

Under a strict Zero-COVID strategy, new infections in China turn sharply lower

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17 March 2022

The Western media has suddenly shown interest in the experience of China in the coronavirus pandemic, with the first significant surge in infections, due to the Omicron variant, since the February days of 2020. But this press campaign hypes the casualties (far lower than the grim daily death toll in country after country around the world, and *not a single death*) and ignores the effectiveness of China's application of "dynamic zero-COVID policy," which has had immediate success in stemming infection.

In the first two weeks of March, over 15,000 domestically transmitted cases had been identified across 28 provincial-level regions, with the epicenter of the wave centered on Jilin province in the northeast. The exponential rise in cases propelled authorities to implement the current strict measures that have repeatedly proven successful—a simple matter of denying the virus the necessary human fuel.

By Monday, March 14, China's National Health Commission reported 5,154 new COVID-19 cases (143 percent rise from the day before), the highest single-day figure. On March 15, cases across China had dropped 41 percent to 3,054, and the cases in Jilin appeared to stabilize. On March 16, national numbers continued their decline to 2,432.

Yesterday, the Commission reported there had been only 1,317 new COVID-19 cases, of which 91 were imported, and 1,226 were indigenous cases. This corresponds to a decline of 75 percent over four days. Additionally, new cases in Jilin province have also turned downwards.

In their summary of cases to date, the National Health Commission wrote, "[Over the last 27 months we] had received reports of 123,773 confirmed cases and 4,636 deaths [*no additional deaths*] in 31 provincial-level regions and the Xinjiang Production

and Construction Corps on the Chinese mainland, and in all 104,287 patients had been cured and discharged from hospitals. There still remained 14,850 confirmed cases (including 16 cases in serious condition) and 14 suspected cases. [Additionally,] 1,919,136 people had been identified as having had close contact with infected patients, and 244,428 were still under medical observation."

Instead of congratulating China's massive effort and calling on their own countries to emulate these comprehensive public health measures and bring the pandemic to an end once and for all, the main concern of the international press is the potential ripple effect China's efforts will have on the complex international supply chain that capitalist production depends on. It is the state of the global financial system and capitalist profit that they lament. The countless lives saved and livelihoods spared in the world's most populous country do not enter their calculations.

The *Financial Times* wrote, "China's latest attempt to suppress an outbreak of COVID-19 with lockdowns in several cities has disrupted global supply chains, which is likely to lead to lower growth and profitability across the technology industry. Apple supplier Foxconn said on Wednesday its revenue could contract by up to three percent this year, and it might struggle to raise its operating profit margin as component costs rise and the pandemic persists." Notably, Apple was the first US company to reach a market value of three trillion dollars on the first trading day of 2022.

Shenzhen is the third most populous city in China. It is in the southern province of Guangdong and one of China's special economic zones. The local government ordered all but essential factories in the technology manufacturing district to halt production for one week. The city will conduct three rounds of mass testing of

the entire population during the one-week shutdown with the hope of lifting restrictions by March 20.

In an announcement by the local government to the city's populace, they request, "All government agencies and institutions at all levels in the city, except for the staff who undertake epidemic prevention tasks, work from home, or become community volunteers, report to the community where they live, and fully participate in community epidemic prevention work and community services." They added, "Market supervision, commerce, and other relevant departments and supply guarantee companies ensure sufficient supply of daily necessities and stable prices."

The measures being taken in Shenzhen exemplify the efforts being taken across the entire country. Fundamental to the success of China's zero-COVID policy is the "dynamic" interaction that takes place between the local governments and the population in enlisting their cooperation to ensure infections are stopped in their tracks and chains of transmissions broken permanently. It is precisely this symbiotic relationship that the bourgeois press has failed to grasp in their constant carping at the country's monumental efforts.

They prefer to cite comments by the likes of Olaf Schatteman, a 20-year consulting veteran and supply chain expert at Bain & Company, to substantiate their criticism of China's policy. Schatteman told the *Times*, "China is digging itself into a deep hole with its zero-COVID policy. As the restrictions are hurting suppliers and logistic operations, companies are moving beyond containing the current crisis and towards diversifying production locations, undermining China as the supply chain hub of the world."

Heeding the disastrous lessons offered most recently in Hong Kong, the most recent territory laid waste by the global pandemic, where the per capita daily death toll is reaching 40 per million and morgues are filled to the brim with corpses, the Chinese health authorities reissued city-wide lockdowns affecting more than 52 million people.

The whole province of Jilin, with 24 million people and the hardest-hit region by COVID-19, has been isolated. The industrial city of Dongguan, with 10.4 million people, has locked down. Langfang, which borders the capital Beijing, has closed all non-essential businesses. Schools in Shanghai have returned to online

classes, and residents have been asked to shelter in place unless absolutely necessary.

The current threat to China's zero-COVID policy commenced in February when daily cases began to grow in line with the spread of the Omicron subvariant in Southeast Asia and Oceania. South Korea, Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand were also experiencing a rapid rise in community transmission as they moved away from policies that would contain infections.

The Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation estimated that on January 10, 2022, the global daily COVID-19 infection rate had reached almost 50 million per day. And country after country where Omicron arrived saw a massive surge in cases that disrupted every aspect of social life for several weeks while taking another 600,000 lives since the New Year. And, once more, due to efforts to completely abandon any meager mitigation measures, the BA.2 version of Omicron has reignited a new surge in cases across Europe.

Indeed, one must ask, which policy, "let it rip" or "dynamic zero," has served the planet's population better? The coordinated, streamlined measures employed in China are a far different approach than the initial chaotic days when the novel virus first emerged in the population in December 2019. These efforts have paid dividends as the Chinese population—despite the police-state rule of the Stalinist regime—have had much more freedom in their everyday life over the past 2+ years, compared to the working people of Europe, the US, Latin America, and the rest of the world.

What is proven in China is that a dynamic zero-COVID strategy is not only feasible, even with Omicron, but necessary. What has threatened the world economy—in the sense of the development of the productive forces, not the short-term financial interests of the billionaire parasites—has not been the adherence to a zero-COVID policy, but rather, the short-sighted and criminal policy of living in permanence with the virus that has created so much misery and death.



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