

TRUSS GONE BY CHRISTMAS?

by New Worker correspondent

THE PRIME Minister is battling for her political life following a week of U-Turns and economic turmoil that forced her to sack the Chancellor and replace him with a bitter rival who many now see as the real power behind the throne in Downing Street. But whilst the new Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, does his best to calm a jittery market by reversing virtual all of Truss's tax cuts the general view in Westminster, on all sides of the House, is that Liz Truss will be gone before Christmas.

Some Tories believe that appointing a caretaker premier will stave off demands for an immediate election that could see the complete collapse of the Conservative & Unionist Party.

With a colossal 33-point lead in the polls Labour is heading for an astronomical landslide at the expense of the Tories, who could, the way things are going, easily be eclipsed by the Scottish nationalists and the Liberal Democrats.

The Conservatives need time to restore their fortunes in the Tory heartlands in the South and to restore the trust between their traditional constituency and the Tory activists who committed political suicide when they voted for Liz Truss to keep

Rishi Sunak out of Downing Street. But time is a luxury they can no longer afford. Labour and the other opposition parties are baying for a snap general election, and they won't accept a prolonged 'caretaker' government. There's nothing in it for them nor indeed for the ruling class as a whole.

The Establishment has clearly been embarrassed by the antics of the party that traditionally represents the consensus of bourgeois opinion. It was bad enough under Johnson. Now it's intolerable under Truss.

done nothing

She's done nothing to resolve the Northern Ireland Protocol issue and restore confidence in Brussels or Washington, and no-one will listen to her now as who can say how long any of her pledges will last these days. Her standing with Joe Biden is rock bottom and if one investigative journalist is to be believed, she is held in contempt by her master in the White House.

Andrew Cockburn's *Spoils of War* online news-



• Greenpeace supporters heckle Truss.

letter says Biden was less than impressed with Liz Truss when he met her on the fringe of the UN General Assembly meeting in New York last month. She stupidly asked Biden to bring down global energy prices and at the same time enforce a total cut-off of all Russian oil exports – seemingly unaware of the fact that you can't do both at the same time.

Russia's soaring oil exports have kept the lid on the price of crude oil and if that was curtailed the price of oil on the spot market would soar to astronomical levels. According to Cockburn's source "following the meeting Biden told his aides that the new British leader was 'really dumb' and "not to be treated seriously".

Although the ruling class remains divided over the European Union, they are

concerned at the fact that Britain no longer has any real allies in the world. They need a stable government that can restore British im-

perialism's ties with Franco-German and above all American imperialism, and at the moment only Starmer fits the bill.

FUND

This week's postbag brought in £580 pushing the needle up to £1,080. We've still got a long road ahead of us. Special mention this week goes to the Southall comrade who sent in £100 and our old friend in Essex who popped a £30 cheque in the post for the fighting fund.

We need £1,950 to hit our target for October and we've still got time to do it.

Truss may be on her last legs but we're still fighting fit and we always will be as long as we maintain the level of financial support that has kept our communist presses going since 1977.

Workers are sick of austerity and they're sick of the Tories. Let's get the socialist answer to the crisis back on the streets. Every penny raised and every paper sold helps in the struggle for peace and socialism. Your donations, big or small, count. Please send them to: *New Worker* Fund, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the '*New Worker*'.

To save a stamp you can also use your credit or debit card to send contributions here:

<http://newworker.org/ncpcentral/fightingfund.html>

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THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

Looking to Beijing

COMMUNISTS all over the world are looking to Beijing this week. There, thousands of delegates and observers have gathered for the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

A Party congress is the most important event in the life of any communist party. The 20th National Congress will chart the course of the People's Republic of China as it faces the challenges and responsibilities of a world divided by imperialist greed whilst struggling to deal with catastrophic environmental changes.

In the Great Hall of the People, Chinese communists are laying down their party's programme for the next five years. A plan that will steer the people's government as it strives to build a modern China. An economy that is now second only to that of the USA in size and an agenda for peace and socialism that will strengthen all forces for progress throughout the planet.

China is the pivot for the millions upon millions of working people across the world struggling for peace and socialism.

China is a major force for peace. It has become a beacon of hope for all oppressed people. It offers economic assistance and medical aid to poor countries. The Belt and Road Initiative has brought real and tangible benefits to millions of people all over the world.

Cities have been modernised beyond recognition. Absolute poverty has been abolished. Vast investments have created new industries to face the challenge of the 21st Century and China is, once again, the work-shop of the world.

The immense wealth of the Western world remains in the hands of a tiny minority of capitalists and feudal lords. Millions upon millions live in poverty in the Third World whilst their resources are plundered by the big Western corporations.

In the West millions of people scramble to earn a living just to keep a roof over their heads, whilst a tiny elite live lives beyond the reach and often beyond the imagination of most workers.

We, on the other hand, see a different picture in China. China's wealth is being used to raise the standard of living of everyone in the people's republic and to help the development of the Third World through genuine fair trade and economic assistance.

In China we see vast cities with modern offices and factories, and equally modern housing for the workers who live there.

Chinese astronauts circle the globe. A high-speed rail network spans the country. Container trains travel to Europe packed with the goods that fill our shops and markets. International airports link China to the four corners of the world. A growing network of domestic airline services and modern ports serve the seaborne trade that fires the global economy. And a state-run education system and a dedicated health service that battled to contain the Covid pandemic is available to all.

Some Western communists like to dwell on the mistakes of the past to try to explain why the Soviet Union and the people's democracies of Eastern Europe collapsed in the late 1980s. But we have to move on – to look to the continuing successes of the people's democracies still marching along the road to socialism – and above all the immense achievements of the People's Republic of China.

Time up for Truss?

by Ekaterina Blinova

LIZ TRUSS'S premiership is looking increasingly in peril after five weeks of navigating the country through an economic storm. Last week she sacked her top finance minister, Kwasi Kwarteng, and shelved her ambitious plan to reduce corporation tax. Meanwhile, the new chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, is undoing Truss's other flagship policies.

"Never before has Britain found itself in such a humiliatingly risible position," says the US *Atlantic* magazine. "It is the stuff of nightmares: the national equivalent of getting caught short onstage in front of your entire school because you chose not to go to the bathroom when you had the chance."

"The premiership of Liz Truss is in grave danger," said Alistair Jones, associate professor of politics at De Montfort University in Leicester. "The track record in the five weeks she's been in office has been absolutely abysmal where the UK economy has done very, very badly. Global confidence in the government and the way it's planning on running things has been massively undermined. The knock-on effect of this has been for Liz Truss to sack her Chancellor of the Exchequer, Kwasi Kwarteng, even though he was implementing the policies that she wanted to be implemented."

Jones explained that the entire campaign that Truss ran to become Conservative Party leader "was based around cutting taxes and also targeting some aspects of reduced spending, but basically trying to get the economy to grow." She vehemently criticised those who threw the viability of her plan into question as part of an "anti-growth coalition", he said, adding that eventually "this backfired massively, because so many international organisations questioned what she was doing".

Markets reacted negatively to the Truss Cabinet's mini-budget, announced by then-Chancellor Kwarteng

late last month. Borrowing and mortgage costs went up, whilst the pound went down. But the prime minister's decision to fire her chancellor and make a U-turn on her flagship tax-cutting policy on 14th October did not end the market turmoil. The pound and government bonds fell again.

"The knock-on effect of this, though, has been for the Conservative Party to lose even more confidence in Liz Truss as prime minister," Jones notes. "Now it must be borne in mind that when the leadership election started, which she eventually won, about 50 MPs out of the 350 odd Conservative MPs actually backed. So you're talking therefore one in seven. In this respect, she did not have the support of Conservative MPs. Even though she won the election and many of them rallied round behind her – the reality is their support at best was lukewarm."

Truss "has done huge amounts of damage to the economy and to her party and to the credibility of the country in a very short space of time". Jones says the appointment of Jeremy Hunt looks like "a lack of confidence in Liz Truss".

Indeed, the British press of all stripes describes Hunt as the only adult in the room. The *Guardian* noted that the former health secretary is seen as "the most powerful man in government". The *Spectator* agreed: "Truss is now prime minister in name only: Jeremy Hunt, her Chancellor of the Exchequer, now holds power."

Hunt has repudiated the prime minister's mini-budget and is now working on a medium-term financial strategy at the Treasury whilst operating in tandem with Andrew Bailey, the Governor of the Bank of England. A newly empowered Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) approves of Hunt's approach. "Each of these institutions

– the Bank, the Treasury and the OBR – were treated with disdain by Truss and Kwarteng," the *Spectator* added.

"There is speculation that Liz Truss will be gone potentially in a matter of days if not weeks. And the reason being the lack of confidence in her ability to lead the party," Jones noted. "Her Cabinet was made up of allies rather than trying to unify the party, and they were basically simply isolated from the rest of the party. Her speeches, and even with the sacking of Kwasi Kwarteng, that particular press conference, instilled little or no confidence in her ability to lead."

Jones suggested that Conservative MPs may soon ask the 1922 Committee to ask Liz Truss to step down. Some say they are going to replace her with a joint ticket of Rishi Sunak and Penny Mordaunt. "One of them, possibly Mordaunt, [would] be prime minister."

"And if she was to be prime minister, Rishi Sunak would be Chancellor of the exchequer and Jeremy Hunt could choose whatever job he wanted. Apart from those two, if Sunak was to become prime minister, Jeremy Hunt, as speculated, will stay in post as chancellor and Penny Mordaunt will become deputy prime minister and also foreign secretary."

As of yet, this is all speculation, because there is a whole argument about whether or not the Conservative Party wants to go through the turmoil of another leadership election.

There are many other potential successors They range, according to the press, from Defence Secretary Ben Wallace to former Chancellor Rishi Sunak. What saves Truss at the moment is that "there is no common consensus on who would be best placed to take over", according to the *Spectator*. Nonetheless, the British media doesn't rule out that the patience of British MPs will soon become extremely thin, resulting in Truss's ousting.

Sputnik

Workers' Notes

UK PLC

by New Worker correspondent

ON THE EVE of its belated annual conference the Trades Union Congress (TUC) has published a curate's egg of a report entitled *Companies for People: How to make businesses work for workers, which is worthy of some attention.*

On the positive side it sets out, in jargon-free language, much of what is wrong with contemporary British capitalism. None of that will surprise readers of the *New Worker* but many details will be interesting.

Unsurprisingly, it is as helpful as chocolate teapot when it comes to pointing out the way forward. There is certainly nothing in it to strike fear into hearts of members of the House of Lords, where outgoing general secretary Frances O'Grady will shortly be joining.

As if we did not know it, the report laments that "the benefits of economic growth are not shared fairly among its participants".

It notes that since the 2008 financial crisis, shareholders have benefited from dividends growing over three times faster than wages. From 2008–2019, wages grew by 1.9 per cent and dividends 6.3 per cent per year in nominal terms, but in real terms, average wages fell by 0.3 per cent per year but dividends rose by four per cent annually per year. Had pay risen as dividends have, workers would have been an astonishing £16,400 better off in 2019, or in other terms UK workers would have received an additional £510 billion in wages.

In the Thatcher–Major–Blair years of 1987–2007 dividends grew by 10.4 per cent per year and pay by 5.2 per cent per year in nominal terms, or 7.4 per cent and 2.4 per cent in real terms respectively.

In this period dividends

came to take an increasing share of profits, from 16 per cent in 1987 to 52 per cent in 2018. Although this fell during COVID 19 pandemic, it bounced back to 41 per cent in 2021. This rise has come at the expense of productive investment and wages.

The results of this for workers are clear: 4.8 million workers, or one in six of the workforce, are paid below the Real Living Wage.

generally hold shares in hundreds of companies and do not have the staff capacity to analyse and engage with all the companies whose shares they hold."

Ever since early Victorian times company law has been biased in favour of bosses. The 1844 Joint Stock Companies Act made it easy to set up companies and the Limited Liability Act of 1855 ensured that owners could

which tax needs to be paid.

The 2006 Companies Act has some pious clauses that mention directors being required to have regard to the interests of employees, supplier and customer relationships, community and environmental impacts, and company reputation – but as always, company law is only concerned with the over-riding objective of promoting the interests of shareholders

sive executive pay, but this only means that investors approve of that. In any case, institutional investors care little about the long-term future of the businesses they invest them and drop the shares like hot potatoes when the dividends dry up.

With regards to executive pay, remuneration reports often see the highest 'no' votes at company AGMs. But it is as rare as hens' teeth for a majority of shareholders to actually vote against remuneration reports or remuneration policy. It is often just a case of harmlessly letting off steam in a symbolic fashion.

As a result, FTSE 100 CEO pay rose from £2.27 million in 2009 to peak at £3.97 million in 2013 and 2017. At present, the ratio between median FTSE 100 CEO is 109 times the median earnings of a UK full-time worker in 2021.

The TUC is spot on about one matter: collective bargaining not corporate governance rights are what matters in securing workers' rights, and it notes that things have got worse with the decline in trade union density and collective bargaining coverage from 54 per cent and 23.1 per cent respectively in 2021.

The TUC's solutions to the problems of low pay and insecure work are timid however: It wants changes in company law to require directors to focus on long-term company success and balance workforce and shareholder interests, and to change the term "employee" to "workforce" in the Companies Act. A more seemingly revolutionary demand is for elected Worker Directors, who should be one third of boards at companies with over 250 staff.

This is not as good as it sounds. While it would benefit union officials looking for another cosy job, it also means that workers would find it difficult to oppose management decisions 'their' board members were a party to, however willingly or reluctantly. In Germany, where this process has gone furthest, it is often impossible to distinguish

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• On a TUC march in London.



A Living Wage Foundation survey carried out earlier this year found that 38 per cent of people earning less than the Real Living Wage said they had fallen behind with essential bills in the last year; with 32 per cent saying they regularly skipped meals, 23 per cent had fallen behind with their rent or mortgage payments (wait till the more rates increase), with 17 per cent taking out a pay-day loan for essentials.

Even before the pandemic, in 2019, 14.5 million people in the UK lived in poverty, over half of whom, 57 per cent or 8.3 million, were in working households. As a result, 4.3 million children live in poverty despite having a working parent.

Shareholders Rule OK

The TUC wisely points out "that UK company law and corporate governance prioritise the interests of shareholders over those of other stakeholders". That is a statement of the blindingly obvious, but the TUC laments that: "Institutional investors

separate their own personal assets from a failing company, so they only lost the value of their shares and were absolved from any wider responsibilities. Bosses did not follow workers into the poor house, and do not do so today.

not suffer

Having a spread of investments means they do not suffer greatly if one of their companies goes under, so the 'reward for risk' that bourgeois economists use to justify high profits for 'entrepreneurs' (a French word for chancers) does not apply to them. On the other hand, workers suffer most as they have only one job to lose.

To make things worse, most large companies have complex webs of holding companies and corporate structures so it is virtually impossible to know who owns whom. Instead of a company having different departments, it turns them into different companies that in theory trade with each other to reduce the profits on

who have the whip-hand in running the company by electing directors, attending AGMs, setting directors' pay and appointing auditors, many of whom are at best useless or worse.

On the latter point, the TUC laments that despite high profile cases such as Carillion and Patisserie Valerie, where dozy auditors failed to notice companies were on the brink of collapse resulting on huge fines being imposed, such as the largest ever audit fine of £14.4 million imposed in July on KPMG for misleading regulators in routine inspections of historic audits of Carillion, few shareholders oppose auditor appointment resolutions.

In 2019–2021 only 0.8 did so. The TUC laments that investors are not making good use of the rights they hold, rendering our current shareholder-oriented system ineffective even in its own terms.

The TUC also complains that investors to not intervene enough, citing the fact that they do not limit exces-

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trade unionist directors from the shareholders' nominees. Recently worker directors at Ford plants in Spain and Germany have been busy petitioning American bosses that rival plants should be shut down rather than their home plants, instead of co-operating with fellow workers.

The TUC piously hopes that unions should have access to workplaces to tell workers about the joys of trade unions, it wants processes for establishing union recognition simplified, and Fair Pay Agreements agreed by unions and employers to be established.

It also wants a system of strict liability for core employment law standards to be established so that organisations have a legal responsibility to protect basic workplace rights for workers in their UK supply chains. In true TUC tradition, it does not say what action should be taken. Perhaps the new general secretary could write to Santa Claus. Calling for mass action is a definite no-no for the TUC.

Insecure Work

Insecure work has increased greatly since 2008. By 2019 it reached 3.7 million workers or one in nine of the workforce. The rate only

dropped slightly during the pandemic, and that was for the worst of reasons, namely, they disproportionately lost their jobs entirely. This figure includes agency, casual and seasonal workers, but not those on fixed-term contracts. In the UK there are no less than 935,000 people on zero-hours contracts (in 2006 there were only 70,000), 952,000 agency, casual and seasonal workers, and 1.9 million in low-paid self-employment, mostly of the fake variety where they are beholden to a large employer, rather than running small businesses. Fixed-term contracts, whilst acceptable for specific projects, are often used as a means of keeping workers on tenterhooks.

most desperate

Zero-hour contracts are another means of exploitation. It is a myth that zero-hours contracts offer 'flexibility' to workers. This is not the sort of flexibility where 9–5 can be swapped from 8–6 or 10–7, but instead allows bosses to cancel work at less than 24-hours-notice (without pay) or workers being told to take a job at similar notice. Only the most desperate accept jobs at such terms.

Indeed, the 2010 *Marmot Review of Health Inequalities* found that whilst unemployment was a major factor in causing poor health, a low

quality or stressful job can be even more damaging, arguing that "Getting people off benefits and into low paid, insecure and health-damaging work is not a desirable option". It might be for bosses, of course.

That *Review* pointed out job insecurity and instability were commonly associated with low levels of control by workers; high levels of demand; lack of supervisor and support; and more intensive work and longer hours.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this results in a wide range of mental and physical health impacts, such as depression, cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease, musculoskeletal disorders and metabolic syndrome.

The TUC also points out that: "Insecure work also has the effect of further weakening worker power. If you are reliant on the whims of a boss for your next shift you are far less likely to complain about conditions, let alone ask for a pay rise. It blights the lives of millions of workers who deserve better." That will not be news to many.

Who Owns Whom

The TUC also laments that whilst the share of the FTSE 350 held by asset managers has doubled since 2000 from 20 per cent in 2000 to over 40 per cent today, these asset managers do not "analyse and engage with all

the companies whose shares they hold" and that they are "reluctant to vote against company management and most AGMs pass with little or no investor dissent".

At the same time the proportion of UK company shares held by UK owners has declined, with the majority of UK shares now held by overseas investors.

figures refute

In 1990, 12 per cent of UK shares were held by overseas investors, it rose to 56.3 per cent in 2020. At the same time the proportion of UK shares held directly by UK pension funds fell from nearly a third in 1990 to less than one in 50 (1.8 per cent) in 2020. Even if we add in indirect ownership, UK pension funds hold only six per cent of UK shares. These figures refute that common argument that workers have an indirect stake in British capitalism.

It is also worth noting that the average holding period of UK shares has declined from around six years in 1950 to less than six months, sometimes shares are owned for a fraction of a second as City whizz kids or their computers buy and sell shares in response to tiny movements in share prices rather than any long-term considerations about a company.

Mergers and takeovers also provide incentives for companies to strategise to keep share prices high rather than invest in long-term, organic growth. For Companies' dispersed shareholdings, the best way of protecting themselves against a hostile takeover is to keep their share price high so that a takeover will be too expensive for bidders to contemplate.

As a result, many companies pay dividends unjustified by company performance. Between 2014–2018, in 27 per cent of cases returns to shareholders were higher than the company's net profit, including seven per cent of cases where dividends and/or buybacks were paid by loss-making companies. In 2015 and 2016, total returns to shareholders came to more than total net profits for the FTSE 100 as a whole. Trebles all round as P45s are

handed out.

In theory shareholders should suffer when profits decline, but this does not always happen. Whilst total profits ranged from £53 billion in 2015 to £150 billion in 2017, a variation of £97 billion, with a fall between 2014 and 2015 and a sharp rise in 2017, the returns to shareholders only varied by £48 billion, which means the money still rolls in regardless.

An examination of 182 companies in the FTSE 350 from 2009–2019 found that the top 20 per cent of companies (in terms of shareholder returns to net income) paid out 178 per cent of their net income to shareholders over the period and also had the lowest productivity increases, lowest growth in R&D, lowest profitability and investment, and highest debt-to-equity ratio.

This shows that these companies are paying dividends funded by borrowing, rather than funded by sustainable profits generated by investing in organic growth. When the bubble bursts the shareholders will have fled the scene. Even the banker's Bank, the Bank of England, thinks this is undesirable.

modest

In short, the TUC offers some modest suggestions for improvements in the management of British capitalism. It wants directors' duties to be rewritten to remove the present requirement for directors to prioritise shareholders' interests and be required to "promote the long-term success of the company as their primary aim, taking account of the interests of stakeholders including the workforce, shareholders, suppliers, customers and the local community and impacts on human rights and the environment", but in the very next sentences of the reports it points out that this has been done before, in the pious bits of the 2006 Companies Act, and does not seem to have made any difference. It merely wants to change the word "employee" to "workforce", which would include indirectly employed workers.

Workers need to demand much better!

20 years ago this week in the New Worker

THE INDUSTRIAL dispute at Friction Dynamics, near Caernarfon in Wales, is due to be heard at an industrial tribunal in Liverpool this month, after 75 weeks of round-the-clock picketing since June 2000.

The workers have a long list of grievances that began when the company was taken over by American buyer Craig Smith from Ferodo.

Smith brought Friction Dynamics for £5 million and was given a £1.4 million grant by the Welsh Assembly to safeguard and create jobs. There were fears that otherwise the plant would

close with the loss of 200 jobs immediately.

As soon as Smith took over, however, he began to change the work agreements, and new contracts with different terms and conditions were offered.

Smith had already made his name in the USA auto-parts industry for disputes over workers' rights.

In the 1980s he joined a company called Raybestos that was in deep financial trouble over 68,057 personal industry claims.

He declared: "I believe 85–90 per cent of all the asbestosis claims are frivolous and without merit." He then sued tobacco companies for their alleged role in the deaths of Raybestos employees.

After taking over he tried to ban on-site union meetings. The Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) tried to negotiate for many weeks but in the end was forced to stage a walkout in protest.

The next day workers returning to work found they had been locked out. The factory gates were locked, with two managers telling the workers they were on holiday.

Alwyn Williams said: "It was worst moment in the whole dispute for me. I'd been working there for 30 years."

Eight weeks later, Smith sacked 87 workers. The terms of the newly passed Employment Relations Act allow strikers to be sacked after eight weeks.

The strikers and their families are disqualified from benefits because it is assumed they are getting union money.

This has caused friction within families. One woman accustomed to supporting herself is now dependent on her husband. "He's a sheep farmer, he doesn't understand why people should want to work in a factory," she says.

Sailors take warning... of disaster capitalism

by Len Yannielli

ON 29th September 2015 the container ship *El Faro*, which means lighthouse, left port in Jacksonville, Florida. It was carrying 25 million pounds of cargo, including such diverse commodities as 149 cars and fructose syrup. Its destination was San Juan, Puerto Rico, but it never got there.

How does a ship, stretching more than two-and-a-half football fields in length, sink in the 21st Century? Was it solely the hurricane it attempted to navigate? The truth is that the ship was floundered by a toxic mix of elements.

Firstly, however, some background. Over the last four decades there has been a sustained attack on mariners and their working conditions, including health and safety. President Ronald Reagan (1980–89) knew the radical organising behind Mariners' unions; he eliminated the Seamen's hospitals which stretched back to 1789. The International Maritime Organisation (UN) issued the International Maritime Safety Code in 1987 but the USA did not sign on.

The sinking of *El Faro* left no survivors; the floundering took the lives of 33 mariners, including 11 Black workers, five Polish nationals and two women.

In 2011, the shipping company TOTE, which owned *El Faro*, hired a consultant to make their operation leaner. Heads rolled immediately, including a whistle-blower who had pointed out maintenance being neglected on another ship. Overall, crews and shore help shrank. Critically, there was no clear evaluator of ships officers, including the captain.

An example that directly impacted on *El Faro* during its encounter with Hurricane Joaquin was the 2012 elimination of a Port Captain. These were usually experienced maritime officers who were at the ready if there was an emergency at sea. When the captain of *El Faro* belatedly called the company for that experienced voice for advice, there was none.



• The *El Faro*.

Lobbyists did more dirty work for shipping companies. Keeping waterlines high on hulls seem to be an objective. Also called the Plimsoll line, this is the line that should not be breached because it could cause buoyancy problems for the ship. Companies want these waterlines, which are marked on hulls, high so that they can carry more containers. In other words, the ship would then run lower in the water.

This is a particularly important point concerning *El Faro*. It was an older, converted container ship with vents on its hull to send air down into the belly of the ship. Water most certainly made its way into the ship this way during Hurricane Joaquin. Should the waterline have been raised or the venting reconfigured?

One of the most egregious moves by the company was to refuse to equip the ageing ship with modern, and expensive, enclosed lifeboats. International codes mandated the change in 1986. Some of *El Faro*'s antiquated, open lifeboats were found after the hurricane in the ocean debris field. They were empty.

There were many subsidiaries of TOTE, which was itself a subsidiary. When administrators were questioned about safety during follow-up hearings to the sinking of *El*

Faro, fingers would point in other directions. Most had business degrees and would clearly state their job was to make money. The finger pointing would stop at the Master Captain, and he was now un-

der three miles of ocean. Were these the only factors? Not by a long shot.

What role did fossil fuel-generated climate change play? Heat is the key ingredient that gives muscle to a

hurricane. Hurricane Joaquin got that extra energy from very warm Bahamian waters.

At a record 86 degrees (Fahrenheit) in 2015, the ocean was two degrees hotter than usual. What's the big deal? Each degree rise in ocean temperature can increase a hurricane's wind speed by 15–20 miles per hour. It was like a shot of adrenalin into a growing monster.

That monster hurricane hit wind speeds of 155 miles per hour. At wind speeds of 60 miles per hour, a person has trouble putting a foot down where one intends to land it. These winds were so high that along with 30- to 40-foot waves, water is also airborne making it almost impossible to breathe. Even if mariners made it into an open lifeboat the chances of survival were slim at best.

Cost-cutting machinations of the TOTE shipping company and the wind-speed spike of global warming climate change were clear objective factors. There are also subjective factors involved on any ship at sea, even in good weather. Trust between Captain, mates and crew is a must.

Second Mate Danielle Randolph of Rockland, Maine, knew all too well about trust and how it can be shattered. On one of her first TOTE Co voyages, the chief mate told her that he wanted to see her. When the door opened to his state room, he dropped the towel he was wearing. She got out of there fast. The chief mate was fired for sexual harassment.

Randolph's skirmish with sexual harassment didn't end there. The next one was even more daunting. It was Captain Davidson. He ambled up to her on the bridge one day and said: "I'd like you to be my friend."

The meaning of that advance was not lost on the young second mate. This would be more of a challenge. Captains reign supreme on ship. They give the orders.



• Memorial to the crew of the *El Faro* in San Juan.

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The crew follow them, including the officer mates. Captains are still called Master. Would she ever get another job if she called him out on it? How could she even tell him that he was following a disastrous shipping route?

Captain Davidson was not a crew captain in the eyes of those who carried out his orders. He quite often went from his quarters to the bridge and back to his quarters. He isolated himself and seemed to like it that way.

Davidson also had a reputation as a hothead. He would fly off the handle quickly. None of the above endeared him to the crew.

One of the two books on the sinking, *Into The Raging Sea* by Rachel Slade (HarperCollins 2018), tells an even darker story. Davidson was a doomsday survivalist.

Davidson had guns at the ready. He equipped his wife and daughters with Glockes. There is a video of Davidson charging a target with automatic weapons ablaze. When he runs out of ammunition, he draws handguns. When out of bullets again, he brandishes knives.

But there was another level to all this with Captain Davidson. He was not only a survivalist in doomer fashion, he was also a doom prepper. The difference is that they like to be tested.

Was the captain test-

ing himself and, in a similar sense, showing his mettle to the crew, by steering *El Faro* dead into a hurricane? Also, was racism involved? Doomers can have quite an array of enemies in mind. Some see people of colour playing that role. A full one-third of the *El Faro* crew was Black.

A ship going off of its planned course to avoid a storm would take more fuel and time. The ship owner's mantra is like any corporation – time is money, in this case profits would be lost. The captain was known to be seeking an assignment with a newer ship. Was he also trying to show his fidelity to ownership by not re-routing and costing the company added expense?

testimony

You can hear actual testimony at the National Transportation Board meeting investigating the sinking of *El Faro*.

One of the women was from Rockland, Maine, where the dedication of the memorial 'El Faro Salute!' took place on Saturday 24th September 2022. The steel memorial was created by Jay Sawyer, a Maine Maritime Academy alumnus. Sawyer worked on large tanker ships in the 1980s.

On 7th October 2015 the then president of the AFL-CIO union federation, Richard Trumka, stated: "We are deeply saddened by the loss of

28 of our brothers and sisters aboard the cargo ship *El Faro*. These brave men and women left an incredible mark on their communities, both on land and at sea via their hard work and steadfast commitment to the maritime trade."

Was Captain Davidson the sole reason for the demise of *El Faro* as the corporate heads continually pointed to him during the investigation? Probably not. Clearly, he did make the decision to continue mostly on route in face of a growing threat to the ship and crew.

The sinking of *El Faro* was a microcosm of corporate society. It was run as an autocracy, with ample doses of male supremacy and a worshipping of the bottom line.

Profits were sacrosanct. Mix in climate change, shipping lobbyists, cutbacks, deregulation, a dangerous leader with a doomer bent, and what do you get? Disaster.

The memorial gathering on 24th September 2022 in Rockland, Maine, paid moving tribute to the mariners who were the essential workers getting useful products to the Island of Puerto Rico on a regular basis. The heroism of that multi-racial, multi-national, male/female workforce of *El Faro* was in their everyday work.

People's World (USA)

China: connecting Ugandan villages to the outside world



• The project in Uganda is handed over to the Government.

ACCESS TO information in remote villages in Uganda is a daunting task as one has to walk for miles and miles to a neighbouring trading centre to find out what is happening in the rest of the country or the world.

China has been changing the situation since 2018 by connecting remote areas, especially schools, health and community centres and selected homes, to satellite television. The satellite TV project is one of the fruits of the resolutions of the Forum on China-Africa Co-operation Johannesburg Summit held in 2015 in South Africa.

The 'Access to Satellite TV for 10,000 African Villages' project in Uganda is implemented by Chinese satellite television, StarTimes.

On the shores of Lake Victoria in the central Ugandan district of Wakiso, rural communities have started reaping benefits from the project

that has connected over 18,000 households to the rest of the world through satellite television.

Patients at Wagagai

Health Centre queue as they wait to see doctors. In the waiting area a TV set connected to the satellite has different



• Another StarTimes satellite dish goes up.



• Family members of the crew wait for news.

channels, both local and international.

Roy Kyabangi, the health facility administrator, said that the TV set is important to both the health workers and patients in terms of accessing information, especially during the ongoing Covid pandemic and the Ebola outbreak that the country is facing.

Roy said some of the patients come from islands where access to information is limited.

"As health workers, it has helped us because since most of the time we spend it here at the health centre, we need to get current affairs, what is happening in the world. So we can get that information from our television, StartTimes," Kyabangi said.

"We also get some medical updates, for example, now we have Ebola, if there are some medical people saying something about Ebola, we can get the information as health workers and also patients get current information about health services."

In the health facility neighbourhood is St Luke Nkumba Primary School, with about 500 pupils, some crossing to the mainland from a neighbouring island. Like the health facility, one cannot miss the orange satellite dish fixed on the rooftop of one of the classrooms.

Rebecca Namusisi, deputy head teacher at the school, said that the school received a solar-powered projector and a decoder. She said the projector and the education programmes aired on some of the channels have made teaching easier.

"We connected to different channels where we get educative information such as when the president is addressing the nation about Ebola, we get the information," Namusisi said.

She added that the projector can also be used for other purposes, for instance, projecting images that would take a long time to draw on a blackboard.

"It has added a very

great impact on our learners as far as teaching and learning process (is concerned). First, with the teachers, it simplifies your work and with the pupils, they get a clear picture of what you are talking about," Namusisi said.

Doreen Asuru, a 16-year-old pupil at the school, cannot hide her excitement about the entertainment programmes. Asuru said she loves the cultural programmes screened, including Chinese kung fu.

Some 25 miles north of the school, in the capital Kampala, there is excitement as pupils of St Claire Primary School watch children's programmes on the school projector. The school is one of the beneficiaries of the 'Access to Satellite TV for 10,000 African Villages' project.

Fred Mpanga, the headteacher of the school, said the projector has helped the teaching staff acquire more knowledge and skills.

Mpanga said that besides the education purpose, the children, most of whom come from slum neighbourhoods where there are no TV sets, get to watch children's entertainment programmes.

Wang Jiangnan, Marketing Manager at Startimes Uganda, said the project is now coming to an end after connecting 900 Ugandan villages in different parts of the country. The project was implemented in two phases. The first phase was in 2018, when 500 villages were connected. In the second phase, which started in August 2021, another 400 villages were connected to satellite television.

Wang is optimistic that the project has and will continue to deepen Uganda-China ties.

"The whole project helps us to strengthen the relationship between China and Uganda. We get closer and closer because of this project," she said.

Xinhua

Che's last stand

by Pedro Ríoseco

IN THE narrow Quebrada del Yuro the smell of gunpowder can still be felt. There, behind a rock scarred by the marks of many gunshots, Commander Ernesto Che Guevara fought his last battle in Bolivia.

It was 8th October 1967 when 17 Cuban, Bolivian and Peruvian guerrillas – the remaining members of the National Liberation Army that had begun the struggle for the true emancipation of the Bolivian people in November of the year before – defended the strategy conceived by Che in his political project for Latin America and sought to reorganise themselves after suffering heavy casualties.

They moved without guides through the arid mountains near La Higuera, with the purpose of looking for more favourable areas to begin a period of recovery, establish contact with the city, where the urban apparatus had also suffered hard blows, recruit new members to the guerrilla army and continue the struggle. But the Quebrada would become a trap, as it became very difficult to get out of it due to the roughness of the place without vegetation or water and the physical condition of the guerrillas weakened through disease, the lack of food and the fatigue of the long walks whilst trying to evade the enemy that was chasing them.

The guerrillas were unaware that 3,000 troops of the Bolivian army had taken the high positions and that they were practically surrounded. When they met the first army patrols the unequal combat began. Che ordered them to withdraw fighting and go to the agreed meeting point in case of any eventuality.



According to the survivors, Che then decided to divide the group into three flanks: right, centre and left. The one with the most experienced men to cover the area with greater possibilities of escape. Another was sent to a side canyon for the same purpose, to fire on the enemy with less intensity. The centre was headed by Che, with the objective of covering the sick combatants so that they could leave the encirclement and advance to safe places, which showcases the humanism that always characterised him.

The confidence placed by Che in the most experienced fighters was correct because they were the ones who managed to break the siege. They were the only survivors. The sick guerrillas were able to

evade the soldiers and escape from the Quebrada – but they were savagely killed later whilst hiding, waiting for the right moment to go to a safer place.

In a nearby position were the Cubans Orlando Pantoja Tamayo (Olo), René Martínez Tamayo and Alberto Fernández Montes de Oca, who fell under the hail of army fire. Che, wounded in one leg, confronted the enemy advance to protect the retreat of his comrades.

He sent the Bolivian Aniceto Reinaga to check other positions, and this is captured. The Bolivian Simón 'Willy' Cubas tried to get Che out of the Quebrada, but Che was already surrounded with a wounded leg and a rifle rendered useless by gunfire. He was captured together

with the Peruvian Juan Pablo 'El Chino' Chang, and the three are taken to the little board school of La Higuera, where they were cowardly murdered the following day.

"The decision... to assassinate Che, the Peruvian Juan Pablo Chang, and the Bolivians Simeón Cubas and Aniceto Reinaga was taken in Washington, and was imposed on (President) General René Barrientos," explained researchers Froilán González and Adys Cupull.

González recalled that radio stations broadcast the news of Commander Guevara's death in the morning of 9th October, when in fact the crime was perpetrated at 13:10 hours [1:10pm] in the afternoon of that day by a sergeant who had to get drunk to shoot him. The wounded guerrilla got up from his chair and ordered him to "shoot, there is a man here!". The sergeant then shot Che from the chest down, as ordered by his superiors.

The once unknown hamlet is now visited all the time by people from different parts of the world, who climb these mountains to pay homage to the heroic guerrilla and his comrades, and the local people lay flowers to the man they call San Ernesto de La Higuera.



• Memorial to Che in La Higuera.

Granma

LETTERS

Dear Comrades

Whilst the powerful domination by the USA over its collective Western allies remains strong, the rest of the world is starting to break free. Subordinate states, however, remain totally submissive to their masters in Washington. In practice, this amounts to supporting sanctions and trade embargoes.

These can have a devastating impact upon their own economies that includes fuel and commodity shortages leading to rising costs and a total dependency upon the Americans. Increasing threats to peace are also created as the aggressive NATO bloc is expanded.

The tragedy in Ukraine is the result of the imperialist project launched in 2014 by the Obama administration. If European leaders were sane and honest, they would be calling for peace negotiations, instead they compete with reckless stupidity by fanning the flames of war with more arms and money. No doubt they would like to weaken Russia and reduce it to a semi-colonial status, to become a mere supplier

of cheap energy and commodities.

Imperialist leaders appear to have learnt no lessons from their current self-inflicted financial debacle. They appear willing to support, without question, the US-led trade embargoes and war-mongering campaigns against People's China. Many of them actively support the selective trade restrictions imposed by the USA by banning the products and services of companies such as Huawei that are seen as a threat to US technical dominance. Increasing numbers are also paying high profile visits to Taiwan with the aim of increasing tensions in that area. They appear to have conveniently forgotten that China is their main trading partner as they risk turning their current crisis into a catastrophe.

Very dramatic changes are now taking in the rest of the world. Co-operation and respect are core components for new alliances and collective agreements between countries representing a majority of the world's population. China's Belt and Road Initiative, the BRIC [Brazil, Russia, India and China] trade grouping and the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation are examples of new ideas for global development being put into practice.

The proposed Turk-stream energy hub for Europe and Africa offers the prospect of cheap, reliable energy supplies. A new multi-polar world is being built, without domination by the USA and its dirty dollar, free from the restrictive and exploitative policies of imperialism.

People's China will

play a major role in the new reality. It has become a major investor and partner for the developing world and in doing so demonstrates its socialist ethos. Countries such as India will be able to develop freely without being sanctioned by the USA if they become too successful.

The USA will continue with its policy of stirring-up trouble and then pretending to care about human rights in its constant attempts of regime change to retain world hegemony.

The capitalist states will soon collapse if they are unable to abandon their colonial attitudes and total obedience to the USA.

The new world order must be a true socialist one.

**John Maryon
Suffolk**

Dear Comrades

On Monday 10th October rights groups appealed to Bahrain's ruler, Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, to commute death sentences of 26 men and take steps to end capital punishment in the Gulf nation.

Human Rights Watch and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy said the men, who include those convicted on "terrorism" charges as well as for drugs, can be executed as soon as the dictator ratifies their sentences. "King Hamad should commute all outstanding death sentences, starting with defendants convicted on the basis of false confessions and those who have been sentenced to death for other than the most serious crimes," a joint report read. Bahrain should also "take steps to formally end the application of the death penalty in all circumstances", it added.

The US government has been asked to restrict arms sales and security co-operation with Bahrain amidst charges of serious human rights abuses against the Gulf state's police and judiciary. A 61-page report said: "The court is satisfied with the admission: death sentences

in Bahrain follow torture, sham trials."

Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) point to serious and persistent human rights violations in Bahrain's justice system. They allege that courts in Bahrain have dismissed credible allegations of torture and ill-treatment of suspects and have routinely violated a suspect's right to a fair trial, including the right to legal counsel and the right to question prosecution witnesses. "In case after case, courts convicted defendants of the crime of manslaughter and sentenced them to death solely or principally on the basis of admissions that the defendants (or co-defendants) were allegedly coerced through torture and ill-treatment," the report said.

The European Saudi Organisation for Human Rights has also appealed to the Saudi authorities to stop executions. It documented 37 cases of people facing death, including eight under-aged youths. At least three young men are at imminent risk of execution for "crimes" that occurred when they were under the age of 18.

On World Day Against the Death Penalty, calls were made to end the death penalty!

**John Hughes
Bahrain
Freedom Movement
London**

Dear Comrades

I've just read John Maryon's and Manuel Raposo's articles in last week's *New Worker* [NW:2180, 14 Oct 2021].

The *New Worker* is a brilliant read at the best of times but last week's was outstanding. My local corner shop will put in a regular order. The proprietor is Indian and savvy about Ukraine!

**Pat Abraham
Uxbridge**

Diary

FRI 28 OCT

Trades Union Congress: 50th Anniversary of the National Building Workers Strike: 18:00 - 21:00, Congress House, 28 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS

SAT 29 OCT

Radical Options for Scotland and Europe: Conference on the present crisis and the way forward. 10:30-12:30 Unite HQ, 145-165 West Regent Street, Glasgow G2 4RZ. Details TBA

SAT 29 OCT

Korean Friendship Association UK: Picket of the BBC, 15:00, Portland Place, London W1A 1AA.

WED 2 NOV

Trades Union Congress: Demand Better Lobby of Parliament. 14:00-18:00 Palace of Westminster, London, SW1A 0AA

WED 2 NOV

Working Class Movement Library: Ann Boran on Mining and Social Change in the Castle-comer [Kilkenny] Mine-fields, 14:00 to 15:30. 51 Crescent, Salford M5 4WX and online.

SAT 5 NOV

People's Assembly: National Demonstration. Assemble 12:00, Embankment, London WC2N 6NS.

SAT 5 NOV

Society for Cooperation in Russian and Soviet Studies: Christine Lindsey on Representation of Workers in Soviet Art. 14:00, SCRSS, 320 Brixton Road, London, SW9 6AB

MON 7 NOV

Barry Amiel & Norman Melburn Trust: Andrew Murray on Competing Imperialisms: A New Cold War. 19:00. Hybrid meeting at Marx Memorial Library and Online. Book on MML website.

TUES 8 NOV

Socialist History Socie-

ty: Kryss Katsiavriades on Iraq's cultural heritage: Theft of Artefacts following the US/UK Intervention. 19:00, Zoom Lecture. Register on SHS website.

WED 9 NOV

Marx Memorial Library: Science as Technology. Online Seminar. 19:00-20:30. Book on MML website.

SAT 12 NOV

Palestine Solidarity Campaign: Trade Union Solidarity with Palestinian Workers. Conference. 9:45-17:15, London. Details TBA.

SAT 12 NOV

Keep NHS Public: SOS NHS Conference 10:00-17:00, hybrid. 50-52 Camden Square, London, NW1 1XB. Register on KNHSP website.

SAT 12 NOV

Ceremony remembering the October Revolution, 13.30, at the Soviet War Memorial by the Imperial War Museum.

TUES 15 NOV

Society for Cooperation in Russian and Soviet Studies: Geoffrey Roberts on Stalin's Library. 19:00, SCRSS, 320 Brixton Road, London, SW9 6AB

FRI 18 NOV

Cuba Solidarity Campaign: Soy Cuba (I am Cuba) 1964 Soviet-Cuban film 19:00. Ruskin House, 23 Coombe Road, Croydon, CR0 1BD £5.80

MON 21 NOV

Barry Amiel & Norman Melburn Trust: Vijay Prashad on Viewing decolonisation through a Marxist lens. 19:00. Hybrid meeting at Marx Memorial Library and Online. Book on MML website.

WED 23 NOV

Marx Memorial Library: Science as Work. Online seminar. 19:00 Book on MML website

The editor welcomes letters from our readers. If you have a contribution to make please make sure it reaches us before Wednesday. You can send your letters to: PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ, or email party@NCP.clara.net

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Scottish
Political
News

by our Scottish political
affairs correspondent

THE KNIVES are out in Westminster as the Truss government totters on the brink of collapse. Dissent spreads through their ranks in Scotland. In London the grandees scramble around to replace their useless leader with someone who might stave off an apocalyptic Labour landslide at the next general election. And in Edinburgh the Scottish nationalists look to see how this can be turned to their advantage.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon told the media that the fact Truss had not resigned was “perhaps a sign of how badly broken UK politics is”, in another call for a general election to get rid of the national government she said was a “rotten shower”.

This, however, would lead to “even more uncertainty” says a senior Tory in the Scottish parliament. Liz Smith, who covers

finance and the economy for the Scottish Conservatives, noted however, that Ms Truss was “in an extremely difficult position”. Truss does not enjoy the support of the markets, the public or the Tory party in Westminster, she said. and she warned that some Conservatives in the House of Commons may “coalesce around a candidate of unity” if Truss cannot turn things round.

Bad news for the Tories but a golden opportunity for the SNP to win more Scots over to the call of independence. This week Sturgeon said: “A stronger, fairer, more sustainable economy is more possible for Scotland with independence than it ever will be with continued Westminster control.” With that, she launched the latest in the *Building a New Scotland* policy papers.

The main proposal is the creation of a new Scottish pound monitored by a new Scottish Central Bank – but there is no time-frame for a Scottish pound. This, as some nationalist critics point out, is a cop-out because it would involve keeping Sterling and therefore control by the Bank of England for an unspecified period, until “market conditions”, in other words the approval of international bankers, was achieved.

At the time of the 2014 Referendum the SNP said that Scotland would keep Sterling because there would be “eye-watering transaction” costs if Scotland and the UK used different currencies.

Over the last 30 years the SNP have had currency policies ranging from a new Scottish currency to the Euro and a currency union with a rump UK. Now they have two at the same time, because as enthusiasts for re-joining the EU they would in reality have to join the Euro when and if they were admitted.

For the SNP, Scotland re-joining the EU is not merely a desirable objective but an article of faith, because it is seen as one of the fundamental economic benefits of leaving the UK.

Sturgeon also said that having achieved the SNP’s goal there would be customs checks on the M6 and the A1, and at rail freight terminals, but she played down their importance saying that a trade border between England and Scotland would be

managed by “arrangements” involving unstated technology – possibly similar to that used for tax purposes on the internal state borders in the USA.

Curiously enough, publication of the statistics on Scottish ‘exports’ have been delayed. The previous figures showed that almost 60 per cent went to the rest of the UK. The statistics for 2020, which were published this time last year, have mysteriously been delayed by the Scottish Government.

Pointing out that there are no fewer than 25 cross-border routes, Daniel Johnson, Labour’s finance spokesman, said: “This is a smugglers’ charter that could lead to checkpoints along the border. The last thing Scots need is this manufactured chaos.”

Another point was creating a £20 billion fund supported by oil and gas revenue (presently £1.5 billion a year) to invest in capital projects. Their Green allies will doubtless be delighted at this proposal. SNP policy towards developing North Sea oil and gas fields seems to depend on what day of the week it is. Other than the £20 billion fund, solid figures are few and far between, but a lot of borrowing will be required.

Economists and
nationalists respond

Like someone who is against sin, Sturgeon said she was against austerity as being “immoral”, but the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) said that increased taxes or cuts in public spending would occur unless onshore economic growth is boosted to counteract the declining North Sea sector and that with a “substantial deficit” after independence, the £20 billion fund would require heavy borrowing.

The IFS also gently said: “Experience from recent weeks suggests the markets may not look favourably on fiscal plans built on the uncertain hopes of a substantial future boost to growth.”

Stuart McIntyre, head of research at the Fraser of Allander economic institute, said that the document could be considered a Scottish government wish list.

Professor Ronald MacDonald, of the University of Glasgow’s Adam Smith

Business School, said that all the SNP was doing was “rehashing proposals from before; given all the criticism that has been levelled against the informal use of sterling. Furthermore, I think the whole idea that you would borrow foreign exchange reserves is a completely incoherent economic policy, it just doesn’t happen in other countries”.

Nationalist economist Tim Rideout said the SNP plans equalled “austerity on steroids”.

shredded

Richard Murphy, Sheffield University professor of accountancy much favoured by the TUC, said the SNP had shredded “its economic credibility in a way only Truss and Kwarteng have done before” because “quite literally no country can do what this plan published by Sturgeon this morning suggests. Using sterling would economically ruin an independent Scotland”.

The new document was different from that of 2018 in that it gives few figures. This is sensible because the Growth Commission spelled out too much detail, which allowed anyone with a pocket calculator to work out for themselves that harsh austerity was inevitable in the future, so it is best not to quote any at all. Anyone wanting to know if the SNP are planning to borrow to fill the deficit, cut services or increase taxes to pay for them, will be left clueless.

From the left, Robin McAlpine of the Commonweal thinktank said the document was merely “the latest dismal paper in a series of dismal papers”, the cumulative effect of

which only “shows that this is a Scottish Government that has no vision for independence and no realistic grasp of what being an independent country means”.

He points out that Sturgeon’s central bank would only have two functions, which are to raise capital from commercial banks to enable future bailouts (lender of last resort) and to provide data to government. Thus, it would be dependent on the goodwill of commercial banks, all of which, including those with the word “Scotland” in their title, are UK-wide banks with branch HQ in Scotland.

McAlpine also notes that there could be no Scottish currency for a decade or more on the evidence of Sturgeon’s paper. As to the fiscal consequences of joining the EU, we hear nothing – and those would be brutal. Sturgeon neglected to remind us of the harsh rules the EU imposes on its small members who borrow too much money.

Scottish Trotskyist guru Jonathon Shafi chips in to warns that “Scotland in Europe” is not a slogan that meets with universal acceptance and that it could alienate many supporters of independence. Thirty-five per cent of SNP voters supported Brexit in 2016.

Former SNP MP George Kerevan, now in the doomed Alba Party, said: “We don’t learn a lot that’s new and nothing that really confronts the harsh realities that have appeared since 2018. These include the return of galloping inflation, a global energy crisis, and the trashing of UK public finances by the Tory regime at Westminster.”

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XR returns to London!

by New Worker
correspondent

ECOLOGY campaigners were on the streets of London again for a “Weekend of Resistance” led by the Extinction Rebellion (XR) campaign as part of a month of protests called by a number of movements to draw attention to the environmental crisis that they say could trigger mass extinction across the planet.

On Friday two young ‘Just Stop Oil’ protestors poured tomato soup over Van Gogh’s *Sunflowers* painting in National Gallery and then glued themselves to the wall

beneath the frame. Another sprayed yellow paint on the walls of New Scotland Yard, the Metropolitan Police’s headquarters, to protest against police and state repression of activists.

The Van Gogh masterpiece was fortunately shielded in glass and suffered no damage. Enraged art lovers called it vandalism, but this suffragette-style protest was defended by one of the protesters who said: “Is art worth more than life? More than food? More than justice? The cost-of-living crisis is driven by fossil fuels – everyday life has become unaffordable for millions of cold, hungry families –



they can’t even afford to heat a tin of soup. “Meanwhile, crops

are failing and people are dying in supercharged monsoons,

massive wildfires and endless droughts caused by climate breakdown.

“We can’t afford new oil and gas, it’s going to take everything. We will look back and mourn all we have lost unless we act immediately.”

The next day (Saturday) the climate change warriors gathered in Trafalgar Square for a march on Downing Street to show “this corrupt, unelected government that we refuse to be pushed around”. Some burned their energy bills outside the Prime Minister’s residence whilst others held sit-down protests in other parts of central London to draw attention to their demands and disrupt traffic throughout central London.

The Days we Lived

by Amal Farhat

A NEW BOOK by Dr Najah Al-Attar, the Vice-President of the Syrian Arab Republic, has just been published in Damascus. Combining personal and collective memories, *Personal Papers in Britain and the Homeland* summarises some of her long experience and accumulated expertise over many decades in the cultural, political and educational spheres.

Dr Al-Attar’s book is unique in combining her personal experience with the political experience through which she has consistently served Syria and the Arab nation. She exposed Western propaganda that falsify the facts about her homeland, spreading lies and false claims in Western societies to sway domestic opinion, particularly in Britain and the USA, in support of anti-Arab policies.

In her new book, Dr



• Dr Najah Al-Attar, left, presenting awards.

Al-Attar introduces the reader to some stages of her personal life in order to communicate some of her thoughts and experience in an integrated and seamless way that addresses both mind and soul. She began her book by devoting a chapter to her husband, Major-General Mohamed Majid Al-Azama, who played an important role in supporting and encouraging her to reach what she had achieved in the world of culture, thought and politics.

The book includes many details of their travel together to Britain to study, specifically the University

of Edinburgh, where he pursued his studies at the prestigious Academy of Surgeons whilst Dr Al-Attar studied literary criticism to obtain a doctoral degree in this speciality.

experiences

Between 1955–1959 Dr Al-Attar took up science and refined her experiences in Britain. She devotes seven chapters in her book to these years setting out many details of her entire life at university in particular and in British society in general, which is abundant with many contradictions. And she covers a variety

of issues in British society including the life of the expat communities, the role of women, as well as work and the significant class disparities within the UK.

Under the heading *End of a phase*, referring to the end of her time living and studying in Britain, Dr Al-Attar devotes a new chapter in which she outlines the ideas and perspectives that she developed during the time she lived in Britain. She emphasises that every individual has responsibilities and anyone who doesn’t recognise this contributes to the breakdown of society and acts as an obstacle in the life of

the nation. --It is this sense of responsibility that drives the writer to write and the press to struggle for an idea or the best interests of the nation. It is this sense that leads heroes to battle and leaders to confront crises.

Dr Al-Attar took part in a seminar at Harvard, the Ivy League university in Massachusetts, which lasted for several weeks. Her participation in the discussions is extensively covered in her new book.

She exposes the role of the Zionist entity at these conferences called by American and Western European universities in order to promote false anti-Arab Zionist propaganda that exploits the ignorance of public opinion about the secret history of Zionism, the real history of Palestine and the real history of Syria.

In her book, Dr Al-Attar exposes another aspect of the objectives of this Harvard seminar that she saw during the session on the Vietnam war. Washington officials tried to promote the idea that the USA was defending “democracy” by bombing Hanoi and other Vietnamese cities, claiming that by doing so Washington was somehow safeguarding Vietnamese lives.

Likewise, US officials have consistently falsified the facts about the suffering of the Black people in

America. She says in her book: “How can America talk about freedom and the defence of democracy while still living in an atmosphere of racial discrimination?”

The last part of her book is devoted to memories and follow-ups from the homeland that she personally lived at the end of the 1960s and early ‘70s.

She concludes that: “The [Israeli] enemy supported by America is trying to create new illusions through noise and tumult... we know from the experience of the days that have passed that these threats will fail. Those who destroyed the old myth of the US-backed enemy are quite capable of destroying the new myth of that same enemy.”

Syria Times

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by Yang Sheng &
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THE Communist Party of China (CPC) unveiled its blueprint for building a modern socialist China over the next five years and beyond as the 20th CPC National Congress opened on Sunday in Beijing.

The five-yearly meeting is the first national congress of the CPC after its centenary in 2021, when the Party led the Chinese people to finish building a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

“From this day forward, the central task of the CPC will be to lead the Chinese people of all ethnic groups in a concerted effort to realise the Second Centenary Goal of building China into a great modern socialist country in all respects and to advance the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts through a Chinese path to modernisation,” Xi Jinping said in a report at the opening session of the congress.

The theme of the congress is holding high the great banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics, fully implementing the *Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era*, carrying forward the great founding spirit of the Party, staying confident and building strength, upholding fundamental principles and breaking new ground, forging ahead with enterprise and fortitude, and striving in unity to build a modern socialist country in all respects and advance the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts.

Chinese political experts said the theoretical innovation of the CPC showed in the 20th Party Congress has global significance as it offers countries around the world which are seeking modernisation an alternative and an example, and in its new journey, China will continue to uphold the great banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics with firmness and confidence.

Xi expounded on the missions and tasks of the Communist Party of China on the new journey of the new era. The Communist Party aims to basically realise socialist modernisation from 2020 through to 2035, and to build China into a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, demo-

China: a new journey for a new era



• President Xi Jinping at the opening of the Congress.

cratic, culturally advanced, harmonious and beautiful from 2035 to the middle of this century.

Shen Yi, a professor at the School of International Relations and Public Affairs of Fudan University, said that: “The concept of Chinese modernisation was raised for the first time as one of the most important conclusions the CPC made from its past experiences.”

Chinese path

Shen said that as there is no ready-made development path or mode for China to copy directly or imitate. China has finally charted out a Chinese path to modernisation after more than 100 years of exploration and construction since the Revolution of 1911, providing a completely new alternative, a third choice for all developing countries in the world which are searching for or struggling with their development modes with the wish to both achieve rapid self-development and maintain sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

Xi underscored the unique features of Chinese modernisation, which he said is the socialist modernisation pursued under the leadership of the CPC. It contains elements that are common to the modernisation processes of all countries, but it is more characterised by features that are unique to the Chinese context.

Chinese modernisation is the modernisation of a huge population, of common prosperity for all, of material and cultural-ethical advancement, of harmony between humanity and nature and of peaceful development, Xi said.

Analysts said that the Chinese path of modernisation is about common prosperity for all, and it will be attained through peaceful development. From this aspect, it is completely different from Western modernisation, which resulted from the rise of hegemony and based on plundering and invading other nations, and domestically, was based on uneven development between different classes and racial groups.

Chinese modernisation

will be successful together with other nations’ modernisation, and it will create chances for other countries to fulfil their modernisation and development plans. China will not lecture or force others to accept its ideology. It will not use alliance systems to get other countries to surrender their autonomy or be subject to hegemony.

achievements

Many foreign journalists shared the same feeling as they highly value the achievements that China has made in the last century and especially over the last 5–10 years. They want to know how China accomplished these great missions and how these experiences could help their countries.

Abdurakhmannova Albina, a journalist from CBC TV of Azerbaijan, said that the congress is not just important for China “but also for many other countries around the world too”, and the most impressive part for her is that she learned that the CPC has done so much for China and the

Chinese people in just the last 5–10 years. She considers that it is important for her to report this to the people of her country.

David Lopez, a journalist from Colombia’s *El Tiempo* newspaper, said that the congress is an historic event, and it is important for journalists like him to be here to witness this event closely because “we need to let the people from the other side of the world understand what’s happening here” in China, and “we are interested in [China’s] development, economy and technologies and so on”.

crucial

Xi said that the next five years will be crucial for ensuring that the efforts to build a modern socialist country in all respects get off to a good start. “Building a modern socialist country in all respects is a great and arduous endeavour. Our future is bright, but we still have a long way to go. We must therefore be more mindful of potential dangers, be prepared to deal with the

worst-case scenario, and be ready to withstand high winds, choppy waters and even dangerous storms.”

Zhang Xixian, a professor at the CPC School in Beijing, said that “the potential risks that could bring ‘dangerous storms’ come from the risk of war amid profound changes the world hasn’t seen in the last century. And a potential global economic and social crisis, such as the obstacles for national reunification like foreign interference to support Taiwan secessionism, could bring extreme danger”.

The fundamental reason why China needs to be prepared for a worst-case scenario and even “dangerous storms” is that Chinese modernisation, which is very different from Western modernisation, will bring challenges to the hegemony that is now dominating the current world order. This hegemony and its followers do not accept that China will succeed because that could bring about the end of the system that they built to unfairly serve their interests.

pressures

So as long as China keeps developing itself and keeps seeking improvement for the livelihood of the Chinese people and puts efforts into offering more public goods, like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), to other countries which also want win-win co-operation, modernisation and peaceful development, the existing hegemony will impose pressures, suppressions and even attacks against it. This has already happened in the last decade say analysts, referring to the US-launched trade war and suppression against China’s sci-tech industries, as well as provocations and interference on the Taiwan question.

Xi also stressed modernising China’s national security system and capacity and safeguarding national security and social stability.

“National security is the bedrock of national rejuvenation, and social stability is a prerequisite for building a strong and prosperous China,” Xi said. “The Party will take co-ordinated steps to ensure external and internal security, homeland and public security, traditional and non-traditional security, as well as its own security and common security.”

Global Times

Russian rockets hammer Ukraine

by our Eastern
European Affairs
correspondent

RUSSIAN missiles continue to hammer Ukraine with waves of drone and cruise missile attacks on military and economic targets through the country whilst their troops continue to hold the line across the 1,000 km front. A Ukrainian bid to recapture the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant has failed, and Israel has publicly turned down a puppet regime request for arms and weapon systems after a warning from the Kremlin that this would destroy all ties between Israel and the Russian Federation.

Russian rockets and

drones have crippled the Ukrainian national grid as the puppet regime buckles under a torrent of Russian rockets and drones. Russian forces are targeting Ukrainian energy facilities and military command hubs using high-precision missiles, with devastating effect.

Thirty per cent of Ukraine's power stations have been destroyed in just over a week, leading to "massive blackouts" across the country, puppet leader Vladimir Zelensky told the media this week as he stepped up his appeals for more NATO assistance to stave off the Russian onslaught over the skies of Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Russian forces have foiled yet another Ukrainian attempt



• Ukrainian power plant hit.

to recapture the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in the liberated south of the country. Thirty boat-loads of Ukrainian commandos landed on the south bank of the Dnieper River near

Energodar but they were beaten back by a furious defence that lasted for over three hours.

It is time to wrest our national wealth from the hands of the oligarchy says

Gennady Zyuganov, the leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, in a renewed call for the maximum mobilisation of all resources, a new industrialisation

drive and a decisive rejection of oligarchic dictates.

"We are faced with enormous economic and social challenges. At the same time, the struggle for the preservation of the Russian world, for the revival of Donbas, Zaporozhye and Kherson, for their return to their historical homeland is met with stiff resistance from the 'fifth column' inside the country," the communist leader said. "Today, when Russia faces one of the most serious challenges in its history, we have every reason to say: we can adequately respond to any threats, survive and win, only by pursuing a policy based on the socialist principles of honest work, equality and justice."

Gun law – US style

by Maria Josefina Arce

IN THE USA gun violence has become a daily tragedy. Mass shootings in schools and public places have taken place throughout the USA and 2022 is shaping up to be another lethal year.

So far more than 530 mass shootings have been recorded according to the Gun Violence Archive, which monitors these events.

Some 251 children have been killed and another 570 wounded in the nearly 10 months that have passed, the non-profit archive details.

Last May an 18-year-old shot his grand-mother and then went on to kill 19 children and two teachers at his old elementary school in Uvalde, Texas before he, himself, was gunned down by the police.

School shoot-ups, in many cases involving young people, are not one-off tragedies. Since that sad day in April 1999 when the Columbine massacre took place in Colorado, in which 12

students lost their lives, every so often the USA is rocked by similar events.

As experts point out, each massacre heightens the fear of families and children who live in fear that the school they attend will be the scene of a shooting.

The spiral of violence has been growing unchecked. Little or nothing has been done about it in recent decades. Proposals to tighten gun laws have not advanced for years in Congress. Behind has been the lobbying of the influential National Rifle Association (NRA), which many politicians support – including former presidents who didn't even face this problem during their term of office.

Others are like Donald Trump who, following the Parkland massacre in February 2018, proposed arming teachers instead of putting limits on the proliferation of fire-arms.

There has always been a great divide on the issue. Many defend the right to bear arms, endorsed by the Second Amendment of the Constitution and behind which they hide to avoid taking the security measures that could save lives.

Moreover, the efforts being made in some

states to curb the bearing of arms clash with a conservative Supreme Court. Last June, for example, it reaffirmed the constitutional right of a person to carry a gun in public in a ruling on a case in New York – one of the six US states with restrictions on the carrying of fire-arms on public streets.

It is now, after the Uvalde massacre and the numerous other victims over the decades, that Democrats and Republicans have finally come to an agreement and passed a modest gun-control law, which although still far from the demands of part of society, introduces certain limitations on the possession of arms and allocates billions of dollars to mental health and school safety.

According to the most recent data available, there are more than 390 million guns in circulation on US soil today.

The reality is that this right that many in the USA evoke so much is an attack on the right to life and security of its citizens. With each passing day, gun violence claims more lives and more families mourn the loss of loved ones.

Radio Havana Cuba

French workers launch nationwide strikes

by Ed Newman

FRENCH trade unions have launched a wave of strikes across the country to demand higher pay amidst the highest inflation in decades, one of the biggest challenges to President Emmanuel Macron since his re-election in May.

Thousands of people took to the streets of Paris on Sunday to protest against soaring prices. The leader of the hard-left party La France Insoumise (France Unbowed), Jean-Luc Mélenchon, marched alongside this year's Nobel Prize for Literature winner, Annie Ernaux, and called for full support for the general strike on Tuesday.

Tuesday's strike, which primarily affects public sectors such as schools and transportation, was an extension of the weeks-long industrial action that has disrupted France's

major refineries and put petrol stations' supply in disarray.

Rail operator SNCF saw "severe disruptions" with half of all train services cancelled, according to transport minister Clement Beaune. Suburban services in the Paris region and bus services were also crippled, operator RATP said, but the inner-Paris metro system should be mostly unaffected.

The effects were already visible at the Gare de Lyon Paris hub on Tuesday morning, with packed suburban trains disgorging floods of passengers onto the platforms every 15 or even 20 minutes.

"I've got a two- or three-hour trip today, rather than an hour and a half normally," said commuter Yera Diallo, adding that "I have no idea how it's going to go this evening".

Beyond transport workers, unions hope to bring out staff in sectors such as the food industry and healthcare. Trade union leaders are hoping workers will be energised by the government's decision to force some of them to go back to work at petrol depots

to try and get the fuel flowing again, a move some say may jeopardise the right to strike.

The CGT union notably has called for continued walk-outs into a fourth week at TotalEnergies, despite the oil company reaching a deal including a seven per cent increase and a bonus on Friday with other unions. The CGT is demanding a 10 per cent pay rise, citing inflation and the firm's huge profits.

As tensions rise in the Eurozone's second-biggest economy, strikes have already spilled over into other parts of the energy sector, including nuclear giant EDF, where maintenance work crucial for Europe's power supply will be delayed.

A representative of the FNME-CGT union said strikes were affecting work at 10 French nuclear power plants, with further maintenance delays at 13 reactors and French power production reduced by a total of 2.2 gigawatts.

The strikes are happening in a tense political context as the French government is set to pass the 2023 budget using special constitutional powers that would allow it to bypass a vote in parliament.

Radio Havana Cuba