that could prove to be premature. (Russia launches barrage of drones at Kiev as counteroffensive looms by Roman Olearchyk, Financial Times, 8 May 2023)

The more obvious it becomes that the proxy Ukrainian forces are just the failing tool of US imperialism, the wilder the historical distortions coming out of Zelensky's mouth have become.

"In a video address on Monday morning, Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky honoured the millions of Ukrainians who fought and died during the second world war. 'We fought then and we fight now so that no one ever ► page 18



# Ukraine war

## Ukraine Zelensky

◀ **page 17** again enslaves other nations and destroys other countries,' Zelensky said. 'And all those old evils that modern Russia is bringing back will be defeated just as nazism was defeated,' he added." This grotesque parody of the truth is a reminder that whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad.

Millions of Ukrainians did indeed fight and die to help rid the world of Nazis – Nazis like Stepan Bandera, the collaborator who is now held aloft as a national hero by the Kiev junta, but who is remembered by most of the rest of us for sending thousands of jews to the gas chambers.

The clown Zelensky dishonours the memory of all those Ukrainians, whether speaking Ukrainian or Russian, who really did fight and die to save the world from fascism. It is to those Soviet heroes that all honour is due.

So gross a distortion of reality as that purveyed by the puppets of US imperialism cannot long fool even the most credulous of holocaust deniers.

Zelensky's mock-heroic poses on the world stage do not stack up with the political sewer he inhabits, as admirably charted by veteran investigative journalist Seymour Hersh (hotfoot from his recent exposure of US president Joe Biden's hand in the sabotage of Nord Stream):

"Zelensky has been buying the fuel from Russia, the country with which it, and Washington, are at war, and the Ukrainian president and many in his entourage have been skimming untold millions from the American dollars earmarked for diesel fuel payments.

"One estimate by analysts from the Central Intelligence

Agency put the embezzled funds at \$400m last year, at least ... 'Zelensky's been buying discount diesel from the Russians,' one knowledgeable American intelligence official told me.

"And who's paying for the gas and oil? We are ... Many government ministries in Kiev have been literally competing,' I was told, to set up front companies for export contracts for weapons and ammunition with private arms dealers around the world, all of which provide kickbacks ...

"The issue of corruption was directly raised with Zelensky in a meeting last January in Kiev with CIA director William Burns. His message to the Ukrainian president, I was told by an intelligence official with direct knowledge of the meeting, was out of a 1950s mob movie.

"The senior generals and government officials in Kiev were angry at what they saw as Zelensky's greed, so Burns told the Ukrainian president, because 'he was taking a larger share of the skim money than was going to the generals'." (Trading with the enemy, 12 April 2023)

Presumably he is saving pennies towards an early retirement?

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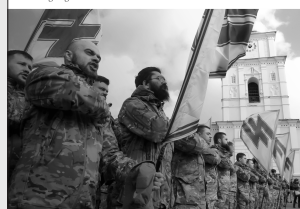
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## Neo-nazi Nato's Proxy War Against Russia



Neo-nazi Nato's Proxy War  
Against Russia

What's going on in Ukraine?



The conflict in Ukraine did not start with the launch of Russia's special military operation (SMO) in February 2022; it started with the fascist 'Maidan' coup of 2014, and its roots go back through a century of imperialist meddling.

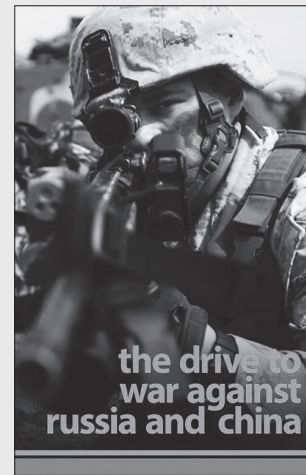
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## The Drive to War Against Russia and China



Why do the US and British ruling classes seem so set on war with Russia and China?

What has the economic crisis of capitalism got to do with it? Why should it be that Russia and China in particular inspire such belligerence? And what kind of antiwar movement do workers need to build if they wish to stop the juggernaut in its tracks?

Despite the urgency and importance of these questions, they are hardly discussed in what passes for the British working-class movement at present, but one thing is for certain: we cannot succeed in a task we have not even set ourselves.

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# Ukraine war



## Spanish communist Miguel Angel on the war in Ukraine and our tasks

The 'leftism' of certain organisations is as useful to imperialism as right-wing revisionism or reformism, and must be resolutely opposed.

The following speech was delivered by Miguel Ángel Villalón on behalf of Unión Proletaria at a joint rally with the Iniciativa Comunista in Spain. All emphasis is ours.

\*\*\*\*\*

Good afternoon, comrades. I bring you greetings from Unión Proletaria.

I will try to clarify from our point of view what the proletarian-communist position should be in relation to the conflict in Ukraine (as well as in relation to international conflicts in general), particularly in an imperialist country like Spain. I suppose you know well enough the background and causes of this conflict. If necessary, we will recall them during the debate that is to follow.

The other classes and parties have already taken a position:

1. The majority of the population, as usually happens in any non-revolutionary situation, accepts the narrative put forward by the authorities, especially when there is consensus among them as is the case at present. Russia has unjustifiably invaded Ukraine and Nato is protecting us from Russia.

2. Pacifists in theory and the majority of workers, out of a degree of class-consciousness, distrust the Nato imperialists, but also consider capitalist Russia to be imperialist and to have invaded Ukraine for imperialist purposes.

This second position is taken by many communist parties in the world. In response to it, please allow me to read to you one of those quotes from Lenin which cannot be lifted out of context because it discusses the question from the point of

view of general principle:

"It is necessary to explain the meaning of annexations, and why and how socialists must fight against them. Not every appropriation of 'foreign' territory can be described as an annexation, for, generally speaking, socialists favour the abolition of frontiers between nations and the formation of larger states; nor can every disturbance of the status quo be described as an annexation, for this would be extremely reactionary and a mockery of the fundamental concepts of the science of history; nor can every military seizure of territory be called annexation, for socialists cannot repudiate violence and wars in the interests of the majority of the population.

"Annexation must apply only to the appropriation of territory *against the will* of the population of that territory; in other words, the concept of annexation is inseparably bound up with the concept of self-determination of nations." (Proposals submitted by the central committee of the RSDLP to the second socialist conference by VI Lenin, April 1916)

If you like, during the debate we can elaborate on how to apply this criterion of Lenin's to the present war in Ukraine.

Most communist parties, especially those in the imperialist west, do not consider Russia to be imperialist, but nevertheless they dare not support it for fear of damaging their relationship with the masses. This shows that the masses have not been told the whole truth of how the society in which we live works: they have not had explained to them the link between the opportunists who betray them on a daily basis and the exploitation of most countries in the world by a few; they have not had explained to them that we must support

everyone who fights this imperialist yoke, and not just out of sympathy, but *because it is that same yoke that keeps us enslaved*.

*These parties have not behaved as revolutionaries but as centrists.*

What does this mean? It means that although they have done well to attempt to bring about unity of action with reformist mass organisations, they have done wrong to do so *at the expense of the need to explain the essential question of the imperialist oppression by our countries over others*.

There is also a minority of communists whose sin is not centrism, but the opposite: the sin of 'leftism'. They confuse the part with the whole.

They exaggerate certain particular truths to the detriment of concrete truth (in the debate, we will be able to clarify the difference between the particular and the concrete). It is the same process followed by all those who create obstacles to building the necessary workers' and people's unity through insisting on the acceptance of some false idea, some dogma.

Currently, their chief international exponent is the KKE with its theory of the 'imperialist pyramid'. This theory takes from Lenin some of his most important ideas about imperialism and applies them to current capitalist development, but it discards others that are equally important. Thus, starting from the fact that imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism and that it is characterised by five features, they conclude that all capitalist states have become imperialists, some stronger and some weaker, but we must fight them equally.

In this new conception of imperialism, *the dis-* **page 24**

# Ukraine war



## Russian communists: Russia is fighting neo-nazism in Ukraine

**CPRF rebuts ahistorical assertion that Russia's involvement in the Ukraine war is as an aggressive imperialist power.**

*The following article was written in reply to remarks by the Communist Party of Greece's international department: 'On the imperialist war in Ukraine and the position of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation' by the international department of the CPRF in May 2022.*

\*\*\*\*\*

On 23 April 2022, the newspaper Rispastis, the press organ of the Communist Party of Greece, published an article by the international department of the central committee of the KKE: 'On the imperialist war in Ukraine and the position of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation'.

The article assesses the actions of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation in connection with the special operation carried out by Russia in Ukraine, and openly accuses the party of a pro-government, ie, pro-imperialist, position. We categorically disagree with

such a mechanical assessment.

The quintessence of the article lies in the fact that, from the point of view of the Greek comrades, an imperialist war is going on in Ukraine in the interests of the Russian bourgeoisie and, by supporting a special operation, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation is thus "pursuing a line of solidarity with the ruling United Russia party and President Putin".

Insisting on the 'imperialist' nature of this war, the Greek comrades rely on the well-known statement of VI Lenin that "A struggle for markets and for freedom to loot foreign countries, a striving to suppress the revolutionary movement of the proletariat and democracy in the individual countries, a desire to deceive, disunite, and slaughter the proletarians of all countries by setting the wage-slaves of one nation against those of another so as to benefit the bourgeois-

sie – these are the only real content and significance of the war." (August 1914)

However, the comrades did not mention that this statement is contained in the article of VI Lenin 'The tasks of revolutionary social democracy in the European war'. And in it he was talking quite specifically about the first world war – really a purely imperialist, predatory one. But if we do not take a stand on the ground of dogmatism, then we must admit that any war has its own specific features.

The task of a Marxist in determining his position in relation to war is, first of all, to determine precisely its specific character. Indeed, in addition to imperialist wars, there are also national-liberation and antifascist wars, which gained a particularly wide scope in the middle of the 20th century, when fascism and Nazism arose as political phenomena, and the national-liberation struggle intensified under the influence of the October Revolution.

### How did the CPRF come to its position?

Developing its political posi-

tion on the issue of the special operation, the party analysed the specific historical conditions that objectively caused the crisis in Ukraine.

Before the October Revolution in Russia, Ukraine, which was part of the Russian empire, was a purely agrarian country. In order to strengthen its industry, at the suggestion of VI Lenin, six industrial regions from the Russian Soviet Republic in the east and south, which had never been part of Ukraine, were transferred to Ukraine, including Donetsk and Lugansk. In 1939, Galicia (western Ukraine) was annexed to Ukraine, previously part of Poland.

So, the current territory of Ukraine is the result of its entry into the USSR. And it is 'sewn together' out of very disparate pieces, from Galicia (Lviv) with a strong influence of Poland, Austria and Hungary, to eastern Ukraine, strongly gravitating towards Russia.

Socialist Ukraine developed very powerfully. Aviation and rocket-building, petrochemistry, the electric power industry (four nuclear power plants) and defence industries were added to the extraction of metal and coal. It was as part of the USSR that Ukraine received not only the bulk of its current territory, but also its economic potential, and became one of the ten



# Ukraine war

largest economies in Europe.

The destruction of the Soviet Union in December 1991 caused, at the same time, the destruction of the centuries-old economic integration of Ukraine with Russia, the rupture of all economic, political and cultural ties.

Now it is one of the poorest countries in Europe. Its manufacturing industry, with the exception of metallurgy, is practically destroyed. The economy of Ukraine now rests on loans from the west and income from people who left for Europe and Russia in search of a job. The people's living standards fell catastrophically, and emigration increased sharply. About 10 million people (out of 45 million) left the country, the most qualified specialists.

The level of corruption and social differentiation has reached one of the highest levels in the world. The country is on the brink of a national catastrophe.

## Coup in Kiev as a basis for inciting the conflict

In February 2014, a coup d'état was carried out in Ukraine with the direct assistance of the United States and other Nato countries. Legitimate power in the country was overthrown. Neo-nazis came to power. Subsequently, the United States publicly announced that it had invested about \$5bn in preparing for the change of power in the country and the "development of democracy". It is quite obvious that, just like that, no one will spend such a gigantic amount of money.

As a result of the coup d'état, people from western Ukraine, from Galicia, where extremely nationalist, antisemitic, anti-Polish, russophobic and anti-communist sentiments are historically strong, seized power.

The forced assimilation of

the Russian-speaking population began. The ban on the Russian language and the decision to transfer school education from Russian to Ukrainian gave rise to strong resistance in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions. People took up arms.

On 11 May 2014, in a popular referendum, 87 percent of citizens voted for independence. So, not at the direction of the Kremlin, but at the initiative of the masses, the Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics arose.

After several unsuccessful attempts to seize the LNR-DNR, the nazis from Kiev switched to terror. During eight years of incessant shelling from large-calibre guns, almost 14,000 civilians were killed and tens of thousands maimed. Serious damage has been done to the infrastructure there.

At the same time, European countries and the United States were extremely indifferent to the eight-year-long genocide of the Russian people in Donbass, in fact, justifying the actions of the Kiev regime.

Today, the European Union and the USA, showing unprecedented hypocrisy, talk about the suffering of people during the fighting, but they remain silent about the fact that using civilians as human shields has become a common tactic of those whom they call "freedom fighters".

## Development of neo-nazism in Ukraine

Our comrades, considering the situation in Ukraine, only grudgingly mention the danger of the country's fascistization. But one of the main goals of Russia's military operation in this country is its denazification. After all, even according to US congressmen and US intelligence agencies, Ukraine has become a centre of international neo-nazism.

Here are some facts. After Hitler's invasion of the USSR, in western Ukraine, where, as we have already noted, extremely nationalist, antisemitic, russophobic and anti-communist sentiments were initially strong, SS divisions were formed to fight against the Red Army. Local nationalists, led by Hitler's admirer Stepan Bandera, began to exterminate the Jewish population.

In Ukraine, about 1.5 million Jews were killed at the hands of Bandera. This is one-quarter of all victims of the Holocaust. During the Volyn massacre in 1944 in western Ukraine, about 100,000 Poles were brutally killed. Bandera massacred partisans and burned alive the population of hundreds of villages in Belarus.

Already after the war, anti-communist and anti-Soviet rebels and western Ukraine, with the support of the United States and Great Britain, launched terror against the civilian population from 1945-53. During these years, Bandera killed about 50,000 people in Ukraine.

The descendants and followers of these killers came to power after the 2014 coup. The traditions of anti-Polish, antisemitic and anti-Russian terror are very strong among the neo-nazis who now really control Ukraine.

Nazi ideology is being implanted in Ukraine. Ukrainian fascists – the organisers and participants in the atrocities of the war – are officially recognised as national heroes. Their symbolism became that of the state. Every year, solemn marches are held in honour of fascist criminals. Streets and squares are named after them. The Communist Party of Ukraine has been driven underground. Intimidation and political assassinations of politicians and journalists have

become a regular occurrence. Monuments to Lenin and everything related to the memory of life in the USSR are being destroyed.

At present, the Banderaites, like the SS stormtroopers of Nazi Germany, serve as a shock detachment of big business. They tightly control every movement of state power, constantly blackmailing it with the threat of a coup.

The nature of the current Ukrainian state is an alliance of big capital and the highest state bureaucracy, supported by fascist elements, under the full political and financial control of the United States.

## Causes and nature of the special military operation

Based on Marxist theory, the military conflict in Ukraine cannot be regarded as an imperialist war, as our comrades are trying to prove. By its nature, this is a national-liberation war of the people of Donbass. And from the point of view of Russia, this is a fight against an external threat to national security and fascism.

It is no secret that the people's militia of Donbass was not able independently to resist the many thousands-strong Ukrainian army, armed with foreign weapons. The defeat of the militias would inevitably have led to the total annihilation of the Russian-speaking population, many of whom were Russian citizens. In accordance with the constitution of the Russian Federation, in order to protect its citizens and ensure national security, Russia took the actions provided for by the law, since it was impossible to do this in any other way.

The negotiation process within the framework of the Minsk agreements was deliberately sabotaged by Kiev with the support of the Unit- **page 22**



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## Russian communists

◀ **page 21** ed States and the European Union.

By this time, Ukraine had concentrated 150,000 troops and nazi battalions in the Donbass. Kiev, with the support of the United States, was preparing to regain control of the Donbass by military means.

With the blessing of its American directors, Ukraine was preparing in early March of this year to launch a military operation to seize Donbass, and then Crimea. Today, there is plenty of data to support this assertion.

The Bandera regime has been preparing for war for eight years. The ideological indoctrination of military personnel has been systematically carried out in the spirit of outright russophobia, the most powerful fortified areas have been created, and the army has been saturated with the latest weaponry.

Following its imperialist geopolitical goals, the United States systematically included Ukraine in the sphere of its military interests and turned the country into a Nato spearhead, intending to fight Russia “to the last Ukrainian soldier”.

Back in December 2021, Russia turned to the United States with a proposal to hold talks on the non-expansion of Nato eastwards. The Americans evaded a direct answer. In light of this, in January 2022, Russia warned that in such a situation it would be forced to take additional measures to protect its national security.

At the same time, things were moving towards the deployment of US tactical weapons in Ukraine. Ukraine, which has four nuclear power plants and great scientific and technical potential, has begun the preparations for building its

own nuclear weapons.

Under the patronage of the Pentagon, more than 30 laboratories for the development of bacteriological weapons were created in Ukraine. There are documents confirming the work in these laboratories with especially dangerous bacteria of deadly diseases, as well as the study of methods for their distribution, taking into account a person's race.

*All this poses a threat not only to Russia, but to all mankind.*

It is argued that this is exclusively a question of inter-imperialist contradictions; the struggle for markets and raw materials. The inability to see the national component of class questions and the class component of national questions leads one into the realm of dogmatism.

## Interest of the Russian oligarchy in Ukraine or lack thereof?

In an effort to prove that the war is being waged in the interests of the Russian bourgeoisie, in the interests of seizing the natural resources and taking over the industrial potential of Ukraine, our Greek comrades use VI Lenin's statements about the nature of wars outside of the historical context in which he made them.

However, the assertion that the Russian leadership was preparing a military takeover of Ukraine in advance contradicts the facts.

From the very beginning, the leadership of the Russian Federation did not support the idea of a referendum on the formation of the people's republics of Donbass.

Following the agreements under the Minsk 2 process, Russia *a priori* assumed that the Donbass would remain

part of Ukraine, although with a certain degree of autonomy. And the Russian leadership, until the very beginning of the military operation, insisted on the implementation of Minsk 2 – that is, on the integration of Donbass with Ukraine.

So where is the preparation for an imperialist takeover?

In reality, Ukraine, its industry and resources, has since 1991 been the object of superexploitation by the US and European monopolies.

The Russian oligarchy did not participate in ‘dividing the pie’, which was in the sphere of western interests.

Moreover, the Russian oligarchy was against the military operation in Ukraine. It was striving with all its might to integrate into the world oligarchy and was already under strong pressure from the west, which demanded more energetic influence on the government in order to maintain Russia's pro-western orientation.

In addition, Russian oligarchs have suffered greatly from the Russian military operation in Ukraine. They are included on the sanctions lists, their palaces and yachts have been confiscated, their bank accounts are frozen.

We do not feel the slightest sympathy for those who plundered Russia for three decades, and who are now losing their loot. We only want to emphasise that the Russian oligarchy was not only not interested in the military operation, but also suffered from it. By refusing to support this operation, big business lost not only property and money, but also much of its influence on the Russian ruling elite.

Pay attention to which class forces opposed Russia's military operation in Ukraine in the first place. That is, first of all: large monopoly capital.

Their political representatives are in the liberal environment, and they have many ‘creative’ servants among the so-called intelligentsia.

Of course, we recognise the existence of inter-imperialist contradictions, of the desire of imperialist predators to seize the natural and energy resources of other countries. Russia is a victim of the west's plans to turn our country into a source of cheap raw materials. And we have been fighting against such plans for many decades.

But we by no means believe that Russia, for all the depravity of its current political system based on the power of big capital, has suddenly turned into the same predator. The struggle in Ukraine has a fundamentally different character that does not fit into these dogmas.

## Our position

It was the Communist Party of the Russian Federation that was the first to define the essence of the regime that seized power in Ukraine during the 2014 Maidan. Thus, all the subsequent activity of the party was built precisely on the basis of the class essence of the ongoing political processes.

We have been very critical of the foreign policy of the Russian leadership. We have always condemned the disregard for the interests of the peoples who until recently were part of the unified Soviet state.

If anyone closely follows our actions (and it seemed to us that the Greek comrades were well acquainted with our documents), they will inevitably see that it was the Communist Party of the Russian Federation that, since 2014, has been persistently putting forward a demand for the recognition of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics by

# Ukraine war

Russia. No other political party in Russia has done so much to support the population of Donbass. We supported the return of Donbass to Russia from the beginning.

It is not that the CPRF “shows solidarity with United Russia and President Putin”, but that they, as a result of historical imperatives, are now being forced to take the path that the CPRF has stubbornly insisted on for three decades.

In such a situation, is it fair to say that we blindly support Putin’s policy in Ukraine?

The Communists of Russia take an active part in the defence of the LNR-DNR. Hundreds of communists are fighting the nazis as part of the troops of the people’s republics. Dozens of communists have died in this struggle. Over those eight years of fighting, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation sent 93 convoys of humanitarian aid to the republics, with a total weight of 13,000 tons, and brought thousands of children for rest and treatment in Russia.

Throughout these years, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation demanded that the Russian leadership recognise the independence of Donbass.

It is frankly unpleasant for us to hear how our Greek comrades speak with an element of contempt about the “so-called” people’s republics of Donbass, since these are precisely the people’s republics that emerged as a result of the real will of the masses.

Citizens of the LPR-DPR defended them at the cost of the lives of thousands of civilians and soldiers of their armies during the hardest eight years of resistance to the creeping aggression of neo-nazi Bandera-ites.

Of fundamental importance is the fact that not only the Russian army, but also volunteer units of the Donbass itself, in which there is a very large stratum of communists and miners, are fighting against the Bandera-ites.

Where in all this is the “protection of the interests of the oligarchy”? Are our comrades, who put their lives in mortal danger every day, also defending the interests of the Russian oligarchy? Or are they protecting ordinary people who have fallen victim to the neo-nazis who seized power in Ukraine?

One must have a strong unwillingness to see the real state of affairs in order to assert that the Communist Party of the Russian Federation is merely showing solidarity with the ruling elite.

The intensity of the class political struggle in Russia has not abated at all. The persecution of communists and party supporters, even after the start of the military operations in Ukraine, show that there is no class harmony between the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and the current ruling group. One can list very many cases when our comrades are subjected to repressions. And we react harshly to the persecution of our comrades.

At the same time, we continue to subject the socio-economic course of the current government to harsh criticism. No party in Russia can claim to have been more vocal in its criticism of the government.

In the 30+ years since the 1991 anticommunist coup, we have provided countless evidence of our determined struggle against the ruling faction. That is why our party enjoys broad support from the masses.

The Communist Party of the

Russian Federation received almost 19 percent of the vote in the elections to the state дума in September 2021. And this is in the conditions of a well-established and long-established machine of electoral fraud. We are sure that the real level of support for us among the people is much higher. And this is because we are guided, in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism, by the desire to carefully study the interests and moods of the people.

By the way, by supporting Russia’s special operation in Ukraine, the Communist party has expressed the will of the overwhelming majority of Russian citizens.

As for the allegations of “flirting with nationalist sentiments and nationalist forces”, we are proud to say that the Communist Party of the Russian Federation is the leading left-wing patriotic force in Russia.

And we consider the protection of the interests of the Russian people and other peoples for centuries living together with the Russians, primarily Ukrainians and Belarusians, as our international duty. And to deny the historical significance of the ‘Russian world’ or Russian civilization, in our opinion, is just as absurd as to deny the great significance of the ancient Greek civilization.

When Manolis Glezos tore down the Nazi flag from the Acropolis, he was guided not only by class interests, but also by the national pride of the Greeks, who resolutely joined the fight against the German occupation.

Attitude of the world community to the events in Ukraine

Although western politicians and their media, arrogantly pretending to be ‘world public opinion’, openly participate in the war on the side of the neo-nazis, the largest countries in

Asia and Africa, the middle east and Latin America, who know first-hand what European and American neocolonialism is, quite rightly view what is happening in Ukraine as Russia’s struggle against the unipolar world led by the United States.

Countries whose population make up 60 percent of the world’s population either support the Russian operation or take a neutral position.

An aggressive position is taken only by those who in 1941 came to us with a war as part of the Nazi coalition. These are the countries of Europe, as well as the USA and Great Britain, which did a lot to revive the German military machine after its defeat in the first world war. Today, Russia is again fighting against fascism and against those who support it in Europe and the United States.

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**CPRF postscript:** *Mindful of the heroic merits of the Communist Party of Greece in the struggle against Nazism and against the military dictatorship, we categorically reject the idea that our comrades could knowingly end up in the camp of those who are now trying to crush Russia through the hands of Ukraine. We once again emphasise our deep respect for the KKE as a party that has made a huge contribution to the revival of the international communist and workers’ movement after the destruction of the USSR in 1991.*

*However, the statements of our comrades sometimes sound like the ultimate truth. We are for comradely dialogue, which has always helped communists all over the world to understand the essence of events and develop their own correct, truly Marxist approach to their assessment.*



# Ukraine war

## Miguel Angel

◀ **page 19** *inction between oppressor and oppressed countries disappears, as does bribery of the labour aristocracy in the oppressor countries as a consequence of this relationship of domination.*

*They advocate a somersault from imperialism to proletarian socialism, despising the democratic struggles of other social sectors and oppressed nations. They miss out the last chapter of the Communist Manifesto, precisely the one that tells us how to put its lessons into practice.*

***In short, this is 'leftism' in quotation marks, because it is as useful to imperialism as right-wing revisionism or reformism.***

Finally, we communists are exposed to one last danger, which also confuses a part with the whole, but this time equating resistance to imperialism with the suppression of imperialism.

This danger consists of waiting passively for someone else to bring us to an idyllic multipolar world that is almost socialist, or which at least respects the political choices of each people.

However, the hypothetical victory of Russia, China and the Global South over the current international imperialist system will not of itself replace capitalism with socialism. And capitalism, at this stage of development of the productive forces, tends to be monopolistic, with all it entails of domination and reactionary violence.

Hitherto, we have only known the imperialism of the old colonial powers: of their conflagrations first and of their international system in the most

recent period. But this does not mean that another cannot form on its ashes.

If we want to put an end to imperialism altogether, we must develop the class struggle of the proletariat for socialist revolution in all countries. And we will have the bourgeois world against us, however multipolar it may be.

I will end this speech with a practical conclusion: in order to achieve the social emancipation of the workers, we *must support any struggle that weakens the current imperialist system*, the only one that at present exists and operates as such – ie, the one that is organised around the USA.

Its overthrow by Russia, China and other oppressed countries must therefore be supported.

At present, because of the persistent crisis provoked by revisionism in the workers' and communist movement, the greatest anti-imperialist force is that national-liberation movement. Although its successes cannot eradicate imperialism definitively (unless they entail a revolutionary revitalisation of the workers' movement), they do weaken it by opening a window of opportunity for communists to achieve this.

Solidarity with this national-liberation movement will have to be one of the aspects – together with others – of the programme and tactics of the proletarian force that we must gather together so as to concentrate all popular struggles towards the conquest of socialism. Let us soon agree on this plan of unification and implement it step by step, systematically.

***This is the priority: to reconstitute the Communist party.***

# Hunter Biden's laptop and democracy, US style

**First the Nord Stream revelations, now the Hunter laptop cover-up. Could US president Joe Biden be looking any less credible?**

Whilst Nato justifies its every brutal act of aggression around the world by claiming that it is all in the service of democracy, every day brings new evidence of just how far US democracy has degenerated back in its own yard.

In the run-up to the last presidential election, the camp of Joe Biden was eager to tamp down allegations about corruption and influence-peddling. Key to the allegations were emails on a laptop used by Biden's son Hunter, detailing how he had introduced his Ukrainian business partner to his father, then-Vice president Biden.

Things looked black for Biden's election campaign.

But in the nick of time a letter surfaced, signed by 51 former intelligence officers, declaring categorically that the Hunter laptop scandal was the fruit of a Russian disinformation campaign and should be disregarded. This effectively squashed the story, which was obediently pulled by all the major social media platforms, thereby greasing the wheels for Biden's path to the White House and the ousting of the much-reviled Donald Trump.

Now, though, with Biden presiding over the Ukraine fiasco and losing friends fast, the Biden clan's dirty Ukrainian secrets are leaking out again. Worse yet for a regime struggling to retain some shred of credibility after the Nord Stream revelations, the conspiracy to cover up the Hunter

laptop scandal is tainting the whole administration, including the now-secretary of state Antony Blinken.

In private sworn testimony, Mike Morell, who had been an acting CIA director under Biden, told the House judiciary committee that Blinken, now secretary of state, was the senior campaign official who had reached out to him three days after the new York Post published details of the story.

***Egged on by Blinken, Morell rounded up as many intelligence officers as he could lay hands on, including John Brennan and Leon Panetta, getting them to put their names to a letter denouncing out of hand the Hunter laptop allegations as Russian disinformation.***

In his testimony to the House, Morell made no bones about what motivated him to abuse his position as an acting CIA director by interfering with the election process in this way.

He frankly admitted that he had cobbled together the letter because he wanted "to help Vice-president Biden ... because I wanted him to win the election".

Is it perhaps time for the well-financed National Endowment for Democracy to have a look at how democracy is faring back at home?

## Middle east



# Natural disaster in Syria and Turkey: a tale of two earthquakes

**Imperialist sanctions, occupation and war have hugely exacerbated the effects of the recent quake on the longsuffering Syrian people.**

*The following article is by RT reporter and CPGB-ML member Steve Sweeney.*

\*\*\*\*\*

The earthquake that recently hit Turkey and Syria was a natural disaster, but the resulting deaths and devastation were far worse than they needed to have been.

It is estimated that the earthquake in Turkey inflicted around \$104bn in damage, with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan appealing for international funds to help tackle the crisis and rebuild nearly 320,000 homes over the next year.

The European Union pledged \$1.07bn to help Turkish relief efforts, but at the same event European commission president Ursula von der Leyen promised just \$115m to aid Syria, where some 6,000 people died in the same earthquake.

### Syria and Turkey – a tale of two earthquakes

The global response toward Damascus was in stark con-

trast to that seen in Turkey. In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, relief efforts to war-torn Syria were blocked by US sanctions, with donation pages shut down and those who wanted to send financial aid threatened with legal action.

Syrian president Bashar al-Assad accused Washington of pressuring western countries *not* to help. The punitive Caesar Act sanctions have effectively cut the country off from the world, and it has been saved only by its alliance with friendly anti-imperialist states such as Russia, Iran and China.

The continued occupation of whole swathes of Syria's oil-rich north by western and Turkish-backed jihadist groups and other armed militia saw government aid blocked from reaching the people there. Former al-Qaeda affiliate Hayat Tahrir al-Sham stopped trucks at the border saying it would not allow them to enter Idlib province.

Cynics would be forgiven for thinking that the earthquake was being weaponised by western powers, which have

failed to oust President Assad despite 12 years of bombing, military interventions and flooding the country with armed jihadi proxies in their dirty war against Syria.

And it is telling that while the country was struggling, and as people still lay under the rubble, Aleppo international airport – the main hub for humanitarian aid to Syria – was bombed by Israel, putting it out of action. Tel Aviv struck the airport again on 22 March, and this crime was met with an abject and deafening silence from the self-identifying 'international community' and its media 'defenders of free speech'.

Israel also struck the Syrian capital Damascus, targeting a densely populated residential area and killing at least five people soon after the devastating earthquake struck.

Just last week, US forces also attacked the country, killing at least 19 people in a 'revenge' missile strike against what it described as "Iranian forces" in Syria's northern Hasakah province, where it has military bases at the 'invitation' of the proxy Kurdish administration. These bases are clearly a legitimate target for resistance groups, since they house an occupying force that is plun-

dering the country's natural resources, in particular wheat and oil.

The US attack once again dangerously escalated the situation in Syria, but it is unlikely to turn back the tide of events in the country or the region. It came at a time when Iran and Saudi Arabia's rapprochement – mediated by China – has led to talks over the reopening of embassies in the former foes' respective capitals.

Damascus and Riyadh have also restored diplomatic relations as, much to the chagrin of the west, Syria is being welcomed back onto the world stage. With more and more countries finally recognising that President Assad is going nowhere, Syria is also poised to be readmitted to the Arab League, from which it was suspended (at the behest of US imperialism) in 2011.

The USA will undoubtedly be concerned over its regional ally (Saudi Arabia) making peace with its regional enemies Iran and Syria). This blow will be doubly felt with the rising prospect of peace and the normalisation of relations between Syria and Turkey, in a road map laid out by Russia that could see the two countries' respective presidents meet face-to-face for the first time since Turkey joined the imperialist war against Syria in 2011.

The imperialists will also be alarmed at the news, breaking at time of writing, that Saudi Arabia's council of ministers has officially approved a proposal to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), a China-led bloc that includes some 40 percent of the world's population and accounts for around 30 percent of global GDP.

Latakia resident Moussa told our reporter that the west should abandon its strategy of regime change in ► **page 26**



## Middle east

### Syrian earthquake

◀ **page 25** Syria, accusing the imperialists of trying to starve the country's people into submission.

"People are dying under buildings, they are dying because we can't get medicine for them, because we can't get equipment," he told Proletarian. "Look at what happens. Even when we are suffering, the US and its proxies, the zionists, drop bombs on us.

"But the Syrian people are strong. We will never accept American interference. We will never forget this. And we will never forget who helped us."

### Poor quality building practices exacerbated the Turkish disaster

While the consequences of the earthquake have been amplified in Syria by the effects of war and sanctions, the cost to the Turkish people has been exacerbated by other factors.

Back in 1997, Turkey passed a code that required buildings to be constructed using ductile concrete, a material that is more flexible in the event of an earthquake, but it is estimated that 25 years later only one in ten buildings in the country meets the standard.

"Earthquakes don't kill you. Buildings can kill you. That's our slogan," Turkey's former deputy prime minister boldly declared on the foundation of the earthquake disaster body AFAD in 2009.

"The most important thing is to prevent disasters before they happen," he said, in words that will now have come back to haunt him.

A post-1999 study found that 6m out of 22m buildings nationwide either needed retrofitting or demolishing and rebuilding to meet seismic standards.

But in 2018 a controversial zoning law was introduced, effectively creating an amnesty for illegal construction work. This cash boosted government coffers, but there is little evidence that it was spent on strengthening buildings or infrastructure.

One of the initiatives that should have helped prepare for such an event was the introduction of an earthquake tax in order to reinforce buildings and infrastructure and help cities to cope better with earthquakes. But after disaster struck once more in Izmir in 2020, many were left wondering where the money had gone.

In 2022, following a 5.9 magnitude earthquake, Turkey's Union of Engineers and Architects released a statement saying that Turkey "has failed in terms of what needs to be done before the earthquake".

Another factor is the huge economic disparity between western Turkey and the east of the country. According to a 2020 OECD report, Turkey has the highest regional disparities among 29 OECD countries, while a CEPR study showed huge income inequality between the two regions.

#### *Profit before people*

Construction quality in the eastern areas affected by the earthquake is of a much lower standard as a result, according to experts. Combined with the fact that the buildings sit on a major faultline, it was a perfect storm.

When asked, one construction engineer told Proletarian that the answer to how this has happened can be summed up very simply. He said it was because of "the capitalist system and its implementers", for whom "human life is of no importance".

"What matters to them is the

absoluteness of exploitation and the system. This system is the creator of the biggest disaster in our country," he explained.

"The fact that no measures were taken to prevent such a disaster, even though it was obvious that it would happen, while the current laws and regulations were ignored and not enforced, is to a large extent related to the mentality of the system," the engineer told Proletarian.

"Capitalism feeds on exploitation," he added. "It brings with it the devaluation of people. Of course the major factor [in the disaster] is capitalism.

"If the experts had not been ignored many times, this natural event could have been prevented from turning into a disaster, and people's lives could have been saved."

Speaking to Proletarian, one woman accused the government of covering up the real death toll. Whole towns and cities have been flattened as a result of the quake and thousands of people are still missing.

Some of those who protested against government negligence in Turkey's major cities, including Istanbul, were detained in a crackdown. But President Erdogan couldn't escape the chants of "Government, resign" that reverberated in the stadiums of Turkish football giants Besiktas and Fenerbahçe, a team long-associated with the country's leader.

In both Syria and Turkey, however, change is coming. All the signs are that both countries are rebuilding relations with regional neighbours while strengthening ties with Moscow and Beijing.

From the rubble of the earthquake, a new world order could be emerging.

### Manifesto for the Crisis: Class Against Class



Workers in the west are faced with the biggest fall in their living standards since the second world war. But what is at the root of the energy and inflation crises that are fueling the cost of living crisis in Britain and elsewhere?

Why do British trade unions seem so unable to lead a victorious struggle despite overwhelming support for pay restitution and for the restoration of our decimated public services?

Why are we also seeing a rampant and seemingly insatiable drive to war by our rulers?

And what, in the midst of all this chaos, should we actually be *doing*?

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## Middle east

### Middle east peace

◀ **page 28** and Egypt are on course to do the same.

The Russian president recently announced plans for Brics to create a new 'basket-based' global reserve currency, comprising the Brazilian real, Russian rouble, Indian rupee, Chinese renminbi and South African rand, and posing an alternative to the International Monetary Fund's special drawing right (SDR) – a major step towards the dedollarisation of the world economy and the end of the US-dominated global system of imperialist economic blackmail.

It might have given some modicum of comfort to President Biden had his inaction over developments in the middle east been compensated for by some encouraging news on the war front in Ukraine. This was not to be, however.

"Ukraine's ever-imminent counteroffensive will attempt to retake Russian-seized territory most likely in the east and south, though for operational reasons no senior officials from Kiev have detailed specifics.

"Publicly, President Joe Biden's team has offered unwavering support for Ukraine, pledging to load it up with weapons and economic aid for 'as long as it takes'. But, if the impending fighting season yields limited gains, administration officials have expressed privately that they fear being faced with a two-headed monster attacking it from both the hawkish and dovish ends of the spectrum.

"One side will say that Ukraine's advances would've worked had the administration given Kiev everything it asked for, namely longer-range missiles, fighter jets and more air defences. The other side, ad-

ministration officials worry, will claim Ukraine's shortcoming proves it can't force Russia out of its territory completely.

"That doesn't even account for the reaction of America's allies, mainly in Europe, who may see a peace negotiation between Ukraine and Russia as a more attractive option if Kiev can't prove victory is around the corner." (Biden's team fears the aftermath of a failed Ukrainian counteroffensive by Jonathan Lemire and Alexander Ward, Politico, 24 April 2023)

Meanwhile, progressive humanity is cheering to see that the end of the wars in Syria, Iraq and Yemen are all finally within sight, while the positions of the USA and its remaining proxy Israel look increasingly shaky. Nothing could more eloquently give the lie to the fairy tales of Russian and Chinese 'imperialism' than these people-centred results of their actions in the region.

In the early days of the Bolivarian revolution, the great Venezuelan revolutionary Hugo Chávez put on record his gratitude to the Iraqi resistance for putting fire under the feet of US imperialism and giving his people a space in which to advance while Uncle Sam was bogged down elsewhere. We can be sure that he would today be cheering on Russia's antifascist war of national resistance and thanking those involved for providing a similar breathing space to progressive forces in other parts of the world, amongst them those who have seized the opportunity to further the cause of anti-imperialist liberation in the middle east.

Truly, our struggles against imperialism are one and the same.

**Victory to the resistance!**

## Join the communists

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

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

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

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

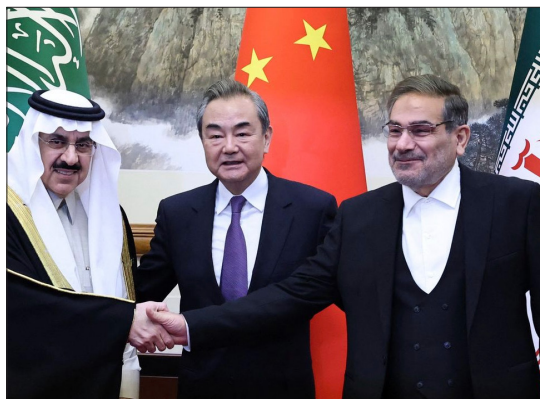
Our membership is youthful, while our leadership is experienced. We may be small, but we are growing. We welcome anyone who is serious and committed to working for a socialist future.

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# Proletarian



## The quiet revolution: peace breaking out all over the middle east

**While Uncle Sam is bogged down in trying to destroy Russia via Ukraine, peoples elsewhere are getting out from under his jackboot**

After half a century of failed 'peace initiatives', 'road maps', 'deals of the century' and 'shuttle diplomacy', peace appears to be breaking out all over the middle east – without any help at all from Uncle Sam. It seems that the biggest contribution to peace that can be made by the United States is via its absence from the scene.

Not that Washington has been twiddling its thumbs all the while. But trying to wage a proxy war against Russia turns out to be more complicated and perilous than US president Joe Biden bargained for, especially when his reluctant European allies are scrambling for the exit, Russia's courageous war of resistance is standing firm, and President Vladimir Putin, so far from facing popular revolt and regime change, is riding high in the polls.

### China and Russia lead a quiet revolution in the middle east

But time waits for no man. Whilst the collective west has been fighting to the last drop of Ukrainian blood, emptying its arsenals to feed a much-trumpeted 'spring offensive' that is looking more dubious by the day, China and Russia have been diligently negotiating a series of bilateral diplomatic forays which, taken all together, amount to a quiet revolution in the middle east.

China's near-miraculous feat of reconciling the Saudis with the Iranians has been followed by Russian talks with Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Syria, raising the prospect of an end to the war in Syria and the latter's resumption of its rightful place in the Arab League.

Al Jazeera reports: "Syrian

president Bashar al-Assad has met with Saudi foreign minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan al-Saud in the most significant step yet towards ending Syria's decade-long regional isolation. Prince Faisal landed in Damascus on Tuesday, Syrian state media reported, a week after his Syrian counterpart visited Saudi Arabia. The visit is the first by a Saudi official to Syria's capital since the start of the country's civil war in 2011."

The report noted: "diplomats from nine Arab countries met in the Saudi city of Jeddah to discuss ending Syria's long spell in the diplomatic wilderness and its possible return to the 22-member Arab League after Damascus was suspended in 2011." Al Jazeera points out that "regional capitals have gradually been warming to al-Assad as he has clawed back most of the territory lost to rivals, with crucial backing from Russia and Iran". (Saudi foreign minister meets Syria's Assad in Damascus, Al

Jazeera, 18 April 2023)

Russian diplomacy has also concentrated on forging a rapprochement between Syria and Turkey. Whilst President Assad refuses to meet directly with Turkish premier Recep Tayyip Erdogan until such time as Turkish-backed forces are withdrawn from Syria, "Turkish and Russian officials say preparations are being made for a meeting between deputy foreign ministers of Turkey, Syria and Iran ahead of planned talks between foreign ministers.

"Assad acknowledged the role played by Russia in encouraging a rapprochement between Erdogan and himself. 'We trust the Russian side, which has played a mediator role to facilitate the communications, but within the basis of Russian policy of respecting sovereignty of states, and the exit of illegal foreign forces from Syrian territory,' Assad said," adding that of course the presence of Russian troops in Syria was legitimate as his government had requested Moscow's support. (Syria's Assad says he won't meet Erdogan until Turkey ends its 'occupation' by Suleiman al-Khalidi, Reuters, 16 March 2023)

### Inexorable rise of Brics

Running in parallel with these shifting patterns of allegiance in the middle east has been the steadily increasing gravitational pull exercised by the Brics alliance, comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Iran and Argentina recently applied to join, and Saudi Arabia, Turkey ► **page 27**