

BRAZIL: LULA VOWS TO PUNISH REBELS

by New Worker correspondent

NEW Brazilian leader Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has vowed to punish the ringleaders who plunged the capital into chaos last weekend.

The right-wing extremists took advantage of the fact that Lula was far away in the São Paulo region inspecting areas damaged by the recent heavy rains to launch a Trump-style rampage through Brasília in an attempt to provoke the army into seizing power and removing Lula's left-social democratic government. But the generals sat on their hands, mindful of the fact that Trump is a spent force and that his successor, Joe Biden, is no friend of Bolsonaro, the man some called the "Trump of South America".

Thousands of supporters of former president Jair Bolsonaro swarmed over government buildings in Brasília on Sunday claiming that last October's election was rigged and demanding the ousting of Lula.

Bolsonaro has never publicly conceded defeat and, like Trump, claims without evidence that the country's electronic voting

system was vulnerable to tampering.

President Lula, who was inaugurated the week before, ordered the police and security forces to disperse the mob of "fascist fanatics" that he said had been incited to violence by Bolsonaro, who had conveniently gone to Florida to avoid taking part in the inauguration of his left-wing rival.

Over 1,500 people have been detained since the assault on the Brazilian Congress, Supreme Court and presidential palace by the Bolsonaroistas in the capital Brasília on Sunday.

The president of Brazil's supreme court, Alexandre de Moraes, has ordered the arrest of Anderson Torres, the former justice minister under Bolsonaro and, until Sunday, head of security forces in Brasília. Torres was fired from his Brasília post after the riots and it is understood that he too has recently left the country and is now believed to be in the USA. But for how long remains to be seen.

Bolsonaro was a rabid Trump man, which won him no favours with the US Democrats. Now Joe Biden tells reporters that the Brazilian riots were "outrageous" and invites Lula to the White House whilst other Democrat politicians are calling for Bolsonaro to be immediately kicked out of the USA.



• Rioters arrested.

"Domestic terrorists and fascists cannot be allowed to use Trump's play-book to undermine democracy. Bolsonaro must not be given refuge in Florida, where he's been hiding from accountability for his crimes," says Texan Democrat Joaquin Castro.

Lula, a member of the Workers' Party, is the first Brazilian president to have been elected to a third term and the first to have defeated an incumbent president in an election.

At the age of 77, he is the oldest Brazilian president at the time of inauguration. His platform is supported by the Brazilian communists (PCdoB), who have six seats in the Chamber of Deputies, the Brazilian parliament.

PCdoB leader Luciana

Santos, who is a minister in the Lula government, has called for the "strict punishment" of those responsible for the violence last weekend. The Brazilian people demand strict punishment of those involved in these

acts together with those who organised and funded their actions, she said. "Fascism and its terrorists will not stop the strength of the people and the return of hope for the reconstruction of Brazil."

FUND

The January fighting fund has kicked off with £550 in the bag and a mountain to climb to hit our £3,500 target for the month. Special mention this week goes to a regular supporter of our fund-raising efforts in Essex who sent in £100 and the Brighton reader who gave us a tenner.

Soaring costs, soaring inflation – these are difficult times for the communist press in the capitalist world. But if not us who and if not now when?

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THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

Defend the right to strike

AS WAVES of strikes sweep through Britain the Tory government responds in the only way it knows how – repression. The Sunak government is moving anti-union legislation to curb industrial action in key public sectors to ensure that essential public services are maintained during industrial action.

Rishi Sunak likes to pose as a pragmatist and a liberal conservative, and he was certainly opposed to the sham, empty popularism of Boris Johnson and the crude neo-liberalism of Liz Truss. But while he can rely on their support he's not a member of the Tory "One Nation" faction in parliament and he clearly doesn't want to burn all his bridges with the Neanderthal element that is clamouring for more and more anti-union laws to ban industrial action in more and more areas of the public and private sector.

If this new legislation gets off the ground it could easily be used to crush all independent union action by allowing employers to sack strikers out of hand if they walk out and take unions to court for compensation if they do. Reducing unions to impotent staff associations that existed in some sections of the old, and now long gone, public sector or the "company unions" set up by employers specifically to keep independent unions out of their factories has always been the dream of some in the Tory camp. It is after-all what the "Victorian values" the Tories used to drone on and on about actually means.

But we're not going back to the days when workers eked out a miserable existence working round the clock on pittance pay while kids crawled up chimneys for pennies to stave off starvation.

We get the usual weasel words from Labour's leaders vowing to repeal any new anti-union legislation. We see the TUC called on its members to come together to agree on a collective response to the new threat to their existence. But what we need is total defiance – enough to kill this proposal stone dead.

On the unity of the movement

IT IS amusing to note that calls for a new Communist International often come from the most sectarian elements of the world movement. But world-wide contacts between communist parties can only strengthen the communist cause.

Nevertheless a new international can only succeed, firstly if it includes and has the agreement of the ruling parties of People's China, Cuba, Democratic Korea, Laos and Vietnam. It should be based on Marxism-Leninism and the principle of equality between big parties and small parties. It must recognise the principle of a collective secretariat which reflects the views of the co-operating parties and not that of one big party. And it must recognise that in countries where there is more than one communist party -- the case in most countries these days -- the differences between them are a matter for those parties alone to resolve.

The New Communist Party has supported many of the efforts taken since the collapse of the Soviet Union to encourage co-operation and the exchange of views between communist and workers parties throughout the world. Though the Brussels May Day festival and seminar programme organised by the Belgian Workers Party (PTB) has been dissolved the annual Solidnet conferences that began in 1998 are still going – but even that forum is now being undermined by sectarians who refuse to recognise the principled stand of the Russian, Donbas and Ukrainian communists and equate the prime mover – US-led imperialism – with the major victims; the Russians and the people of the Donbas.

Now, more than ever, is the time for a clear call from the world communist movement for an end to the fighting and a just and lasting peace in eastern Europe. This can only come with a neutral and de-Nazified Ukraine that recognises the rights of the Donbas republics and the Crimea to join the Russian Federation and equal rights for all the people of the regions of the Ukraine.

Travel testing irritation

IS THE pre-departure polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test the best way to collect COVID 19 data or is it an unnecessary irritation on global travel? Or just another political tool in an anti-China narrative?

Many countries have imposed COVID 19 checks on Chinese travellers. The difference is between those who acted with undue haste, making a political decision, and those who delayed the decision, acting on the basis of health advice. Some countries appear to have used this decision as a political tool in part of a broader strategy that paints China unfavourably.

The UK in particular acted against the advice from its own health authorities. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's decision to impose COVID 19 checks on travellers from China is described by some health experts as a purely political manoeuvre that would make no difference to the rise or fall of cases in the UK.

Chief Medical Adviser Chris Whitty told Health Secretary Steve Barclay that there was no clear evidence of significant benefits from testing travellers from China.

The *Observer* newspaper reported that Barclay discussed the issues with Sunak, who still decided it was more important for Britain to align itself with those nations – the USA, Japan, Italy and Spain – that had already imposed such testing requirements. This became a political decision driven by Sunak's anti-China sentiment.

"I don't think it's likely the UK will get any public health benefit from this measure" said Professor Mark Woolhouse of Edinburgh University. "This can only have been done for political reasons."

Australian infectious diseases expert Paul Griffin said he did not agree with the move from some countries to place entry restric-

tions on people travelling from China. "I think that the practicality and the feasibility ... outweighs any potential benefit of implementing those sort of measures.

"And I would have liked to think we've learned from that by now and we just focus, once again, on those basics to minimise the impact of this virus, wherever it is."

The health advice suggests that pre-departure tests for travel out of or into China are a waste of time when it comes to preventing the spread of COVID 19.

Paul Tambyah, president of the Asia-Pacific Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infection in Singapore, said that despite China's reopening there is no need for Singapore to toughen its entry requirements for travellers from China.

The incidence of new cases in China appears to be no higher than in other countries such as Germany, France and the USA, and there is no evidence that travel restrictions are effective.

A number of countries, including Australia, imposed the COVID-19 testing as a way of tracking the emergence of new COVID 19 variants. Australian Health Minister Mark Butler, acting on health advice, said: "The decision to implement these temporary measures has been made out of an abundance of caution, taking into account the dynamic and evolving situation in China and the potential for new variants to emerge in an environment of high transmission."

This conclusion is backed by UK Professor Woolhouse: "Another reason for imposing the tests has focused on the need to

track potentially dangerous new COVID 19 variants."

Nonetheless, this data collection justification also reveals a political component because it gets applied inconsistently Woolhouse said, adding: "but we already know of one variant that is spreading rapidly in the US. Variant XBB.1.5 now accounts for about 40 per cent of cases in the US, but no one in the UK seems worried about it. Instead, a lot of noise is being made about hypothetical variants emerging in China."

It is crucial to track the potential emergence of new variants so that action can be taken to manage their impact. This is an essential part of any living with COVID 19 strategy. Data collection sits at the core of this management strategy. This is good science when it's applied to all travellers, particularly from countries with high infection rates including the UK, or low vaccination rates, such as the USA.

It is reasonable in some cases to apply pre-flight PCR testing as a way of tracking the development of new variants. This is a data collection exercise and it's essential that all the genomic information to be fed quickly and seamlessly into the internationally available data base. Except in cases of significant infection, it is not reasonable to apply this testing as a means of excluding or hindering travel.

Reliable, consistent and shared data collection through shared testing results is an essential COVID 19 management tool. The processes are a travel irritation, but there's no reason they should be used to hinder or prevent travel by Chinese or any other tourists. Chinese tourists, like those from any other country, can be welcomed as a vital component of a re-emerging global tourism industry and that helps to drive the global economy.

CGTN

Workers' Notes

Tories target unions

by New Worker correspondent

TUESDAY saw the Tory Government unveil its latest anti-trade union law with the first reading of a Bill which demands that public sector services maintain a minimum service level (MSL) during strike action. This was promised in their 2019 General Election manifesto (at least with regard to public transport). The same document also promised to abolish 'Fire-and-Rehire' – but that has not been given such a high priority, despite ministerial promises made at the time of the P&O sackings.

These regulations have now been extended into the NHS, education, fire and rescue, border security and nuclear decommissioning. Details are as yet unclear but employers will be able to issue a "work notice" stating the workforce with workers named on the list would lose their present right from unfair dismissal for striking.

Business Secretary Grant Shapps piously claimed that the measures were similar to those on the continent, saying that he hoped the Government would "never have to use it", and had the brass neck to assert it was not designed to ban strikes. He claimed that during the one-day ambulance strike this was not done, which is clearly nonsense as local agreements were put in place beforehand.

This point was speedily refuted by Sharon Graham of Unite, who said: "Grant Shapps is, as usual, economical with the truth. He is taking the worst practices from other countries but not those that actually assist workers. The evidence from abroad clearly

shows this kind of legislation only forces unions to use other tactics, inflaming and prolonging disputes."

She dismissed the move as "another dangerous gimmick from a Government that should be negotiating to resolve the current crisis they have caused".

TUC general secretary Paul Nowak pointed out the absurdity of a measure that "would mean that when workers democratically vote to strike, they can be forced to work and sacked if they don't comply". Although saying the TUC could mount a legal

How they live

by New Worker correspondent

SOME PEOPLE at least do not need to worry about having to go on strike for higher wages. At about two in the afternoon last Thursday (5th January) the CEOs of the FT Stock Exchange 100 index had earned more than the median UK full-time worker can expect to earn in a year.

the median FTSE 100 salaries for CEO pay at £3.41 million is now 103 times median full-time worker's pay of £33,000. Compared with January 2022, this means CEO's pay has gone up 39 per cent whilst the median worker's pay has only increased by six per cent in the same period.

Slightly further down the corporate food chain, other FTSE 350 executives (FTSE 100 executives apart from the CEO, plus CEOs and other executives of FTSE 250 companies) have to make do with a median pay of £1.33 million, which means they had to work until Wednesday 11th January

at a 'magic circle' law firm who 'earns' an average £1.95 million salary would need to work until 9th January, whilst a partner at a 'Big Four' Accountancy firm, on an average of £911,000, will need to work until 16th January. Worse off are the poor top bankers at one of the five FTSE 100 banks, who only get £820,000 need to keep going until they break open the champers on 17th January.

In general, all those in the top one per cent of full-time UK earners who make a bare minimum of £145,000 per annum will have overtaken the annual pay of the median full-time worker by 23rd March.

Luke Hildyard, Director of the HPC, commented that: "In the worst economic circumstances that most people can remember, it is difficult to believe that a handful of top earners are still raking in such extraordinary amounts of money. The UK economy really cannot afford for such a big share of the wealth that is created by all workers to be captured by such a tiny number of people at the top. To address declining living standards for the majority, we need measures to balance the distribution of incomes more evenly." Whether that means higher rates in income tax or storming the barricades he does not say.

The fight-back continues

by New Worker correspondent

LAST YEAR more than a million working days were lost to strike action, the highest figure since 2011. Although the high point was in October when almost half that, 417,000, were lost, 2023 is seeing the continuing of action from Shetland to the Sicily Isles. One sign of this is the newspapers have started publishing strike diaries of forthcoming actions, just like the football fixtures.

Government figures show that wages have risen 6.9 per cent since October. But this is only slightly less half the inflation rate, which means that even a headline-grabbing increase means a de facto pay

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challenge, he naturally said nothing about encouraging any wider protests.

It was left to Mark Wrack, General Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), to take a tougher line, saying the measure was aimed at his members.

definitely

He said that fire and rescue is the one area where MSLs will definitely be set. He clearly distrusts the government when it says MSLs will be a last resort. He also described the likely law as representing: "one of the most shameful attacks on the democratic rights and liberties of working people in decades ... This is an attack on all workers – including key workers, who kept our public services going during the pandemic. It's an attack on Britain's COVID heroes and on all workers. We need a mass movement of resistance to this authoritarian attack."

This calculation was made by the High Pay Centre (HPC), based on the annual reports of the top 100 British companies and measured against official government statistics of pay, so they must be true.

The calculation assumes that bosses put in a full 30 hours of exhausting labour. Last year they worked a whole 39 hours until nine o'clock on the 7th January to meet that demanding target.

It is not however, all a bed of roses at the top. HPC notes that high-powered lawyers in the City will have to wait until next week to surpass the median worker's annual pay, and surprisingly, leading bankers will have to wait until as late as 20th January – however these poor darlings will have part of their wages paid in shares.

In some respects this is a return to pre-pandemic days, but a difference between three and four days in a year is a minor one. HPC point out that

for their pay to overtake the median UK worker.

Of course, not all workers earn £33,000 per year. GMB General Secretary, Gary Smith, noted that: "A hard-up 999 call handler would have to work for 150 years to earn what a CEO boss trousers in just 12 months. It's an utter disgrace. NHS workers and others are being forced onto the picket lines just to make ends meet while these fat cats get the cream."

Of the top 10, the highest paid CEO was Sebastien De Montessus of mining company Endeavour, who came out top on £16.85 million; the poorest of the top 10 was Rob Perrins from Berkeley, the builders, who made do with £7.97 million. Curiously the highest paid CEO was not one of the FTSE 100; Frederic Vecchioli, CEO of storage company Safestore, raked in £17.06m.

Other of the HPC's calculations are that a partner

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cut. That 6.9 per cent average obviously conceals a great deal – public sector workers only got 2.7 per cent. The last time there was such a decline in real wages was in 1945. However

Trade unions and workers show no sign of being disheartened, however, nor of being taken in by the claims of Chancellor that: “Any action that risks embedding high prices into our economy will only prolong the pain for everyone, and stunt any prospect of long-term economic growth.” Even those who do not read the {Financial Times} are aware of the massive profiteering that is driving up prices.

Fruitless Talks

Monday saw Government ministers stalling yet again. Having previously hid behind the ‘independent’ pay review bodies, the Government went through the motions of actually holding direct talks with NHS unions.

At close of business on Monday there was a mixed response to the outcome of the talks, which in theory were about next year’s pay settlement rather than the present unfinished business.

Unite described the meetings as “a missed opportunity”, The Royal College of Nursing’s different view was that the outcome of the talks was “bitterly disappointing”. Unison said that Wednesday’s ambulance strike would go ahead, GMB agreed that the

talks “fell well short of anything substantial that could stop this week’s strikes”.

In particular more than 2,600 ambulance workers in the East and West Midlands, North West, North East, and Wales are striking on Monday 23 January, which continues the core Christmas action. The dispute is of course not just about pay but to save the service.

Sharon Graham said: “Unite’s ambulance workers have been left with no option but to take industrial action. They are fighting to protect patients, to save the ambulance service and the NHS itself, as well as providing for their families.”

Sara Gorton of Unison tugged her forelock however, to say that “the tone has changed” as the Health Secretary Steve Barclay was now willing to discuss pay and acknowledged that any resolution to the current dispute “would involve a reach-back into the current pay year”. She concluded by saying that: “So it is progress, but it isn’t significant until we match the new tone with some cold hard cash.”

Prime ministerial mutterings about a one-off payment to public sector workers are just that. He angered unions by saying that such a payment would have to be based on “productivity savings”.

Onay Kasab from Unite angrily pointed out that with some NHS workers putting in 18-hour shifts this was insulting.

On the same day, another

set of fruitless pay talks took place between the Education Secretary Gillian Keegan and the various English and Welsh teaching unions teaching unions.

The result, in the words of joint the National Education Union (NEU) General Secretary Kevin Courtney, was that “no concrete progress” had been made and no new pay offer was on the table. “There is nothing so far that would dissuade us from taking industrial action,” he added.

His union has just balloted for strike action, whilst north of the border the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) and other unions took strike action on Tuesday and Wednesday, just a day after the end of the Christmas holidays. After this nationwide action another 16 days of strike action will take place in different regions. They are seeking a 10 per cent rise, which the SNP Government has said is not on, they have offered exactly half of that.

Small but perfectly formed

by New Worker correspondent

AMONGST some smaller strike actions taking place are those at the Driver, Vehicle and Licensing Agency (DVLA) in Swansea and Birmingham, who started a five-day strike on the Monday. In this case about 600 members of the Public and Commercial Service Union

(PCS) who assess people’s medical ability to drive before granting them a driving licence have taken to the picket line.

Mark Serwotka, PCS’s General Secretary, linked the strike to the Government’s proposed tough new anti-union laws by saying: “By trying to stop unions taking action – something we will fight strongly against – the government is attacking the symptom, not the cause. The cause, in this case, is a government that has offered our members just a two per cent pay rise at a time when inflation is over 10 per cent.”

The same union also represents driving examiners who are also coming out on strike, which has resulted in widespread cancellation of driving tests across the country from Inverness to Exeter and points in-between.

At the same time more 400 PCS members at the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) call centres in Workington, Newcastle and Caernarfon are on strike from the 3–13 January.

Particularly affected are those include those working for the British Cattle Movement Service, on the Sustainable Farming Incentive and Countryside Stewardship schemes. As the RPA is responsible for giving farmer handouts for producing food and saving the environment by not producing food, so it will hit Tory-voting farmers in the pocket.

Serwotka said: “Workers at the RPA provide services for farmers and many others in our rural communities and pride themselves in the levels of customer service they provide.

“But after years of seeing their pay cut in real terms and threats to their pensions, jobs and redundancy terms, this becomes stressful and the temptation to find a job elsewhere because it pays better gets stronger.”

Private sector actions

by New Worker correspondent

IT IS NOT just in the public sector that industrial action (or the threat of it) is making itself felt.

At Luton Airport, 200 staff employed by GH London Ground Handling have secured a 19 per cent pay

increase at Luton airport. They had voted for strike action late last year over the delayed payment of a retention bonus.

The deal, which breaks down to a 10 per cent salary increase applicable from last July to 31 December 2022 and a £500 retention bonus, was agreed. They will also receive a nine per cent increase from 1 January 2023. The deal also promises that if the RPI inflation rate is more than nine per cent next May, workers will receive the difference from June.

Further north, engineering construction roles at the GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) pharmaceutical plant at Irvine in Ayrshire started taking strike action on Monday over bonus payments. The 40 workers employed by contractor Kaefer Limited are demanding a bonus hourly payment of £2.37, as laid out under the National Agreement for the Engineering Construction Industry.

Action will continue for a fortnight, until the 23 January. Unite’s General Secretary Sharon Graham, noting that GSK had sales of £7.8 billion and profits of £1.2 billion in the third quarter of 2022 alone, said: “GSK, which operates the Irvine plant, is making eye-watering profits. Paying our members the bonus they are seeking is like a drop in the ocean to their overflowing coffers. Yet the contractor Kaefer who we are directly in dispute with onsite refuses to award our members what they are entitled to.”

Industrial officer Paul Bennett added that: “The strike action will cause considerable disruption and it will lead to significant delays in maintenance issues affecting GSK’s Irvine plant. The dispute has been contrived entirely by the contractor Kaefer and GSK as the client steadfastly refusing to pay a bonus.

“Our members don’t want to be in this position but they have been forced to take this action in order to get what they are entitled to under a UK-wide bargaining agreement. The action will continue until our members get what they deserve.”

20 years ago this week in the New Worker

RODDY Robertson, who chairs the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) in Scotland, last week warned that the current dispute is no longer about pay so much as about saving the fire service.

The FBU is set to go ahead with a new programme of industrial action after talks at the arbitration service Acas failed last Tuesday.

The union had entered these talks in a last ditch effort to resolve the dispute but with little hope that they would succeed, after the employers refused to budge from the Government-imposed position.

This is an offer of a four per cent rise now and another seven per cent next autumn – to be funded from drastic cuts in the service. It is based on the Bain inquiry report, which was compiled in three months by non-experts and recommends severe cuts in service personnel and equipment, whereas the Pathfinder inquiry, conducted over three years by experts, recommended enlargement of the service with more staff and equipment.

The Government’s stance, and its sabotage of a compromise agreement between the employers and firefighters last November, have hardened the firefighters’ resolve.

Robertson said: “Our members are very angry at the employers and the Government for failing to come up with what they consider to be a reasonable offer.

“The employers and Government may choose to pretend the Bain report is about modernisa-

tion, but the truth is that it is all about cuts.”

FBU general secretary Andy Gilchrist said that with the Government effectively forcing an impasse on negotiations by insisting they be tied to the Bain recommendations, the ACAS talks would be pointless.

The FBU nevertheless gave it a try, but was not surprised when the talks failed.

Now the firefighters are set to stage a 24-hour stoppage on 21 January, followed by two 48-hour strikes beginning on 28 January and 1 February.

The FBU is calling for a 40 per cent pay rise to bring basic pay up to £30,000 per year and a new pay structure. In negotiations with employers last year they showed they were willing to compromise and accept 16 per cent – until the Government scuppered the deal.

Football and Politics Politics in Football

by R Arun Kumar

ARGENTINA won the FIFA World Cup. Millions of football crazy fans heaved a sigh of relief. Messi achieved his dream, cementing his place as one of the greatest footballers of all time.

There were many surprises in this edition of the world cup. Morocco reaching the semi-finals is one amongst them. The other one is the elimination of another fan favourite, Brazil, in the quarter-finals, denying fans the chance to enjoy a mouth-watering Brazil v Argentina semi-final clash. Of course, the failure of countries such as Germany and Belgium to pass through the group stages was a surprise. On top of all these is the performance of the African and Asian teams – Saudi Arabia upsetting Argentina in the first round, followed by Japan defeating Germany, the play of Senegal and Morocco – all were indicators of the emergence of football outside of the traditional powerhouses in Latin America and Europe. This is a good sign or is it too early to predict? Only time will tell.

But the purpose of this essay is not to discuss these matters. It is about how politics combined with the great football spectacle. This began with the questioning of the right of Qatar to host the World Cup. Allegations of corruption to win the bid or the hosting rights were doing the rounds right from the day Qatar was declared the host. These allegations gained much wider traction with the arrest of some prominent politicians in Europe who were found to be involved in such corrupt practices. This brings to the fore the entire issue of commercialisation of sports, neo-liberal influence on culture (of which sports are an important component) and the vested interests that command the organisation of sporting events.

Sports editor Dave Zirn, who works for the *Los Angeles Times* and *The Nation* argues



• Messi holds the World Cup.

that: “Global mega-events like the World Cup and Olympics have become incredibly effective tools for re-organising an economy on neo-liberal grounds...they are a neo-liberal Trojan horse aimed at bringing in business and rolling back the most basic civil liberties.”

Similarly, Jules Boykoff, a professional football player, states: “Celebration capitalism is disaster capitalism’s affable cousin. Both occur in states of exception that allow plucky politicians and their corporate pals to push policies that they couldn’t dream of during normal times. But while disaster

capitalism eviscerates the state, celebration capitalism manipulates state actors as partners, pushing economics rooted in so-called public-private partnerships. All too often these partnerships are lopsided: the public pays and the private profits.”

Zirn extends this argument

a little further: “Celebration capitalism also provides a ‘once-in-a-generation’ opportunity (for police and military forces) to multiply and militarise their weapons stocks, laminating another layer on the surveillance state.”

He buttresses this point by giving examples from all the Olympics and World Cups that were organised within the last three decades. Construction of ‘FIFA standard stadiums’, evictions for the purpose and security are also some of the conditions imposed on host nations, insensitive to the popular concerns, forget about the discontent they create.

“Sporting mega-events shape the economic, political and personal destinies of masses of people, with zero accountability for the trial of displacement, disruption and destruction they leave behind.” These really put into context the entire human tragedy that went into the construction of all those mega stadiums in Qatar to host the World Cup. Many had discussed the death of migrant workers who constructed these wonderful modern-day ‘monuments’ for us to enjoy the spectacle that we all watched. The State of Qatar was also blamed for being inconsiderate to the plight of the migrant workers. But missing in this entire discussion was the role of FIFA, IOA [Indian Olympic Association] and such other sporting associations, which are intrinsically undemocratic and not at all responsible to the common people.

Eduardo Galeano, in his *Soccer in Sun and Shadow*, clearly explains the role of politicians and their greed in promoting such mega sporting events: “Soccer and fatherland are always connected, and politicians and dictators frequently exploit those links of identity.”

Recall the picture of the Emir of Qatar patiently smiling



• Protests around the world.

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ing and hovering around Messi during the presentation of the World Cup! Or Macron, offering his shoulder to a dejected Mbappe after their heart-wrenching loss in the final! Or Bolsonaro campaigning in the recent presidential elections in Brazil (which he lost) in the famous yellow jersey of the Brazilian football team and trying to appropriate it. All of them are sending a message to their respective constituents – the citizens of their countries – that they are very caring, concerned and associate themselves with the emotions of the common people who identify with the sport.

The second overt political gesture that immediately caught the attention of sports lovers all over the world was from the teams themselves. The German team closed their mouths shut during the start of their first match, indicating their explicit displeasure over the denial of freedom of expression in Qatar. The Iranian players refused to sing their national anthem in protest against their regime's attack on women who are demanding their rights and everyone appreciated their stand.

Nobody denies that Qatar is a state that denies basic democratic rights such as the right to freedom of expression

and choice or to organise and express dissent. The same can be said about Iran. Both are autocracies and refuse to heed people's views and ignore their demands. We have to protest against such policies of these states. But the question here is, what is happening in many of the European countries or the advanced capitalist countries?

protesting

Workers in the USA, Germany, Britain and many other countries in Europe are protesting against the attacks on their rights to unionise and protest and against labour reforms. The austerity measures introduced by their governments are met with resistance. These so-called advanced democracies are brutally suppressing protests. We all know how police used force against Occupy Wall Street protesters to vacate the park in New York. We have seen images of how French police used tear-gas shells and baton-charged workers and Yellow Vest protesters. Similarly, the UK government is now talking about bringing about a law to ban strikes.

It would be great if the football players in these countries, or when they are playing in these countries, express their dissent and protest against such attacks. Can

we expect the football federations of such players to stand with them, if and when they express their opinions and views on such attacks? This is the real million-dollar question! It really involves millions!

The great Socrates, captain of an earlier generation of Brazilian footballers, was a doctor and a left activist who always stood by the working class in Brazil. Of course, now we have a Richarlison (who scored the famous acrobatic goal for Brazil in this World Cup) and a Paulinho who have expressed their support for Lula. Then there is Colin Kaepernick (who plays American football) who started taking the knee against the attacks on Afro-Americans in the USA and supported the Black Lives Matter movement. Many players and teams throughout the world, including the Indian cricket team, are now taking the knee against racism.

Palestinian support

Another political gesture brought out into the open by the Moroccan players during the World Cup was the open display of support for the Palestinian cause. After their win, they went around the stadium parading the Palestinian flag. In fact, in Qatar, many were reporting that Palestinian flags and symbols

of their resistance such as their scarf, were the most sought-after items along with the jerseys and flags of the competing nations. This is an important reflection of the feelings of not only the Arabs who thronged the stadiums, but also of the fans from various other countries who visited Qatar to watch the action live from the stadiums. This prevalent sentiment should not and cannot be ignored.

double-standards

Those who took notice of the German protest, unfortunately or rather deliberately downplayed the significance of this expression of support for Palestine. This once again exposes the bias and double-standards of the so-called advanced democracies and their pen-pushers.

Galeano wrote this about a budding football player: "From the moment of birth, that child is forced to turn his disadvantage into a weapon, and before long he learns to dribble around the rules of order that deny him a place. He learns the tricks of every trade and he becomes an expert in the art of pretending, surprising, breaking through where least expected, and throwing off an enemy with a hip feint or some other tune from the rascals songbook."

Messi has showed how this is done on the field. So did other footballers (the sad part is that some famous Brazilian football names openly supported Bolsonaro for whatever reason, betraying their class of origin).

Now it is our turn to twist and turn, feint and 'throw off the enemy' – neo-liberalism and the capitalist womb from which it grew to such monstrous size. That would be a much cherished and satisfying victory for all of us. The whistle has blown!

People's Democracy (India)

Blasts from the past: The Spying Game

by Ekaterina Blinova

THE USA is intensifying efforts to swap former US Marine Paul Whelan, convicted for espionage in Russia. The spy case evokes strong memories of the covert struggle between American and Soviet intelligence agencies in the not-so-distant past that both sides kept out of the media spot-light until an incident in the late 1970s.

Back in the day, 1978 in fact, three Soviet citizens working for the United Nations in New York were arrested. They were taken and charged on 20th May 1978, in New Jersey, for allegedly paying \$16,000 for secret US Navy anti-submarine warfare documents.

The three were taken into custody in a shopping centre in Woodbridge, after a US Navy officer – who had been co-operating with the FBI – dropped a film of classified documents into a pickup spot. The aforementioned officer never had a face-to-face meeting with the alleged spies but the US press claimed that the FBI had managed to identify them. One of the Soviet UN employees had diplomatic immunity, the other two did not and were detained whilst awaiting trial. The US media acknowledged at the time that the arrests seemed "certain to heighten strained relations between the United States and the Soviet Union".

This prompted an asymmetric response from the USSR. The crux of the matter was that the two Cold War rivals maintained a sort of a gentleman's agreement and largely avoided discussing their intelligence tit-for-tat in

the mediasphere. The US media story about the alleged Soviet spies appeared to be in breach of this tacit accord.

CIA Agent Exposed

In June 1978, the Soviet newspaper *Izvestia* dropped a bombshell by exposing CIA agent Martha Peterson, who was caught red-handed by the KGB in Moscow in July 1977 when she planted a cache of spy equipment, including ampules of a lethal poison, on a bridge over the Moscow river. The article also contained a photo of Peterson being interrogated behind a table covered with her spy paraphernalia.

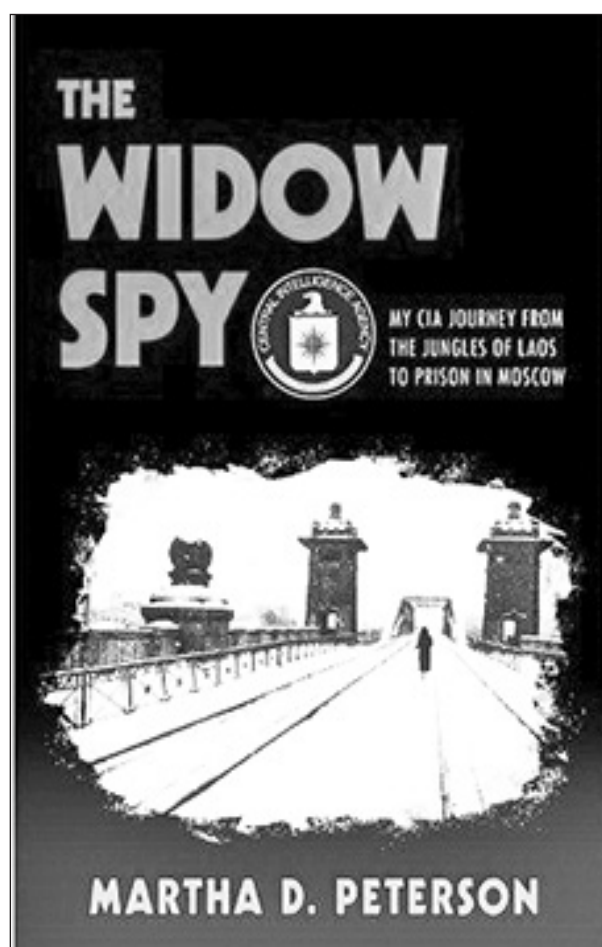
"Imagine a young diplomat, a smiling girl who speaks foreign languages, who works as vice-consul of one of the countries in Moscow," wrote stellar Soviet investigative journalist and novelist Yulian Semenov. "Imagine this pretty girl in the evening when she got into her car and drove into the city centre. Just what did our heroine do there? Visit the theatre? Friends? No."

revealed

The article went on to reveal how Ms Peterson stopped her car in a place that was dimly lit, changed her clothes, got on a city bus, then rode the Metro, then took a taxi and finally arrived at the Krasnoluzhsky Bridge. There, the vice-consul put a stone in a porthole on the arch – "an ordinary cobblestone, which in the villages they put in a bathhouse so that the heat lasts longer". At that very moment, KGB agents grabbed and de-



• Colin Kaepernick takes the knee with his colleagues.



tained her.

"Inside the 'cobblestone' lay the usual espionage accessories – cameras, gold, a questionnaire, money, instructions, in a word, everything needed for such work. There were, however, objects in the drop cache that were perplexing – small inconspicuous black ampules. What's this?" the article went on.

It turned out that the spy cache included poison capsules. What's more, the same poison had been sent by the CIA to the Soviet Union before and had been used to kill at least one Soviet citizen who threatened to expose a US mole in Moscow. "The question arises," Semenov wrote. "Who will answer for the death of this person? Only the spy to whom Peterson gave the poison? Or the CIA? And, if that is the case, who precisely?"

The Soviet government expelled Peterson, who had diplomatic immunity and did not make a fuss about the case, at the request of Washington. The May 1978 incident in New Jersey untied Moscow's hands, however. The Soviet newspaper specified that it had made the case public because of "the new round of anti-Soviet hysteria" in the USA.

Semenov specifically referred to the case involving the two detained Soviet citizens in New

Jersey, stressing that by all accounts, it appeared to be a set-up.

"The prosecution witness was a Navy officer, an FBI agent who was dispatched provocatively to the Soviet citizens," he wrote. "Rough work, I would say, a police state in its purest form."

Semenov insisted that the irrefutable case involving Peterson was contrasted with a kind of "theatrical buffoonery" by the FBI, which was aimed at disrupting Soviet-US relations.

The US media immediately reacted to the *Izvestia* story by trying to downplay the Peterson affair. Still, the Carter administration in the White House had to admit that Peterson, 33, was a CIA employee who had used the US Embassy in Moscow as a cover.

US newspapers went into a full damage control mode and attempted to sweeten the pill: they portrayed 'Marty' Peterson as a mixture of a ladylike and quite glamorous "girl-next-door" and a "mysterious woman" with a green-belt in taekwondo, who was "caught up in the general heightening of tensions" between Moscow and Washington. The efforts to glorify the busted American spook paled in comparison, however, with the 'cloak-and-dagger' story broken by the Soviet newspaper.

Later, Martha Peterson went public with her CIA background and secret mission in Moscow. In 2012, she published her memoir *The Widow Spy: My CIA Journey from the Jungles of Laos to Prison in Moscow*. In her book, Ms Peterson described the Cold War spy operation in Moscow. Even though the US media has tried to depict the CIA operation, involving Peterson and her colleagues, as a success story, the truth of the matter is that the KGB outsmarted their American counterparts.

The story was used by Soviet filmmakers to make a series titled *TASS is Authorised to Declare* (1984). The series is based on Yulian Semenov's novel that he wrote, using documentary and video evidence, soon after the Soviets made Peterson's failure public. Following the collapse of the USSR, participants of coun-

ter-intelligence operations against the CIA also shared their accounts of events.

The story actually began in 1974 in Bogota, Colombia, where the CIA managed to catch Soviet diplomat Alexander Ogorodnik in a honey trap. At the time, Ogorodnik was having an affair with a Colombian Institute of Culture employee, Pilar Suarez Barcala, who was allegedly collaborating with US intelligence.

Their intimate relations were reportedly filmed by the CIA and shown to Ogorodnik during a recruiting conversation. For fear of ruining his career, the Soviet diplomat agreed to cooperate with the CIA under the codename TRIGON. Having returned to Moscow, Ogorodnik began work as the second secretary at the American Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Directorate for Foreign Policy Planning.

For two and a half years, TRIGON was an informant for the CIA station in Moscow. It is assumed that at some point his bride, Olga Serova, started to suspect him of being a US spy. She unexpectedly died of the flu. It is believed that he poisoned her with a deadly substance smuggled by the CIA.

suspected

Soviet intelligence started to suspect Ogorodnik early on. They received a tip about US intelligence approaching an unidentified Russian diplomat in Bogota. Some Western observers presume that Ogorodnik was exposed by an underground agent, the Czech undercover intelligence 'illegal' Karl Koecher.

The KGB watched TRIGON closely and saw how he left secret information in special 'containers' (disguised as a pack of

milk or a branch) in Victory Park in Moscow. They also secretly searched the spy's apartment, at No 2/1 on Krasnopresnenskaya Embankment. On the evening of 21 June 1977, Ogorodnik was arrested. Alas, the KGB missed the moment when TRIGON, who agreed to co-operate with the prosecution, swallowed a deadly ampule.

Soviet secret agents now faced a serious challenge, however, they needed Ogorodnik alive to catch their CIA counterparts red-handed.

They solved this dilemma quite elegantly. The KGB invited one of the best make-up artists of Mosfilm – the Soviet Hollywood – to make a Soviet intelligence officer a 'double' for Ogorodnik.

The Mosfilm specialist guaranteed that no one would notice the difference from a distance of at least 20 metres. Given that Ogorodnik's handlers never approached him closer than that, it could work. Reportedly, the Soviet officer successfully posed as TRIGON for three whole weeks.

As a result of the KGB's operational game, the CIA scheduled another secret encounter at the Krasnoluzhsky Bridge with the man they believed was Ogorodnik. It was planned that CIA agent Martha Peterson would drop a package disguised as a stone there and that Ogorodnik would pick it up after she left the bridge.

The rest was described by the *Izvestia* newspaper. Whilst Martha Peterson changed her clothes and transport to get to the infamous bridge, she had no idea that around 100 KGB officers were keeping an eye on her movements, with some of them waiting for her at the hiding place.

The KGB's successful operation resulted in the exposure of both Peterson and a number of her US colleagues in Moscow. The publication of the story became a sensation at that time both in the USA and the USSR. The two Soviet UN employees who were detained in New Jersey in May 1978 were convicted of espionage in the USA and even got a 50-year sentence each, but soon they were swapped for five Soviet dissidents. Even at the height of the Cold War stand-off, the USA and Russia found ways to reach mutually beneficial solutions.

Sputnik



• Above: Peterson being questioned by the KGB in the presence of a US diplomat. Below: The tools of the spying game discovered.



LETTERS

Dear Comrades

There is a line in an old song that says "the more things change, the more they stay the same". This certainly applies to the British Brainwashing Corporation (BBC), which still cannot stop lying about People's Korea.

The BBC have started off the New Year with an article attacking the Democratic People's Republic of Korea titled *North Korea: What can we expect from Kim Jong Un in 2023*.

The BBC fail to call People's Korea by its correct title, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea or DPRK. Of course, Juche Korea and Socialist Korea are acceptable names for the DPRK. The BBC brainwashers

even use the south Korean style Romanisation of Korean language. Needless to say, the article or report is written by the Seoul correspondent of the BBC who is not actually in the DPRK. The article does not contain any facts but is simply sound-bites from fake experts who are in the pay of south Korea and the USA.

The DPRK's excellent health system is slandered. There is the usual old tosh about human rights. The article falsely claims that Kim Jong Un himself had made reference to a 'food crisis', however a search of the DPRK national news agency, KCNA, and also recent speeches of the Korean leader could not find the phrase "food crisis". More lies from the BBC about People's Korea!

Anyone fancy a KFA UK picket of the British Brainwashing Corporation?

Dermot Hudson
South London

Dear Comrades
A report by the
Associated Press

on 3rd January has confirmed that the people of Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have not rushed to normalise relations with the occupiers of Palestine. It said when Israel struck an agreement with the two countries "the ties would go beyond governments and become society-wide pacts, stoking mass tourism and friendly exchanges between people long at odds".

Although more than half a million Israelis have flocked to oil-rich Abu Dhabi and skyscraper-studded Dubai, just 1,600 Emirati citizens have visited Israel since it lifted coronavirus travel restrictions last year, the Israeli Tourism Ministry told the Associated Press.

The ministry does not know how many Bahrainis have visited Israel because, it said, "the numbers are too small". It said: "The expected flood of Gulf Arab tourists to Israel has been little more than a trickle." The lack of Emirati and Bahraini tourists reflects Israel's long-standing image problem in the Arab world and re-

veals the limits of the Abraham Accords, experts say.

John Hughes
Bahrain
Freedom
Movement
London

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Diary

SAT 14 JAN
People's Assembly
Against Austerity: Annual conference. 11:030, Friends House, 173-177 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ. Register at www.facebook.com/events/721702045562415.

THUR 19 JAN
Socialist History Society: Tony Greenstein on Zionism During the Holocaust. 19:00, Online Zoom meeting. Register on at SHS website.

SAT 21 JAN
Stop the War Coalition: Trade union conference. 10:30, Mander Hall, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD

SAT 21 JAN
Palestine Solidarity Campaign: Boycott Puma in protest over it supporting Israeli apartheid. Details of nationwide protests on PSC website.

SAT 21 JAN
Korean Friendship Association UK AGM: 15:00-17:00 via Skype at <https://join.skype.com/l6O94eL-1gT0Z>

MON 23 JAN
Palestine Solidarity Campaign: Stop the Twickenham Arms Fair. 14:30-16:30, Twickenham Stadium, 200 Whitton Road, Twickenham TW2 &BA

FRI 27 JAN
Soviet War Memorial Trust: Holocaust Memorial Day, Act of Remembrance 10:45 for 11:00, Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park (Imperial War Museum), London SE1 6HZ

FRI 27 JAN
Haringey Education Aid for Cuba: fundraiser with live Cuban music 19:30, £12.00 book on Cuba Solidarity Campaign website.

SAT 28 JAN
Latin America Conference 2023: 10:00-17:00, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD Tickets £10/ £8 at <https://bit.ly/LA23ticket>
MON 30 JAN

Marx Memorial Library: Engels and the Housing Question 150 Years. On Panel Discussion. 19:00, in person at MML 37a Clerkenwell Green, London, EC1R 0DU and online. Book on Eventbrite.

WED 1 FEB
Marx Memorial Library: Book launch: Alexander Buzgalin and Andrei Kolganov 21st Century Capital: post-Soviet Marxist reflections 18:30, Online. Book via MML website.

THUR 2 FEB
Marx Memorial Library: Socialist Solutions to the Climate Crisis: Nicaragua, China, Cuba. On site and Online. 19:00-20:30, 37a Clerkenwell Green London EC1R 0DU Book on MML website.

SAT 4 FEB
Cuba Solidarity Campaign: Vigil against the blockade 13:00-13:45 Marks and Spencer's, Argyle Street, Glasgow.

SAT 4 FEB
British Group for the Study of the Juche Idea: Joe Pateman and others on DPRK and Anti-Revisionism. 15:00-17:00 online via Skype <https://join.skype.com/MY5OINKmAJCk>

THUR 9 FEB
Marx Memorial Library: The Energy Crisis. Panel discussion. 19:00, in person at MML 37a Clerkenwell Green, London, EC1R 0DU and online. Book on Eventbrite.

THUR 23 FEB
Marx Memorial Library: Inflation & the Developing Economic Crisis. 19:00, in person at MML 37a Clerkenwell Green, London, EC1R 0DU and online. Book on Eventbrite.

THUR 23 FEB
Socialist History Society: Gregory Claeys on Utopianism for a Dying Planet: Life After Consumerism. 19:00, Online Zoom meeting. Register on at SHS website.

SAT 25 FEB
Cuba Solidarity Campaign: Fundraising social for Viva La Educaci3n with speakers. 14:00-17:00, The Sportsman Inn, 57 Mottram Road, Hyde, SK14 2NN. Tickets £20 from Sue Piper on 07981 925881.

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Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

THROUGHOUT the country Scots welcomed 2023 in street parties that lead to the usual consumption of strong spirit over a winter festival that has long been seen as far more important than Christmas. Christmas celebrations were, in fact, banned by the Scottish Puritans in 1640 and although this ban was lifted in 1712, the kirk frowned on anything that smacked of what it considered to be Catholic or pagan “superstition”.

Although Christmas Day was restored as a public holiday in 1958, the New Year remains the popular focus for the festive season. Some 30,000 revellers saw in the New Year in Edinburgh for the first post-Covid Hogmanay celebration on the streets of the Scottish capital since 2019.

Likewise, Scottish parliamentary politics came back to life on Tuesday

with a debate on independence. This, however, did not generate any great ructions such as the flashing in the public gallery that marked the end of the last session.

Controversy surrounded the fact that it took place at all. The opposition demanded that it be replaced with a debate on the state of the NHS – but obviously the SNP have no time for such trivialities, so they had to make do with having a long statement from the Health Secretary about why things are bad but it is not his fault.

The fact there was no debate on the NHS spared him from opposition MSPs quoting Iain Kennedy, chair of BMA Scotland, who earlier said: “The NHS in Scotland is broken, we know that in Scotland many parts of the NHS are collapsing,” and that “we have no doubt that the NHS in Scotland in its current form is unsustainable.”

what day

Opinion polls on the merits of what the SNP call independence (ie membership of the European Union) give different results depending on what day of the week it is. The latest from the *Scotsman* newspaper give a 59–41 result in favour of remaining in the UK with don’t knows excluded. As for Holyrood and Westminster elections, it gives the SNP the allegiance of 44 per cent of the Scottish electorate, well ahead of runner-up Labour on 31.

One curious result of the poll was that whilst 61 per cent of the voters thought that the SNP is “not doing well” on running the NHS, no less than 34 per cent actually think it is doing well whilst four per cent don’t know. That 34 per cent is a remarkably high number and it represents the hard-core nationalist vote who think the SNP can do no wrong.

No doubt another poll more pleasing to the Nats will be along soon, but they will be worried that very few, including even a substantial part of their own supporters, find their chief cause is not a priority.

To return to the Holyrood chamber: In his statement about the health crisis, Humza Yousaf announced a bonanza to deal with the problem of mostly elderly patients whose stay in hospital is unnecessarily prolonged by the

lack of support for them at home. To resolve this, he is spending £8 million on 300 more care-home beds and authorised the health boards to pay up to pay 25 per cent over the National Care Home rate for beds.

He was firm in stating that: “Every penny is allocated, this is not additional finance coming from central finance...so we would have to find that money from within the health and social care budget.” The SNP could have diverted some of the money spent on Scotland’s overseas offices or “embassies” onto the NHS.

Whilst the SNP boast that the NHS staffing levels are at an all-time high of 155,000, it is finding it difficult to recruit in many specialities. The SNP’s income tax policies mean that compared with England real salaries are slightly lower as more are caught in the higher rates.

After such unimportant business as the state of the NHS was out of the way Holyrood devoted the remainder of the day to yet another debate on independence. This took the form of an SNP motion entitled the *People’s Right to Choose – Respecting Scotland’s Democratic Mandate*, which naturally passed 70 to 54 with SNP and Green support. An alternative motion from the Tories saying that the SNP should concentrate on the NHS failed.

Curiously enough the SNP motion was very vague and actually made no specific demand about a referendum. It accepted the Supreme Court’s decision that Holyrood does not have the powers to hold a referendum. It added that it “reaffirms its belief that people in Scotland have the sovereign right to determine the form of government best suited to their needs; believes that the United Kingdom should be a voluntary association of nations and that it should be open to any of its parts to choose by democratic means to withdraw from the union, and calls on the UK Government to respect the right of people in Scotland to choose their constitutional future”.

The motion will do its job of keeping most of the SNP membership happy, however, or at least distracted for a few months or so.

It might be wearing a bit thin. Some SNP members have been grumbling

that the SNP’s next one-day conference in March will be the last such half-yearly event and they will have to make do with the annual Autumn conference.

It is to be devoted to endorsing Sturgeon’s strategy of declaring the next General Election a de facto referendum. One SNP insider told the Tory *Scottish Daily Express* that: “The membership’s views are being decimated with no spring conference and instead a one-day cult meeting to vote on a referendum process we have been given no option about.”

hell-bent

He (or she) also complained that: “HQ are hell-bent on reminding us of the lack of democracy in Westminster and yet constantly and consistently fail to practise what they preach.”

The SNP claim that conferences are not profitable, which mean they have to have be cut back. It remains curious, however, that a party which claims a membership of 103,884 needs an interest-free loan of £107,620 from its CEO, of which only £47,620 has been paid back after two years. One would have thought that at least they would have been better at running their own party machine than at running the NHS or the ferry services.

Cold War nonsense

The ‘Yellow Peril’ has been resurrected in Scotland. The nationalist website the *Ferret* has courageously unmasked a latter day Fu Manchu as being Linhao Lin, also known as Jimmy Lin, who cunningly

disguises himself as the owner of the Loon Fung restaurant on Glasgow’s Sauchihall Street, which according to the *Ferret* is actually a Chinese “secret police station”. No doubt the woks are carefully disguised satellite dishes capable of transmitting secret information about Scotland’s politicians back to Beijing.

The *Ferret* is basically repeating allegations made by a Spanish-based anti-Chinese organisation called ‘Safeguard Defenders’, which claims that Loon Fung is one of 54 clandestine bases across the globe aimed at influencing foreign politicians and returning Chinese dissidents from abroad to face potential criminal charges in China.

Irrefutable proof of this great conspiracy is based on the fact that then First Minister Alex Salmond attended a Chinese Moon Festival just before the Referendum, that Lin visited Fujian province on a business trip accompanied by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh in 2018, and that Lin visited Holyrood. It is unclear what vitally important intelligence could possibly be gathered from Holyrood.

Green MSP Ross Greer was quick to jump on the imperialist bandwagon, saying: “Countries including Ireland and the Netherlands have taken swift action against the secret Chinese police stations operating in their territories. I hope and expect Police Scotland and UK intelligence agencies will provide an update on their own inquiries into this alleged Glasgow base in the near future.” He clearly has a great deal of faith in MI6.

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A British animal rescuer in Vietnam

by Thanh Nga

Harold Browning was a care manager for rhinos and ungulates at Longleat Safari Park in the UK, from 2011–2014. From 2014–2017 he worked as an animal manager for Four Paws Kosovo and deputy director of Four Paws Vietnam. Since 2018, he has worked at the Hanoi Wildlife Rescue Centre.

I MET Harold Browning in the late afternoon at a café in Hanoi whilst he was preparing for a guitar session with his friends ahead of a performance in bars in Tây Hồ District.

The 36-year-old is very tall and thin with a friendly smile. He has been a wild animal rescuer in Vietnam for nearly eight years.

The need for wild animal protection and conservation brought Browning from the UK to Vietnam. Now, he works as an animal welfare consultant for about 600 animals at the Hanoi Wildlife Rescue Centre in Sóc Sơn District, where most of the animals are evidence of trafficking cases.

“I’ve worked with animals for 30 years. My first job was on my parent’s farm when I was six years old. They had 400 hectares of land (around 900 acres). They had 1,200 sheep and 300 cows. Then I experienced many works related to animals,” Browning said.

Every day, it takes Browning about 30 minutes from his home in Tây Hồ District to the Hà Nội Wildlife Rescue Centre.

In the morning, Browning often inspects cages. The number of animals is often changed daily, so it is always necessary to update information about care conditions, food

and health recovery regimes.

The centre is being expanded, rearranging the cages to be reasonable. Each cage will be scientifically designed and suitable for each species.

“The Hanoi Wildlife Rescue Centre has a limited capacity. So, a lot of new, amazing enclosures are being built. For example, we have new aviaries and primate enclosures that are huge and exciting. I designed them,” he said.

According to Browning, to work with animals you must understand what each species in the wild usually does and what they need. In captivity or rescue, it is necessary to make animals’ living conditions closest to natural life. The general rule is to give animals a choice to self-regulate their behaviour.

Wild animals spend many days being separated from the natural environment, so when they are brought back to the centre are placed in a separate isolation area to be monitored for 30 days. They will then be placed in a suitable cage if they are in good health.

When receiving animals in a state of

injury or after unsuitable grouping, they may beat or bite each other. Browning will work with the vets to treat the wounds and help the animals recover.

Browning was sent to Vietnam by Four Paws in 2015. Here, he and his colleagues founded the Four Paws Việt Foundation. They designed and built the Bear Sanctuary in Ninh Bình Province with a total area of over 900 sq metres, including housing facilities with outdoor playgrounds for bears to exercise.

During his three years of working at the Bear Sanctuary, Browning and his colleagues have rescued and cared for 46 bears who were victims of illegal bear bile extraction and body parts. Over time, he became familiar with each bear whilst helping them return to good health.

Browning said that just looking at the individual bears after being rescued gave him joy and motivation.

Now, Browning also works directly with the Phong Nha-Kẻ Bàng National Park in central Quảng Bình province and Hoàng Liên National Park in northern Lào Cai Province to

Corbyn joins Euston pickets



by New Worker correspondent

FORMER Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn joined Mick Lynch and other members of the RMT on the picket line at London’s Euston station on Saturday in the latest round of strikes to defend jobs, pay

and conditions on the railways.

Far from seriously responding to the union’s demands the Government is preparing to introducing new anti-union legislation to undermine industrial action. RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that his union

“remains available for talks to resolve this dispute.

But until the government gives the rail industry a mandate to come to a negotiated settlement on job security, pay and condition of work, our industrial campaign will continue into the new year, if necessary.”

improve the welfare of rescued animals, and is an expert in rescue facilities in Yok Đôn National Park in the central Highlands province of Đắk Lắk and Cát Tiên National Park in south-

ern Đồng Nai province.

Browning is also a consultant for many zoos in Vietnam. “Hanoi Zoo has great potential as a city zoo. However, the zoo needs to change before people realise their zoo isn’t good enough,” he said.

Browning also has many upcoming plans, mostly for conservation animals in the rescue centres.

The Hanoi Wildlife Rescue Centre has released some birds, such as white-necked cranes and great hornbills, back into the wild. Browning has worked with experts on birds around the world to jointly support the release process with the appropriate methods for each species according to international standards, to maximise the

birds’ survival rate after re-release.

For his efforts to end the illegal wildlife trade and restore and conserve Vietnam’s ecosystems, Browning has been recognised as one of 70 “Good people, good deeds” people of Hanoi City.

VNS



• Harold with colleagues.

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Life in the Balance

by John Maryon

BIODIVERSITY refers to the total variety of all different life forms found in one location. Animals, aquatic life, plants, fungi and micro-organisms flourishing together where conditions are suitable. Species may have a mutual dependence upon each other. It could be a simple relationship such as squirrels burying nuts for food that are forgotten and grow into trees. It could be a symbiotic association in which one species could live within another. It could also take the form a predatory relationship.

A good healthy environment is essential for nature to survive. Human activity that includes over-fishing, forest clearance, pollution of water sources, causing climate change and intensive farming is having a negative impact on biodiversity around the world. A result has been that global populations of birds, fish, mammals, reptiles and amphibians have declined by an average of 70 per cent over the last 50 years.

I would like to examine some of the most serious threats and also to highlight a number of successful projects to restore habits. A crucial factor is the vast increase in the human population. A major driving force to destruction, however, is the desire for greater profits, which has caused many species to disappear and led to bleak barren landscapes replacing once lush areas of vegetation. Many conferences have been held over the years at which grand promises are made to save the planet. Leaders have posed for photos and then returned home and nothing changes.

The vibrant Amazon ecosystem, regarded by some as the lungs of the planet, is home to over three million different species. It is estimated that over 100 billion tons of carbon are stored in the Amazon basin, which is an important source of oxygen. Between August

2018 and July 2019 alone over 3800 square miles of forest were destroyed. Newly elected President Lula da Silva of Brazil has named Marina Silva as the new minister to protect the forest and reverse the disastrous policies of right-wing President Bolsonaro. Trees were felled for timber or to clear the land for agricultural use with the risk of pesticides leaking into the environment. Mines were developed with the inherent danger of toxic contamination. The beautiful Blue Macaw is just one of many beautiful birds facing extinction. Indigenous communities who had lived in harmony with their environment for thousands of years were displaced.

In another part of the world the tropical forests of Borneo and Sumatra faced the same fate. Oil palm plantations are a serious cause of deforestation in Borneo. The large island was once covered with dense rain-forest. Today only half of that primeval forest remains. Ten primate species, found nowhere else in the world, live in upland regions of the island. The orangutans are critically endangered due to degradation and fragmentation of their home environment. Monkeys and apes are in peril in many countries. I once saw a video of a terrified baby orangutan clinging on to its mother as she held tightly to the last standing tree in an area that was being cleared.

barbaric

The cruel barbaric practice of hunting, egg stealing and overfishing all have a negative impact on biodiversity. It is not only those creatures themselves that are affected but also other species that co-exist with them that may suffer. Over-fishing for profit led to the collapse of herring stocks in the North Sea; they have never fully recovered. As fish stocks fall sea birds will be unable to find enough food. Over a third of the world's oceans are currently over-fished.

Man-made disasters

due to ignorance, greed or careless action are serious matters. Oil spills can be fatal. The introduction of alien species can have a tragic impact on indigenous creatures. In New Zealand many creatures were wiped out when European settlers brought cats and dogs to the islands. Unintended introduction of non-native plants to the British Isles has occurred when seeds

network of national parks and protected areas rich in biodiversity. Severe tree loss is being addressed with government-supported tree-planting events. The national bird of the DPRK is the northern goshawk. On the west coast the Mundox Migratory Bird Reserve is a vital stop-over for hundreds of species. Land reclamation projects are developed so as to allow

challenges as the population increases and the country develops. The difficulties are, as in Laos, made more acute by unexploded bombs and the after-effects of the deadly toxin 'Agent Orange' following its use during the brutal aggression of US Imperialism. The government is not complacent and has adopted a National Biodiversity Action Plan. During the

al conference on Biodiversity) China chaired the meeting and was able to inject vitality into the proceedings. President Xi Jinping called upon the international community to respond jointly to climate change and biodiversity loss.

Xi said China will do its best to assist and support developing countries through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). He announced an initiative to invest 1.5 billion yuan to support biodiversity in developing countries.

China's progress in recent years has been remarkable. Large canals have been built to carry water to create vast lakes in desert regions. The people's government has established a number of national parks and protection areas, including Hainan Tropical Rainforest Park and Giant Panda Park. In the last 40 years the number of giant pandas living in the wild has increased from 1,114 to 1,864.

Conservation efforts have seen the number of crested ibises increase from only seven to over 5,000 whilst the world's rarest and most endangered primate, the Hainan gibbon, has risen to at least 36 from under 10.

Last year a herd of, now famous, elephants set out from the rain forests of Yunnan province, moving through valleys, fields and hills, crossed rivers and walked through villages. For 124 days they progressed some 1400 km. They won the hearts of millions who watched their progress. The event highlighted the responsibility of living with wildlife, the care of ordinary people and the need for wildlife corridors.

Biodiversity is an essential foundation of nature. The amazing variety of life ranging from colourful fish, beautiful flowers, bright butterflies, tall majestic trees and herds of graceful animals is simply fantastic. Let us protect our wonderful natural heritage for future generations to enjoy.

• The Northern Goshawk. national bird of the DPRK.



have blown off lorries leaving ports. Creatures may hide in containers or even suitcases, to leap out and start a new life when they arrive.

Today there is at last a growing acceptance that we have a problem. In Britain many keen volunteers, in the absence of much direct government involvement, have become involved in protecting wildlife. Organisations such as the Wildlife and Woodland trusts, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the British Hedgehog Preservation Society and many more are playing a vital role.

At a government level the socialist countries now have a keen commitment to conservation and environmental protection. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, despite crippling sanctions, threats, blockades and a destructive war unleashed by US imperialism managed to establish a

for the needs of the birds.

Laos is a small landlocked Asian country that is still relatively under-developed. It is home to Asian elephants, pot-bellied pigs, tigers, rhinos and over 10,000 plant species. The socialist government is working to overcome centuries of poverty and is encouraging industrial production that could put pressure on the environment – however a national protected-area system is being established to counter any threats. These areas, which are expanding, are of great beauty and inspire those who visit them. Much of the country is still covered in its natural forest. Laos faces challenges typical of developing countries and I feel that the developed world has a responsibility to support protection efforts.

Vietnam is rich in wildlife and has the highest number of marine species in Asia. It faces

period 1990–2006 some 10 per cent of forest area was restored.

Cuba determined

Cuba is determined to protect its biodiversity despite crippling sanctions. The archipelago of over 4000 islands has a vast range of habitats. The UN 2016 Human Development Report revealed that Cuba was one of a few countries able to improve the well-being of its people whilst developing in a sustainable manner. Cuba's position owes much to Fidel Castro, who amended the constitution to include environmental protection.

The People's Republic of China has become a world leader in protecting the environment and encouraging biodiversity. It has overcome the pollution problems associated with its rapid industrial development to set new standards. At the recent COP15 (15th International

Russians advance in central Donbas

by our Eastern European Affairs correspondent

RUSSIAN forces have taken control of the “entire territory” of Soledar, a strategic town on the western front which is surrounded by salt-mines that give the town its name. Wagner soldiers, members of Russia’s answer to the French Foreign Legion, have taken the town hall but some Ukrainian troops are still holding out in the ruins of the town that had a population of over 10,000 before the war broke out last year.

The Russians are preparing to fend off a

fascist drive on another front, however, after the Ukrainians opened the floodgates of the hydro-electric power stations along the Dnieper river that has become the front line in the south to lower the river level and make it easier to cross. Ukrainian commandos are targeting bridges and crossings behind the Russian lines in the Kherson and Zaporozhie regions in preparation for a new offensive. But this may now have to be put on hold as the Ukrainians swing more troops back to central Donbas to try to prevent a major Russian breakthrough following the fall of Soledar.

In the air Russia is

maintaining its control of the skies with strategic rocket and drone attacks to continue the degradation of the Ukrainian power network. And last week their missiles hit Ukrainian barracks in the town of Kramatorsk in a revenge attack for a deadly Ukrainian raid on a Russian garrison on New Year’s Day. Russian missiles struck two dormitories that housed more than a thousand Ukrainian soldiers, of whom over 600 died as a result of the strikes that also targeted the local machinery plant.

“There were more than 700 Ukrainian servicemen accommodated in the dormitory 28 and more than 600 Ukrainian

servicemen in the dormitory 47. As a result of a massive missile strike on these points of temporary deployment of the AFU [Ukrainian army] units, more than 600 Ukrainian servicemen were destroyed,” the Russian Defence Ministry said.

The Russian military called the missile attack on Kramatorsk a response “to the criminal strike of the Kiev regime” on 1st January 2023, which hit the college building in Makeyevka where the Russian troops were temporarily accommodated. According to the Ministry of Defence, 89 servicemen were killed as a result of missiles fired with US-made HIMARS rocket launchers.



• Russian troops take the salt-mines of Soledar.

Remembering Filipino revolutionary leader

by Monica Moorehead

A STANDING-ROOM only forum, *Ka Joma Lives: International Proletarian Revolutionary Leader, Theoretician, Teacher and Poet in the Service of the People*, was held in tribute to the Filipino leader, Professor Jose Maria Sison, in Amsterdam on 23rd December.

Ka (Comrade) Joma died on 16th December at the age of 83 in a hospital in the Netherlands, where he was forced into exile in 1988 by the reactionary Philippine government. Sison was imprisoned in the Philippines in 1977 for nine years but was released following the overthrow of the American-backed dictator, Ferdinand Marcos.

The US placed Sisons on its terrorist list in 2002, which kept him from travelling outside of the

Netherlands.

Sison was a founding member of the Communist Party of the Philippines, guided by the revolutionary principles of Karl Marx and Mao Zedong, in December 1968. The party was the theoretical foundation of the New People’s Army, an armed liberation formation that still exists today.

Although Sison faced many hardships being in exile, it did not prevent him from expressing his solidarity with workers and the oppressed masses, especially in the developing world in resistance to imperialist domination.

This heartfelt solidarity was expressed in the three-hour tribute, live-streamed globally, which included cultural presentations. In addition, hundreds of written tributes poured in to honour Sison. A beautiful video tribute showed photos and video of Sison speaking, with the anti-fascist song *Bella Ciao* playing in the background.

Participants included four different Kurdish revolutionary movements; the Samidoun

Palestinian Political Prisoner Network; Workers’ Party of Belgium (PTB); International Women’s Alliance; International Migrant Alliance; International League of People’s Struggle; Belgium-Korea Friendship Association; Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany; Filipino Solidarity Movement; Surinam Solidarity Committee; Communist Party of Ukraine; International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines; Communist Party of Turkey; and many others.

The widow of Sison, Julie de Lima, gave a short but inspiring message calling on the audience to turn their grief into revolutionary courage.

Coni Ledesma, an International Women’s Alliance executive committee member who attended the memorial, said: “It was a militant, solemn and beautiful tribute to Joma. The red flags, the songs, the tributes spoke of the person he was and the legacy he leaves behind.”

Sison was cremated on 27th December. Ka Joma ¡presente!
Workers World (US)

Indonesian leader regrets 60s massacres

INDONESIAN President Joko Widodo publicly acknowledged that gross human rights violations took place in the country’s past in a rare admission this week.

In the mid-1960s, over half a million communists were killed across Indonesia in a brutal episode marking the launch of former President Suharto’s three decade-rule.

“With a clear mind and a sincere heart, I as the leader of this country, admit that gross human rights violations have happened in several incidents and I regret they happened very much,” Widodo said in a speech at the State Palace in Jakarta.

“I have sympathy and empathy for the victims and their families,” the president commonly known as Jokowi added.

Widodo claimed that the government is working towards rehabilitating the victims’ rights, without overlooking the judicial process, but did not provide any specific details.

In addition to referencing the bloodshed and arrests that took place in 1965 and 1966, the president likewise cited 11 other incidents that occurred between 1965 and 2003, prior to his tenure as leader.

These incidents include the shooting and abduction of students during protests against the three-decade rule of the former president, General Suharto, in the late 1990s.

The president’s acknowledgment of these atrocities is a significant and rare admission of the

country’s history by a top leader: in the past, it was a sensitive topic and not widely discussed.

This massacre, primarily targeting alleged communist sympathisers, was driven by the fervent anti-communist stance of the Suharto regime and led to the collapse of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), which was once one of the largest communist parties in the world behind those of China and the former Soviet Union.

The killings were widely considered amongst the worst atrocities in Indonesia’s history and had a lasting impact on the country’s political and social landscape.

The legacy of the 1965–66 violence is still felt today, with many families of victims and survivors still seeking justice for the atrocities committed during that period.

Sputnik