

Six months after the lifting of Zero-COVID

China's second wave of COVID infections, deaths, Long COVID, and government lies: Conclusion

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This is the fourth and final part of a four-part series. Read Part 1 here, Part 2 here and Part 3 here.

Criminal silence from the corporate media and pseudo-left

The mass suffering and deaths from China's second COVID-19 wave have been met with virtually complete silence in the corporate media internationally. Even in the regional press in China and throughout East Asia, outside of a handful of local media outlets reporting on Dr. Zhong Nanshan's projection of 65 million weekly infections by the end of June, there has been no coverage of this catastrophe.

The *South China Morning Post* published two brief reports in June that simply repeated the official monthly figures from the Chinese CDC, which vastly underestimated the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths. These articles also parroted the lies and deliberate misinformation from health care officials downplaying the scope and impact of the current wave.

One of the only recent articles on COVID-19 in China by the Western corporate media was published on June 6 in the *Washington Post* titled "China abandoned 'zero covid.' But some don't want to leave it behind." The article maligns China's Zero-COVID policy and people who continue to adhere to strict measures to protect themselves, while drastically minimizing the impact of China's second COVID-19 wave, as well as its first. Nowhere do the words "death" or "Long COVID" even appear.

The *Post* interviews a handful of people, whom they refer to as "zero covid holdouts," including Gugu, who "wears a face mask outside." While noting that Gugu has diabetes and high blood pressure, so she "felt safe under zero covid," the *Post* slanders this policy that once protected people with underlying conditions like Gugu as "China's notoriously strict approach to keeping the virus out."

Another person interviewed in the same article, Lin Yiwu, is concerned about the consequences of multiple reinfections, which

will be hard to avoid under current circumstances. He said, "If possible, avoid catching it at all. Delay—the later you get it the better. And as much as possible, reduce the number of times you catch it. Delay, reduce and avoid."

Lin is part of an online community formed by like-minded people where they share "tips on how to build an air purifier at home or what face masks are more breathable."

The *Washington Post* attempts to present these people who remain careful about COVID-19 as crazy and refers to them as "evidence of the long shadow that the zero-covid approach still casts on China." However, this vilification cannot cover up the existing and growing social concerns over the prospect of unending waves of the pandemic.

Even more damning than the silence of the corporate media is that of the international pseudo-left organizations, which claim to be socialist or in some cases even Trotskyist. Not a word has been said about the deepening social disaster in China by any of these political tendencies, all of which had advocated for the lifting of Zero-COVID.

These include but are not limited to Socialist Alternative, La Izquierda Diario, the International Marxist Tendency, International Viewpoint, Socialist Appeal, Committee for a Workers' International and *Jacobin*. A browse through these organizations' websites reveals that most of their coverage on the COVID-19 pandemic stopped altogether in January.

For over two years prior to the lifting of Zero-COVID in China, virtually every pseudo-left tendency continuously denounced the Zero-COVID policy as "draconian" and demanded that it be lifted immediately. In late November 2022, these tendencies hailed the "white paper" protests, a series of small, choreographed anti-Zero-COVID protests at universities and cities across China, which were seized upon by the CCP to fully scrap Zero-COVID on December 7, 2022.

Now that China has joined the rest of the world in the horrific "forever COVID" policy of repeated waves of mass infection, death and debilitation, all these pseudo-left tendencies have gone silent about their complicity in this public health disaster.

The real political orientation of the pseudo-left stands thoroughly

exposed. In no way do they speak for or represent the interests of the working class. Rather, they give voice to the individualist and self-centered politics of the affluent middle class, who largely view anti-COVID public health measures as interruptions to their lifestyles.

Conclusion

Contrary to the depictions of Zero-COVID as oppressive and widely resented, it was understood within broad sections of the Chinese population that these measures, despite their inconvenience and sometimes bureaucratic excesses, were necessary to protect their health and lives. In a poll conducted just prior to the lifting of Zero-COVID in China, only 11.9 percent of the population supported “large-scale adjustment” to the policy.

Even today, when almost all public health measures have been revoked, a section of the population that sees the real danger of the virus and used to actively support Zero-COVID measures still strives to protect themselves through strict infection control measures. They are joined by millions of people globally who continue to shield themselves from COVID-19 to the greatest extent possible through indoor masking in public places, limiting social contact, testing and other measures.

At the same time, the individual struggles of these “Zero-COVID holdouts” underscore the impossibility of combating a global pandemic on an individual basis without any public health infrastructure or global coordination. Fundamentally, the pandemic can only be stopped through the building of a mass movement of the international working class, in unity with principled scientists, fighting for a global elimination strategy.

The necessity for this strategy was underscored in a significant interview conducted by the *World Socialist Web Site* last week with COVID-19 researcher Arijit Chakravarty, whose team at Fractal Therapeutics has produced among the most far-sighted and critical papers throughout the pandemic.

In the interview, Chakravarty warned of the immense dangers of letting COVID-19 spread completely unchecked, which increases the likelihood that a far more dangerous variant will evolve. He stated:

I can't predict the outcome of the next wave. I can't predict the outcome of the next five waves. But, at the rate that we are going, a prediction can be made with a high degree of certainty that something bad will happen sooner than later along these lines. Keep this pandemic running for another five years, and you'll face a debacle on a scale that you haven't yet seen. That's a given.

Commenting on the ending of the Public Health Emergency declaration by the World Health Organization last month and the false claims that “the pandemic is over”—which he characterized as

“Orwellian Newspeak”—Chakravarty said that global society now has nothing in place to protect against a more dangerous variant. He stressed:

In that kind of reactive strategy what will happen is billions will be infected before we realize something is wrong. And that's too late to do anything about it. So not only is the pandemic very much not over, but by creating the *impression* that the pandemic is over in the face of rampant viral spread and continuing rapid viral evolution, we are essentially sticking our chin out and asking the virus to do its worst.

Chakravarty is one of the best-informed scientists on the pandemic, and his warnings must be heeded. The complete scrapping of Zero-COVID in China and global adoption of a “forever COVID” policy are only accelerating the process of viral evolution. The coronavirus now has a home among 8 billion people throughout the world in which it will continue to mutate and evolve.

The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically altered global society, exacerbating the preexisting contradictions of world capitalism and exposing the bankruptcy of this social system in the eyes of masses of workers. It has accelerated the eruption of a new imperialist redivision of the world through the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, while at the same time propelling the working class into struggle on every continent.

The same process is now taking place in Chinese society, which confronts the horrific reality of perpetual waves of mass infection, death and Long COVID and the growing threat of military conflict with US imperialism. It is essential that the Chinese working class orient to its international brothers and sisters and initiate a global struggle to stop the pandemic, as well as the escalating danger of a nuclear World War III, climate change and other existential threats confronting mankind.

This requires world socialist revolution, which only the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the genuine Trotskyist movement, is fighting for. From the beginning of the pandemic, the ICFI is the only political party in the world which defended China's Zero-COVID policy and fought for the international working class to expand this comprehensive public health strategy to every corner of the globe. It is essential for the Chinese working class to draw the necessary conclusions from the experiences of the past six months and take up the fight to build a Chinese section of the ICFI.

Concluded



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