

# The Communist Party

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## AFGHANISTAN: RETURN OF THE TALIBAN

The return of the Taliban to power in Kabul is a fact that does not surprise us too much. Of course, we cannot deny that the grand finale of the macabre spectacle of a twenty-year conflict, which has cost rivers of blood and mountains of money, has taken on surreal characteristics, especially if the result of so much mad effort has been nothing other than to see the faction that had been driven out of power thanks to the military intervention of the United States return to power. The collapse of the regime held in place thanks to the protection of the armed forces of the first military power in the world, looks like a stinging defeat likely to significantly alter the balance between the great imperialist powers. It is not by chance that the Beijing government, emboldened by the American defeat, took the opportunity to reaffirm the imperial appetites of mainland China over Taiwan and wanted to send a warning message to the Taipei rulers: "watch how the United States abandon their protégés to an inauspicious fate. Tomorrow the same fate could befall you". But the consequences are not necessarily less serious at the domestic level: reliving in the Kabul of 2021 the defeat already suffered in Saigon in 1975, and moreover with a very similar script, inflicts a disfiguring wound to the image of the U.S. establishment that after more than 2,400 American deaths and a trillion dollars dissipated in a totally inconclusive occupation, is presented in front of the spectacular machine of bourgeois propaganda with very meager spoils of war. Yet we would be wrong to see in these results only the ineptitude of the four presidents who in these twenty years have managed American foreign policy. If in the epoch of bourgeois decadence the frenzied race of the economy towards the overproduction of goods and capital seems to us ever more irrational and destructive, why should we be surprised if the policy of the greatest economic and military power on the planet also turns out to be absurd and inconclusive? If politics for us Marxists is a concentration of economics, why shouldn't a demented economy correspond to an equally demented policy? We don't want to insist too much on the real or presumed ineptitude of those responsible for US policy, because it is not in our method to overestimate the function of individuals. Our reading starts rather from the consideration that the foreign policy of states is nothing more than the result of objective factors linked to the necessities imposed by the valorization of capital, by the

aims of social preservation imposed by the overall interests of the ruling class and in the last instance by the relations of force between the powers. In the case of the United States, marked by decades of relative decline in its economic weight on a global scale, foreign policy can no longer adhere to a coherent overall strategic design, but finds itself forced to come to terms with ever-increasing difficulties in many areas of the world that impose swings and sudden turns with almost never decisive consequences.

After the attacks of September 11, 2001 against the Twin Towers in New York and against the Pentagon, the decision of then US President George W. Bush to invade Afghanistan was officially motivated by the need to strike at the alliance linking al-Qaeda to the Taliban regime that had been ruling the Central Asian country of Afghanistan since 1996. In reality, if the aim had really been that of striking the protectors and instigators of those who had struck the beating heart of American power in such a devastating way, the war would have had to be conducted elsewhere, given that behind al-Qaeda were the great economic interests tied essentially to oil revenues in Saudi Arabia. This aspect was also confirmed by the fact that most of the attackers were Saudi citizens. In the second place, if the objective had been that of striking the Taliban, at the time at the helm of a fragile State structure, born on the ruins of the civil war between the "war lords" of the so-called "resistance" to the Soviet invasion, then it would have been more logical to take it out on Pakistan, which had been, since its birth, the nurturer and political godfather of the movement of the "Koranic students". But all that was impossible since Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were historic allies of the US. Then there had already been some of those natural setbacks that mark the progress of history: the religious Afghan mujahidin who had been supported militarily to sustain the war against the Soviet Union, once the pro-Soviet regime had been overthrown, massacred themselves in a bloody civil war whose sides had been defined along the fault lines of the various ethnic and religious components of a country with an only fictitious national unity. The fragility of the country's cohesion stemmed from a process of state formation in which British colonial policy had played a decisive role. In a certain sense, Afghanistan resembles many states that were first drawn on maps by

the old colonial powers rather than in actual reality. In fact, the 2,670-kilometre-long border separating Afghanistan from Pakistan was the result of an agreement reached in 1893 between the Secretary of State of British India Sir Mortimer Durand and the then Afghan Emir Abd ur-Rahman Khan. Since then, the so-called Durand Line has defined, with few variations, the arbitrarily drawn boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan, two states that, in the act of birth, bore in varying degrees and for different reasons the stigmata of British colonial domination. The former was born at the time of Indian independence, thanks to the work of fragmentation of the independence movement on a religious basis, planned and pursued with pertinacious determination by London. The second was born instead as a "buffer state", again at the behest of British diplomacy, in order to keep under control the expansionist aims of Tsarist Russia, which through Central Asia were turning in the direction of the warm seas. It should be added that the birth of Afghanistan, which became fully independent from a de facto British protectorate only in 1919, was a sort of fallback solution for the colonial power. This was the consequence of the outcome of the three Anglo-English wars that in a span of 70 years had failed to subdue the country. This solution was the result of the so-called Great Game which, starting from the middle of the 19th century, involved the great world powers of the time around what is now Afghanistan. It is no coincidence that in the mid-1970s, after decades of relative dormancy, the Great Game came back to the fore as a consequence of the first serious economic crisis of the cycle of capitalist accumulation following the Second World War. Just as it is no coincidence that in the last 42 years Afghanistan has gone from one war to another in a process of social upheaval that has also manifested itself in the urbanization of large portions of the rural population.

The last two decades of the "American war" have also seen the progressive inclusion of China in the Afghan Great Game, in a way completely parallel to the affirmation of the latter as an industrial power in the world. The Chinese interest in Afghanistan was also propitiated by the geographical contiguity, so much so that the two countries shared a 92-kilometre-long stretch of border, the route of which was defined for the first time in 1895 in

continued page 6

### WHAT DISTINGUISHES OUR PARTY

**The line running from Marx to Lenin to the foundation of the Third International and the birth of the Communist Party of Italy in Leghorn (Livorno) 1921, and from there to the struggle of the Italian Communist Left against the degeneration in Moscow and to the rejection of popular fronts and coalition of resistance groups – The tough work of restoring the revolutionary doctrine and the party organ, in contact with the working class, outside the realm of personal politics and electoralist manoeuvres**

# Sept 11th 20 Years

This month marks twenty years since the attacks of September 11, 2001. The workers of the United States can expect a flood of patriotic drivel to mark the anniversary. Indeed, September 11 remembrance is a cottage industry in the United States, encompassing everyone from the media personalities who drone on about the tragedy every year to the sensitive entrepreneurs who sell 9/11 mementos to tourists in New York City. One only needs to spend a few minutes at the World Trade Center Memorial in Manhattan to experience this ghoulish, sanctimonious, for-profit remembrance.

This twisted form of national memory obscures the real meaning of the attacks. The events of September 11 were of great world-historical significance. This fact is especially clear on their twentieth anniversary, as the United States' occupation of Afghanistan crumbles in front of our eyes. The September 11 attacks represented the first obvious crack in United States imperial power after the end of the Cold War. It has continued to disintegrate in the two decades since, and now nears collapse.

September 11, 2001 marked the abrupt and unexpected end of the post-

today. September 11 shows that this is not true. At what seemed to be the absolute height of United States power, nineteen members of an international terrorist organization were able to murder three thousand people in two of its most important cities. The international system is never really "polar," and no state can ever really be hegemonic. International networks, whether formal organizations or informal connections, always exist in the modern world, and they can be just as powerful as any state. As a class that emerged from international trading networks at the end of the Middle Ages, the bourgeoisie knows this truth very well. And after all, it was an international network which laid the foundations for Al Qaeda: the so-called "Afghan Arabs" from the Gulf States who supported the Mujahideen during the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, funded by American and Saudi money.

No country can escape the contradictions of the imperialist stage of capitalism, no matter how strong a position it may seem to have. Even with no other state as its equal, the United States had to face the history that its policy-makers were desperate to escape after the Cold War. Two centuries of imperialism in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia set the scene for the humiliation of September 11, 2001. Just like every Great Power that had sought control over that geopolitically important region, the United States paid off the regional forces who seemed to be on its side and violently suppressed anything that looked like opposition.

The result was the creation of a colonial middle class. Like every middle class in history, this national bourgeoisie wanted to rule outright, but it was prevented from doing so by the imperial

same way. The individuals who planned and carried out the September 11 attacks were members of the reactionary bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie of Middle East, raised in the shadow of the Afghan Mujahideen. Afghanistan was the perfect place for their base of operations, sitting on the frontier between the Middle East and South Asia but not completely under the influence of the regional powers in either one.

The United States helped create the Taliban through its support for the Afghan Mujahideen against the Russian occupation, yet American politicians continue to claim that their invasion in 2001 was a humanitarian intervention. The CIA had extensive contacts with Mujahideen fighters before they coalesced into the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The United States knew exactly who the Islamists were and what they would do to Afghanistan. Yet it was only after the whole plan blew up in their faces on September 11 that the captains of American imperialism started crying about the need to "liberate" the Afghan people.

This "liberation" was nothing more than a calculated (or miscalculated, as the past twenty years have proved) geopolitical action, intended exercise control over the types of political groups that could operate in the Middle East and South Asia. In that respect it was no different that the earlier civilizing missions of the British imperialists, who fought three different wars in Afghanistan between 1839 and 1919. Britain's wars in Afghanistan were about bringing a strong British backed puppet government to power, which would reign in the "frontier tribes" and stabilize the frontier between Britain's colonial possession in India and Russia's possessions in Central Asia. The United States' war for the past twenty years has been about bringing a strong American-backed puppet government to power, which would stomp out any challenge to American control of the entire globe. It is abundantly clear that both missions failed.

The United States' invasion of Afghanistan brought about nothing but repression. At least 220,000 Afghans died as a result of the invasion and occupation. Others suffered as a result of poverty and the collapse of the medical system. At least another million people died as result of the United States' invasion of Iraq, which it used to September 11 attacks to justify. And others across the world suffered from the "anti-terrorist" measures that reveal the truly repressive nature of democracy: drone assassinations, kidnapping, torture, imprisonment without trial, and mass surveillance.

The historical meaning of the September 11 attacks is that they marked the downward trajectory of one of the most important imperial powers in history. Now engaged in a new Great Power rivalry with China, the United States strains under the weight of that burden of history.

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# Mexico: Cooking Gas Prices Rise and Wages remain in the ditch.

When the Mexican government of López Obrador (AMLO) wanted to adjust the price of LP gas, for domestic use, and to incorporate the new state company "Gas Bienestar" in the distribution, announcing on 28 July the Decree "Emergency Directive for the Welfare of the Liquefied Petroleum Gas Consumer", the response of the owners and cartels of this lucrative business, which moves billions of pesos a day, was activated.

At least 80% of the population is affected by the shortage of LPG. The strike and the protest of the so-called "commission agents", who are the ones who close the circuit in the attention to the end users, in an atmosphere of "tolerated informality", with the delivery of cylinders or the refilling of stationary tanks, was the employers' response, supported by this mass of informal workers who carry out the distribution. With this employers' strike, the intention is clear: to force the government to back down on the gas price cap and the creation of the public company.

Over the years previous governments have allowed the exponential movement of gas prices. It currently sells for over 500 pesos. The minimum wage in Mexico does not exceed 150 pesos. To buy a tank of gas a worker would have to save more than 3 minimum wages and not spend on anything else. From the first minute of this Sunday, August 8, millions of people in the capital woke up to the news that the price of LP gas, both for stationary tanks and metal cylinders, will increase by 45 cents and 15 cents per kilogram and litre, respectively.

Amid the biggest rise in 20 years in the international price of LPG, the value of Mexican imports of the fuel between January and last May grew 67.5% to 1.299 billion dollars, according to the most updated data of the trade balance published by the National Institute of Geography and Statistics (INEGI). During the same period, the values of imports of gasoline and diesel - the two petroleum derivatives that Mexico imports most - grew at much more moderate rates of 3.2 per cent and 1.8 per cent, respectively. As a result, the share of LPG in the value of total Mexican imports of petroleum products from January to May grew from 8.3 per cent to 12.8 per cent from 2020 to 2021, while the share of gasoline fell from 52.5 per cent to 50 per cent and that of diesel from 22.9 per cent to 21.6 per cent. The notable rise in the value of imported LPG is mainly explained by the significant increase in the price of its main component, propane, whose international average price (Mont Belvieu, spot) between January and May rose 132% to 0.865 dollars per gallon compared to the same period in 2020. This increase is, according to data from the US Energy Information Administration (EIA), the largest observed for a comparable period since 2000,

when it rose 111 per cent. In this context, the volume of LPG imported by Mexico during January-May grew just 6.8 per cent to an average of 194,000 barrels per day, according to data from the Mexican government's Energy Secretariat.

Five large companies control the distribution of domestic gas, the main gas groups operating in Mexico are Tomás Zaragoza Fuentes' Tomza Group, which controls most of the northwest region of the country from Baja California, along with Zeta

Gas, owned by his brother Miguel Zaragoza Fuentes. This list of the G5 also includes Gas Uribe, headed by Óscar Uribe, which has a high penetration in the Valley of Mexico

and its surroundings, where it also shares the market in this area with Vela Gas, owned by Lázaro Bello.

In the political confrontation, the opportunists want to present this conflict as a clash between the capitalist gas cartels on the one hand and the government and the workers on the other. AMLO has declared that "the government will not bow to the strike"; but immediately, conciliatory, he affirmed: "It has already been explained to them, it is an emergency measure that was taken, it is transitory until a balance is established in the prices, because they have gone too high and are affecting the popular economy" and he recognised that "it is not about all the distributors and commission agents".

AMLO's government and his 4T, like previous governments, only administers the interests of the bourgeoisie, the interests of big capital, even when it tries to find a "middle ground" between corporate profits, international prices and the purchasing power of the workers. The apparent confrontation between the government and the gas bosses should not confuse the workers. Even some calls for the nationalisation of the gas companies and their transfer to workers' control, ends up being an approach that, although it sounds "radical", really takes the workers' movement away from the central struggle for wage increases. Once again opportunism is placing its booby traps in the path of the proletariat to take it away from the centre of its battle.

The Mexican workers' movement must advance in its trade union and rank and file organisation and orient itself towards unity of action for wage increases and a reduction in the working day. The price of gas must be covered by a new wage that allows workers to pay their own and their families' bills. In this struggle AMLO's government is as much the enemy of the workers as are the capitalist gas cartels and the entire economy.

## VAX/NO-VAX

The bourgeoisie does science in spite of itself, it is forced to do so to the extent necessary to continue making profits. But it has always wavered in its regard for the scientific method and in its confidence in the practical applications of its discoveries. When in the ascendant phase of the economic cycle, it has gone from idolising the progress of knowledge, from which all classes would benefit, to rejecting science as such in times of crisis and general insecurity, and even to adopting pessimistic and agnostic attitudes.

Today, in times of epidemics, the Vax and the No-vax are aligned on these two opposing fronts.

We wrote in 1977 in "Defending the revolutionary theory is defending the future of the proletariat", "The problem, both practical and theoretical, has always kept the revolutionary communist theory vividly engaged, while the bourgeoisie and opportunism, in alternating and contradictory phases, have now exalted the experimental scientific achievements, now they have preferred to make them preceded by idealistic, subjectivist and instrumental fumbblings.

"Bourgeois science takes on the characteristics of subjectivism and metaphysics, more or less evident, when the need to preserve class privileges takes precedence over the need to wrest from nature its secrets for the growth of the productive forces and the accumulation of surplus value.

"We deny the bourgeoisie - which never before has shown itself to be selfish and blind, bloodthirsty and incapable of setting itself general human objectives - the right to present itself as the author and dispenser of true science. That is why we are fighting for its violent end and the establishment of communism."

The position of Marxism is well known, opposite and far superior to both these fallacious bourgeois conceptions. Science and technology, which progress intertwined and push each other forward, are indeed the result of the perfecting of the productive forces, including the forces of labour, and of the work of the brain, but they are likewise subservient to the class of the holders of the means of production.

Hence the permanent and historically growing contrast between the forces of thought, science and technology, which tend to grow, and the relations of production.

This is despite the fact that the dominant thought, with its essentially ideological and anti-dialectical approaches, does not fail to penetrate the skulls of even the greatest researchers, holding them back and diverting them from fully representing the reality.

As early as 1898, science had clearly described the origin of asbestosis, generated by the inhalation of asbestos crystals; the same can be said for the damage caused by tobacco smoke, or the lead poisoning generated by lead vapours. It was Capital, for its own exclusive interests, that ignored all warnings for almost a century. Because not 'philosophers', in this case biologists, are in power in a class society.

In dealing with the Covid, therefore, we wrote immediately "what does not work in order to preserve the health of the species is capitalism", not in the sense that science can already cure all ills, but that capital also prevents the full application of what science

# Constitutional Wrangles and Election Hysteria

A number of books have now been published relating to the events at the conclusion of the Trump Presidency and the Inauguration of Biden as the 46th President of the United States of America. Each book and study on these events are expected to be dramatic, relaying interviews with prominent politicians and Government officials, with many giving new revelations from participants with different slants on their motives and what they in effect prevented. The authors and media personalities were then rushed off to TV studios to speak again about their interviews and the impressions they formed about what the outgoing President and his allies were doing as a result of the loss of the 2020 election.

Without going over the various revelations and reports of the events leading up to the riot of January 6th and the assault on the Capitol building, the consensus was the horrifying conclusion that on January 6th the Constitution of the USA “hung by a thread”. It was suggested that the American state and way of life was in danger and could have been extinguished that very day. It was none the less an extraordinary event, an outgoing head of state in a presumed stable democracy calling out supporters to invade the session of elected representatives disrupting the result of elections for his replacement. The rationale, the excuse for the mobilisation of protesters was that the election was stolen from Trump and that far-fetched and outlandish claims were made about fraudulent means had been used to “steal the election”.

The traumatic events since the election of Biden in the November 2020 General Election are still being played out on many levels with the ferocious campaign by Trump and his supporters to question if not overturn that election. The wrangling going on in Congress, the previous replacing of various government agencies with more “pliable” people (including the Pentagon), the investigations about attempts to suborn the Department of Justice, the various cases both criminal and civil going before the Courts as well as the pantomime of the Maricopa County ballot “audit”. We have not touched upon the civil and criminal investigations into the Trump organisation and its related companies, the demand for the release of Trump’s Tax Returns, and the eventual biggie, possibly conspiracy and sedition charges against Trump and / or his associates.

There are well-used methods of ensuring the turning out of supporters at election time. There is the well-known arrangement called Gerry-mandering after the way Catholic voters were confined to voting areas in Ulster in order to maintain a Protestant majority in the Northern Ireland Parliament. A similar system has long been used in the US in reducing the number of non-white representatives who are sent to Congress. There was a tried and tested system used in Australia, later imported into the UK, where certain parts of the population and certain marginal areas were targeted with resources in the strategy of getting an electoral victory. Similar methods previously had been used in the US. However for 2016 more drastic steps were taken when being confronted by the almost certain chance of Hillary Clinton being elected. The Hillary Clinton candidacy

proved to be organisationally inept and outclassed by the Republican candidate (Trump) who had the internet backing of Moscow and media algorithms to target potential voters.

## The 2020 Presidential Campaign

The accusation of the “stealing” of the election away from Trump seems to be a contingency already prepared for in Trump’s White House no matter what reservations some of the Government officials may have had. The crippling of the Postal Service (an attempt to limit large scale postal voting) and the reliance on far-right forces such as Alt-Right and QAnon was having an impact on traditional Republican supporters. Attempts to limit voting in Georgia was having widespread criticism amongst business sectors, with a clear threat to move business interests out of that state. This was a clear unease by sections of the capitalist class about the way the Trump administration was conducting itself.

During the last year it became apparent that the Biden campaign was outspending the Trump campaign by three to one, an unheard of imbalance – this was a clear expression of the support from business in general for the Democratic candidate as the one standing for stability and certainty in economics and politics. Although there has traditionally been two main parties of the American bourgeoisie (Republican and Democratic parties) with the election process switching between the two, depending upon the usefulness of the policies being expounded, the instability and uncertainty of whose interests the Trump administration was representing (had Moscow something on Donald Trump was a common concern) has led to a pronounced shift to the Democratic Party as the preferred main party of the American bourgeoisie, at least for the moment. The desire for consistency and certainty of the Biden administration is a recognition that the American state and its institutions are there to represent and protect the interests of all of the capitalist class (in so far as that is practicable) instead of that of a bunch of property speculators and apparently unhinged conspiracy theorists.

Trump’s campaign was thrown into a panic and sought urgent financial funding from his supporters, in most cases taking multiple bank payments, many payments having to be refunded. The frantic conspiracy theories were reaching a fever pitch, especially plots by the “Deep State” to take over the country.

It was the Arizona election declaration which gave the clear indication for a Biden victory. This was followed by a similar result in other swing states. Initial election results were showing that tens of thousands of normally Republican voters were either abstaining or voting for other candidates. It was this defection of republican voters (who voted for Republican candidates in everything but the Presidential election) which gave rise to the absurd claims that some software had been used, or some mechanism had been fitted which caused the “flipping” of votes from Trump to Biden. Recounts were done, and proper audits were carried out which confirmed at large the original result. This did not stop the hysteria of election fraud, with the attempted invasion of election ballot counts to “monitor” events. Nothing to change ballot counting results were ever found, for the simple reason they did not exist. The handful of fraudulent voting turned out to have been carried out by Republican party supporters. But the lack of any way of changing the voting

totals did not stop such idiotic conspiracy theories such as “Italygate”, laser signals supposedly from Italy were being sent by satellite causing voting machines to switch votes. Why these signals from Italy were taking place was never explained. That lack of reality did not deter Trump from raising this absurd notion with all and sundry. There were even weirder theories, some gleaned from the internet, such as wifi access being gained at counting stations through room temperature thermometers. The very fact that the election counting machines were isolated (not connected) to the internet has been mostly ignored. Each more outlandish theory was desperately considered by Donald Trump. One White House official reportedly stated that the “crazies of the crazies” were being entertained, while the White House staff are reported to have been keeping their distance from these events and preparing to head for the door.

## The so-called January 6th Insurrection

The Presidential election results stood despite attempts by Trump and his allies to intimidate State officials into changing the voting outcomes. The results were due to be counted and certified by Congress on 6th January, but Trump and his MAGA (Make America Great Again) wanted to challenge that. First of all there was to be a Million MAGA March on Washington DC, then that was scaled back to half-a-million “Stop The Steal” rally outside the White House, a projected “wild event”. The vast crowd of half-a-million never materialised. Trump and his associates had been visited and assured of a mobilisation of militias, a Patriot Caravan, etc. There was supposed to be vast multitudes to overwhelm Washington DC to clamour for the 2020 election to be nullified and changed. The vast crowd did not appear.

The subsequent event of the fiery speeches, the march on the Capitol building, its invasion and partial occupation, with the disruption of proceedings have all been televised. The fiery orators had all disappeared, the out-going President feeling they were not his sort of people, went back to the White House to watch events on TV. What was the storming of the Capitol to achieve except to delay the certification of the election. Security forces evacuated the Vice President and Congress members to places of safety and waited out events. After hours of rioting the protesters withdrew and the business of confirming Joe Biden as President took place. All the rioters had achieved was wrecking part of the Capitol building, taking off some trophies and taking loads of selfies and video recordings which the FBI would use later to identify many of the key rioters.

## The Military and other state agencies begin their work

Once the confirmation of the Electoral College results by the Vice President Mike Pence that Joe Biden as the following President the military took over. There would be a peaceable takeover as laid down in the Constitution. A ring of steel was placed around the White House and surrounding area. Arrangements were made for the orderly leaving of Donald Trump and family (by the back door) and for the installation of the Biden Presidency. In that way it was shown that the American state and its institutions had taken the strain, buckled slightly but had held. The FBI, supposedly affected by the previous sacking of its Head (Comey) did not wait for

the Inauguration of the next president but were already investigating events. More than 500 of the rioters have been arrested and charged with some already been sentenced.

A second Impeachment charge was brought in the Senate against the outgoing President Trump, but there were insufficient votes to carry out the trial. There was a determined closing of ranks by Republicans Senators to protect trump and keep the Republican Party in some sort of order. Congressional enquiries are taking placed to examine all these previous events. The attempts to pressurise (and weaponize) the Department of Justice is beginning to emerge.

Trump and his diminishing band of supporters have continued the campaign of discrediting the election count and trying to substantiate claims of outside interference, and that the vote counting machines had been hacked into “flipping” votes to Biden. This campaign has broadened out into a general assault on elections, and trying to get the Presidential election declared invalid. The Courts have systematically thrown out of all the election challenges, Judgments coming out that the cases were frivolous, unbelievable and even ridiculous. THE Lawyers who brought many of these cases are now paying a high price for bringing these cases, by being suspended from practice, some threatened with disbarment as Lawyers and ultimately having to pay damages and for all the Court costs of the cases.

## Further discrediting of the Election process

The big test on the election counting process was to be the “audit” in Arizona, in Maricopa County where the ballot papers and vote counting machines were handed over to self-styled Cyber Ninjas (a Republican Party sponsored organisation which had no experience in audit ballots). The “audit” which was started in April was to last for three weeks, but what we are labelling as a pantomime has been going on for more than three months. First of all the ballot papers and machines were being scanned for traces of bamboo (presumably the suspicion that ballot papers had been surreptitiously imported from China to replace the original ones. How this was to be done was never explained, especially replacing ballot papers which were specially milled (with distinctive water mark) printed ballot papers. After failing to find traces of bamboo, searches were made of the ballot counting machines looking for nefarious devices for changing the ballot counting. Again nothing was found. The examination of the voting counting machine had led them been declared unusable and needing to be replaced. This will be costing Maricopa County \$3 million to be replaced. The “Cyber Ninjas” finally demanded that the routers should be handed over to be examined. Maricopa County officials refused to part with the computer system routers, not only because they would not reveal any useful information, but also because they were being used for the County’s services and would cost \$6 million to replace. Nothing has been produced to point to any irregularities or fraudulent behaviour. It has however led to threats and intimidation of election organisers in various states in the US, including death threats.

The Arizona “audit” was to be the centre piece of the campaign to overturn the 2020 Election, to reveal that Trump won by a Landslide at a so-called Cyber Symposium in South Dakota on 10th – 12th August. After all the “incontrovertible” evidence were presented the big revelation would hit the country and

# VAX/No-VAX (con't)

can already teach.

There is no, it is not possible for there to exist, in present class society, an 'alternative' science, an anti or post-bourgeois knowledge, to which the better informed proletarians can have access. The only non-bourgeois science is that of the party, Marxism, pertaining to the field of human societies; we do not yet have our own communist science, except that of history and revolution. The party, from our great Frederick onwards, has always kept abreast of every new discovery and theory in the natural sciences, but not even we communists can know more. We only criticise bourgeois science, the science of our centuries, which are bourgeois centuries. Because there can be no other science today.

But it is the science "of the multinationals"! Sure, and whose science should it be? By now, universities have been reduced to such hiding places of know-nothing, copy-and-paste ignorance and careerism that research and science is carried out directly by capital. Do you want the 'national' vaccine, or from your local pharmacy?

This dying society, a victim of its own conflicting interests, is also incapable of getting its slave science to give it a definite direction. So it pretends to appeal to the will of the people and the individual freedom of citizens. Not only is he unable and unwilling to clarify matters, but he continues to wreak havoc and misinformation. Even what would be a healthy and necessary debate between medical and clinical schools of thought is degraded to a television show, somewhere between hilarious and terrorist. Will Vax or No-vax win tonight?

But the No-vaxers add: it's all a conspiracy, and all the numbers they're giving us are false, manipulated!

Of course. But just as we use bourgeois statistics to great advantage in our studies of economics, even though we know that they are rigged, we are obliged to do the same in all fields of knowledge. We have to start from these data, which are the least worst we have.

Moreover, the world's bourgeoisies are not so prescient, omnipotent, united and

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Biden and Harris would be forced to resign and that it would go to the Supreme Court who would vote by Nine to Nil for Trump to be reinstated as President. All this was to take place on Friday 13th August. As we all now know Friday 13th came and went and no big change took place.

All this has descended into a farce. The chaos and lack of evidence was put down to disruption and infiltration by Antifa, even though there were few people at this supposedly 72 hour rolling live coverage. The Cyber expert on the stage said he had not seen any “legitimate” internet evidence, and was reported as saying he had been handed “a turd”. The “white-hat” hacker whose evidence was being relied upon was finally named, and apparently this former Casino worker had reportedly previously hoaxed the Pentagon and CIA. It is not known how much was paid to this “white-hat” hacker.

The campaign to discredit the 2020 Elections, which has no basis in reality (even the outgoing Trump Attorney General Bill Barr conceded that the election was fair), and is getting further out of touch with reality. The US bourgeoisie has ended up in a real bind.

disciplined. Just the opposite. There is no hidden director who writes the script and controls the actors. Instead, it is a tangle of scoundrels and liars, but who, historically and contingently, have the world against them and must defend themselves against it. The bourgeoisie, in its current comatose state, cannot be expected to make effectively rational choices and behave rationally; it is struggling to stay afloat.

But, they object, the No-vax, petit-bourgeois for the most part, in various countries have even taken to the streets to demonstrate against vaccination and health cards. Certainly they are the expression of a malaise within the popular strata, which has been going on for several decades now, of a state of suffering due to their conditions, precariousness, relative impoverishment, etc.,. But it cannot be defined as a resumption of class struggle every kind of rebellionist demonstration, from the No-vax to the yellow vests. The class struggle - which is and can only be proletariat against bourgeoisie - is expressed, developed and organised in a completely different way. The rebels, the discontented of all the intermediate classes will join the proletarian movement, but only when it is strong and wins the social battle. Otherwise, petty-bourgeois movements are born and remain counter-revolutionary.

Finally, we come to the everyday and the practical, of course, in this largely involuntary bourgeois shambles, complicated by the more than legitimate suspicion that the directives issued by the health institutions of the states are not the best, that the use of ineffective treatments is neglected or delayed for criminal reasons of commercial interest, or imposed as unsafe. How can proletarian families defend themselves against the epidemic? Who should they listen to? To vaccinate or not to vaccinate?

There is no individual escape from bourgeois society and culture. Neither can this be denied or opposed by individual goodwill or 'more conscious' behaviour. Nor can the working class as a whole, except partially in the practice of its defensive action. Only the party in its revolutionary programme and its militant structure escapes it. Proletarians can only be treated in this society according to its science, which is bourgeois science. We will certainly not invite them to blindly rely on the cares of the state, but neither on the dementia of television talk shows, nor on the self-medication on the Internet, typical of the individual bourgeois solitude.

The proletarians, in the absence of class welfare structures, which could emanate from the trade unions, will treat themselves as they have always done and could not fail to do, by consulting the health workers of the health structures of the present society, workers devoted to science and medical practice, mostly proletarians, and certainly the least ignorant and most disinterested to turn to.

Finally, then, it is clear that communists are neither Vax nor No-vax.

## AFGHANISTAN from page 1

an agreement between Russia and Great Britain in which the two empires placed a "no man's land" between their respective areas of influence, arbitrarily attributing to Afghanistan the inhospitable, desolate and impervious Wakhan Corridor (350 kilometres long and less than 30 wide on average), located between the high altitudes of the Hindokush mountain range.

Today, China's attention towards Afghanistan is motivated by various aspects, first and foremost the fact that it represents an obligatory passage along the three lines of expansion of Chinese trade, one of which moves in the direction of the Indian Ocean, another goes towards ex-Soviet Central Asia and yet another heads straight for the Mediterranean. With regard to the first line of Chinese expansion, Beijing has invested in two major projects: the first is the "Five Countries Railway" which, passing through Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan, will end in the Iranian port of Chabahar and will connect China to the Gulf of Oman; the second is the "Sino-Pakistan Economic Corridor" which, crossing the areas inhabited by Pashtuns and Belucis (the same populations also present in Afghanistan), will reach the port of Gwadar, on the Indian Ocean, which is being enlarged thanks to substantial Chinese funding. So it is not surprising if Beijing's Afghan policy aspires first and foremost to the political stabilization of the neighboring country. This is an aspiration that, for diametrically opposed reasons, does not arouse the same enthusiasm in the United States, China's main imperial rival. This crucial knot has had its weight in the chain of events that has led the United States to derail on the road to its military disengagement from the Afghan conflict and it is certainly no coincidence that in an attempt to make Chinese hegemony over a vast geo-historical area including Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran more difficult, the last two US administrations have decided to play the card of the political rehabilitation of the Taliban, who have become key players in Washington's Afghan policy. There are several factual elements that corroborate the picture of a dialogue and cooperation with the Taliban that may never have completely disappeared but have certainly been growing in recent years. In 2017, the United States pressured Pakistan to release Taliban leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, also known as Mullah Baradar Akhund, from its prisons in order to represent the "Koranic students" movement in direct negotiations. The negotiation between the U.S. Representative for Afghan Affairs, the Afghan-born, Pashtun-ethnic diplomat Zalmay Khalilzad, and Abdul Ghani Baradar himself, also like most of the Pashtun-ethnic Taliban, resulted in the February 2020 Doha Agreement in which Washington agreed on the agenda for its military withdrawal with its apparent "arch-enemies" after nearly two decades of uninterrupted war. But the thing that made this circumstance even more paradoxical was that the "friendly" government in Kabul was kept (rightly!) out of the negotiations. To highlight some of the paradoxical and apparently incongruous aspects of imperialist warfare, it

so happens that Qatar, of which Doha is the capital, is also the country where the US military base of al-Ubeid, the most important in the Middle East, is located. But at the same time, Doha has been home to the headquarters of the Taliban for several years. Moreover, Qatar is, as is well known, the main international sponsor of the Muslim Brotherhood, the largest component of Sunni political Islam, whose expansion has been opposed or encouraged in alternating phases by the United States itself. Suffice it to say that the Muslim Brotherhood is also affiliated with the A.K.P. of Turkish President Erdogan and the Palestinian group Hamas, further confirmation of the ambivalent relations between states and organizations once considered enemies and now considered allies. And it is no coincidence that, taking advantage of the hospitality offered to the Taliban, Doha has risen to contribute to that shift in identity that has changed the features of the Afghan fundamentalist movement, bringing them closer to the Muslim Brotherhood and in some respects – something that was unheard of until recently – even to the Iranian theocracy. Once misoneists and iconoclasts (one remembers the destruction of the gigantic statues of the Buddhas of Bamyan or the scenes in which the television sets were smashed with an ax in spectacular propagandistic representations of the fight against unbelief), the Taliban are ready to propagandize their new course in which, in tune with modern fundamentalism, they show themselves willing to Islamicize capitalist modernity rather than oppose it. This attitude was manifested immediately after the fall of Kabul into their hands with a proclamation affirming their commitment to respect property and investments, including foreign ones. The Taliban want to make themselves out to be the best promise of bourgeois continuity for Afghanistan available on the market today, and in this endeavor it cannot be taken for granted that they will fail since they have excellent credentials (of which the world capitalist class is well aware). In this regard, it is worth noting the immense trust granted to the Taliban by the U.S. that among the points of the Doha Agreements had agreed to include the release of 5,000 prisoners of war from Afghan jails. This aspect of the agreement was opposed in every way, and for reasons easily understandable, by the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani who precisely opposed the measure, denouncing it as unconstitutional. But a puppet government cannot but obey the strings of its puppet master and so Washington "suggested" to the president the convocation of a Loya Jirga, the Great National Assembly that groups together the Afghan notables representing all the ethnic groups and all the territorial realities of the country, judged in that case to be competent to adopt such a decision. So in August 2020, in his opening speech of the Loya Jirga, Ashraf Ghani found himself obtorto collo in the paradoxical condition of pleading for the release of 5,000 Taliban prisoners in exchange for the release of a thousand soldiers and public officials detained by the Koranic students. An episode which explains how ample strata of the Afghan dominant class, worried by such weakness on the part of the Kabul Government, was

encouraged to keep its foot in two stirrups, thus preparing itself for the eventuality of a change of regime, limiting possible clashes, friction and useless and inculcated heroism. To make the surrender without a fight that took place in the first half of August more plausible, there is also the Afghan custom (typical of all societies that do not boast of a tradition of solid state order) of not considering loyalty to the State or to a political alliance as superior to the loyalty owed to one's own tribe. It is almost needless to say that most of the prisoners freed in September 2020 went to swell the ranks of the Taliban militias, contributing to creating havoc and distrust in the government forces.

At the end of 2020, the Taliban already controlled a conspicuous part of the Afghan territory. Although excluded from the large cities, which were held by the regular army backed by US and NATO forces, they were at the head of a "de facto State." A state which they managed with efficiency and shrewdness, especially when compared to the extreme inefficiency and corruption of the official government which, lacking any real cohesion, was a brand behind which the interests of the tribal clans survived the lack of centralization of the country due to the fragility of a state entity without its own strength. In fiscal year 2020, the Taliban managed a budget of about \$1.6 billion, only part of which came from the taxation of opium cultivation, the refining of drugs and their marketing (a fact that, according to sources such as the Financial Times, dispels the myth of an armed insurgency entirely dependent on drug trafficking). According to some estimates, the narcotics trade has contributed a quarter of the Taliban's income, roughly equal to that of the taxes collected on the exploitation of the mines, a very important sector and very promising for the future, considering the wealth of the Afghan subsoil. Particularly profitable is the exploitation of the talc mines extracted in Afghanistan, exported through the porous Pakistani border thanks to the good offices of the ISI (the Pakistani secret services) and then marketed as talc "made in Pakistan" throughout the world (the US and Italy are among the major consumers). Among the other sources of income were the taxes imposed on the subject population (the press opposed to the Taliban defines these as "extortion") which contributed 160 million to 10% of the total budget. Exports of goods yielded \$240 million, while donations came from many countries. Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates contributed a similar amount to the Taliban coffers, confirming the existence of a dense international network of support. The financial resources of the Taliban played an essential role in the long war of position that prepared the triumphant final offensive if, as it appears from various sources, the Taliban militias were mercenary troops in all respects and received a salary generally higher than that of the regular troops. Moreover, as has been repeated in several media outlets in recent days, the regular army's numbers were inflated by commanders in order to obtain more funding from the state.

There are now various difficulties and unknowns for the Taliban in power. The political unification of the country under its

own flag, with the exception of a few pockets of resistance, seems substantially complete. The chances of the so-called "Northern Alliance", barricaded with a few thousand men in the Panjshir valley, to effectively oppose an announced Taliban offensive also seem slim. It is necessary to remember that the spoils of war of the Taliban, obtained from the dissolution of the regular army supplied by the United States, include many hundreds of Humvee armored vehicles, some Black Hawk combat helicopters and twenty or so A-29 Super Tucano aircraft. All of which put the Taliban in a clear advantageous position in the face of any eventual armed insurgency. This does not mean, however, that the country will be easily pacified. Another difficulty with which the Taliban must reckon is the freezing of international financial flows destined for the old Afghan government and which were indispensable to guarantee its functioning. A third difficulty could come from the internal divisions of a not very homogeneous political structure. Some components would be more interested in imprinting an "internationalist" character of all-out Islamic propaganda on the Taliban Emirate, as would be the case of the Haqqani Network traditionally tied to the Pakistani services and to Al Qaeda. The most influential component, at the moment, seems to be more interested in highlighting the national character of the movement. Exponents of this tendency are the leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, designated as Amir al-Muminin (Prince of Believers) and the already nominated Head of the Government, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar. In a meeting in early August in Tianjin with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, the latter pledged not to interfere with the thorny issue of the Uyghurs, a Sunni Muslim and Turkic-speaking population in China's Xinjiang, whose ethnic discrimination by the Beijing government is one of the leitmotifs of anti-Chinese propaganda advocated by the US and Western powers. The armed movement called the Turkistan Islamic Party, which gathers Uyghuri jihadists, is active in China and took part in some moments of the war in Afghanistan and the war in Syria by joining the jihadists in Idlib. This aspect presents itself as one of the obstacles that could hinder the development of those "friendly" relations between China and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan that the Beijing government hastened to hope for immediately after the fall of Kabul into Taliban hands.

For us Marxists, national and religious conflicts conceal material interests that are mostly unconfessable, just as the Taliban flag is waved to propitiate and co-conspire more or less shady business deals. A new advance by China could undoubtedly benefit from a pacified and unified Afghanistan, even if under the banner of the Taliban, which is indigestible to many. Chinese imperialism is anxious to fill a void left by the retreating American imperialism, but a success in this sense is far from being taken for granted. What will determine future developments in the Great Game of the 21st century will be the balance of power between the great powers on the verge of entering the final straight of the general war, of the infamous world imperialist slaughter.

# FOR THE CLASS UNION

## news and interventions of the class struggle

### Pakistan (con't)

other exists were closed. This unfortunate incident, a crime of bourgeoisie world, is just one among many, in a similar particularly tragic incident, more than 250 workers were killed as a fire broke out in a garment factory in 2012, Karachi. Some trade unions have started protesting outside the chemical factory.

On August 17th 2021, 16 thousand active government workers from various departments, institutions have been sacked by a decision from the supreme court. In the 90's all these workers had been also previously sacked during the governance of the Muslim league party, in 2010 the governance of the people's party had reinstated these employees by passing a bill. The court now deems the bill unconstitutional, and the fate of 16 thousand workers hangs in the air, the court had already made its decision in 2019 and reserved in announcing the verdict, appeals from the various departments from which these workers belonged had also been rejected. Going on, workers committees have been formed, unions have started being involved. It is important to note, many government departments have been going through privatization, a process which many government employees have been actively opposing through strikes, protests etc. The people's party making use of this opportunity participated in a worker's convention in Tando Allahyar, Sindh province, announcing protests and "solidarity" with the workers, deceiving workers.

### Germany Railroad Strikes

"There has been a series of strikes by the train drivers in Germany, the union is GDL (Gewerkschaft Deutscher Lokomotivführer) and its demand is modest, €600 bonus for the extra stress and work during Coronavirus and a 3.2% pay increase.

Train drivers are officially "civil servants" in Germany, members of the civil service confederation, but their formerly privileged position has been eroded.

The train drivers have had to do more demanding shifts and unpaid hours during coronavirus.

Moreover the "Tarifeinheitgesetz" gives the main trade union confederation DGB a virtual monopoly over collective bargaining, which threatens concessions won by the GDL in the past. In particular, the drivers worry that Deutsche Bahn will get more leverage in changing shifts at short notice.

The pandemic has also created more work for train conductors as they often have to take care of 1,000 passengers on their own and are required to ensure that coronavirus restrictions are adhered to (which means they sometimes suffer abuse).

They are members of a separate union, the EVG (Eisenbahnverkehr Gewerkschaft) and the two union bureaucracies strive to prevent joint action."

### Third German Railworkers' Strike

A third strike by German railworkers took place between the first Thursday to Tuesday of September, with two large rallies of the Gewerkschaft Deutscher Lokführer (German Locomotive Drivers' Union, GDL) in

Nuremberg and Essen on Friday, September 3. According to newspaper reports the strike was solid on Thursday and Friday, with just a quarter of trains running.

The day before, the Frankfurt Labor Court in the State of Hessen rejected an appeal from German Railways (Deutsche Bahn, DB), as the court could not determine whether or not the strike was illegal. DB has been desperately trying to divide the striking train drivers from other groups of employees by allowing their "representation" only by the in-house union the Eisenbahn- und Verkehrsgewerkschaft (EVG). DB continues to pursue legal actions in other jurisdictions.

DB has made a derisory offer of a Covid-19 "bonus" of between €400 and €600 and a wage increase of just 3.2% over 36 months, while inflation means this will be a severe cut in real terms.

The drivers are angry about the additional workload and poor sickness provision during the pandemic. Among other things, a lot of goods including vitally needed disinfectants have been moved to rail transport as a result of the shortage of truck drivers. Extra journeys are also impacting other workers such as maintenance crews. On passenger trains, attendants have also had to work extra shifts and faced the additional stress of enforcing Covid-19 rules.

There is a very strong feeling that the extra work should be recognized with a pay increase and not just ritual applause from management.

Apart from the issue of wages, the strike is about the proportion of so-called "disposition shifts" in drivers' schedules. These are shifts outside of and beyond planned rosters, for example because of staff sick leave or other unforeseen circumstances. This currently stands at 20% of all shifts, and DB wants to raise it to 40%.

The militancy of the drivers and other rail workers is setting off alarm bells. Shift work and overtime are becoming more and more unbearable across many sectors while wages are getting worse, and the prospects of unemployment and poverty pensions are increasing.

German workers understand the need for greater union militancy. As a result of the strike, GDL has succeeded in recruiting and additional 4,000 members.

DB has therefore had no trouble mobilizing support from the government and the German media. There is a strong possibility that the September election will see a change of government, with the "left" party in the coalition, the SPD, becoming the dominant voice in a new multi-party constellation.

This is another reason for DB is pursuing the legal route, hoping to sue the GDL for damages. The SPD leadership has let it be known that they want to stick to the current law, which limits strike action and provides a framework for annual wage negotiations. The law is, in effect, a straitjacket on the working class.

Meanwhile the leader of the GDL, Claus Weselsky (who is actually a member of the governing conservative party, the CDU) is urgently seeking a compromise. He can see the railworkers' militancy spiraling out of control.

# FOR THE CLASS UNION

## news and interventions of the class struggle

### Quebec: FIQ Health Care Workers

On 6 August, the FIQ (Fédération interprofessionnelle du Québec) voted to accept a provisional agreement, the result of 18 months of negotiations. The three main unions arrived at the agreement united, separating the workers at the beginning of the negotiations. The pitting of the unions against each other, to the delight of the bosses and their allies in government, has led to heavy defeats over the years. It should be noted that the FIQ, which represents 76,000 nurses, nursing assistants and respiratory therapy technicians, has historically never formed a common front with the large central trade union organisations.

In the end, the agreement was accepted with a small majority of 54%, with low participation rates (between 32% and 44% depending on the region) and was pushed back in some regions. Surprising with regard to its content: a small wage increase of only 2% over the 3 years of the agreement, which is just above inflation. In addition, there is a 3.5% FIQ bonus, which will only be paid to members of that union and will increase the already existing gap between workers. Finally, there are retention and attendance bonuses, but in reality the government will never have to pay them because the working conditions in the field will not change for those who have to work compulsory overtime (OTT) or who cannot reconcile work and family.

The biggest problem are the salaries but the working conditions for nurses: too many patients, lack of resources, being constantly understaffed. These conditions make it impossible for health care facilities to retain staff or hire new ones. Throughout the dispute, the FIQ has not hesitated to reveal its reactionary nature through the agreement in principle, which shows little interest in its members.

In reality, the leadership of the FIQ wants to avoid the strike at all costs, because it prefers its position as a mediator between employers and workers, and simply has no interest in conducting this kind of struggle.

The weakness of the protest against the agreement unfortunately shows us that the majority of members are not ready to mobilise. Despite the heroic combativeness of a number of nurses, who have not been afraid to show their discontent and their will to fight, they are only a minority for the time being. Most of them have never experienced a strike, while another part is still de-moralised by the defeat of 1999.

Workers have stopped seeing unions as a powerful weapon in the class struggle, but rather as a kind of insurance they pay for certain services. This is certainly due in part to the opportunism of union leaders such as those in the FIQ, who prefer conciliation to struggle.

Moreover, provisions such as the Rand formula, which obliges employees in a workplace to pay for union membership even if they are not members, tend to lower the level of consciousness and leave the field open to opportunists. Workers must bear in mind that their economic situation means they have interests that cannot be reconciled with the bosses and their state, and that the class struggle will therefore inevitably lead to

confrontation. They therefore need structures that enable them to fight effectively, which is not the case with their current trade unions. Money does not buy happiness, so the FIQ can call this agreement a success.

The meagre wage increases signed are not enough! It is not enough for nurses and it is not enough for the entire Quebec working class who must work in dilapidated facilities.

Nurses are now stuck with this terrible contract until March 2023. We need a fighting movement of health care employees who can fight for better working conditions. This must start with a mobilisation in the trade unions and the agreement to form a common front in order to arrive prepared for the 2023 contract.

### Greece: New Labor Law

After the approval of the new labor law by the Parliament, the "Newspaper of the Editors", close to the position of Syriza and the Greek social democracy, was entitled: "Back to the Middle Ages for the workers".

Nothing more misleading! The law approved by Parliament in June, with the votes of the right-wing majority, responds to the most recent directives of all the bourgeoisies in the world, and also of the European Commission, towards ever greater flexibility and job insecurity and with further limitations on strikes and to the trade union organization. It is therefore the result not of "backwardness" but of a necessity and an explicit request of the most modern capitalist mode of production, increasingly in crisis and increasingly inhuman and anti-historical.

The government justified the law to allow Greece to "seize the growth opportunities" after the 2020 crisis and the pandemic, "improve competitiveness" and "create new jobs", attracting foreign investors for the reduced wage costs and general.

The new law firstly abolishes the 8-hour day and the 5-day week; it eliminates the obligation for entrepreneurs to pay increased wages for overtime over 8 hours and 5 days and provides that it is possible to work up to 10 hours a day without wage integration; overtime can be compensated with days off. However, the limit of 40 hours per week is safeguarded. Hours in excess of 40 will be counted as overtime; up to 150 hours of overtime per year are allowed, or even more for "urgent work", with a 40% increase in wages, while currently the maximum is 120 hours and the increase is 60%.

Added to this is the abolition of compulsory Sunday rest and the introduction of tele-work. A "digital work card" is also activated to monitor the hours worked.

The raising of the working day to 10 hours knocks down one of the symbols of the international labor movement, the eight hours a day, the result of more than a century of hard struggles, but in practice a large part of the proletariat, even in Greece, is currently in this condition. weakness that has to accept much heavier work situations, in terms of hours and wages.

But the worst aspect of the law is the attack on the role of trade unions, it gives space to individual relationships between the employee and the company, aiming at overcoming national collective agreements. The workers

thus lose the possibility of asserting the strength of numbers and their organization in the determination of hours and wages. According to the new law these will be resolved in the framework of "individual contracts", bypassing the trade unions!

It could be the final blow to the recognition of collective agreements, already severely limited with the "austerity memorandums", after the 2010-2011 crisis, also with the collaboration of the Syriza government in the 2015-2019 period, which now pretends to oppose to the initiative of the right-wing government.

But the attack on the union is not limited to this. Now the unions are obliged to keep a digital "register of members", available to the Ministry of Labor and employers' organizations. A strike decision must first be approved (by electronic vote) by 50% + 1 of all company personnel. In the critical sectors of public services (health, education, transport, energy, etc.) in the event of a strike, 35% of the workforce must continue to work, for "social responsibility".

In the event that the union does not respect these rules, workers will be subject to civil and criminal penalties. A system similar to the one that in Italy currently affects workers who perform so-called "essential" public services but not those of industry, commerce, etc.

In the months preceding the approval of the law, the main trade unions, the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), the Confederation of Public Employees (ADEDY) and the Militant Front of All Workers (PAME), held demonstrations and even a strike general 24 hours. But these struggles have highlighted not the strength but the state of weakness of the Greek proletariat which in recent years has had to swallow a series of burning defeats and has seen its living and working conditions considerably worsen.

According to OECD data for 2019, the average effective working time in Greece was 1,950 hours per year, lower only than in Korea and Mexico, while it is much higher, for example, than in Germany (1,386 hours per year). Real wages between 2008 and 2019 are estimated to have decreased by 30%, the average wage having gone from about 1,300 euros to 950.

The current government is also, in line with previous ones, drawing up plans for the privatization of the system. public pension and social security, as well as massive privatizations of all that is still owned by the state.

To this the proletariat is unable to oppose a single trade union front of class struggle, given that the two main unions have a policy of substantial agreement with the employers while PAME contributes to the division of the trade union front, tied as it is double-stranded with the opportunist boulder of the KKE.

The parties and political organizations on the left of the KKE, while they are agitated in the search for a phantom political unity, neglect to organize workers on the level of union demands, overcoming the divisions between categories, to try to reconstitute the indispensable unity of the class.

### Pakistan: Recent Labour News

On 27th August, a fire broke out in a chemical factory named (BM LUGGAGE industry) in Korangi Industrial Area, Karachi, resulting in 17 workers being burnt to death. In classic fashion, there was only one entry point into the factory, windows were locked and all