

Floods devastate parts of Russia, Kazakhstan

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For the past week, large regions of Russia and Kazakhstan have been devastated by the most severe flooding in decades. The rapid melting of snow due to high temperatures caused the swelling of the Ural River, which flows from Russia's Ural Mountains through Kazakhstan to the Caspian Sea.

In Kazakhstan, flooding is at its worst in over 80 years. As of April 10, a state of emergency has been declared in ten of Kazakhstan's seventeen provinces. At least 3,400 residential houses and 336 yards have been flooded. According to the Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Republic, a total of 96,500 people have been evacuated. Almost 3,000 of them had to be airlifted from the flood-hit regions, and more than 7,600 are staying in temporary accommodation.

Water has also flooded 14 anthrax burial grounds and eight cattle burial grounds. Anthrax is a serious infectious disease, the spores of which can remain in the soil for a long time. Reportedly, all necessary measures are being taken, but the question necessarily arises as to how the opening of anthrax burial grounds by water could occur in the first place.

In Russia, over 12,000 people have been evacuated. So far, the floods have centered on the Orenburg region. The Orenburg region is located in the south of the Ural Mountains, at the junction of Europe and Asia, on the border with the former Soviet republic, Kazakhstan, and is home to about 2 million people. On the evening of Friday, April 5, due to a strong flood, the dam protecting the city of Orsk, with a population of almost 200 thousand people, from the Ural River broke. More than 2,400 people were evacuated from the city. Moreover, often people from neighboring settlements had to save themselves when the water level reached the roofs of houses.

Peak water levels in Orsk were recorded at about 9.3 meters (30.5 feet). In an indication of the growing popular anger over the floods, on April 8, more than a

hundred local residents gathered for a spontaneous rally near the city administration to protest low payments for partial or total loss of property due to flooding. The mayor of the city, Vasily Kozupitsa, was met with angry shouts when he came to speak to protesters and had to flee back into the administration building. One woman said angrily, "We feed emergency ministry workers with pies and dumplings and bring them thermoses... Kozupitsa cannot even provide for emergency workers. Shame!"

As of this writing, the water has begun to recede from the city of Orsk. But the situation with flooding is worsening in the regional center, the city of Orenburg, which has a population of more than half a million people. At the time of this writing, water levels have reached 11 meters 54 centimeters (39 feet).

The first deputy mayor of Orenburg said that the city has not experienced such flooding in more than 30 years. Over 12,000 houses and about 15,000 household plots in Orenburg have already been flooded. About 7,500 people have been evacuated. A state of emergency has been declared in Orenburg, as well as the Kurgan and Tyumen regions, where evacuations have now also begun.

Extremely high temperatures have been recorded throughout Russia since March, causing the melting of ice and the rapid rise of water levels. Moscow recorded a temperature of 21 degrees Celsius (69.8 Fahrenheit) on April 10, and St. Petersburg (the northernmost city with a population of more than 1 million) recorded a temperature of 21.5 degrees Celsius (70.7 Fahrenheit) on April 10, breaking a 134-year-old record. Scientists attribute the abnormally hot temperatures to the emission of greenhouse gases into the earth's atmosphere.

But while the rapid rise of the water levels of the Ural River was bound up with climate change, the devastating consequences of the floods are the direct

result of the failure of the Russian and Kazakh oligarchies to invest in the infrastructure necessary to protect the population from its impact.

Meteorologists warned the authorities of the Orenburg region about the threat of flooding back in early March. Nevertheless, the Orenburg region's authorities did not take any protective measures in March or at the very beginning of April, when it was already obvious that this year's floods would be serious. The mayor of Orsk was at the dam itself on the eve of the breach, declaring that the dam was in good condition and that there was no threat of flooding.

The dam breach in Orsk was not inevitable. Experts believe that the dam in Orsk was designed and constructed without taking into account possible maximum water levels, noting that "the dam, at least, should withstand a flood, which happens once in a hundred years, and even with a small reserve, because it is modern, the construction was built recently." Defects in the construction of the dam are also considered possible.

Experts have emphasized the desire to save money over the safety of people during construction: "The dam was low, designed for a much smaller amount of water than could be expected... Measurements... of course, have predicted such high water level rises. But apparently they decided to save money."

The regional prosecutor's office said that the dam collapse occurred because measures for its maintenance were not taken in a timely manner. A completely absurd version of the dam breach was presented on federal television by the general contractor who built the dam in Orsk in 2010. According to his story, the dam was gnawed through by rodents. However, even the mayor of Orsk soon refuted this version, saying that the dam simply could not withstand the water pressure.

Regardless of the primary reason for the dam collapse, it is clear that the desire to save money played a key role in its collapse. The technical means to build a dam that could contain such a flood were and are available.

The bursting of the dam in Orsk demonstrates yet again the failure of the capitalist system, in which the ruling class is concerned only for its own profit, with no regard for the lives and health of millions of people. In considering this situation, it is impossible not to mention two other recent incidents that occurred for a

similar reason: The collapse of the Francis Scott Key bridge in Baltimore in the US, on March 26 and the collapse of the Pioneer mine on March 18 in the Amur region of Russia. In the first case, six workers who were on the bridge at the time were killed, while in the second case, all 13 miners in the mine at the time of the collapse were declared dead. All of these disasters happened primarily due to the refusal of the ruling class to spend money on safe infrastructure.

This is all happening against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine and the genocide in Gaza. Colossal funds from all sides are squandered on military spending, while minimal amounts of money are allocated to social welfare, environmental policy and other areas important to the population. Biden's budget calls for insane military spending of over \$1 trillion. The Putin regime's current military budget lags far behind its Western rival, totaling approximately \$115 billion, but when compared to Russia's budgets in previous years, it is still the largest in terms of military spending.

All this money could be spent on ending poverty, hunger, the COVID-19, addressing global climate change and a host of other things. But the profits concentrated in the hands of capitalists go not to solving global problems, but to wars and general destruction. Capitalism has reached a dead end, and the ruling class has no future to offer other than war, threatening the world with nuclear apocalypse.

The only force that can oppose the capitalist destruction of humanity is the working class. Due to its position in the economy, it alone is able to stop the bourgeoisie, and thus put an end to the emerging world war and, instead, channel funds for the socialist reorganization of the world. Therefore, it is necessary to politically organize the working class all over the globe to bury the capitalist system once and for all.



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