China fights to contain outbreak of COVID-19 delta variant

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Health authorities are scrambling to contain an outbreak of COVID-19 spreading across China, after the delta variant infected workers at Lukou Airport in Nanjing. It had seen 381 cases across China by the end of July, 75 new cases on August 1, and 98 on August 2.

Though China was the initial epicenter of COVID-19 after it emerged in the city of Wuhan in December 2019, a scientific policy of strict lockdowns and contact tracing halted domestic spread of the coronavirus by June 2020. Since then there have been isolated outbreaks from individuals arriving in China after having been infected abroad. Now the most serious such outbreak is underway, due to the delta variant's extraordinary virulence.

The contrast between the response of the Stalinist Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime and that of the imperialist powers of North America and Europe is staggering. The number of cases found so far in China in this outbreak is under 1,000—dozens of times less than the 27,000 daily cases found in France or 89,000 in the United States. Yet while officials in NATO powers insist that workers must "learn to live with the virus," in French President Emmanuel Macron's words, Chinese health authorities are mounting a public health offensive to halt the contagion.

Yesterday, China's Civil Aviation Administration (CAA) confirmed that on July 20, it had received a report that cleaning staff at Lukou Airport, vaccinated with Sinovac or Sinopharm vaccines, had showed positive in PCR tests. Testing of staff and travelers reportedly found that the virus came aboard Air China flight CA910 from Moscow. Chinese authorities have repeatedly suspended CA910 after COVID-19 cases were imported aboard this flight.

Yesterday afternoon, top officials in China's Jiangsu province, where Nanjing is located, held a press conference. They reported that contact tracing and testing has revealed that 44 percent of cases in Nanjing are among airport cleaning staff, 52 percent are among their contacts (primarily families), and the remainder are travelers who were infected abroad, before their arrival in China. Of the 220 cases, 82 are asymptomatic and six are severe.

Several reports in Chinese state media said cost-cutting and poor safety measures for workers at subcontracting firms working for the Lukou Airport and its corporate parent, Eastern Airport Group, caused the outbreak. The state-run *People's Daily* contacted several of the subcontracting firms, who either denied that they were involved or refused to answer journalists' questions.

Chen Mou, a manager at Nanjing Property Management, told the paper, "The cleaning of the airport and of airplane cabins at Nanjing-Lukou was given to several subcontracting firms… The reason why such a big problem occurred this time is that the airport did not carry out proper daily supervision, and in order to save money, the subcontracting firm did not properly separate workers in domestic and international operations."

The *People's Daily* wrote that overwork of cleaning staff played a major role: "In order to save money, subcontractors had the work originally assigned to two people carried out by only one."

The *People's Daily* reported that on July 23, CCP Jiangsu provincial committee secretary Feng Jun was fired from his post and as a member of the Eastern Airport Group's corporate board. The paper criticized Feng for "not having handled the operations of the Eastern Airport Group in a professional manner, allowing the COVID-19 pandemic to spread."

A vast public health campaign to eradicate the delta

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variant in China is underway.

Entire city districts are being placed on lockdown, and tens of millions of people tested for COVID-19 to identify, isolate and care for the sick, and prevent further contagion. The entire populations of Nanjing (8 million) and Wuhan (11 million) are to be tested. Mass testing is also underway in Yangzhou, Xiamen, Chongqing, partially flooded Zhengzhou, and the capital, Beijing.

Mass testing and contact tracing rapidly tracked the spread of the virus across China. As of the end of July, the 381 cases included 243 in Jiangsu province, where Nanjing is located; 91 in Yunnan province, 12 in Henan and Hunan provinces, 8 in Sichuan province, and 5 in northeastern China's Liaoning province. There were two in Beijing, Chongqing, and in Fujian; and one each in Guangdong, Shandong, Ningxia and Hubei provinces. Since then, further cases have been found in Shanghai and in Shaanxi and Fujian provinces.

The town of Zhangjiajie, a tourist destination in Hunan province, is hard hit with 13 cases detected as of yesterday and is in lockdown. The town's WeChat social media account is naming those infected and identifying where they have gone in the town, to alert inhabitants or tourists who may have come into contact with them. Schoolteachers and other public sector workers are ordered to shelter at home and await mass mobilization orders on epidemic control operations.

Hunan authorities said that the situation in nearby Zhuzhou, where there is community spread of the delta variant and over one million people are in lockdown, is "grim and complicated."

The efforts of Chinese workers and health authorities expose the criminality of COVID-19 policies in most of the rest of the world. Calls to "live with the virus" also predominated in the Brazilian regime of fascistic President Jair Bolsonaro, India's Hindu-supremacist regime, and the post-Soviet capitalist kleptocracy run by Russian President Vladimir Putin. Above all, the imperialist powers rejected scientific policies, making their own British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's infamous call, "No more f***ing lockdowns, let the bodies pile high in their thousands!"

The result is that since the pandemic began, fewer than 5,000 people died in China, the original epicenter of the virus, while in the NATO alliance, grouping the world's wealthiest imperialist powers in Europe and America, 1.7 million people have died.

This is not because, as is claimed in NATO countries' media propaganda, eradicating the virus is impossible. It is because the degenerate political criminals who run these governments pursued a policy that the BMJ (*British Medical Journal*) correctly branded "social murder." While giving trillions of dollars, euros and pounds to the financial aristocracy in bank and corporate bailouts, they rejected scientific social distancing policies that have saved millions of lives in China.

It is not to excuse the CCP's indubitable corruption—inseparable from its restoration of capitalism in 1989, and its exploitation of the Chinese working class—to state that this corruption is not the main cause of the contagion spreading from Nanjing. Outbreaks like that of today, of January 2021 centered in Shijiazhuang, or of May-June 2021 in Guangzhou are caused above all by circulation of COVID-19 outside China, as infected travelers or contaminated frozen goods arrived from overseas.

The pandemic is a world catastrophe that can be halted only by the coordinated, global implementation of the scientific measures now being adopted in China. Imposing such policies requires building an international movement of the working class against capitalism. This underlies the utter bankruptcy of the Stalinist CCP's nationalist policy. Unable and unwilling to appeal to workers internationally, it has no way of halting the pandemic disaster unfolding outside China's borders.

Viewed from the standpoint of workers internationally, however, events in China have a different significance. While protests in Europe against science and vaccination are led by neo-fascists, popular support in China for "mass mobilization" and scientific policies against COVID-19 are a distant echo of great struggles of the 20th century like the 1949 Chinese revolution. It testifies to the vast potential for science and revolutionary struggle to resolve even horrific problems such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

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