

Blaming China for the climate crisis is shameful nonsense

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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In the run-up to the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference, currently taking place in Glasgow, politicians and media in the West conducted a coordinated and insistent campaign to shift responsibility for the climate crisis on to China.

US President Joe Biden claimed in his closing statement to the G20 Summit, the day before the start of COP26, that China “basically didn’t show up in terms of any commitments to deal with climate change.” He further stated that meaningful

progress on climate change negotiations is “going to require us to continue to focus on what China’s not doing.”

Biden specifically criticized Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin for not attending the G20 Summit in person, although he failed to mention that they did attend via video link. Several commentators on social media have noted that attending a climate change conference via Zoom produces significantly less emissions than arriving in a private jet and travelling round Glasgow in an 85-car motorcade, which is what Biden did.

Blaming China is nothing new, of course, and feeds in to the New Cold War that the US and its allies are cultivating, with a view to protecting and expanding the US-led imperialist system. China is an enemy, a “strategic competitor”; it must not be allowed to “win the 21st century”.

When it comes to the global struggle to prevent climate catastrophe, pushing responsibility towards China has a further benefit beyond old-fashioned demonization; it means shifting the responsibility away from the advanced capitalist countries which might otherwise be expected to fix a problem largely of their making.

The “it’s all China’s fault” narrative rests on two key themes: first, that China has for the last few years been the world’s largest emitter (in absolute terms) of greenhouse gases; second, that China has committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2060, whereas the US and Britain have said they will bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.

Such a narrative is flawed in five obvious ways:

First, China is the world’s most populous country, with a population of 1.4 billion. Measured on a per capita basis, China’s emissions are very ordinary – around the same level as Bulgaria and New Zealand.

To understand the relevance of the per capita calculation, just imagine China is split into four different countries – that is, the wildest fantasies of the imperialist nations have been realized! Each one would have under half the emissions of the US.

Second, the comparison of current annual emissions distorts the overall picture. Greenhouse gases don't suddenly disappear from the atmosphere; carbon dioxide hangs around for hundreds of years.

In terms of cumulative emissions – the quantity of excess greenhouse gases in the atmosphere right now – the US is responsible for 25 percent, although it contains just four percent of the world's population. China meanwhile is responsible for 13 percent of cumulative emissions, in spite of having 18 percent of the world's population.

Over the course of two hundred years, Europe, North America and Japan have become modern industrialized countries, burning enormous quantities of assorted fossil fuels and creating an environmental crisis. Now they want to both shift the blame onto others and pull up the ladder of development. Any reasonable person will agree that this is outright moral bankruptcy.

Third, the reason China's emissions have gone up in recent decades while the West's emissions have gone down has essentially nothing to do with people in the rich countries compromising on their lifestyles or governments making impressive progress on decarbonization; rather, it's that the advanced capitalist countries have exported their emissions to the developing world.

China as the “workshop of the world” means that products consumed in the West are very often produced in China. Chinese emissions are primarily caused by manufacturing and infrastructure development, not by luxury consumption. In fact, average household energy consumption in the US and Canada is eight times higher than in China.

Fourth, and related, is the fact that China is a developing country. The leading capitalist countries of Europe, North America and Japan reached peak greenhouse gas emissions in the 1980s, after nearly two centuries of industrialization. If they succeed in achieving net zero emissions by 2050, their journey from peak carbon to net zero will have taken six or seven decades.

Before the proclamation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, China's economy was based overwhelmingly on small-scale agriculture. There was very little industry, very little transport infrastructure; only a tiny fraction of the population had access to modern energy. Since then, China's use of fossil fuels has steadily increased as it has industrialized. If it meets its targets of reaching peak emissions by 2030 and zero carbon by 2060, both achievements will have taken less than half the time they took in the West.

Fifth, China is already making extraordinary progress towards tackling climate change. It is unquestionably the world leader in renewable energy, with a total capacity greater than the US, the EU, Japan and Britain combined. For the last two decades, it has been making a concerted effort to reduce its reliance on coal, which currently makes up 56 percent of its power mix, down from over 80 percent.

China's forest coverage has increased from 12 percent in the early 1980s to 23 percent today. It has established national parks covering 230,000 square kilometers. Meanwhile it also leads the world in the production and use of electric cars, trains and buses. Around 99 percent of the world's electric buses are in China, along with 70 percent of the world's high-speed rail.

Even leading US politicians have recognized China's progress. Back in December 2019, setting out his vision for the US to accelerate its decarbonization, John Kerry observed in an article for the New York Times that "China is becoming an energy superpower", that "China surpassed us for the lead in renewable energy technology." He commented: "China is doing things we are afraid to do. They offer

citizens large subsidies for purchasing electric vehicles from state-owned companies.”

Of course, the world needs China – as the largest current emitter – to take serious action to reduce emissions. Indeed there is a clear consensus at all levels of Chinese government on tackling climate change, biodiversity and pollution. China is taking the project of constructing an “ecological civilization” very seriously, but it is hypocritical and nonsensical for the West to play the blame game and to push responsibility onto China.

As it stands, the US and its allies are more committed to their New Cold War than they are to a safe future for humanity. This is exemplified by US import bans on Chinese solar panels, based on the unproven and libelous accusation that this industry makes use of slave labor in Xinjiang.

Environmental catastrophe is knocking at the door. We need to get serious. The West must drop its policy of demonizing and threatening China; it must adopt an approach of multilateralism and cooperation. The US, Europe, China and others should be collaborating on research and development for climate change adaptation and mitigation; on renewable energy systems; on artificial intelligence systems for monitoring weather patterns; on providing urgently-needed support to the least developing countries.

China has been abundantly clear that it wants a close, collaborative relationship with the other major powers around environmental issues. The ball is in our court. Those of us in the West should be demanding our governments to stop shirking their responsibilities, to build mutual trust with China, and to do everything possible to keep Earth habitable for humanity.

Source: [Morning Star](#)



Chronicle of a tragedy foretold

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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Fidel Castro was the first head of state to warn about the very serious threat posed by environmental pollution and greenhouse gases to the human species. It will soon be 30 years since that warning was made in just under six minutes at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

An important biological species -the Cuban leader affirmed- is at risk of disappearing due to the rapid and progressive liquidation of its natural living conditions: man. And he immediately went to the heart of the matter, which is not greenhouse gases per se, but a whole complex multidimensional crisis originated by the capitalist system. It is necessary to point out -added the Commander- that consumer societies are fundamentally responsible for the atrocious destruction of the environment. They were born of the former colonial metropolises and imperial policies which, in turn, engendered the backwardness and poverty that today plague the immense majority of humanity.

With only 20% of the world's population, they consume two-thirds of the metals and three-quarters of the energy produced in the world. They have poisoned the seas and rivers, polluted the air, weakened and perforated the ozone layer, and saturated the atmosphere with gases that alter climatic conditions with catastrophic effects that we are already beginning to suffer.

Only with some adjustments in the quantities, those words still allow us to characterize the brutal depredation of nature and the exploitation of the great majorities by the imperialist powers. In reality, the situation described by his prophetic warning has only worsened, because during the three decades that have passed, the barbaric neoliberal policies have deepened, accentuating capitalist exploitation, plundering and environmental depredation practiced by imperialist capital, causing catastrophic global warming and pollution.

Fidel was also the world leader who in the whole second half of the 20th century devoted more energy of his brilliant mind to analyze capitalist and imperialist exploitation and its consequences. Among them, the very serious problem of global warming which, together with the danger of nuclear war, formed a substantial part of his concerns until the last days of his life.

From his warning in Rio to his Reflections in the final stage, the facts prove the Commander right. As denounced by most of the social movements in attendance, with particular emphasis on the representatives of indigenous peoples, very little has been done to date by the developed countries, the main causes of this situation, to halt and reverse it.

In fact, despite how threatening the phenomenon has become, none of the pollutant emissions reduction targets set in the famous Paris Agreement, which came into force in 2016, not to mention the previous Kyoto ones, have been met. On the contrary, a temperature increase of 1.1 degrees Celsius over the pre-industrial era, the highest recorded in two million years, has already been reached.

Nor are the commitments reached so far at COP26 in Glasgow sufficient to avoid, before the middle of the 21st century, an increase in temperatures of more than two degrees Celsius and a climate change with terribly catastrophic effects. Increasing and more frequent heat waves that will kill many people, loss of forests and desertification; melting of glaciers, poles and Greenland's permafrost; extreme and prolonged droughts, rains and floods of unprecedented magnitude, increase of temperature and acidity in the seas, irreversible flooding of large coastal areas and disappearance of small islands as a consequence of sea level rise, more frequent and intense tropical cyclones and storms, migration of important human masses; extinction of tens of thousands of species and loss of hundreds of ecological niches, both with consequences that are difficult to foresee, but certainly disastrous for life.

In truth, these phenomena are already here and are part of our daily lives. They will only become more and more common and will worsen exponentially, creating an unlivable situation for millions of human beings.

Meetings such as COP26 serve to raise awareness of the magnitude and serious threat to life posed by all of the above and to extract certain concessions, but they will not solve them. Only a gigantic pedagogical work together with great popular mobilizations can force governments to act on this crucial issue for humanity. The key to this was given by Hugo Chavez, "let us not change the climate, let us change the system."

Source: [Cubadebate](#), translation [Resumen Latinoamericano - English](#)



Climate crisis: Who's pulling strings of budget negotiations?

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The consequences of a century's worth of industrial capitalist destruction of the atmosphere continued lashing out at the earth in late October. A "bomb cyclone" attacked the U.S. West Coast, while a nor'easter slammed the Northeast.

The damaging weather from the west then sped clear across the country after causing floods and mudslides. Tornadoes and thunderstorms rocked the region known as Tornado Alley, from South Dakota all the way south to Texas.

On the East Coast, from as far south as North Carolina and all the way north, thunderstorms with winds clocked in between 60 and 100 miles per hour. In New England, a storm surge of three to four feet knocked out power to well over 500,000 people.

The extreme weather of 2021 has surpassed so many previous records. It has been

severe and frequent.

The most important international conference on climate change since the Paris Climate Accords were reached in 2015 began in Glasgow, Scotland, on Oct. 31. The White House was counting on getting an assortment of climate change proposals included in a broader spending bill through Congress before Glasgow – to avoid international embarrassment.

The U.S. is the worst per capita emitter of greenhouse gases in the world and hasn't moved forward in its commitments. Biden has to present a puffed-up picture of progress. Negotiations with a handful of right-wing members of his own party sent Biden and other U.S. representatives to Glasgow [empty-handed](#).

The Build Back Better spending bill was initially proposed with a price tag of \$3.5 trillion. Along with a handful of other Democrats, Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia has beaten that down to \$1.75 trillion, and is still pushing for more cuts.

Manchin himself was already a coal baron before he became a U.S. senator. He's raked in more than \$5 million since then. In April he was made chair of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee in a bipartisan vote. That should be seen as a major conflict of interest, but it doesn't raise any eyebrows in Washington. There's plenty of that in capitalist government.

Alongside programs that would be key to mitigating climate change, the bill would have boosted crucial social services like paid family leave, student debt relief, child nutrition, an expansion of Medicare and Medicaid, and more. The spat within the Democratic Party has put all of that on the chopping block.

Manchin, the senator from Big Coal, says he wants the total spending bill cut to just \$1.5 trillion.

CEPP on cutting room floor

Also left on the cutting room floor as of this writing is the Climate Energy Performance Program (CEPP.) That proposal would have paid power generators incrementally to switch to wind, solar, hydro or nuclear power instead of coal or diesel. It would have imposed penalties for non-compliance.

CEPP was the flagship among the climate change proposals included in the spending bill, and the Biden administration was counting on it to happen before Glasgow.

The overall bill is framed in the media as grand and ambitious, but it doesn't live up to the urgency of the climate crisis. None of these climate change proposals go after the profits of the giant U.S. banks or energy industry. The CEPP came the closest — and that was too close for comfort from the point of view of Big Capital. Manchin is their attack dog.

The congressional group aligned against the bill used phony concern over deficit spending — a favorite of the right-wing — as a cover story. It's really the profits of giant corporations that they're defending.

The money is there. Much of it is locked away in the bloated military budget with near-unanimous bipartisan support. U.S. military spending over the same 10-year period projected in the Build Back Better spending bill will add up to at least \$800 trillion — and that's a conservative guess, because there will be increases.

But Pentagon spending is considered untouchable, as are the trillions of dollars in the coffers of the tiny handful of corporate owners that dominate the world.

Their wealth far outstrips that of the rest of the population of the planet. The White House could have pushed harder to get the banks and corporations to pay for the entire spending bill. If they were looking for an easy target, Trump's tax break gift of \$2 trillion to the capitalist class was staring them right in the face.

If you add that to the \$2.1 trillion that parasitic corporations like Amazon, Walmart

and others stole since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the total is far more than the original amount of the spending bill.

The real negotiations

Biden didn't have to cave in to Manchin and his hit squad. But the real center of power that the White House is negotiating with is the collection of giant banks, energy companies and other corporations – the capitalist class.

Big banks and oil companies put on an act that they are investing in “going green.” But a study called [Banking on Climate Chaos](#) reported that seven U.S. banks have invested about \$1.3 trillion in fossil fuels in the six years since the Paris Climate conference.

JPMorgan Chase was out front with \$268 billion; Wells Fargo, Bank of America and Citibank are close behind. They’re at the top of the list globally. Their investments were in some of the biggest U.S. oil and gas corporations.

The U.S fossil fuel industry has not budged an inch in the interest of saving the planet, and the Democratic Party has done nothing about it.

The White House may try to put a good face on it, but the U.S. is lagging way behind the 2015 Paris goals to keep the rise in the earth’s temperature below 2 degrees Celsius by 2030 or reach net zero carbon emissions by mid-century. The Glasgow conference is meant to strengthen those goals.

Further, the catastrophic weather events of 2021 have the world’s climatologists studying the question of whether that timeline is adequate.

In mid-October, 655 people were arrested during “People vs. Fossil Fuels” protests in Washington, D.C. Youth blockaded a road while Indigenous leaders — the initiators of the protests — sat in at the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S.

Chamber of Commerce, demanding that Biden call a climate emergency.

These brave activists have the right idea. Big Oil can't be negotiated away.

The people's movement that is needed has to be more than independent - it has to be revolutionary. To save the planet, capitalism must die.



Capitalism stands in the way of reversing climate crisis

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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A lot of today's climatologists may at this point feel like Superman's father and Krypton's leading scientist, Jor-El, who, in the comic book world, tried to warn the Council of Elders that planetary doom was nigh unless they acted.

Earth's scientists have been sounding the alarm about climate change since as early as the 1880's, and much more in the last four decades, but they have been up against corporate-funded climate change denial and action has been limited. The last

few years — and especially this summer — may have silenced some of the most vociferous among the deniers.

Raging wildfires, floods, extreme storms, historic drought, are already happening. Some projections have been made of a doubling or tripling of the annual number of days with unlivable heat affecting huge swaths of the U.S. by mid-century. An [Aug. 5 Washington Post report](#) says that something called the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC), which is a larger ocean current that includes the Gulf Stream, has slowed down because of climate change and could collapse altogether. If it does, the Post reports, “it could bring extreme cold to Europe and parts of North America, raise sea levels along the U.S. East Coast and disrupt seasonal monsoons that provide water to much of the world.”

Planet not exploding, yet

No serious scientists believe that we will share the fate of Krypton — the comic book planet exploded — but mitigating and reversing the crisis will have to be done independently of capitalist corporations and their government. Unless that is done, global warming will bring more widespread death and destruction. The poorest countries and populations will bear the brunt of it.

There are measures that can be taken to get humanity on track. They would all be massive undertakings. It may take a big combination of some of them or reliance on yet unforeseen methods. It is only the for-profit economic system of capitalism that stands in the way of mounting a serious, no-holds-barred fight against global warming.

It will not be possible to curb or stop CO₂ emissions without an enormous struggle — there should be no doubt about that. But curbing or stopping emissions alone won’t solve the problem. To end the crisis it is also necessary to remove the accumulated CO₂ from the atmosphere.

Compare it to a train with 100 rail cars, doing 55 mph that needs to come to a sudden stop. The engineer fully applies the emergency brake, but the train keeps moving for at least a mile. Dr. David Keith, a professor of applied physics and public policy at Harvard, wrote in [an Oct. 1 opinion piece](#) in the New York Times that “Average temperatures will stop increasing when emissions stop, but cooling will take thousands of years … while the heat will stop getting worse, sea level will continue to rise for centuries as polar ice melts in a warmer world.”

Fossil fuel industry rules

International pressure has forced some action by the world’s richest countries that have amassed staggering riches from fossil fuels, of which the U.S. is number one. Nothing so far, though, has seriously threatened the riches being amassed by the fossil fuel industry. Biden’s “Build Back Better” proposals, if enacted, would enable the U.S. to attend the November climate conference in Scotland having lived up to commitments made in Paris in 2015.

After the climate disasters this year, many see even those commitments as inadequate. But there is also pressure pushing in the other direction, fueled by energy corporations and investors. Biden left out any elements of the Green New Deal proposed by the more progressive wing of the Democratic Party, and he is weakening on his own proposals as bankers, corporations and especially oil giants push back.

Even before this year, actions favored by the ruling class have been half measures that are embraced because they allow energy giants to maintain the status quo.

California had one of the first cap-and-trade markets, which dole out incentives to reduce emissions. A cap gets set on the amount of emissions for every company. Spewing less CO2 than what is allowed by the cap earns credits that can be sold at auction to companies who can use them to legally emit more CO2. As useless as it is,

some 50 more markets were set up globally since California's.

Cap-and-trade was a concession to energy corporations, as an alternative to mandatory emissions cuts. But [ProPublica reports](#) that the state made more concessions under former Gov. Jerry Brown, whose family members are tied to energy companies, by dropping incremental mandatory reductions that were supposed to be part of the deal. The largest California oil refineries, owned by Marathon Petroleum and Chevron, have increased their emissions by 3.5% since 2017, when California's market started.

Carbon Capture is snake oil

Now, big energy, banking and other giant corporations are pouring money into another method of dealing with climate change — carbon capture, utilization and storage. The technology pulls CO₂ out of the air. One method stores it underground or in the oceans, with the risk of pipeline and storage vessel leaks. Another method sells the extracted CO₂ at a profit to be used in products such as soft drinks, plastics, or, unbelievably, to assist in the process of getting more oil and gas out of the ground.

Carbon capture is expected to grow to about a \$2 trillion industry. No wonder that Elon Musk, Microsoft, Occidental Petroleum and ExxonMobil are throwing billions at it. The technology may become very profitable long before it is capable of making a difference. Currently, the amount of CO₂ that it's capable of removing from the atmosphere is woefully inadequate.

Globally, forty-three billion tons of CO₂ go into the air each year. In 2019, 44 million tons were extracted and stored underground using carbon capture and storage. That is only a tenth of a percent of one year of CO₂ emissions - not coming anywhere near what's needed to remove almost two centuries of CO₂ that has accumulated, and which will continue raising global temperatures for future generations.

U.S. corporations caused 20% of the greenhouse gases that are warming the planet. Those same corporations now regularly use the word “green” to hawk their wares. Of course, using the word isn’t a real change. Cap-and-trade markets and carbon capture technologies are what they are doing, because neither threaten the continued profitable extraction of oil and gas.



How capitalism shackles the fight against climate change

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Journalists from the U.S. and Europe have warned that the summer of 2021 should be a wakeup call on climate catastrophe. Rightfully so. A slew of recent studies and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) had already issued dire assessments even before the wildfires, droughts, floods, Hurricane Ida and extreme heat waves shocked the world.

Everything points to the same reality – the efforts of climatologists to predict the

timing and impact of global warming have been too conservative. The events of summer 2021 rendered the newest scientific pronouncements almost unnecessary. Deaths in the thousands and destruction in the billions of dollars, widespread and all in a matter of a few weeks, spelled it out clearly.

You don't have to be a scientist to understand that climate change's terrible effects are worsening sooner than expected. The situation is urgent.

What the mainstream journalists and scientific studies omit is the weakness of capitalist government responses, the conspiracy of sabotage by big corporations and banks, and the meticulously concealed contribution of the imperialist U.S. military to pollution and climate change.

The fight against global warming is shackled by capitalists chasing down profits at all costs. That planet-threatening quest for markets and money isn't a policy that can be changed by electoral politics. It's an inherent trait of the capitalist system. The fight against climate change must be a revolutionary struggle against capitalism and imperialism.

Damning admission, toothless response

Just before the 2021 disasters began raining death and destruction in June and July, a [Greenpeace investigation](#) - a climate activists' sting operation — tricked a top ExxonMobil lobbyist into revealing company efforts to promote climate change denial. It's egregious and normally kept under wraps, yet all perfectly legal under capitalism.

ExxonMobil's senior director for federal relations talked about working with "shadow groups," supporting a carbon tax that had no chance of getting through Congress just for the sake of climate change PR, all the while influencing senators to weaken climate elements of Biden's infrastructure bill.

"Joe Manchin, I talk to his office every week," the Big Oil flack bragged. "We look for the moderates on these issues."

The "shadow groups" are a huge network of think tanks and pressure groups like Heartland Institute, Competitive Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation. The oil giants have been using them to spread disinformation and downplay the dangers of global warming for decades. ExxonMobil alone spent more than \$30 million doing that between 1998 and 2014.

The sting resulted in a congressional investigation, which is still going on, but is predictably toothless. Letters to ExxonMobil, BP America, Chevron Corporation and Shell Oil ask them to testify about their disinformation campaigns and commit to stopping them so that future legislation to mitigate climate change might stand a chance of getting through Congress.

Essentially, the investigation demands that they admit their guilt and promise to be better, but nothing will happen to them if they don't abide.

Imperialism is the culprit

A bill proposed by two members of the congressional group known as "The Squad" aims to choke off Federal Reserve financing for projects that contribute to the climate change disaster.

It has little chance of getting past the corporate-backed politicians in either party, but it revealed the extent to which the major institutions of capitalism add to the crisis, even as their politicians feign concern. The Federal Reserve is supposed to supervise and regulate bank operations, but is financing the continued extraction of fossil fuels.

There is also a concerted push to shift the onus of climate change efforts onto the backs of those countries that have been exploited and underdeveloped in the age of

imperialism. The biggest factor in the existential threat of global warming is still the global dominance of the capitalist system, even as the development of the Chinese economy is affecting that balance.

The narrative of the U.S. major media places the blame on poor countries and China's rising economy for greenhouse gases while touting the "greening" of U.S. capitalism. This marketing subterfuge conceals the efforts by giant energy companies and multi-trillion-dollar banks to maintain their profits at all costs.

It's made easier by the successful U.S. pressure to leave massive Pentagon pollution out of international calculations.

Blaming the Global South is a purposeful distraction. Placing the blame where it belongs — on the big imperialist powers and the profit system — is an essential part of being able to leave the planet in inhabitable condition for future generations.

As a result of the Paris Accords, wealthier countries were obliged to contribute \$100 billion to impoverished countries to help finance clean energy projects before the next major international climate talks, scheduled to take place in November in Copenhagen.

In an international pre-meeting that concluded in early October in Milan, Italy, the fact that the rich capitalist economies still haven't met that obligation became a contentious issue — not only inside the meeting hall, but outside, too, as hundreds of youth, led by activist Greta Thurnberg, lambasted their foot-dragging.

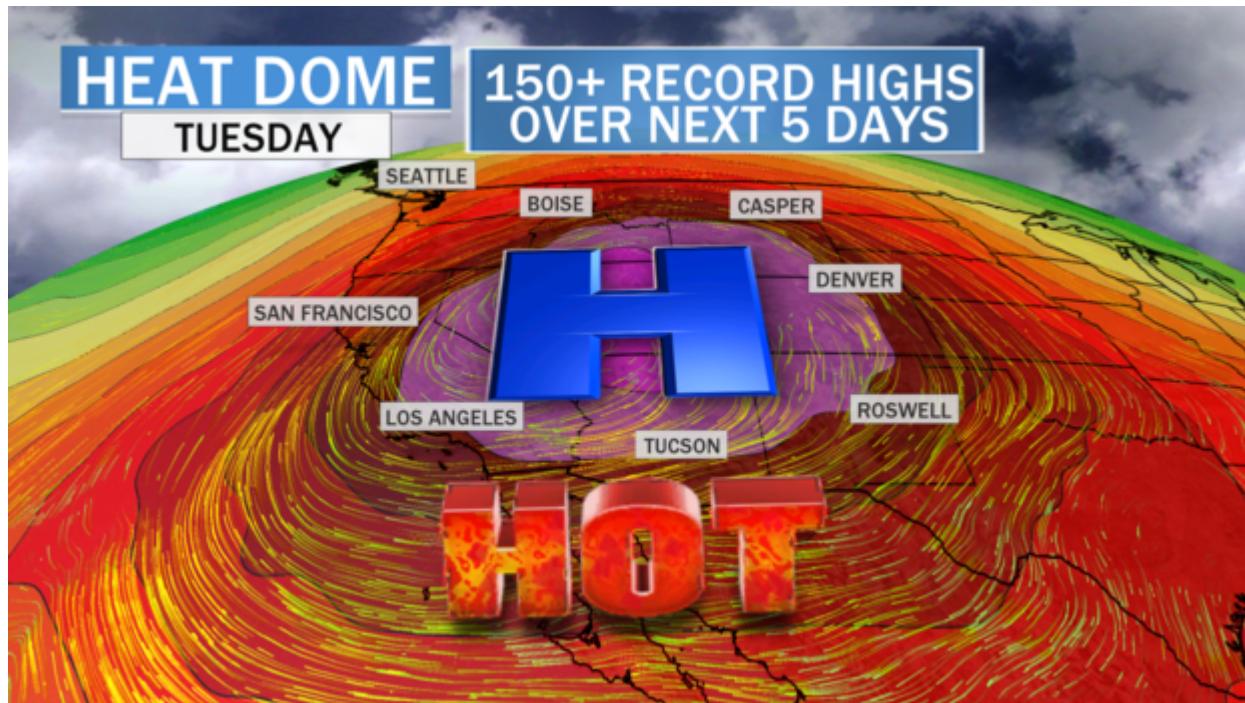
Next: Carbon removal, cap and trade carbon credit markets, and geoengineering: how they're viewed by the capitalist class and how they affect the Global South and the poorest communities in the U.S.



Extreme weather events and capitalism: a deadly combination

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Climate scientists around the world are alarmed by a triple climate-change-related crisis that hit the western U.S. and Canada in June and July.

Normally climatologists are careful in their assessment of extreme weather events, under pressure from energy industry profiteers and anti-science climate change deniers. They go to great pains to avoid being accused of exaggeration, and rarely (really never) point to climate change as the cause of specific freakish weather events.

The severity of what has happened in June and July has pushed past many of their carefully calculated projections. The fingerprints of capitalist-induced global warming are all over the crime scene.

A severe drought in the western states of the U.S. that has been worsening for months has nearly drained Lake Mead in Nevada, Lake Oroville in California and other major reservoirs, threatening power generation for millions of people. A series of intense, widespread, sustained heat waves tortured a quarter of the U.S. as well as western Canada for weeks, taking the lives of hundreds of people.

The super-dry conditions in the region have caused 83 wildfires, including the Dixie Fire in northern California and the Bootleg Fire in southern Oregon. They are two of the largest wildfires in history and are both still raging.

Mild Pacific Northwest goes wild

The southwest U.S. is no stranger to deadly heat, but what is most unexpected is that this extreme heat has hit the Pacific Northwest, a region known for mild temperatures and damp weather.

Roads buckled in Seattle from the sweltering heat. For several days Portland, Ore., was the fourth-hottest place on earth. British Columbia suffered the highest death toll with more than 800 deaths between the end of June and middle of July —

quadruple the average number of deaths.

The village of Lytton in British Columbia burned to the ground just as Paradise, Calif., did in 2018 — essentially nothing left but ashes and smoke.

In Canada's British Columbia province, and the U.S. states of Washington, Oregon and northern California, the heat broke all-time temperature records, and then broke those records again, and then again.

Electric power for millions threatened

Nevada and California's livability depends on a system of 1,500 human-made reservoirs, not only for drinking water and agriculture but for electricity from hydroelectric generators.

Engineers say that the water level in Lake Mead will be below the minimum water level needed to generate power to 1.3 million people in a matter of days. Lake Oroville will likely last until September, when it won't be able to supply electricity for another 800,000.

Normally, power companies buy power from nearby regions when needed. But constantly running air conditioning in a wide swath of the western U.S. during 2021 has diminished power surpluses that normally allow that to happen.

All told, the fires have burned 1.3 million acres — an area larger than Los Angeles, New York City and Chicago combined. The smoke has journeyed cross-country to the East Coast, prompting air quality warnings along the northern part of the Eastern Seaboard and as far inland as central Virginia.

In addition to California, Oregon, Washington and British Columbia, the heatwaves hit Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana and Idaho.

Heat deadly for agricultural workers

Thirty-eight-year-old Sebastián Francisco Pérez from Guatemala was working at an Oregon tree farm on June 26 when he collapsed and died from the heat. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that 53 agricultural workers died from heat nationwide in 2019, but this was the first in Oregon directly attributable to heat.

Only four states have laws in place to protect farmworkers. Oregon became the third after the death of Sebastián. Washington State quickly followed with some emergency measures. Some other states merely have “guidelines.”

Irene Ruiz, an environmental justice organizer from Boise, Idaho, messaged Struggle-La Lucha about the heightened danger to agricultural workers during heatwaves. “Guidelines are not enough. These are the people who put food on our tables and are the most affected and in danger of extreme heat.”

Imperialism and global warming

Recent decades have seen extreme weather events become more frequent and much more severe than previous periods. Experts point to that quickening pace and increasing severity as caused directly by global warming, even though they usually avoid blaming global warming for specific weather events.

The opposing narrative, motivated by energy profiteers, is that the warming of the atmosphere during this period is a natural cycle, that it has happened before over the millennia, and that it will pass.

But a scientific paper [published in the journal Nature](#) on July 28 referenced two large, decades-long studies of the Earth’s “energy balance” — the amount of the sun’s energy entering Earth’s atmosphere compared to the amount of energy reflected back out into space. Both studies confirm that greenhouse gases are keeping the sun’s energy trapped in our atmosphere.

The paper asserts that there is less than a 1% chance that the rise in global temperatures and all of its frightening consequences are a natural occurrence.

Greenhouse gases began to heat the atmosphere with the dawn of industrial capitalism in the latter part of the 19th century. That much is readily admitted in the capitalist press these days. What isn't written about enough is the role of imperialist domination in this crisis for humanity.

The machinery of war is the greatest consumer of oil, and like a dog chasing its tail, pollutes the world while fighting to control oil markets. If the U.S. military machine were to be ranked in the list of countries that indicates how much they contribute to pollutants that heat the atmosphere, the list would show it ahead of 46 countries.

Estimates of the cost of stopping global warming vary from \$300 billion to Forbes Magazine's price tag of \$50 trillion. Underdevelopment and poverty have been imposed on much of the world by imperialist military force and economic leverage for more than a century. The stolen wealth is now concentrated in the hands of the tiny group of billionaires that have profited immensely — as a class — from the control of oil markets. That stolen wealth is key to mitigating climate change.

The world is being told to put its faith in international agreements to solve the crisis. The Paris Climate Agreement is supposed to oblige each participating country to limit greenhouse gases and commit rich nations — and in some cases private corporations — to help fund efforts by poor nations with \$100 billion per year in grants, loans and other forms of financing, to help them switch to clean energy.

That agreement still shifts the blame to the poorest countries, when in fact 20 industrialized countries are responsible for 78% of greenhouse gases.

Historically, no country has put more carbon dioxide into the air than the imperialist U.S. empire. The ultimate goal of the Paris Agreement is to limit greenhouse gases

to a 2% increase per year, and “if possible” to 1.5% per year. As of today, the rich countries haven’t come up with the first \$100 billion that was due in 2018.

Capitalism is a roadblock on the path to mitigating this huge crisis for humankind. It will take a global environmental movement that is revolutionary — conscious of the need to eradicate imperialism — to stop the crisis of global warming and climate change.



Fires, climate and prisons: Systemic racism, sexism is deadly

written by Struggle - La Lucha

November 6, 2021

Los Angeles, Sept. 18 — The National Interagency Fire Center, which provides unified guidance for fire agencies in the U.S., said the fires burning in Washington state, Oregon and California since the end of August have burnt over 4.5 million acres so far — an area larger than Connecticut.

The skies in California can attest to that. They’ve gone from grey to red and back to

grey again and the air quality here in South Central Los Angeles is registered as USG — Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups — meaning folks with asthma and other pulmonary diseases shouldn't be outside exercising and should spend most of the day inside.

For some, this latest crisis drives home the warnings of scientists worldwide about the dangers of doing nothing about global warming. For others, like Trump and his flock, it's just about the origin of the fires, the match, or the lightning, or whatever initially started the fire. We needn't concern ourselves, they say, with the intensity and duration of the fire that follows, just focus on the match.

Last month, Trump said at one of his rallies that if you want to stop the fires, "You've got to clean your forests. There are many, many years of leaves and broken trees and they're ... so flammable," [the BBC reported](#).

Tree debris isn't new, greenhouse gas levels are new

Yeah, those untidy plants have been making a mess [for about 370 million years](#) on earth. So, that's nothing new. But what's different is the historically recent exponential increase in the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. A rake isn't going to fix that.

Although the headlines today are focused on the West Coast, actually these fires have been a global phenomenon. Wildfires have burned large areas of our planet in various continents with smoke drifting across oceans and exacerbating global warming.

According to Matt McGrath, environmental correspondent for BBC news, "While natural factors such as strong winds have helped the spread of these massive fires, the underlying heating of the climate from human activities is making these conflagrations bigger and more explosive."

McGrath writes that nine of the ten warmest years on record have happened since 2005 and the United Nations had already warned that five years from 2016 would be the hottest ever recorded. This is why, he says, six of the 20 largest fires on record in California all occurred this year. In addition, a prolonged drought over the past decade has killed millions of trees, turning them into potent fuel for the fires.

“Climate scientists had forecast that western wildfires would grow in size, scale and impact — but their predictions are coming to fruition faster than expected,” writes McGrath.

Tens of thousands evacuated, but not prisoners

The North Complex Fire in northern California in the counties of Plumas and Butte, initially started by lightning on Aug. 17, 2020, is among the deadliest in history. So far, news reports say that ten bodies have been found and another 16 people are missing.

Last week, the [Los Angeles Times reported](#) that 20 people in California had died from the fires since Aug. 15. [BBC News reported](#) that tens of thousands of people are under evacuation orders in California as 14,800 firefighters continue to combat 28 major fires in the state.

However, the fires in California are not only threatening the lives of people whose homes are located near the flames, they are also a major concern for prisoners who are recruited to fight the fires or who are incarcerated in prisons near them. [According to the New York Times](#), these firefighters are paid up to five dollars per day (that's right, per day!) with an extra one dollar per hour while fighting fires, as if their lives are the most expendable. The prisoner firefighters are highly trained to face the most hazardous conditions and are on the front lines of the fires.

And, if that doesn't kill them, then the exacerbation of the COVID-19 crisis, which

already affects prisoners more than the general population due to overcrowding and no possible social distancing due to lack of space and sanitary equipment and items may. Prisoners are being either evacuated into already overcrowded prisons with no testing for the virus, or are at risk of burning to death because of a lack of evacuation planning with the necessary transportation required.

The New York Times article reports that in the northern California city of Vacaville, while volunteers rescued animals from the encroaching flames, thousands of people incarcerated in two prisons, some suffering from the coronavirus, were not moved, even while a nearby animal shelter just up the road from the prison complex was emptied. Fortunately, the winds were kind and the fire did not reach the California State Prison, Solano.

The COVID-19 crisis and prison transfers had already taken a toll at California's San Quentin State Prison before the fires, where 26 inmates died of the virus and more than 2,500 prisoners and staff members have been sickened since infected prisoners from a southern California prison were transferred to San Quentin in May without being tested.

The New York Times quotes Adnan Khan, who was previously incarcerated in California and now runs [Re:Store Justice](#), a criminal justice reform organization, spent three years at the prison in Solano. Last month, he spoke to a friend at the prison over the phone. "I got a call and honestly, man, I could literally hear people coughing in the background," he said. "I'm like, 'Is that COVID? What's going on?' My friend says, 'No, there's fires here.'"

Khan said his friend told him that corrections officers were walking into the building with ash on their hats and shoulders and that he didn't believe the prisoners would be safely evacuated. "Approximately 7,000 people in both prisons," he said. "And COVID. And buses. Where are you going to get all these buses from? Fire evacuations are relatively fast. You can't just take your time."

COVID-19 and fires a death sentence, release prisoners now

This is why the demand to release the prisoners from these overcrowded death traps is so important and should be elevated. Due to the pandemic and the fires, many prisoners have, in all practicality, had their sentences increased to the death penalty due to criminal neglect by the state and federal governments.

It is interesting that Gov. Gavin Newsom last Friday signed a bill allowing more inmates, who work as firefighters while serving their sentences, to get jobs with fire departments once they are released. The timing is interesting because the demand for that right, along with a real wage, not slave wages, has a long history. But now, the prisoner volunteer pool has been greatly reduced due to early releases or sickness due to COVID-19. So, they are in much greater demand to a state that relies so heavily on these “volunteers.” Perhaps the governor had a change of heart, or felt the necessity to sweeten the pot.

The New York Times quoted a former prisoner at San Quentin, Mr. Stanley-Lockhart, reflecting on how this crisis affects prisoners already dealing with COVID-19 and who live in a country with the highest incarceration rates and long sentences: “It tends to attack your sense of hope,” he said. “If COVID doesn’t get us, the fires will get us. If the fires and COVID don’t get us, we’ll never be able to come out from underneath these sentences.”

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report in 2018 suggested that keeping temperatures down to a certain critical level to avoid environmental catastrophe would require “rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society.”

As the COVID-19 crisis has shown, the U.S. under the system of capitalism is not only a threat to itself, but to the world. The U.S. is the leading contributor to global warming, far exceeding China in regards to emissions per population, and its

rejection of the Paris Accords regarding the international fight against global warming and rejection of the World Health Organization during this pandemic once again shows the necessity of smashing capitalism for the sake of humanity.

A system that breeds racism and sexism, like the former prisoner said, is a recipe for killing hope. Imagine how many of those now fearing the fires behind prison walls could have been the scientists who help us cope with COVID or global warming. Systemic racism in the criminal justice system put them there and keeps them there and denies us their potential contributions. Just as sexism does the same. In fact, global warming was discovered three years prior to its “discovery” by a man. But, those findings weren’t taken seriously since it was the scientist Eunice Foote, a woman, who actually was the first to discover the relationship between greenhouse gases and atmospheric warming. So, we lost three years. Let’s not lose any more in this fight.



What will it take to halt climate

change? Socialism!

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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Among the greatest threats to the people of the world today and our ability for future prosperity is the threat of human-caused climate change, including global warming. In the capitalist world, many in the media, political and business establishment call the concept a hoax because they economically benefit from the industries that are making the planet unlivable for human beings.

Yet in every socialist country, the ruling parties believe in the science of climate change and are taking steps to prevent it. In fact, the socialist countries are doing more to prevent it than many capitalist countries with far greater resources. Their systems of public ownership and planning are what give them the power to do it.

First, what is climate change? What causes it? And why is capitalism so bad at preventing it? What is referred to as “climate change” is the alteration of the planet’s climate caused by human activity. The main mechanism that causes this is the burning of fossil fuels, which release carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas that traps the sun’s heat in the atmosphere and warms the planet.

At the dawn of the industrial revolution, the water power of rivers was used to supply energy to the new factories spinning cloth in England. But before long, steam engines that burned coal replaced the rivers as the primary source of energy. Eventually, electricity was discovered, but the primary source of energy to make electricity was still coal, a very dirty and polluting form of energy, and [it remains one of the largest sources of energy](#), today augmented by oil and natural gas.

Due to hundreds of years of infrastructure and development, coal and other fossil fuels are at the center of so much of the industrialized world and represent some of

the cheapest forms of energy, despite their continued use spelling doom for human civilization. Because capitalism is only concerned with profit, using the cheapest method will always be chosen over anything else, and the future of the planet or welfare of the workers is of no concern for the owners of capital.

The economies of socialist societies, however, are based on planning and public ownership rather than private control by a small wealthy class. These societies can make strategic investments that prioritize other goals rather than the immediate maximization of profit, and preserving the environment and preventing climate change is one of these goals.

China turns to renewable energy

Despite having the largest share of total carbon emissions as a country, the People's Republic of China has a per capita emissions rate that is half that of the United States, while having a greater gross domestic product when adjusted for local purchasing power. During the first decade of the 2000s, the Communist Party of China made fighting pollution a national policy goal. To this end, China poured vast sums of money and national resources into several critical areas of clean energy.

The solar panel and wind turbine markets used to be relatively small and products were expensive, but China invested billions of dollars into massive facilities for the production of solar panels and wind turbines. Within a few years, the costs of these products fell tremendously, with solar panel costs [falling as much as 80 percent](#). These investments were made for the strategic reason of fighting climate change, and they go beyond the capitalist logic of maximizing profits. The state purposefully ramped up production in order to fulfill a human need.

China has also been the nation leading the world in [deployment of new nuclear power plants](#), a form of energy that produces no carbon pollution. According to the World Nuclear Association, China has 47 plants currently in operation, 12 under

construction and 168 in the planning stages. These new power plants are of modern designs quite different from those in the United States, mostly built in the 1970s.

They incorporate many passive safety features to prevent meltdowns such as those that occurred at Chernobyl and Fukushima, requiring no human intervention to prevent disaster. Some reactors in the research stages are even proposed to [run on alternative fuels](#) such as thorium and be cooled by liquid metals like sodium instead of water, offering further increased efficiency and safety.

Nuclear power has been shunned by most countries of the capitalist West for decades. The high upfront costs represent too high of a risk to the private monopoly banks of Wall Street despite their high lifetime output and lack of carbon emissions. A powerful and righteous anti-nuclear movement rebelled against dangerous capitalist abuses of nuclear energy and the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Socialist China, however, believes it can use its collective wealth to plan for the long term and build these power plants safely with the goal of accommodating growth in a way that prevents pollution.

Groundbreaking efforts in Cuba

While the People's Republic of China is the socialist country with the largest economy and most resources at a national level, other socialist countries have made their own contributions to fighting climate change. Many of these efforts were undertaken out of necessity due to the countries' positions as nations oppressed by U.S. imperialism, but embraced for the positive effects they have brought about.

In the 1990s, Cuba went through an incredibly difficult time in what is called the "Special Period" after the dismantling of socialism in the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the state. Nearly overnight, Cuba's largest trading partner was no more and, due to the U.S. imposed blockade, foreign imports of oil and fertilizers

were no longer available to the island nation. They had to innovate in order to survive and in the process reduced their dependence on fossil fuels.

With fuel to run tractors and trucks in short supply, agricultural products on large farms became difficult to harvest and ship to the population in cities. In response, the Cuban government began practicing intensive urban farming on state-owned plots in the cities.

These “Organipónicos,” as they are known, are cultivated with advanced organic methods to increase yields without synthetic fertilizers and because the fields are already in the cities, the amount of fossil fuels needed to be burned to transport them is greatly reduced.

Cuba, known internationally for its sugar production, also uses the waste from the harvest to reduce their fossil fuel usage in ways that are uncommon in capitalist countries. By locating power plants designed to burn the waste products of sugar refining in major agricultural areas and near refineries, Cuba has tapped into an [efficient and renewable form of electricity](#) that avoids fossil fuels.

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) also went through its own period of intense hardship in the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union, known there as the “Arduous March.” They, too, were cut off from oil imports and fertilizers.

The issue in the DPRK became how to irrigate their fields without oil to run the pumps that supplied water to the fields. In response, the country launched a popular campaign to [construct massive dams](#) in the mountains of the country which would allow stored water to flow downhill to the fields via gravity instead of using pumps. These dams were constructed mostly without the assistance of heavy machinery and represented a countrywide mobilization of the people to improve the country.

Additionally, Vietnam faced great devastation at the hands of the U.S. military

during the 1960s and 1970s, including chemical warfare in the form of Agent Orange and other toxic compounds that killed many Vietnamese people and much of their natural environment. Since then, under the guidance of the socialist government, the nation has [planted millions of trees](#), which not only clean the air but also sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in the forest.

These examples are just some of the ways that the world's socialist societies have taken steps to preserve the environment and which reduce their contribution to global climate change. To be sure, none of these societies are examples of the full potential for humanity to live with minimal harmful impacts on the environment. However, their actions show that their social systems based on public ownership of the principal means of production and long-term planning are the basis for the all encompassing action that is needed to prevent disastrous climate change.

If these countries can do so much good with so much less wealth than that held by the United States, what could we do if we got rid of the bankers and CEOs that rule this country and decided to use our wealth for human needs, including preventing climate change?



Capitalist climate disaster strikes Indonesia

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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As deadly bushfires were raging up and down the eastern part of Australia in late December and early January, Indonesia's island of Java and the nation's capital city of Jakarta suffered historic floods.

Rivers swelled and burst their banks, while some neighborhoods saw over 20 feet of flood water within hours of the start of the rains. The waters have since receded, but more rainfall is expected.

Some 67 people have already died by electrocution, hypothermia, drowning or being buried alive. Those who live in the poorest and most vulnerable neighborhoods suffered the most.

According to NASA's [Earth Observatory website](#), the immediate cause was that winds which blew from the northeast of Java met warm winds blowing from the

Indian Ocean and formed the torrential rains. This weather pattern is common for Java but has become more frequent in recent decades.

Indonesia is the world's largest archipelago and is comprised of some 18,000 islands. Its capital city of Jakarta is located on the western side of Java and is one of the world's "megacities." Its 10 million residents experience overwhelming rain and floods every year. Forty percent of the city is below sea level and—similar to Amsterdam—relies on hundreds of pumps to keep it habitable.

Even with the elaborate pumping system, the city is sinking further below sea level with each passing year. Half of the city will be submerged in 30 years. President Joko Widodo has proposed moving the capital to Borneo, in the center of Indonesia's largest land mass, but the narrative that surrounds the proposal denies that climate change or rising sea levels are a factor.

As news spread about the flooding and the death toll, meteorologists asserted that although Java has historically dealt with flooding, this rain was different.

On New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, more rain fell than has been recorded in a 24-hour period since the Dutch colonizers began keeping records in 1886. In other words, this may have been the greatest rainfall ever.

Power failures, mudslides and rising flood water displaced 175,000 people.

Bosses dismiss climate crisis

Like Australia, Indonesia has a president that denies the role of climate change, and the media march in lockstep.

Worldwide, representatives of giant corporations—and fossil fuel capitalists in particular—try to propagate the idea that extreme weather has always been and always will be, that it is normal that the earth experiences warmer periods that

come and go, and-in the wildest version of climate change denial of all-that climate change science is a Chinese conspiracy. None of it is based on actual science.

In recent years, although climate scientists and meteorologists cannot connect any particular storm or weather event to climate change, they are in agreement that global warming from CO₂ and other toxic emissions is warming the earth's atmosphere, melting the polar ice caps and raising the sea levels. All of this is increasing the frequency and intensity of disastrous weather events.

As Jakarta grew, its development was shaped by frequent flooding and its vast income inequality. The city's wealthy live in areas out of harm's way. The rich live in posh neighborhoods less prone to flooding, but the majority live in areas where the risk of disaster is greatest because they have no choice.

When flooding occurs, the gap between Indonesia's tiny handful of wealthy capitalists and the majority of Indonesians comes into stark relief. A 2015 World Bank report analyzed the gap between rich and poor Indonesians: "Indonesia's economic growth has been enjoyed by only the top 20 percent. ... On the other side, people ... struggle to find productive employment. They are trapped in low-paying jobs.

"Some work in farming and fisheries in rural areas, others work in the informal sectors - market coolies, domestic workers, drivers, etc. As their wages increase more slowly than for skilled workers, the income gap widens."

CIA coup blocked social progress

Indonesia may have developed along a different path were it not for a CIA engineered coup that overthrew its president, installed a right-wing general, and led to a massacre of more than 1 million communists in 1965. At the time, the Communist Party of Indonesia was the world's third largest communist party, behind

only the USSR and China.

The Indonesian people wanted to reorganize their country to attack the problems of massive poverty and inequality, much as China was in the process of doing. It was the height of the Cold War. As the U.S. military was trying to turn back similar efforts by the Vietnamese people, Indonesia's anti-colonial president, Sukarno, was also in the crosshairs of U.S. imperialism.

The CIA facilitated right-wing Gen. Suharto's rise to power and stood by as one of the greatest crimes of the 20th century was carried out. Indonesia's revolutionary movement was destroyed, and a great step forward for human progress was turned back.

Social progress has to move forward in order to manage the effects of climate change. Endless imperialist wars and corporate pollution are a one-way ticket to the planet's destruction.

Only a planned economy and the elimination of private ownership can develop the science and implement the decisions that are sorely needed — free of corporate control.



Australia's fires fueled by capitalist exploitation

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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There just is no way to describe what is happening in Australia. The fifteen million acres that are engulfed in flames are an area bigger than Switzerland. Even in Sydney, the capital city, air quality has been from 10 to 17 times the level considered hazardous and the skies are intermittently blood red from the glow of nearby fires, and black with dangerous smoke.

Firefighters up and down the eastern coast of this driest continent on Earth report walls of fire 100 meters tall. "Fire tornadoes" have flipped over fire trucks. Persistently rotating updrafts caused by the heat that precedes the arrival of actual flames have caused supercell storms, the most severe category of thunderstorms.

Dozens of people have died and somewhere between 500 million and 1 billion animals may have perished. Many smaller species will vanish completely. Thousands have evacuated. At one point, four thousand people in Victoria made their way to the

relative safety of beaches with fire closing in on them, waiting for rescue.

The perilous situation has hit many First Nation communities even harder because of government neglect. In many cases, only their own efforts have saved lives and homes.

The village of Lake Tyers, in Eastern Victoria, has only a small water tank on a pickup truck. The isolated peninsula is home to 200 residents and has one access road. An all-Indigenous women's firefighting brigade whose members are part of the council of their self-governing community are the firefighting team.

Charmaine Sellings leads the brigade and in an interview with the organization Now to Love said: "Just one crack of lightning on a stormy day could be disastrous. ... We are in extreme conditions. Our dams are empty and it's not a good situation. The crew will work around the clock. We hope for a quiet summer, but we fear the worst."

The Guardian reports that in Ulladulla on the south coast the fires had burned all the way to the sand by early December. Just a few miles north of there is a protected area called Murramarang — the site of archaeological finds that hold "the stories of 12,000 years of Yuin occupation in layers of stone tools, spear points, fish bones and oyster shells," according to an essay published in the Guardian by Lorena Allam, an Indigenous writer. No one knows yet how much of these treasured artifacts will have survived.

The administration of Prime Minister Scott Morrison is packed with energy industry-friendly, climate deniers – it's been reported that over \$29 billion annually is handed over to fossil fuel companies. Australia is the 4th largest coal producer in the world and the owners of coal and other sectors of the energy industry have government officials in their back pocket. Billionaire Rupert Murdoch's major newspaper, "The Australian," is doing its part by constantly assigning the blame for the fires to

arsonists.

Australia is a junior partner of the U.S. and Western European imperialist countries with a large modern military. In 2018, it became the second largest purchaser of military equipment in the world behind Saudi Arabia. But in the early weeks of the crisis, as fires ripped through the country, the military was idle. Only after weeks of raging fire and at least a month left of the fire season-as intense criticism mounted-did Morrison finally call out naval ships to carry out evacuations from southeast coastal villages.

Still the crisis is far from over. When the fires are extinguished and the smoke has cleared in Australia, the billionaire owners of the mines that deplete precious water resources, the agribusiness that burns forests to make way for profitable crops, the right-wing media that downplay climate change, and the bought-and-paid-for politicians will face a reckoning.

