

# Lula lands in China for peace!

by our Eastern European affairs correspondent

US diplomacy is on the defensive following the leaking of documents that have exposed NATO's role in the Ukraine war and the failure of its pathetic *'Summit for Democracy'* to mobilise what American politicians call the "free world" behind US imperialism's drive to prolong the conflict against Russia and confront China across the Pacific. This week the spotlight is on China following the recent fruitful summit with the French leader and the arrival of Brazilian President 'Lula' da Silva for talks with the Chinese leadership.

The only 'peace plan' the Americans have got to offer is a ludicrous demand for Russia's unconditional withdrawal from Crimea and the Donbas and the prosecution of Vladimir Putin as a "war criminal". Although their chief Ukrainian lackey, Vladimir Zelensky, likes to pose as an heroic war-leader in the West, in his own country more and more people are voting with their feet – fleeing abroad to avoid conscription or deserting to avoid the senseless sacrifice on the front. The Belarus leader Alexander Lukashenko says that according to "insider information", people on both



• A warm welcome in Beijing. Lula and Xi Jinping.

sides of the front in Ukraine "do not want to fight" and are already beginning to negotiate – company commanders, platoon commanders, combatants – at a local level.

Meanwhile the relentless war of attrition continues, with Russian troops battling to drive the Ukrainians out of their remaining outposts in Bakhmut and day and night barrages across the entire 1,200 km front.

In China all eyes are on the visit of the Brazilian delegation led by President Lula da Silva and his meeting with the Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

The talks mainly revolved around strengthening Brazil's economic, trade and political ties with the people's government, but China's 12-point peace plan clearly will also be high on the agenda. Lula has repeatedly expressed his willingness to serve as a mediator, saying that Brazil could "make an extraordinary contribution to end the war".

Soon after he returned to high office Lula tabled an in-

itiative of his own called the 'Peace Club', which proposed the formation of a multilateral organisation including countries such as China and India to mediate conflicts and called for respect for China's prominent role in safeguarding world peace and mediating international conflicts.

But the Americans and their lackeys are not interested in peace at the moment. They still think they can defeat the Russians in Ukraine and they are doing their best to stone-wall all the Global South's efforts to end the conflict.

Leaked documents reveal that the USA does not expect peace talks between Russia and Ukraine in 2023. Reports that 50 British special forces personnel are active in Ukraine "give the lie to the claim that NATO forces are not at war with Russia", says Stop the War Coalition convener Lindsey German commenting on the secret Pentagon files leaked online in recent weeks that provide intelligence on a range of sensitive security

matters, including Ukrainian air defences, Russian military activities, and US assessments of the conflict. The files reveal that Britain and other NATO members, including the USA, France, Latvia and the Netherlands, have deployed dozens of special forces personnel to Ukraine.

But "this is actually non-news", says Alexei Podberezkin, military expert and director of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) Centre for Military and Political Studies. "We have already seen this in the public domain and read about it. Such information was provided by the military too. And they talked not only about mercenaries, but also about [foreign] officers of the special services who not only carried out training, education, and preparations, but also participated in combat operations. Therefore, I was not surprised."

The apparent leak has added nothing to the intelligence concerning Western military personnel on the ground in Ukraine already gathered by Russia, says Podberezkin. Some of these foreign fighters surrender. Their chatter is being intercepted by the Russian military, he noted, adding that one cannot hide the presence of foreign special ops and mercenaries in Ukraine.

## FUND

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# THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

## Smear campaigns are here again

**Last week, the Labour Party tweeted a photo of a smiling Prime Minister alongside the words: "Do you think adults convicted of sexually assaulting children should go to prison? Rishi Sunak doesn't". A follow-up accuses Sunak of not wanting to jail gun owners who possess the weapon with intent to harm; and another appears to accuse the prime minister's family of benefiting from a 'non-dom' tax loophole, after the Tories raised taxes for working people.**

Tory MPs have rushed to defend their leader, denouncing Labour for the "gutter politics" of these attack ads that are focusing on the Tory leader in the run-up to next month's local elections. Liberal Democrat leader Sir Ed Davey says: "I think it's wrong when people attack individuals personally, particularly over subjects which are so sensitive, which are so important to the British people." Even some Labour MPs have expressed doubts about the new social media campaign including John McDonnell, the former Shadow Chancellor. McDonnell, who likes to pose as a left-winger, piously says: "This is not the sort of politics a Labour Party, confident of its own values and preparing to govern, should be engaged in."

"I say to the people who have taken the decision to publish this ad, please withdraw it. We, the Labour Party, are better than this."

But the Labour leader is unrepentant. Sir Keir Starmer says: "I make no apologies for highlighting the failures of this government. They've broken our NHS, they've broken our economy. And this argument that because they've changed prime minister five times, that somehow the prime minister doesn't bear responsibility for 13 years of grief for many, many people, I just don't think stacks up...behind these adverts is a basic truth – that they have broken our criminal justice system, broken our NHS, and broken our economy."

We need not trouble ourselves with the bleating of the Tories and the Liberal Democrats. These were the people, after-all, who had no qualms in targeting Jeremy Corbyn as an anti-Semite and a supporter of terrorism throughout his leadership of the Labour Party. But adverse comments from Labour MPs, no matter how misguided they may be, must be taken seriously.

It's not a question of personal attacks or taste. The political power invested in the leaders of the mainstream parties inevitably makes them fair game for public scrutiny, and smear campaigns by their very nature are invariably in bad taste. What they achieve is, however, debatable.

No-one doubts the power of the media when it focuses on the foibles of the high and mighty. The truth is that nobody likes them. When politicians are exposed for departing from the bourgeois moral standards of the day or as venal corrupt chancers they go down and rarely come up again. But when one falls another always takes their place.

Denigrating Sunak may make a change from attacking Corbyn, but it's no substitute for genuine election pledges that reflect the demands of the labour movement as a whole.

Smear campaigns only work up to a point. This one may put some off voting Conservative at the next election but it won't in itself bag more votes for Labour. Disaffected Tories are more than likely to turn to the Lib-Dems or even the Greens rather than Labour. And at the end of the day they do little to mobilise your own supporters at election time.

To do that Labour should restore the 'Welfare State' and defend the health service, champion the unions fighting for higher pay, lift the limits on councils to let them build vast new estates to end homelessness. All of this could be paid for by restoring the tax levels and the public sector that existed until 1979 and by cutting the wasteful arms expenditure that is crippling the economy. This is what Starmer should do. But he won't.

Labour hasn't won a general election since 2005. Now there's a surprise...

# Crisis drives Britons to Gambling

by Svetlana Ekimenko

**The cost-of-living crisis is forcing people across the UK to resort to gambling as a means of getting the money they desperately need to pay soaring bills, a charity has revealed.**

Amidst the cost-of-living crisis gripping the UK, heating bills have soared and food price inflation has hit a record high of 17.5 per cent over the four weeks to 19<sup>th</sup> March 2023, with people turning to everything ranging from foodbanks to various money-saving hacks to make ends meet.

Now four in 10 gamblers – 42 per cent – are convinced that rolling the dice, going to a betting shop or pinning their hopes on winning in the National Lottery could be the path to bettering their financial situation next year, a YouGov survey of 4,202 adults commissioned by GamCare showed.

These figures refer to so-called problem gamblers – individuals who display repetitive gambling behaviour deemed damaging to a person and/or their family, that also interferes with one's daily life. As for UK adults who were not in the latter category, only seven per cent thought that gambling could solve their financial issues.

Furthermore, in the last 12 months, one in six people prone

to gambling "at harmful levels" had resorted to using a "warm bank", as compared with five per cent of the overall population of Great Britain, according to the poll. Almost 13,000 warm banks – in public places such as libraries, cafés and churches – have been operating across the UK for vulnerable households unable to afford the costs of heating.

The skyrocketing costs linked with raising their children had prompted half of problem gamblers who were parents to cut back on purchasing food or cleaning their clothes, as compared with 20 per cent of the overall parent population, GamCare said.

According to the charity, the month of January 2023 witnessed a record large number of callers on their help hotline. People revealed that the rising cost of living was driving them to spend increasingly more time at betting shops to keep warm as their homes went unheated. Gambling was also being perceived by Britons on universal credit and disability benefits as a way to possibly cover their bills.

The survey also showed that 42 per cent of gambling addicts were inclined to indulge in their risky practices more in the following 12 months as a result of the cost-of-living crisis, as compared with six per cent of the general population of the country.

"At GamCare, we know firsthand that gambling isn't a way

to ease money worries, as well as how important it is to address the financial picture to support someone's longer-term recovery from harm," said Anna Hemmings, chief executive officer at GamCare.

The survey's results come as recent data released by the Gambling Commission revealed that there was a surge in people buying national lottery tickets, despite overall gambling levels seen as "steady" in December 2022.

In the UK, the living cost increase caused by surging energy prices and sky-rocketing inflation throughout the country has affected millions of households. Vulnerable families have been struggling to survive on a tight budget. With food price inflation in the country hitting a record high of 17.5 per cent over the four weeks to 19<sup>th</sup> March 2023, potentially hiking up average annual household grocery bills by £837, as per UK data analytics company Kantar, foodbanks have become a feature of modern British life.

Public sector net borrowing reached a record level for February in 30 years – £16.7 billion pounds – due to financing energy support schemes, the country's Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in late March.

*Sputnik*



• All that glitters is not gold...

## Workers' Notes

by New Worker correspondent

Comrades joined an angry crowd in London last week to condemn the latest wave of Zionist violence against the Palestinian Arabs. Over a thousand protesters rallied outside the Israeli embassy in a protest organised by Palestinian solidarity movements and Jewish anti-Zionist groups and to demand an end to the brutal Israeli occupation and the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

Ben Jamal, the director of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), said they gathered there because of the brutal attacks by Israeli forces against Palestinians. "We are here because once again Israel is bombing Palestinians in Gaza and we are here because, since the beginning of 2023, Israel has been massacring Palestinians," he told the crowd.



## Doctors on the Picket Line

by New Worker correspondent

A group of professionals rarely seen on the picket line are Junior Doctors in the NHS in England, who took another round of strike action, this time for 96 hours from Tuesday until Friday. Coming just after the long Easter weekend and before a normal weekend, it will in effect be a 10-day strike. This is a considerable stepping-up of action since last month's three-day walkout.

The fact that many consultants will be on holiday will add to the impact of the strike. Their aim is to secure real-terms pay increases to counter the post-2008 decline. Thus they are demanding a 35 per cent increase, which predictably the Government says is unrealistic. Apart from securing an increase for this year they are also fighting for an agreement with the Government to prevent any future declines against the

cost of living and inflation, and reforms to the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body (DDRB) to ensure that future pay increases "can be recommended independently and fairly to safeguard the recruitment and retention of junior doctors", in the words of their union, the British Medical Association (BMA).

The BMA also states that Junior Doctors (who are not all young, the term covers everyone from the newly qualified to those on the verge of consultancies) have seen their wages reduced by more than a quarter in the last 15 years. They note that the low salaries have dramatically boosted the recruitment of British doctors of all ages in Australia rather than Britain. "As a result the NHS is finding it harder to deliver care to the standards expected by professionals," they point out.

The small Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association union are also taking part with its 600 junior doctors, accusing the government of refusing to drop pre-conditions for talks to resolve the dispute.

The response of the Government is a continual refusal to negotiate with the BMA and to indulge in a session of shroud waving, saying that 350,000 operations and appointments will

be cancelled.

Although the DDRB is in theory independent of government its recommendations have long been ignored by successive governments, hence the present large claim. The headline claim of 35 per cent might raise eyebrows amongst even *New Worker* readers, but in recent years the medical profession has suffered badly.

The BMA highlights the fact that the lowest junior doctor salaries puts them on a par with some Starbucks coffee makers. This works out at about £29,000 yearly in the first year. Unsocial hours payments give the average first-year doctor an extra 30 per cent. In the second year, basic pay rises to £16.30 per hour with most also getting another 30 per cent in extra payments (for extra work). By the end of on-job training they get a basic of £28 per hour with the same extras, which can take them up to £77,000. In Australia the starting salary is £65,000.

Apart from the pay issues there is also the question of hours. Senior consultants boast of putting up with 120-hour weeks in the good old days of their youth but the European Working Time Directive (WTD) in theory put a stop to that by 2009, with hours limited to 48 per week, to the

approval of the BMA. Whilst in theory this would allow more time for training, it also saw many managers adopt a shift system and 'request' that junior doctors take on extra shifts. NHS doctors also have to cover the increasing number of vacancies as their colleagues head for hospitals nearer to Bondi Beach.

To give just one example of the pressure young doctors are under, on Tuesday the BBC reported from the picket line at the Royal Leicester Infirmary. Here a young doctor said that: "At the moment every single time you go to work, you have people off sick." At best "you have staffing which is only just covering what it needs to". Every day he was "completely exhausted and lumbered with responsibility" in his "eight months since leaving medical school". Naturally he was thinking of leaving medicine.

Medical salaries have fallen far behind other less difficult professions such as accountancy. Paying off student loans is especially burdensome for medics. Some are comparatively small things, such as the loss of proper catering in hospitals, which has been replaced by vending machines and privatised caterers who will no longer rustle up end-of-shift free bacon rolls to make

life easier. The ending of hospital accommodation is a more important matter that forces doctors and nurses into time-consuming searches for expensive rented accommodation.

The present strike, perhaps the most far reaching, is not of course the first dispute involving doctors. Nye Bevan famously said that he had to "stuff the doctor's mouths with gold" to get them to accept the NHS, in particular he had to allow them to continue with their private practices. Decades later, in 1975 the latter issue sparked protests from consultants that resulted in them keeping their privileges.

Junior doctors took strike action in 2016, which was noteworthy for their refusal to provide emergency care that had been the norm in earlier disputes.

The December 2022 disputes that involved ambulance workers and nurses is still unresolved, but that action forced the present Health Secretary to make a new offer of a five per cent raise with a one-off bonus of 8.2 per cent for low-paid workers. Many nurses in both the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and Unison are extremely annoyed at their union calling off action

*continued on page 4...*



...continued from page 3

and recommending poor offers in ongoing ballots.

Returning to the 2023 pay dispute, the co-chair of the BMA's junior doctors committee, Vivek Trivedi, said at a rally in Trafalgar Square on Tuesday that the pay claim was perfectly acceptable, and pointed out there were 9,000 doctor vacancies in the NHS and over seven million patients on hospital waiting lists.

North of the border, the BMA's Scottish Junior Doctors are presently balloting for a 72-hour full withdrawal of labour in May in pursuit of a pay claim to "reverse ongoing pay erosion and restoring junior doctor pay to 2008 levels, after it has been cut by 23.5 per cent over the last 15 years". The committee's Chair, Chris Smith, deplored the present state of the NHS, highlighting staff shortages: "We make up 44 per cent of the doctors in the NHS in Scotland, and we are on our knees. Indeed, many are considering leaving, or have already left – driven abroad or out of medicine altogether by being overworked yet underpaid." The solution, he said, was "restoring junior doctor pay to 2008 levels in order to retain the staff we so desperately need both now and long term". He condemned the SNP Secretary for Health who "has singularly failed to even commit to start the meaningful negotiations that we believe with goodwill on all sides can lead to a solution".

The BMA in Wales is also demanding that the Welsh Government to restore the pay of junior doctors to the level as it was in 2008. Junior doctors' pay has been cut by 26 per cent in real terms since 2008 whilst the number of patients waiting to start treatment has nearly tripled. The BMA also highlights the

extra burden of student debt has increased and notes that working in Wales pays less well than in the rest of Britain. As a result "doctors are leaving Wales to work in other countries. Students are leaving medical school before finishing their training or deciding not to study medicine at all".

### low morale

Whilst not yet involved in the present dispute, the BMA in Northern Ireland supports the action. Tom Black, chair of BMA's Northern Ireland council, warned that low morale and successive low pay awards were driving young doctors to work abroad and experienced doctors to retire early.

Also in Northern Ireland the picture was slightly different when one-day strikes involving nurses and ambulance staff took place on the last day of March and the first Monday of April after unions were told that the local health authority did not have any money to make an increased pay offer. The province's Department of Health has failed to extend the new NHS pay offer made in England and Wales to its workers. Unison complained that neither the secretary of state nor any officials from the Northern Ireland office attended pay talks with unions.

Patricia McKeown, the union's regional secretary for Northern Ireland, complained: "UK ministers should know by now that workers in Northern Ireland will not tolerate being left behind."

"The secretary of state holds the responsibility to sort this problem now, he cannot sit on the fence. He cannot blame anyone else. It is his government that has failed to make money available for health workers in Northern Ireland."

## Classroom War

by New Worker correspondent

The trade union conference season is underway once again. One of these was that of the National Education Union (NEU), who marked the occasion by electing its first single General Secretary since it was formed in 2017 to replace the two incumbents from its component unions, the National Union of Teachers and the smaller Association of Teachers and Lecturers. In addition to teachers in both the public and private sectors, the NEU represents agency workers such as supply teachers and classroom assistants.

Apologies are due for not noticing this momentous election when it was taking place, but it seems that NEU members were not greatly excited by it either. As is the custom in union elections, the turnout was either pathetic or pitiful depending on how you describe a nine per cent turn-out. Whilst this may be the norm, it seems that even the present upsurge in industrial action, including teachers, does not encourage a similar upsurge in interest in union politics.

Only 41,544 out of 450,000 members of Britain's biggest education put pen to ballot paper, but the result was clear cut. The victor, Daniel Kebede from the NUT wing, secured 28,636 with the distant runner-up getting 12,918. Kebede, backed by the NEU Left faction, soundly defeated the 'moderate' candidate Niamh Sweeney, an NEU Deputy General Secretary from the ATL



wing and a Labour councillor. But she remains a senior full-time official, so she will not short of a few bob.

Given the low turnout it was ironic that that Kevin Courtney, one of the outgoing general secretaries, said in his final speech that "we should all be proud of the level of member engagement in our union".

For his pains, the primary school teacher and former National President Daniel Kebede has been denounced in the right-wing press. The low turnout suggests that there will be no great revolutionary upsurge, however, despite this being in theory a victory for the left-wing over the right. There has long been the tradition in the former NUT of electing left-wingers whose politics are of no great interest to the rank-and-file so long as they do a passable job of defending their interests as teachers. For instance, ordinary teachers favour far tougher disciplinary action for troublesome pupils than their local union activists like to admit.

The NEU conference at Harrogate began with the announcement that NEU members had rejected the latest pay offer for teachers in England by an overwhelming 98 per cent on a 66 per cent turnout.

Teachers, like City bankers, prefer 'light touch' regulation so they voted for the abolition of the inspection agency Ofsted, deploring its harsh testing regime. They also deplored the lack of adequate funding and argued for the importance of arts and music in education. They are against climate change, sexual harassment and violence, child poverty, asbestos in schools, low pay and the new anti-trade union laws.

On a more positive note is that they are in favour of supporting Palestine, higher pay, improved maternity rights and further unity amongst education unions.

The NEU is not just concerned about teachers in state schools, it also represents those in the traditional independent sector and the newer academies. In the independent sector there is a relentless attack on pensions and contractual rights. In addition, it represents agency workers such

as supply teachers and classroom assistants.

It remains to be seen if the mandate for strike action is put into effect. The action is planned for the 27<sup>th</sup> April and 2<sup>nd</sup> May.

The rejected offer included a £1,000 one-off payment and a 4.3 per cent increase next year. This, the Department for Education said, was a "fair and reasonable offer" and that schools would receive an extra £2.3 billion in the next two years. The NEU disagrees, along with the grander National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) and the Association of School and College Leaders.

In contrast to the Government's disdain for the doctors' pay body, Education Secretary Gillian Keegan said pay rises should now be decided by the independent pay review body. Like the doctors, teachers' real pay has declined in the last decade. While the Institute of Fiscal Studies say it has fallen by 11 per cent between 2010–2022, unions say it is double that.

Since February the NAHT has been taking action short of strikes, including such revolutionary actions such as refusing to attend evening meetings, only answering the telephone and replying to emails between nine in the morning and three in the afternoon, and ignoring staff appraisals.

**Like the doctors, teachers' real pay has declined in the last decade. While the Institute of Fiscal Studies say it has fallen by 11 per cent between 2010–2022, unions say it is double that.**

**20 years ago  
this week  
in the New Worker**

**New Worker  
18<sup>th</sup> April 2003**

**IMPERIALIST TROOPS** have entered every major city in Iraq encountering little open resistance. But nobody knows where Saddam Hussein is and none of his chief ministers or army commanders have been seen either.

In Baghdad the Americans are trying to restore the city police to provide some semblance of order; but this has done little to deter the looters who've robbed and torched all the major buildings and museums in

the Iraqi capital apart from the Shia Muslim quarter, which has put its own armed militia on the streets. And a senior Shia Muslim religious leader, well-known for his pro-imperialist views, was cut down by an angry mob as he left a mosque in the holy city of Najaf.

Organised guerrilla resistance to the Anglo-American expeditionary force continued in most of Iraq's towns and cities, tying down the occupation forces and hindering their efforts to set up a puppet regime under the governorship of US General Jay Garner.

Their first attempt, a hastily organised conference in a huge tent outside Nasiriyah, was boycotted by the major Shia movements. Outside, tens of thousands of demonstrators rallied against the Anglo-American occupation chanting "No to Saddam! No to America!"

Ahmed Chalabi, leader of the US-funded Iraqi National Congress, was tipped to head

the puppet regime despite the fact that he was sentenced, in his absence, to 22 years hard labour for bank fraud in Jordan following the collapse of his Petra Bank. This was another occasion he didn't turn up to, although a minion was sent to represent his interests.

The Western-educated Iraqi businessman, who left the country when he was 11, probably got cold feet following the assassination of Abdel Majid al-Khoei last week in Najaf.

Al Khoei had spent the last 12 years in London working with the pro-imperialist Iraqi exiles. Although he was highly regarded by some Shia exiles, he was regarded with suspicion in Shia Iran and also, as it soon became clear, by many from his own community in Iraq. On a recent trip to Iran, angry Shias jeered him telling him to "Go back to America".

He was killed barely two weeks after returning to Iraq.



# Fare Thee Well, James Monroe!

by Bernie Holland

*The 'Monroe Doctrine' originated by US President James Monroe in 1823 proclaimed that the whole of the Americas was its own 'backyard' and that any intervention by external powers in the politics of the Americas was a potentially hostile act against the USA. During the Cold War this 'principle' was extended to enable US imperialism to establish its hegemony over Western Europe and large parts of Africa and Asia.*

It was during a visit to South Africa by US Foreign Secretary Anthony Blinken that Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor explained it is South Africa that will decide who their allies are and not have their choice of allies dictated to them by the USA. The purpose of Blinken's visit was to 'persuade' South Africa that it should join the 'democracies' of the 'international community' in a concerted effort to isolate and contain Russia and to join the clamour and outrage against the Russian leadership in what can only be described as an effort towards regime change in Russia.

As much as efforts are made to disguise the fact, this has been primarily the purpose of the provocation of Russia through the expansion of NATO over more than three decades. Over the same period, Vladimir Putin and Sergei Lavrov have gone to great lengths to de-escalate tensions, largely borne of a Western animus towards Russia, by offering every opportunity to engage in diplomatic exchanges in the interest of furthering cordial relations. They have been rebuffed with insults and threats at virtually every turn, however.

Gripped by an obsession with a 'Cold War' mentality, the USA continue peddling the lie that this 'international community' is united in ridding the world of the menaces of communism and imperialism, still viewing the Russian Federation as the old Soviet Union, the autocracy of which has to be supplanted by the liberal democracy of the Anglo-American sphere of influence based on 19<sup>th</sup> Century geopolitical doctrine.

Ignoring the fact that the emergence of that global majority



of Eurasia and the Global South represents 85 per cent of the world community, the minority of the Anglo-American bloc display little in their view of the rest of the world that can be regarded as 'internationalist' in nature. In their drive to isolate and contain others, particularly through punitive economic sanctions, they are only succeeding in doing exactly the same to themselves.

Reflecting on views expressed by EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell, it appears that the West has placed a partition between its perfumed garden of freedom and democracy and that of the 'lawless jungle' of its former colonies to the east, perpetuating the mistaken view that this western democracy will prevail over the autocracies of both Russia and China.

Herein lies the root of this problem, namely the pressing forwards a notion that it is necessary to create enemies of those who wish to be your greatest allies. The reason for this 'necessity' is simply that by removing the belief that these 'enemies' and 'threats' actually exist, then will come the abandonment of the idea that war itself is an imperative. And it follows that should this be the case, then so should be that of dismantling and abandoning the war industry once and for all.

It is the greed and depravity of those who profit from the grotesque leviathan of the military industrial complex, however, sponsored by the central figures within corrupt political

power bases, that guarantees the continuity of this evil, which can be likened to the growth of a malignant tumour, a diseased organ within the body of Mother Earth.

We cannot look to others to cure this pathology. We have to assume the role of apothecaries to find a prescription to transform this poison into an elixir that can be administered to this belligerent juvenile, devoid of emotional intelligence, which thrashes around in violence, demanding that his perverse appetite be satiated by the suffering of others. We have to sift the herbs of truth, justice, compassion, dignity and diplomacy to fashion a pill, bitter-sweet in taste, that can be administered to lead those, driven by devilish functions, to a more enlightened condition of being.

Addressing those who perpetrate this vile xenophobic, racist and fascist drive to demonise and destroy the Russian people, their traditions, culture and religious convictions, in taking the prescription of these medicinal herbs, they will be brought to accept that the people of Eastern Ukraine have voiced their unanimity in choosing to enjoy the peace and security offered to them by Russia, in a wholesale rejection of the imperative to suffer under this illegitimate Ukrainian regime that is infected with fascism.

Furthermore, in containing the course of this treatment, the patient must abandon this conceit that the diverse characteristics of 'exotic' nations are an

irrelevance to a Western mind that presupposes a dominant position across the spectrum of world affairs.

It is this pathological narcissism that prevents the patient from realising the potential offered by a new model of internationalism, borne of the transactional relationships developed within this emergent global majority, by means of which the participants have gained the liberty to reject entirely any notion that a world order can be maintained through the prosecution of military interventions, the concoction of 'popular revolt' by means of externally sponsored 'colour revolutions' and the bringing about of the overthrow of regimes which, leaning more towards social emancipation, are not inclined towards being further oppressed by the predatory instinct of western imperial and neo-colonial interests that are intrinsically founded on premises that are specious and immoral and benefit no one other than the merchants of death who reside in luxury, distancing themselves from the world of the 'foreigner', soaked in blood and carnage and permeated with human misery.

Whilst the US President and his pack of cronies stage the pantomime of their *Summit for Democracy* in furthering their futile attempts to dismember and dismantle Russia, China and the BRICS movement, Brazilian President Lula continues his diplomatic endeavours with Chinese President Xi Jinping,

choosing to work out bilateral trade agreements rather than engaging in plans for the next 'war of choice'.

## Nuclear disarmament

Whilst nuclear disarmament remains on the horizon, shining a beacon of hope for the further evolution rather than the extinction of our species, another form of disarmament has already been effected, that being the removal of the economic weaponry of the dollar as a tool of sanctions. This has been effected by the rejection of the dollar in favour of the Chinese yuan and the Brazilian real as units of international currency. Furthermore, Lula will be in Shanghai on 13<sup>th</sup> April for the investiture of former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff as head of the new Development Bank within which the dangerous speculative adventures, favoured by the failing Western banking cartels, will be prohibited.

Furthermore, what will surely stick in the craw of this increasingly belligerent and provocative Transatlantic alliance is the fact that, with South Africa chairing the BRICS-Plus Summit this year, Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor will find her 'in-tray' heaped with more than a dozen applications from other nations eager to join this alliance of the global majority, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Algeria, Argentina, Mexico and Nigeria being amongst them. Just one question remains here – will the USA be dispatching their 'sophomore diplomat' Anthony Blinken on yet another tour of these countries demanding once and for all that they gang-up against Russia?

**the people of Eastern Ukraine have voiced their unanimity in choosing to enjoy the peace and security offered to them by Russia,**



# Trump's indictment: only a beginning

By Otis Grotewohl

**Former President Donald J Trump was indicted by a Manhattan grand jury on 31<sup>st</sup> March. The unexpected news was celebrated by many oppressed people, class-conscious workers and many on the left.**

In addition to being the 45th occupant of the White House, Trump is known for being a bigoted billionaire, who emboldened the violent far right over the last several years and led a vicious Islamophobic, racist, misogynist, anti-migrant and anti-worker presidential campaign and administration. Good people believe he deserves to be punished.

Trump was indicted, however, because of an allegation that he used 'hush money' to silence a popular sex worker. These charges hardly distinguish him from many former US presidents.

Many of us can agree that Trump is a criminal and deserves time in prison. But we suggest that his greatest crimes are absent from his indictment. And that the Democratic administration currently in office is also guilty of major crimes.

## Trump's crimes

Before his political career started, Trump is remembered for encouraging the execution of Black youths, now known as the 'Central Park 5', who were wrongfully accused of rape in 1989 even after sufficient evidence revealed their innocence. They were eventually exonerated.

His 2016 campaign and election victory popularised and energised the most chauvinistic fringes of the far-right. In August of 2017, many of his 'alt right' supporters converged for a Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Trump said there were "very fine people on both sides", even though that same white-supremacist



• protests on the streets of America

gathering resulted in the vicious murder of Heather Heyer, an anti-racist protester. Trump's response sent a clear message that under his reign: pro-Confederate, white supremacist and anti-Semitic sympathies were welcome.

Despite all of his 'populist' rhetoric about "bringing back jobs" during his 2016 campaign, Trump welcomed a lot of corporate investors and profiteers into his administration but no union leaders. He was also a strong proponent of federal "right-to-work" legislation, which legally weakens workers' rights, wages and living conditions.

Trump made three appointments to the US Supreme Court, which led to reactionary decisions in two extremely important cases: *Janus v AFSCME*, which weakened public sector unions, and the reversal of *Roe v Wade*, which overturned legalisation of abortion.

Upon hearing about his possible charges, Trump posted a picture of himself swinging a baseball bat in one cut-out image next to

another featuring the image of Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg – who is African American. The bigoted post provoked death threats against Bragg and his family.

One of Trump's last actions before leaving office was his attack on diversity training and continuing-education programmes. These courses had encouraged progressive gains and educational understanding in the workplace about the special struggles and challenges faced by people of colour, individuals with disabilities and LGBT people. His attack helped instigate the reactionary backlash against social justice curriculum in education and against LGBT+ youth, especially those who are trans. Unfortunately, he was indicted for none of this.

In an attempt to lash out against Trump, many of his critics have incorrectly attacked people in the sex-worker profession as well.

US presidents, as well as other politicians, have exploited the use of sex work for their own person-

al gain and greed for centuries. The use of bribery is also common in the American political arena. It is no secret that lawyers and other paid staff have used money to cover up 'scandalous' affairs, involving some of the most high-profile political figures.

Every US president has been complicit with the colonial foundation of theft, genocide and slavery. Every political representative who has stepped in front of the White House podium has historically sided with private and financial capital against the material interests of the working class and oppressed peoples. Despite all of this, Trump is the first and only US president ever to be indicted.

## Ruling-class scepticism of Trump

Although Florida Governor Ron DeSantis has not officially announced any type of presidential run and Trump has, many 'establishment' Republicans have officially announced their endorsement for DeSantis.

DeSantis has gained recent media attention for encouraging "anti-woke" state and local legislation that has resulted in the assault on Black, Jewish and LGBT studies, including the banning of books about Rosa Parks, Roberto Clemente and the Holocaust. DeSantis's policies have led to the terrorisation of trans and gender-oppressed people. In some ways, DeSantis appears to be presenting himself as a more stable ultra-reactionary alternative to Trump in the upcoming elections.

At the same time, Trump is considered a wild card by many in the US ruling class. Trump's meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in 2019 is an example of that.

Some who are celebrating Trump's indictment are omitting the crimes being committed by the current Washington regime. The Biden administration has done little to reverse the reactionary policies implemented by its predecessor and has extended the reactionary policies regarding migrants.

## Biden and Bush also criminals

Much of the excitement around Trump's indictment inadvertently lets the current and previous US presidents off the hook for their war crimes.

The Biden administration has been funnelling billions of dollars into the proxy war against Russia and has used Ukraine as a battlefield, forcing Ukrainian civilians to be used as cannon fodder and human shields. Most of the world is on edge about the risk of a Third World War, yet there are no charges being brought up against Biden.

Nor are there any prosecutions being levelled against former US President George W Bush for his administration's criminal invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2002.

It is clear that a segment of the US ruling class sees Trump as an ineffective imperialist leader. At the same time, there is another faction of the bourgeoisie, especially bosses in the resource-extraction industries such as fracking, who do support him. The profit-based capitalist system as a whole is responsible for accepting Trump as a legitimate presidential candidate and for allowing him to be their "commander-in-chief". The same can be said about other former US presidents.

Communists and revolutionaries can celebrate the indictment of Trump as an opening to expose crimes of the ruling class. But in no way can we expect this to hand a decisive defeat to billionaire bigots and the fascist gangs that followed Trump.

The pursuit of justice regarding the class enemy has to go much further and can only be carried out by a mass movement, separate from and opposed to the capitalist state. Trump, and most politicians and capitalists, are symptoms of the capitalist system itself, as a whole, that should ultimately be placed on trial.

*Workers World (USA)*

# Chinese doctors in Tunisia befriend patients and colleagues

by Xu Supei and Huang Ling

Despite the passage of 50 years, Xiao Chengjing still remembers vividly the day he travelled to Tunisia on his first trip abroad.

“Everything was new to me,” said 84-year-old Xiao, recalling the excitement of flying on a Boeing plane whilst donning headphones and listening to music back in 1973.

The veteran Chinese haematologist, from the Jiangxi province in south-eastern China, was a member of the first medical team that People’s China sent to Tunisia in a goodwill gesture to provide medical assistance to the North African country. Xiao called himself and his colleagues “diplomats in white” as they helped deepen mutual understanding and friendship between the two peoples.

Huang Jian, a Chinese anaesthetist and member of the current 27th batch of Chinese doctors sent to Tunisia last December, found many familiar names when browsing the list of previous teams, including his colleagues, retired hospital deans and even his neighbour, Xiao Chengjing.

Over the last half-century, China’s Jiangxi province has sent a total of 1,153 medical personnel in 27 batches to Tunisia, providing a total of 6.1 million outpatient services to Tunisians.

The Chinese doctors work not only in urban cities, but also in rural and remote areas, alleviating the pains of tens of thousands of Tunisians. Currently, there are 38 Chinese medical personnel assigned to work in four Tunisian cities, including the Tunisian capital of Tunis, Sidi Bouzid, Gafsa

and Jendouba. Joining the Chinese medical team in Tunisia was a dream coming true for Peng Xihua, an anaesthetist working with the team in Sidi Bouzid.

“Since my first day here, I was told how the Jiangxi medical teams had represented our motherland and provided assistance to faraway Tunisia. These stories sowed a seed in my heart,” Peng said.

### challenging work

Before departure for Tunisia, Peng was fully prepared for the challenging work ahead. Nevertheless, she was still taken aback by the shortage of medical resources and the heavy workload upon her arrival. As the only anaesthesiologist in the Sidi Bouzid Regional Hospital, she once received 37 calls for surgery in a single morning.

Because of Peng’s dedication and professionalism, the Tunisian doctors and nurses in the hospital enjoy working with her. They often bring her plates of couscous, a traditional Tunisian dish, as a token of gratitude.

In the northwestern Tunisian city of Jendouba, the capital of the Jendouba Province, Hadda Daboussi, the widow of the former governor, has kept a tradition of inviting every Chinese medical team to her home in the last 40 years.

“Everyone in Jendouba knows that Madame Hadda is a good friend of the Chinese people,” Daboussi said, adding that she was moved by the Chinese doctors’ persistence in fulfilling their responsibilities of helping the Tunisian people even during the turmoil of the 2011 ‘Arab Spring’.

In December last year, at a farewell ceremony held for the outgoing 26th



• Anaesthetist Peng Xihua checks the condition of a patient at Sidi Bouzid Regional Hospital in Tunisia.

Chinese medical team, Tunisian Health Minister Ali Mrabet commended the Chinese doctors for making a great contribution to taking care of Tunisians’ health.

Mrabet noted that the outstanding performances of the Chinese medical staff embody the essence of the China–Tunisia friendship and medical co-operation.

For many Tunisians, their friendship with Chinese doctors over the years has also led them to explore more about Chinese culture and people.

Inspired by her Chinese friends from the medical teams, Daboussi so far has visited China twice, during which she also visited the Jiangxi province, the hometown of the Chinese medical teams sent to

Tunisia. Mgadmi Salwen, a Tunisian anaesthesiologist at the Gafsa Regional Hospital, always bombards Huang Jian with interesting questions about China and even once asked Huang to give him a Chinese name.

Based on the transliteration of Salwen, Huang proposed to him the Chinese name of ‘Shi Lewen’.

“Lewen means joy and refinement. Shi is a common Chinese surname that means ‘rock’, symbolising our wish for the ties between China and Tunisia to be as solid as a rock,” Huang explained.

People’s Daily (Beijing)

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## LETTERS

### Dear Comrades

The armed forces of Ukraine by orders of Kiev regime have completely destroyed Izyum. They have destroyed hospitals, houses, drug stores, ventures, industries, everything.

When Russians came, they started to help us. They started to give us jobs. Before the Russians came, there wasn't much work in the town, very small salaries – not much more than \$150. There was shortage of food as well.

But then Russians came. Everything became better. They started to supply us with humanitarian aid. They started to give us money and help us in different ways.

There is a cemetery on the outskirts of the town of Izyum. It is a cemetery of dead Kiev troops. What happened to them is that they fired on each other by mistake because of mis-co-ordination between two regiments who from afar thought each other were Russians.

When the Russians came, they could see many corpses of fallen Kiev regime soldiers and they buried them in a humane way. But civilians killed from the shelling were buried in many places even in their own homes' backyards. It was an awful time.

Then the Kiev troops returned to the town. They blamed the Russians for the deaths. They wanted to accuse somebody else for their own sins.

The Kiev soldiers are very cruel and very wild people – like savages. There are a lot of for-

eign mercenaries among them. They are very rude and they take from our people just what they want. For them it doesn't matter who is in front of them. If they suspect anyone of supporting Russia they will shoot him down, even the very young. They are worse than Nazis.

### A refugee from Izyum Kharkov area (now living in Russia)

### Dear Comrades

Saudi Arabia has carried out the first known execution during Ramadan. Denigrating this time of year that traditionally provides a brief reprieve from the execution chamber shows how emboldened they have become by the world turning a blind eye to their atrocities. This crime has raised fears that others could be killed in the holy month. Authorities have escalated court cases of death-row defendants who committed 'crimes' as children. Saudi detainee Hilal Hussein Al-Qurashi has lost sight in his right eye inside the prison. He has also developed diabetes, hypertension and other health issues because of deliberate medical negligence at Al-Ha'ir prison in Riyadh.

The anti-capital punishment network Reprieve has asked its members to urge the Chairman of Newcastle United to investigate the Saudi human rights records. It said the legal team for Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund has submitted a document in a US court that states that the Chairman of Newcastle United is "a sitting minister of the Saudi government".

The Premier League's Chief Executive, Richard Masters, said when the takeover of Newcastle United was happening that he had "legally binding assurances" that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia would not

have any control over the club. In November 2021 he said: "If we find evidence to the contrary, we can remove the consortium as owners of the club." So let's remind Richard Masters of his words and ask him to act. Child defendants' lives are at stake. Saudi Arabian authorities have executed 15 people for childhood 'crimes' since 2011. And child defendant Abdullah al-Howaiti currently faces a death sentence.

### John Hughes Bahrain Freedom Movement London

### Dear Comrades

For centuries many parts of Europe have enjoyed a privileged status of wealth and power. They achieved this position through colonial exploitation. New territories throughout the world were conquered and pillaged. Foreign lands were stripped of their resources and the indigenous peoples enslaved. Rich, ancient cultures were destroyed and whole regions left in poverty.

As time progressed more Europeans developed attitudes of superiority, arrogance and racism. Many considered themselves more moral, possessed of greater intelligence and with God on their side and so had every right to treat with contempt those whom they regarded as mere savages.

The Soviet Union, as it developed, was able to play an important role for change by supporting emerging national liberation movements.

Whilst colonialism has been overcome, Imperialism continues to promote various forms of neo-colonialism but faces increasing challenges from the new multi-polar world.

Until now Western nations have been able to use their accumulated wealth and power to

pursue their Imperialist agendas. The situation is starting to unwind however, as dramatic changes start to take effect. The first is that much of the accumulated gains have now been squandered. With its falling income from Africa, France has attempted to put an increasing burden on to the backs of workers by raising the retirement age from 62 to 64, leading to battles on the streets. Secondly, much of the world now sees People's China, with its calm diplomacy and promotion of quality sustainable development as offering the best prospects for progress.

Developing countries are starting to become more confident in their opposition to the intrigues of Imperialism. Perhaps remembering the assistance and support they received from the USSR, most have made the choice of not siding with the USA against Russia over the Ukraine conflict. Neither have they joined the US sanctions actions designed to weaken China. Instead they are eager to embrace the win-win co-operation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In the newly emerging multi-polar world the weakening Western nations only represent 13.5 per cent of the total world population. Europe, in particular, is in relative decline as it is now forced to buy much more expensive energy from the USA since NATO apparently blew up the Nord Stream pipelines.

As in the past the USSR inspired millions, today it is People's China and the other socialist countries that offer the paths of peaceful, honest development in a multi-polar world free from hegemony. Not to dominate, exploit or bully, but to work side by side with others and in so doing to increase mutual respect and understanding.

John Maryon  
Suffolk

## Diary

### UNTIL 21 APRIL

Working Class Movement Library: Shirley Baker Photographing Salford. Exhibition. Wed-Fri afternoons. WCML, 51 Crescent, Salford M5 4WX

### UNTIL 9 SEPT

John Rylands Library: Workers' Playtime: culture and community in industrial Lancashire. Exhibition, 10:00-17:00 Weds-Sat. Free. Deansgate, Manchester

### EVERY SATURDAY

Committee to Defend Julian Assange: Protests: 12:00-14:00, HMP Belmarsh, Western Way, London SE28 and 16:00-18:00, Eros statue, Piccadilly Circus, London SW1

### SAT 15 APRIL

Korean Friendship Association: Kim Il Sung and the struggle of People's Korea Against US imperialism. 14:00, Cock Tavern, Phoenix Road, Euston, London NW1 1HB

### SUN 16 APRIL – FRI 21 APRIL

Palestine Solidarity Campaign: No Way to Treat a Child meetings: Hastings, London, Letchworth, Slough, Bradford on Avon, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Details on PSC website.

### THUR 20 APRIL

Marx Memorial Library: Book launch: Kenny Coyle on Understanding Imperialism. 19:00. Online and onsite, Book on MML website.

### SAT 22 APRIL

Bristol Radical History Group: Annual Festival. M Shed, Princes Wharf, Wapping Rd, Bristol BS1 4RN.

### SAT 22 APRIL

BFAWU: Unionise Ginsters: rally for food workers 17:00, Social Club, Well Street, Callington, Cornwall, PL17 7AU.

### MON 24 APRIL

Socialist History Society: Helen Mercer on James Aldridge: the greatest post-war novelist you have never heard of. 19:00 Online. Register on SHS website.

### THUR 27 APRIL

Marx Memorial Library: Book Launch: Radika Desai on Capitalism, Coronavirus and War. 19:00. Online and onsite, Book on MML website.

### FRI 28 APRIL

Workers Memorial Day. Local events will be found on the TUC website at: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/iwmd-events>

### SUN 30 APRIL

Manchester Trades Union Council: May Day march and festival. Assemble 12:00, St Peter's Square, M2, for a march to Sackville Gardens for festival.

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](mailto:party@NCP.clara.net)

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(cheques to New Worker)

Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

On Sunday, First Bus Glasgow threatened that they would stop running evening and night buses into the Pollock area of the city because of the anti-social behaviour of some of the local youth. The local MSP, one Humza Yousaf, unsurprisingly made no comment on this matter. He clearly has other matters on his mind.

The spectacle of a police tent in the front garden of Yousaf's predecessor will be a greater preoccupation for some time to come. It will be only a small relief to him that the spades the police were photographed with were not actually used to dig for real dead bodies but had just been removed whilst searching the garden shed.

The later spectacle of an £110,000 Niemmann and Bischoff motorhome being removed from house of the former First Minister's mother-in-law only made things worse. The fact that the accountancy firm that had been auditing the SNP for over a decade has resigned was only a comparatively small embarrassment.

The SNP's financial affairs are such that the Scottish Tory chairman Craig Hoy was able smugly to observe: "The investigation into the SNP's murky finances grows more surreal by the day. The public have a right to know the truth and do not want this investigation to be shrouded in SNP secrecy." As a senior Tory he will know a great deal about murky finance.

The actions by Police Scotland have rekindled divisions in the nationalist camp. Some think it is all part of a cunning plot by the hidden hand of the British state to destroy the SNP and their former leader, Nicola Sturgeon, over the issue of the £600,000 that is apparently missing from SNP accounts presided over by her CEO husband.

On the other hand, the fact the raids took place after the leadership election was safely over has more than irritated other nationalists in the SNP and beyond.

Supporters of Yousaf's defeated rivals suspect that the timing of the raids are evidence of collusion between Police Scotland and the SNP HQ anxious to secure their man was elected

before any dirty linen was washed in public, hence the very short election campaigning period. Even the former Health Secretary has said: "Police Scotland should make it clear if they were asked in any way to delay this arrest and, if so, why did they do so."

It is now perfectly clear that the raids could have taken place before the start of the SNP leadership contest. Angus MacNeil, the colourful Western Isles MP, has called for the narrowly won leadership election to be rerun due to it being run by an interested party.

These suspicions could easily be dismissed as a conspiracy theory – but of course conspiracies do happen. The matter has been in police hands since July 2021 (as a result of a complaint by non-SNP nationalist), but only recently has there been much movement.

Opponents of Ms Sturgeon have raised questions about why she departed the house just 10 minutes before the much-delayed police raid. Some of them think the raids on her house and SNP HQ are merely for show as any real evidence would have been deleted long ago.

For what it is worth, this correspondent subscribes to the theory that Police Scotland have belatedly taken action due to some officers refusing to let go of the issue despite orders from on high to let it go.

Scotland is a very cosy country. Whilst senior police officers (and judges) appointed by the SNP Government will not be keen to make waves and query the saintliness of the SNP, further down the ranks the boys and girls in blue may not be so inhibited. It is a well-known fact that many Glasgow policemen and women are much keener on arresting "rowdy" Celtic supporters than "high-spirited" Rangers fans. We might be seeing the same process unfolding here.

The Outlook

Whatever the final legal outcome of these events they will be damaging for the SNP, and to a lesser extent their main cause. Although Peter 'Mr Sturgeon' Murrell was released without being charged, once the crates of seized files have been gone through that could change.

Anyone who was rejected as a parliamentary or council candidate under the Sturgeon-Murrell regime will be out for blood or telling tales. Only a few Sturgeon diehards subscribe to the view that the police investigations had nothing to do with her sudden departure.

One sign of this is that details of internal SNP battles are belatedly coming to light. An example of this is the fact that a letter from Joanna Cherry MP (a long term Sturgeon critic) written two years ago has now been mysteriously leaked to the Times, in which she deplored the "menacing atmosphere" and "secretive and evasive" behaviour over the SNP finance. This was written when the elected SNP Treasurer resigned from the post on the remarkable grounds that he "had not received the support or financial information required to carry out the fiduciary duties", or in other words was not allowed to see the books.

A few months after this, in August 2021, Nicola Sturgeon airily told the party's NEC that: "We don't need to talk about the finances. The finances are absolutely fine." This was just after her husband loaned the SNP precisely £107,620, which was not declared to the Electoral Commission until a year later. It has been suggested that the curious sum was as a result of conversion from Swiss francs, which only adds to the mystery.

Earlier, people were curious as to why the 2019 SNP accounts, showed only £97,000 in the bank and total assets of about £272,000, despite claiming a membership of about 100,000. Little wonder Yousaf has denied having anything to do with SNP finances. After all, he has only held three Cabinet posts.

Another sign of revolt come from SNP MSPs threatening to refuse to pay their monthly £250 membership subscriptions if the SNP pays Peter Murrell's legal fees after they hired a lawyer with expertise in "white collar crime and associated litigation" and "allegations of financial crime".

It is also amusing to observe that many journalists, who just a few weeks ago treated SNP press releases like holy writ, are now writing lines such as "if you're looking for those who have betrayed Scotland and the Scottish people, look no further than the clown-show masquerading as the party's ruling executive and its Westminster and Holyrood groups since around 2015". These are the words penned in Monday's Herald by fervent nationalist journalist Kevin McKenna, who has suddenly discovered the SNP leadership are not as pure as the driven snow.

This might encourage them to start asking hitherto neglected questions such as what happened to the £700 million of unspent Covid support cash, or about the £millions handed over to dodgy businessman Sanjeev Gupta.

Party President and temporary CEO Mike Russell has effectively abandoned hopes of another independence referendum in the foreseeable future, saying the party is facing its first crisis in 50 years.

To add to SNP woes, there have been demands for an early Holyrood election instead of waiting until 2026. Labour leader Anas Sarwar noted that "when Rishi Sunak came to power without an election Nicola Sturgeon said it was a democratic imperative for him to have a mandate", adding that "this is an SNP that screams about mandates – let's be honest the next SNP first minister will not have the mandate".

So far Angus MacNeil has been the sole SNP parliamentarian to say such a vote would stop rivals accusing the SNP of hypocrisy. He is likely to be lone voice with Labour rapidly gaining in the polls.

In response to calls for an early election, the SNP say that "a Scottish parliamentary term is set to a fixed term of five years by the Scotland Act". The SNP have often demanded that the Act be amended to allow them to hold referendums. Unsurprisingly they have gone silent on this occasion.

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# A taste of the Potteries

by Carole Barclay

Stoke-on-Trent is not a major tourist magnet. This northern city is actually comprised of six towns brought together as one civic authority in 1910. Known as 'The Potteries', this was the home of the English ceramics industry that began in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and continues to this day in the six towns that make up modern Stoke.

Thousands of workers once toiled in Stoke's pottery and steel plants or went down the mines in the locality. But the pits and steel-works have long gone, and glory days of Wedgwood, Royal Dalton and Spode are of another day. Nowadays the largest employer is Stoke-on-Trent City Council – closely followed by the Royal Stoke University Hospital with over 7,000 staff.

These days most people come to Stoke to use it as base to visit Alton Towers, the famed theme park and resort complex just 10 miles from the city centre, or to explore the magnificent pocket wilderness of the Peak District.

Football fans will come to see the once mighty Stoke City play in its new stadium where the ashes of their



• A bottle kiln from the old days

legendary former player, Sir Stanley Matthews, lie buried beneath the centre circle of the pitch. Robbie Williams, however, the singer who was born and bred

in Stoke, favours their humbler rival Port Vale. But artists, collectors and students of the Industrial Revolution that turned the six towns into 'The Potteries' will come to

study the past and the still vibrant, although much smaller, ceramics industry in this north Staffordshire town.

The city claims with some justification

to be the "World Capital of Ceramics", and visitors can see for themselves by going on the tours organised by the remaining pottery factories that continue the traditions of a bygone age or to visitors' centres such as the World of Wedgwood and the Middleport Pottery.

The first port of call, however, has to be the award-winning Gladstone Pottery Museum. Here you can see how the workers mass produced tableware in the appalling conditions that were considered acceptable by bourgeois society until outlawed by the unions in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The first factory opened in 1787 to produce earthenware and decorate Wedgwood's plates and dishes, but what we see today is the old coal-fired plant that was closed in 1970 and re-opened as a living museum in 1974.

For kids of all ages there's a maze of workshops and kilns to explore along with hands-on displays of throwing, moulding and decorating, and a gallery charting the history of lavatories from the times of the Tudors to today.

In the engine rooms and the bottle-kilns of the old works we can look at examples of the skill and craftsmanship of generations of Stoke workers in the old plant,

which goes back to the Victorian era. We can see what conditions were like for the men, women and children who slaved away at the centre of the world's pottery industry.

## working conditions

We get a glimpse of what it was like to work in the miserable and hazardous conditions of those days through the audio-visual displays scattered throughout the complex and see what it was like to live in the hovels for the workers that surrounded the factory. What we don't, of course, see is how the factory owners lived in their luxurious mansions well away from the noise and the poisonous fumes that their workers had to endure throughout their lives.

There's the usual cafe and a museum shop that sells a wide range of gifts including ceramics, local paintings, children's novelties and local guides and history books, as well as pottery made and decorated at the museum.

The museum in Uttoxeter road is open from Wednesday to Saturday from 10am–5pm and Sunday from 11am–4pm. The admission charge is £8.50 for adults, £5.95 for children, and £6.95 for students and senior citizens.

## Defending the rights of the unemployed!

by New Worker correspondent

NCP campaign organiser Theo Russell joined demonstrators outside Caxton House, the headquarters of the Department for Work and Pensions, in London last week. Called by the Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group, the picketers were protesting against the radical overhaul of disability

benefits that could see people with complex or invisible conditions left hundreds of pounds out of pocket.

Under the changes, the deeply-flawed work capability assessment (WCA) for determining benefit payments will be replaced with the existing personal independence payment (PIP) system – which is used to decide what day-to-day help a disabled person might

need.

In its post-Budget analysis, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) said the Government could face a choice of either widening the criteria or seeing hundreds of thousands of people no longer qualifying for benefits. Tom Waters, economist at the IFS, estimated one million people could be forced into work and some 600,000 could lose an estimated £350 per month in support.



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# Who Was Vladlen Tatarsky?

by Ilya Tsukanov

*Vladimir 'Vladlen' Tatarsky, a well-known war correspondent who had previously served in the Donbas militias, was assassinated on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> April when a bomb planted in a statuette exploded whilst he was meeting supporters in a St Petersburg cafe. Thirty-two people were injured in the blast, six of whom are in a serious condition. The woman who presented the figurine to Tatarsky has now been arrested.*

**Who was Vladlen Tatarsky? Here's what we know.**

Vladlen Tatarsky was a military blogger and front-line correspondent, with over 563,000 subscribers on Telegram and 21,000-plus followers on VKontakte, a Russian social media site.

'Vladlen Tatarsky' was his pseudonym – picked in honour of Vavilen Tatarsky, the hero from Russian writer Viktor Pelevin's allegorical post-modernist novel *Generation P*. His real name was Maxim Yurievich Fomin.

Fomin was born on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1982 in the city of Makeevka, a major metallurgy and coal-mining centre in the Donetsk region of what was then eastern Ukraine, into a family of coal miners. Graduating from high school in 1999, he briefly followed in his father and grandfather's



footsteps, getting a job in a mine, before deciding to go his own way and going into business for himself as the owner of a furniture company. The venture went sour, with his stores going bust.

In late 2011, wracked with debt, Fomin and several of his friends made the foolhardy decision to rob a commercial bank. They were quickly caught and Fomin was sentenced to a lengthy prison sentence in a penal colony in the north-eastern Donetsk region city of Gorlovka.

In the spring of 2014, Ukrainian forces launched a full-blown offensive into the Donbas in an attempt to crush a nascent pro-in-

dependence rebellion by local residents and militias. By the summer, fighting approached right up to the prison where Fomin was doing his time, with shells, mortar rounds and bullets hitting the detention centre and killing and wounding several inmates. Fomin managed to escape in the chaos and soon joined up with militiamen fighting off Ukrainian forces.

Between late 2014 to 2019 Fomin served in several Donbas militia units, including the Vityaz Regiment, the Fourth Brigade of the Lugansk People's Republic and the Vostok Battalion. Fomin was briefly arrested by militiamen in 2014 after they learned

of his criminal record but received a pardon from late Donetsk People's Republic leader Alexander Zakharchenko in recognition of his service.

Fomin began covering events in the Donbas as a journalist in 2019 after retiring from military service.

His audience on social media ballooned after February 2022 with his front-line coverage of Russia's military operation, where he combined his job as a correspondent with service as a military drone operator. Fomin's videos spread like wildfire across the internet, reaching not only Russian-language users but foreigners as well.

Fomin received popularity – and occasional notoriety 0150 for his brusque and to-the-point reporting style and for his no-holds-barred critical coverage, including discussion of some of the problems faced by Russian forces in the conflict.

Boris Rozhin, a military expert with the Centre for Military-Political Journalism, called Fomin's death a "big loss", saying his reports constituted an honest appraisal of the real situation on the front. "He did not hesitate to reveal the problematic points which needed to be fixed. And in some areas, progress really began to be made after that."

The war correspondent made "a very big contribution" to Russian military journalism, Rozhin said, adding that Fomin had "well-deserved popularity thanks to his reports, especially from Mariupol" – the Donetsk People's Republic city which faced fierce house-to-house fighting during the spring of 2022. Fomin also did his part assisting in humanitarian aid deliveries. "He did not sit in the rear; he carried out his work to the end. We will all miss him," the observer said.

Russian MP and Russian Liberal Democratic Party fraction chief Leonid Slutsky said that whilst he would trust investigators in the case to figure out what happened there is every reason to talk about

a "Ukrainian trace" in the attack on Fomin, "as in the case of the murder of Daria Dugina".

"It has the same handwriting. This crime was committed by those who hate Russia, who are ready to kill Russian patriots," Slutsky wrote in his Telegram page on Sunday evening.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova pointed out that Russian journalists are under constant threat of reprisal attacks by the Kiev regime and its patrons.

"They are subjected to harassment, branded in the literal sense with special markings on digital platforms on American internet companies, and face a 'witch hunt' in the Western media," she said. "Not a single case of the violent death of a Russian journalist, assessed by the Kiev regime and its thugs as a 'success', has been investigated, or even treated with elementary human sympathy by Western countries, international organisations or foreign professional communities."

Zakharova blasted Kiev's "undisguised delight" in the wake Fomin's death and said the lack of reaction in the White House, Downing Street and Elysée Palace "speaks for itself" in light of the lip service they typically pay to the "well-being of journalists and freedom of journalism".

*Sputnik*

## Trump on the come-back trail

by Roberto Morejón

**Former US President Donald Trump has turned the legal proceedings against him in New York into a show to project his candidacy for the 2024 presidential elections.**

Trump was charged with 34 felonies and became the first former president in the history of the USA to face criminal proceedings.

Logic would indicate that a politician in such circumstances would be overwhelmed with shame, but this is not the case.

Trump has assumed the coveted role of victim and is striking back, unleashing his vast arsenal of outrages against the judicial processes that are hot on his heels and which he describes as political persecutions.

The real estate tycoon particularly attacked Judge Juan Merchan and

his daughter, and the prosecutor in the case, Alvin Bragg, an African-American, whom he calls a "racist" and a "criminal".

Enough for both lawyers to receive about 50 threats from supporters of the former president, whose narrative of "harassment" is uncritically assumed.

With stilted phrases, the discordance of the circus staged from his trip to New York, his showy entrance to the court and

his speech upon returning to his mansion in Florida, Donald Trump returned to the adored stage, as the centre of media attention.

He disregards the judge's instructions to avoid statements likely to incite civil destabilisation, speaks of a "witch hunt" and asks the Republicans in Congress to defund the Department of Justice and the FBI.

For Trump, the proceedings hanging over his head are rather puerile

compared with his role in the assault on the Capitol in 2021, the pressures on the Georgia authorities to tip the balance of votes in his favour, and the possession of classified documents.

All these charges are more serious than those of using his campaign money to buy people's silence.

Still, it is not enough to get him out of the way. With his seditious speech, the trials he has faced, and even a conviction, he can run and submit his candi-

dacy to the polls.

It remains to be seen if he is charged with rebellion by the Capitol investigation, which would limit his future ambitions.

In the meantime, Trump continues to control his electoral base, as in the USA whoever faces criminal charges becomes a "star".

*Radio Havana Cuba*



## Odious US involvement in Ukraine crisis

by Zhang Kaiwei and Liang Jun

A small number of Pentagon documents on the Russia-Ukraine military conflict, including some marked “top secret”, were posted on Twitter and Telegram last week. Since then, journalists, researchers and social media sleuths have uncovered additional classified documents posted as early as 1<sup>st</sup> March on additional sites.

It is not the leak that is the most surprising aspect about the classified documents however, but how deeply the USA is involved in the conflict and how much it is doing to help Ukraine. Despite its denial of direct involvement, the USA is already a de facto participant in the conflict,



• on the front

considering both the military and intelligence aid it has offered to Ukraine.

The documents that have appeared on social media only serve to tell the world that the USA

is part of the hostilities, and that what it has been doing is meant to make the conflict continue. Behind the rhetoric of “supporting Ukraine against Russian aggression” is the USA’s geopolitical thinking of

dividing the world into two camps as it did during the Cold War.

With another camp that is supposed to pose a threat both militarily and ideologically to the camp headed by the USA,

Washington can continue to make the case that the EU must unite under the banner of NATO to seek the protection of the USA.

Only under such a ‘dual-polar’ global framework will the USA be able to maintain its hegemony, which has been almost shattered by the globalisation of the world economy and the increasingly multi-polarised world.

If anything, the military conflict between Russia and Ukraine has provided Washington with a glimmer of hope that it may be possible to make the military conflict a protracted war and thus divide the world into two camps: the one that supports Ukraine and the other that supports Russia.

That explains why Washington has made no efforts at all to mediate between the two parties and has excluded any possibility of a political settlement of the conflict.

Think what will happen if the war continues for years to come and EU countries

have to continue their military aid to Ukraine, and the world is deeply divided because of the conflict.

The global industry and supply chains will be disrupted or even shattered. The EU’s economy will be seriously affected. The development of the global economy, which has already suffered considerably because of the COVID19 pandemic and Russia-Ukraine conflict, will see no hope of recovery. Neither will those in need of help for survival in developing countries see any hope of shaking off poverty.

It is both selfish and callous of Washington to do whatever it can to make the hostilities continue and do nothing to seek a political settlement of the conflict. Global efforts are needed to bring Ukraine and Russia to the negotiation table for a political solution as early as possible. That is the way to maintain world peace and development, and that is what China is doing.

*People’s Daily (Beijing)*

## Biden Stirs up the Shenanigans

by James Tweedie

Joe Biden waded into the rows over Brexit and tainted US meat exports to Europe when he visited Ireland this week – whilst dodging bomb threats from dissident Republicans.

The US president flew into Belfast on Tuesday to mark the 25th anniversary of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (GFA) that mostly ended 30 years of sectarian violence. He will later visit Louth, Dublin and Mayo in the Republic of Ireland.

Despite his French surname and hailing from Pennsylvania, settled by German colonists, Biden claims Irish ancestry and Roman Catholic faith.

But MI5 has already uncovered a bomb plot by Irish republican splinter group the New IRA. “They were looking for parts to make a bomb,” an anonymous source told a local newspaper. “The belief is that the New IRA was planning some sort of attack to

coincide with Biden’s visit, similar to the mortar attack on the cops in Strabane last November.”

The US president will travel with a huge Secret Service security detail, reportedly packing an arsenal of over 300 firearms and a motorcade of up to 40 bullet-proof cars.

Biden will be welcomed to the city by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak – whose name he has repeatedly mispronounced as “Rashid Sunook”.

On Monday, Sunak urged Republican and Unionist parties to return to the ‘power-sharing’ coalition in the Leinster assembly mandated by the GFA and to “get on with the business of governance” – accepting the Windsor Framework deal he struck with European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen in February.

The GFA was “born of partnership between the British and Irish governments, Sunak said, adding that Biden’s visit showed “it continues to enjoy huge international support from

our closest allies”.

The two leaders will reportedly discuss reviving plans for a transatlantic trade agreement, stalled since 2016 in a series of controversial circumstances. Now Rishi Sunak is America’s staunchest ally in NATO and an agreement is back on the cards.

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) was opposed by trade unions, consumer groups and environmentalists who argued it would undermine national regulations and allow the USA to export hormone-enhanced beef and chlorine-washed chicken to the EU.

Former US president Barack Obama, as a favour to then-PM David Cameron who backed the campaign to stay in the EU, threatened to send the UK to the “back of the queue” for future trade deals if its citizens voted to leave the bloc in 2016 – which they did anyway.

Brussels went cold on the TTIP deal after Donald Trump was elected US president later that year,

and Cameron’s successor Theresa May was reluctant to strike a separate deal with Trump during his June 2019 state visit to the UK, when she was already on her way out of office after being forced to resign over her ‘soft Brexit’ stance.

Biden, Obama’s vice-president for two terms, spoke during his 2020 election campaign against Britain’s looming formal withdrawal from the EU, claiming it would result in a “hard border” between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The final compromise between Downing Street and Brussels left the exclave as part of the EU’s single market – meaning customs checks on goods moving to and from the mainland UK and a blanket ban on British goods such as sausages and potted nursery plants. That in turn sparked riots in Ulster and even a hoax bomb threat against the Irish foreign minister.

*Sputnik*

## Palestinian resistance will continue!

by Beatriz Montes de Oca

**The head of Hamas’s political bureau, Ismail Haniyeh, has reaffirmed the continuation of Palestinian resistance to Israeli crimes.**

Concluding a visit to Beirut, the Palestinian leader discussed political and field issues, especially the attacks on the Al Aqsa Mosque, and the ongoing Israeli attack on the West Bank, Gaza and throughout the occupied territories.

During his stay Haniyeh spoke with the Secretary-General of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, as well as with the heads of Palestinian forces and factions, and a number of Palestinian and Lebanese national personalities.

The Hamas delegation reviewed the Israeli government’s policy and

its dangerousness for Palestine and the region, condemning its criminal and extremist approach.

The meetings held witnessed extensive discussions on the reality of the Palestinians in the camps in Lebanon in the face of the worsening humanitarian situation and the economic crisis in the nation.

The meetings discussed ways to achieve the broadest base of resistance to the Israeli occupation, the ways to confront it, and address its policies and the successive threats it poses to the Palestinian people and the rest of the countries of the region.

At the same time, they stressed the need for co-operation within the framework of the united resistance front for the liberation of Palestine.

*Radio Havana Cuba*