

STRIKES AND PROTESTS ROCK ISRAEL!

by our Middle East
Affairs correspondent

New fascist laws to curb the power of the judiciary were put on hold in Israel this week following another weekend of mass protests and demonstrations all over the country.

Police attempts to curb the protests have failed whilst anti-protest violence from Zionist settler gangs has only enraged the demonstrators, who say Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was deliberately fuelling the flames by refusing to rein in his followers or clearly condemn violence directed at the demonstrators.

But Palestinian citizens – some 20 per cent of the Israeli population – have generally remained aloof from the protests. Ahmad Tibi, the leader of the Arab Movement for Renewal Party (Ta'al) in the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, told *Yediot Aharonot* (Latest News) that he admires the protesters and that he will join them on the street: "I admire their perseverance. They are the only opposition today," but "the agenda of the demonstrations is focused on the judicial system" and "the Arab public has no love neither for the judicial system as a whole nor for

the Supreme Court. A study conducted at the University of Haifa proved that sentences against Arabs are 30 per cent more severe than sentences against Jews, for the same crimes. The Supreme Court approved the settlements, the expropriations, the Nationality Law, the Admissions Committee Law, the Kaminitz Law. Arabs who submitted petitions were thrown out the door."

This week Netanyahu announced the pause to "allow dialogue" and avoid a "civil war" as hundreds of thousands of Israelis take to the streets to demand a halt to plans that would give the Knesset the power to overturn Supreme Court rulings and limit the ways a sitting prime minister – such as Netanyahu, who is facing an ongoing corruption trial – can be declared unfit for office.

Cracks are even appearing in Netanyahu's coalition following the dismissal of the Defence Minister after he publicly warned that the proposals had affected the military and were threatening national security.

After immense public pressure that has seen 12 weeks of massive demonstrations, and the announcement of a general strike by the Histadrut, the country's largest labour federation, Netanyahu said he was allowing for "a delay to provide a real opportunity for real dialogue" but stressed that "either way" the fascist 'reform' would be passed.

On Monday morning, Histadrut Secretary General Arnon Bar-David called an immediate general strike until the judicial overhaul is halted. "This is an historic strike in which workers and employers will together halt

the judicial overhaul," he said.

The strike quickly snowballed. All take-offs have been stopped at Ben Gurion airport, the biggest and busiest in the country, and many shopping malls have shut down. Many businesses, especially in the tech sector, have joined the strike, and banks and local authorities are also striking.

"What the government wants to do is not to correct or to fix or amend the judicial system, so that it will be more just. Exactly the opposite. They want to take control over the judicial system," says Ofer Cassif, a member of the communist-led Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Hadash) bloc in the Knesset.

"I think that we should refer to the situation not as a judicial overhaul, but as a regime coup," he told the Arab TV channel, Al Jazeera. "Netanyahu wants to turn Israel from an ethnocracy – because Israel in my view has never been a democracy, because this state is based on a Jewish supremacy, so it cannot be regarded as a democracy from the first place. But it's going to be under the coup that the government wants to pursue, Israel is going to turn into a full-fledged fascist dictatorship."

On Monday, protesters blocked roads with rocks in Tel Aviv whilst others rallied in Jerusalem with over 100,000 demonstrating against the fascist 'reforms' in front of the Knesset building.

Protest leaders say they will continue to fight until the legislation is mothballed and the government vows not to legislate unilaterally. "The statements by the prime



• Young Communist League activists marching through Tel-Aviv

minister and his extremist partners are an admission that they intend to continue to legislate the dictatorship laws in the next Knesset session," and "This is another attempt to weaken the protest," they said.

The mainstream Zionist opposition parties and Israel's communists say

they'll keep up the fight until the proposed changes are dropped. Joining the protest near the Knesset in Jerusalem, Ayman Odeh, another Hadash MP, said: "We will do everything, in the Knesset and on the streets, to stop fascism." He asked "all citizens, Jews and Arabs, to take to the streets".

FUND

The third week of the March appeal brought in £706 for the fighting fund pushing the running total up to £1,866 but leaving us with a massive £1,634 to find to hit our target for the month.

But we will have to do our best and struggle to keep the money flowing in to ensure the continued survival of our communist weekly.

The capitalist world is in deep crisis. You see it wherever you turn – from the crime-ridden streets of the United States and Western Europe to the shanty-towns in the immense regions in Africa, Asia and Latin America still controlled by American lackeys. All the capitalist world can offer working people is a life-time of drudgery in a pressure-driven factory, office or dingy sweat-shop or a bread-line existence on paltry state hand-outs where the only palliative comes from the bottle or the illicit use of Class A drugs.

Another world is, of course, possible. But it's not the "American Dream" or the European Union. It's the world being built in the people's democracies of Asia and the Caribbean.

Our paper, the New Worker, is a window to that world which is working for a better tomorrow for everyone. Help us keep up the fight for peace and socialism by supporting the fighting fund.

All donations, big or small, keep our presses rolling. Please send your donation to: New Worker Fund, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the 'New Worker'.

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

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

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THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

Corbyn's last stand?

Jeremy Corbyn has been blocked from standing as a Labour candidate at the next election. Labour's National Executive Committee voted 22 to 12 on Tuesday for a motion from current Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer to prevent his predecessor from being endorsed for the seat he has been an MP in for 40 years. Corbyn said this was a "shameful attack on party democracy".

None of us would disagree with the former Labour leader when he says: "Today's disgraceful move shows contempt for the millions of people who voted for our party in 2017 and 2019, and will demotivate those who still believe in the importance of a transformative Labour government. Now, more than ever, we should be offering a bold alternative to the government's programme of poverty, division and repression."

Some of Corbyn's supporters are urging him to stand for re-election as an independent Labour candidate. He's held the seat since 1983 and over the years he's built up a personal vote within the constituency. Whether that is enough to overcome Labour's machine is another matter.

Corbyn can rely on the support of his loyal constituency activists and what's left of the Corbynistas in the Greater London area. But it's highly unlikely that any of his former colleagues will stick their necks out to support Corbyn if he decides to defend his seat as an independent.

It's true that John McDonnell has given him some lukewarm backing. The former Shadow Chancellor who was once Corbyn's Number 2 says he believes the decision can be overturned. He said it is a "matter of principle" and "quite a number of us will be campaigning to reverse this decision" in the hope that "common sense does prevail".

Jeremy Corbyn says he will "not be intimidated into silence". Sadly, the same cannot be said of most of the Labour MPs who once supported him in the House of Commons.

Is Paris burning?

Barricades and fires. Tear gas and water cannon. Violence on the streets as millions of French workers take to the streets throughout the country in protest at the Macron government's move to cut their state pensions. Sending in the riot police has only triggered more demands for President Emmanuel to stand down following his emergency presidential decree to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64. No wonder Macron's postponed King Charles's visit to France.

The turmoil in France is a bitter lesson for those who believe that the European Union is some sort of haven for social progress and peace. Pensions cut to enable the rich to continue to live their lives of luxury and ease. Workers forced to pay for the billions spent arming the Ukrainian fascists. This is the reality of France today.

The likes of Macron can be found all over Europe. Vernal politicians who serve the ruling elites of Europe who, in turn, do the bidding of their masters in Washington, it's what the European Union is all about.

The spirit of the French Revolution and the Paris Commune lives on, however. Passed on through generation after generation of French workers who struggled to wrest concessions from the grasping bourgeoisie, they are now fighting to defend their rights on the streets of France today.

A dangerous escalation

by Chen Qingqing

If the UK sends controversial shells containing depleted uranium to Ukraine it will set a bad precedent for the conflict that could also mean an escalation in weapon supplies, Chinese experts said, warning of long-term harmful effects on the environment and people's health. This move shows that the West does not care about Ukrainians or Russians as they use "the blood of Ukrainians to weaken Russia by all means".

Last week Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Moscow would be "forced to respond" if the UK government supply Ukraine with armour-piercing tank shells containing depleted uranium following a written response by a UK defence minister who was asked whether any of ammunition currently being supplied to Ukraine contains depleted uranium.

The UK Ministry of Defence said that such material is standard for rounds and has nothing to do with nuclear weapons. They say these armour-piercing shells containing such material for use with its Challenger 2 battle tanks have a low risk of radiation.

The American-led NATO alliance has used depleted uranium munitions many times in the past. Chinese experts say the uranium dust released by it causes serious pollution to the environment. It has a long-term impact on the environment that causes long-term harm to humans.

A resolution adopted by the UN in December 2022 takes into account the potential harmful effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium on human health and the environment. It noted that further research should be done to assess the health risks and environmental impact of the use of arms and ammunitions containing

depleted uranium in conflict situations.

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said that the British decision left fewer and fewer steps before a potential "nuclear collision" between Russia and the West. He also mentioned that NATO had already used such munitions in Kosovo and Serbia, where they massively, without any sanctions... bombarded peaceful cities and destroyed bridges.

The UK's move set a very bad precedent as depleted uranium munitions have been resisted by many countries given its harm not only to soldiers but also to civilians nearby, making post-war reconstruction much more difficult, says Cui Heng, an assistant research fellow from the Centre for Russian Studies of East China Normal University.

"It also means Western supplies to Ukraine being

dropped by NATO.

"The impact of the depleted uranium munitions is long-term not only for Russian and Ukrainian soldiers but also for local residents. Countries such as Iraq and Serbia are still under the impact of such munitions used by the US-led West," says Song Zhongping, a Chinese military expert and TV commentator.

Increasing weapons supplies to Ukraine is adding fuel to the fire that will only exacerbate tensions. On the Ukraine crisis, China has emphasised on many occasions that nuclear weapons cannot be used and nuclear wars cannot be fought, and all parties should jointly oppose the use or threat to use nuclear weapons, preventing nuclear proliferation and avoiding a nuclear crisis.

Providing depleted uranium munitions also means that the UK violates the non-proliferation principle and



• Russian troops on Donbas front

further escalated," he said, noting that Russia will surely react decisively to such escalation.

On the 23rd anniversary of the end of NATO's 78-day bombing of Yugoslavia in June 2022, the Chinese Foreign Ministry urged the USA and NATO to reflect on their war crimes and give a reasonable explanation and compensation to the victims of depleted uranium munitions. Some 3,000 victims of depleted uranium munitions entrusted an international team of lawyers to file a lawsuit against NATO for the bad impact of the 15-ton depleted uranium munitions

Russia will not sit idly by if London breaks the bottom-line. As a major nuclear power, we might collectively oppose such a move as permanent members of the UN Security Council, Cui noted.

"The UK clearly understands the harmful impact of the depleted uranium munitions, which also shows that the country does not care how harmful they would be to either Ukrainians or Russians, or they just want to use the blood of Ukrainians to weaken Russia by all means," he said.

Global Times

Workers' Notes

Rousing the Workers or Not?

by *New Worker* correspondent

In its customary measured language, the official gov.uk website describes the Strikes (Minimum Services Levels) Bill 2023 as a measure that aims “to limit the impacts of strike action on the lives and livelihoods of the public and to strike a balance between the right of unions and their members to strike with the need for the wider public to be able to access key services during strikes”. It adds that: “The legislation will allow regulations to be made to establish the required minimum level of service and specific services it will apply to, following consultation and approval by parliament.”

Not everybody agrees of course. Matt Wrack, general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), denounced the measure, presently at Committee stage in the House of Lords, as “one of the most draconian attacks on the rights of working people in decades. It’s a pernicious piece of legislation that’s in keeping with authoritarian regimes around the world”.

It is so bad, he said, that that the Trades Union Congress “should lead a campaign of mass non-co-operation and non-compliance” and an emergency congress of the TUC must be called to launch a campaign of defiance and civil disobedience against the bill if it becomes law.

Wrack correctly pointed out that there was “no obvious route to challenge this attack through the courts”, therefore a mass campaign of non-compliance was essential, and could defeat the measure, because: “The government is deliberately attempting to strengthen the position of employers and severely weaken the position of workers.”

All very well, but that is easier to talk about organising a mass campaign than bringing one into being to “make this law inoperable and stop it dead in its tracks”. After all, the TUC is more concerned about stirring up apathy rather than encouraging political action. On this issue however, the TUC has taken action: it has condemned the motion and even taken the ‘radical’ step of setting up a petition to oppose it. On Monday this had 274,172 signatures.

Transport union RMT took



• Nurses demand justice!

more direct action in mid-January when it organised demonstrations outside the constituency offices of the four Tory MPs most closely involved, followed by an evening protest outside No 10 Downing Street.

denounced

Unite also denounced the measure when it first appeared in Parliament. General Secretary Sharon Graham criticised the measure as being “another dangerous gimmick from a Government that should be negotiating to resolve the current crisis they have caused”. At the same time shopworkers’ union USDAW denounced the measures for tilting that balance of power “too far towards employers and prevent workers standing up for decent services and safety at work”.

But that is about it. Beyond these initial responses there has been little activity. After searching their websites, it appears that two other giants of the trade union movement, the GMB and Unison, appear to have made little to no comment. An odd press release or two do not make a campaign.

Overall, the trade union movement has not been hyper-active on an issue that gravely affects them. Indeed, one of Unite’s responses was to claim that the measure was unnecessary because they already had a policy of striking such deals in life-or-death situations such as in ambulance workers’ strikes. Obviously, the new bill goes much further than that and is designed to deter and defeat strike action across a wide range of industries and services.

There is no sign that Wrack’s call will have much appeal to other general secretaries. Union members need to start putting pressure on their leaders to become much more active on this issue if they are not to be bound hand and foot in future industrial actions.

Freeports

by *New Worker* correspondent

Trade union bureaucrats rarely, if ever, put much energy into implementing the policies of the members they are paid so handsomely to serve.

Look at the matter of free ports, which have recently been in the news. In April 2021 then Chancellor Rishi Sunak made them a centrepiece of his Budget. This was a not-unexpected move as the Government had announced a public consultation about them the previous year.

Soon after that consultation began in 2020 a TUC official, Rosa Crawford, issued a briefing paper denouncing free ports in general terms. (Here ‘free ports’ applies to the concept, and ‘Freeports’ to the specific scheme and actual ports).

She correctly pointed out that: “There’s no evidence that free ports create jobs or stimulate growth – and they could be a Trojan Horse for watering down employment protections after Brexit” because the government wanted these free ports to sit outside the UK’s main tax and tariff rules, arguing that lower regulations would attract investment and business. They also encourage tax-avoidance tax havens, meaning less money for the NHS and schools, to say nothing of crime hotspots for money laundering and smuggling, the TUC argued.

There is justifiable scepticism about claims that they will actually create jobs. It is more likely that jobs will be moved about the country, as has happened in many other schemes to attract industry.

North East of England former Labour MEP Jude Kirton-Darling pointed out the North East already has many manufacturing companies dependent on imports

and exports through existing ports. She feared that establishing a Freeport at Teesside would simply drain other parts of the region of jobs. Readers of *Private Eye* will be well aware of the doings of dodgy local businessmen and politicians who have used public money to secure exclusive right to the land which is to become the Freeport. This is doubtless going on at other places too.

When the Chancellor announced firm plans the then General Secretary Len McCluskey denounced free ports as: “sinkholes, draining decent jobs and wages away from our communities. These ports stand in utter contradiction to the pledge to level up, and we will oppose them. We need a coherent industrial strategy and real action to underpin jobs creation, not spin, gimmicks and dangerous wheezes.”

All very well, but there is not much unity in trade union ranks. Last week Community, which is the successor to the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, positively welcomed the latest two. General Secretary Roy Rickhuss CBE, no less, said: “We welcome the announcement of a new Freeport in Port Talbot and Milford Haven.” He claimed that: “The Celtic Freeport will give a significant boost for Port Talbot and the surrounding area,” and piously hoped that: “The Freeport could play a crucial role in supporting the decarbonisation of the Port Talbot steelworks, providing green energy and hydrogen.”

Perhaps, he or some other Community official, has an eye on a seat on the board. But this view is all too common amongst local politicians and unions who are eager to grasp any straws that are in the winds in these difficult times.

It is too easy simply to dismiss Community as a right-wing union. But the main transport and maritime union, the RMT,

has also softened its line on the Freeport question. Responding to the same announcement, the union’s General Secretary Mick Lynch merely said: “Our union welcomes job creation in port towns but it cannot be done on the cheap, through lowering standards around safety, pay and conditions,” adding: “We welcome the Welsh Government’s condition of Workers Consultative Forums in Freeports in Wales and look forward to further details on how we can engage on behalf of our members.”

This is another case in which workers need to put supposed local advantages (which generally turn out to be short-lived at best) behind them in the interest of the working class as a whole. That is of course an easy thing to say, more difficult to implement, but as Margaret Thatcher said in a different context: “There is No Alternative.”

Chickenfeed Wages

by *New Worker* correspondent

Strike action is starting, which if prolonged could see the nation’s chickens and pigs going hungry.

Associated British Foods, which supplies Britain’s supermarkets, has a subsidiary, AB Agri, which makes animal feed.

Some 150 workers at AB Agri’s eight mills in Bury St Edmunds, Walsingham, Flixborough, Sherburn, North Yorkshire, Devon, Fridaythorpe in East Yorkshire and their northern outpost at Cupar in Fife, are up in arms about an effective pay cut.

AB Agri raked in a profit of £955 million last year, so they can clearly afford better than the 4.5 per cent rise they have imposed.

Angry workers will be striking from this Saturday until Friday 7th April. This will be followed by a work to rule until 14th April, and an all-out indefinite strike if a more agreeable offer is not made.

Apart from the pay issue, the dispute is over the refusal of AB Agri to recognise mill workers as a national bargaining unit. This is a particular issue at Flixborough in Lincolnshire, where AB Agri have prevented workers from taking up voluntary redundancy despite AB Agri signing up to the Ethical Trading Initiative.

union busting

Regional officer Mark Jaina said: “AB AGRI’s attempts to union bust won’t work and contravene its membership of the Ethical Trading Initiative. The only way the company can end this dispute is to stop its attacks on the Flixborough workforce, recognise the union and put forward an offer our members can accept.”

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Two Scottish Victories

by *New Worker* correspondent

North of the border we have welcome news of two comparatively small victories, one in the face of a multinational company and another against the Scottish Government.

Workers at Drax Hydro Limited employed at three Scottish power stations have secured an eight per cent wage increase along with a £1,500 one-off cash payment and an extra day's leave for this year, and it will be backdated to October 2022 and run until September 2023.

Around 50 Unite engineers, plant controllers, mechanical and electrical craft members at Glenlee in Dumfriesshire, Stonebyres, at Lanark and Loch Awe's Cruachan power stations voted by 90.5 per cent to accept the pay offer.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham was quoted as saying: "Unite's members at Drax Hydro secured this significantly improved wage offer because they were prepared to take strike action for a fair wage, backed by their union all the way. Unite is pleased to have successfully negotiated this valuable deal and to enhance the jobs, pay and conditions of our members during this cost-of-living



• on the streets against austerity crisis."

Elaine Dougall, Unite regional co-ordinating officer, was more specific and added: "The deal at Drax Hydro achieves a number of significant enhancements to pay, terms and working conditions. The deal has also been reached prior to any industrial action taking place, which was always the ambition during the negotiations."

Drax can clearly afford an eight per cent pay rise. It generates 11 per cent of the UK's renewable energy and 20 per cent during peak periods. It also generated huge profits of £680 million last year, an increase of 50 per cent on

the previous year, which will doubtless be peanuts when the next figures are published.

Meanwhile at the Highlands and Islands Airports Limited (HAIL), a state-owned company which owns 11 airports at Benbecula, Campbeltown, Dundee, Islay, Stornoway and Wick, workers have settled a long-running pay dispute.

About 50 Prospect members working in Fire and Security have voted by almost 75 per cent, which has secured them a seven per cent uplift for those earning up to £44,000, five for those earning up to £80,000 and four per cent for those above £80,000.

David Avery of Prospect said: "Our members at HIAL provide a vital service for the Highlands and Islands and deserve to have their work and skills properly compensated. This deal has required compromise from all involved and I thank Scottish Ministers for giving HIAL the authority to reach a deal." He warned however, that: "It is clear there are wider pay structure issues which remain to be addressed and we look forward to working constructively with HIAL to tackle these as we move, almost immediately, into 2023-24 discussions."

At the same time, 120 Unite members work as baggage handlers, ground crew, fire and rescue, security and administration, have accepted the deal. Given the state of the ferry services in the Western Isles, air services have become more important.

One of Unite's officials, Shauna Wright, said: "The deal secured at the HIAL Group represents a significant shift in position from when the industrial action by Unite members started in December. We are pleased our members will receive a significant boost to their pay and conditions." But she too warned that the issue was not closed, saying: "We are also urging the Scottish Government to grant HIAL the flexibility to negotiate with trade unions going forward and this must entail a review of how the public pay policy actually works in practice."

This victory only came after members of both unions voted overwhelmingly for strike action in December.

It is their second triumph in recent years, coming after they had fought to oppose the centralisation of air traffic control services at Dundee, a measure which the unions successfully argued was potentially dangerous.

Lighting the Way

by *New Worker* correspondent

Since it was founded in 1786, the Northern Lighthouse Board (NLB) has not featured much in the annals of working-class struggle. That could be about to change, particularly after the victory at HAIL, a similar organisation.

The NLB, which is a non-departmental public body, has offered a two per cent rise that coming on top of last year's pay freeze is effectively a pay cut. The SNP Government's opening offer is in line with their general guidelines, which need to be broken.

Unite is starting to ballot its able seamen, base assistants, cooks and technicians. This will go on until 24th April despite there being only 30 people to ballot. The NLP looks after 208 lighthouses and other navigational aids in Scotland and the Isle of Man. There are no longer any manned lighthouses for keepers to go mad in due to the isolation, but even in these days of satellite navigation it remains a vital service, especially for smaller ships and amateurs who take to the sea.

The union's industrial officer, Alison Maclean, warned that: "If there is no revised pay offer then quite literally the beacons and buoys at sea could go out or remain faulty due to any strike action our members could take. This would present major safety issues for vessels passing through Scottish waters."

She added that: "Unite's NLB members deserve a pay offer which at the very least matches that of other workers providing a key public service. The current two per cent offer following a pay freeze last year is insulting when inflation has jumped to its highest rate in 45 years."

Whilst the NLB's main office is based in the wild and windy Edinburgh New Town, workers are based in Oban (where its two ships are based), Inverness and the Northern Islands.

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

New Worker 24th April 2003

AMERICAN FORCES are advancing on the Iraqi capital whilst other units of the Anglo-US expeditionary force continue to battle it out with the Iraqi resistance in all the towns along the way. Russia has ordered its Black Sea fleet to the Gulf. Syria and Iran have responded angrily to the latest threats from US imperialism.

Baghdad is coming under relentless air and missile attack as the imperialist forces enter the outer defensive ring

some 50 km south of the city. Western military experts expect the Iraqis to fall back towards the city itself and see if the invaders dare to try and storm it whilst running the gauntlet of hit-and-run attacks on their supply lines along the roads to Kuwait.

The Americans still hope for the collapse of the Iraqi government. If that does not happen, and there is certainly no sign of it at the moment, their alternatives are either frontal assault or lengthy siege. Either way, they are readying for street battles. Palestinian sources report that US soldiers are training for urban warfare in the hills outside Hebron in the occupied West Bank.

After two weeks of war, the imperialists have failed to capture any significant town along the way. Basra is still holding out against British forces in the south and the Americans have barely secured the vital bridges

in the towns along the road to the capital. Iraqi troops rocketed Kuwait City and US-led troops outside Basra last week, and more missiles have been launched against the advancing Americans south of Baghdad.

The civilian death toll is rising. Many have been killed in air-raids. Others have been gunned down for failing to halt at road-blocks. But Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi people remain defiant. In a speech read out by one of his ministers on Iraqi television, the Iraqi leader urged his people to wage a holy war against the invaders, comparing them to the Mongol hordes that attacked Baghdad seven centuries ago. On the Arab street anti-US feeling is growing, matched only by disgust at the ineffectual and impotent response of the Arab regime.

A World to Win!

by Sanjay Roy

THE *Communist Manifesto* begins with the profound observation that the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles indicating history in the making through class contests. Capitalism has undergone different regimes of accumulation co-ordinated through institutions and regulations conducive for particular regimes. During the neoliberal regime of accumulation, capital assumes ascendancy, hegemonising almost all non-capitalist structures and subsuming them into the rule of global finance.

In all the past and current regimes of capital accumulation, capital imposed its rule upon society as immutable laws of objectivity that appeared inescapable. This time it has a global scope and hence the impersonal laws of capitalist accumulation seem to claim inexorable dominance over social life. This facade of 'objectivity' is the core of the TINA or 'There is No Alternative' syndrome where the description of capitalist dynamics becomes a one-sided story of capital, the way it intends to build the world according to its own image.

The myth

The myth of 'objectivity'



• A statue of Marx donated by China is unveiled in his home town of Trier in 2018,

emerges out of commodity fetishism, where human relations are being replaced by exchanges between buyers and sellers and the world of commodities and rule of exchange makes human beings subordinate to its own creations, commodity production. Capitalism is an unco-ordinated system that makes buying and selling or profits and losses as spontaneous outcomes of the immutable laws of the market existing 'outside' as against individuals. Hence the 'other' appears as a structure that is inescapable and insurmountable.

Human beings create history through conscious intervention however, instead of being enslaved by the structures built around them. One should not lose sight of the fact that capitalism cannot survive without the workers because labour is the source of surplus value, the life-line of capitalism's accumulation. But labour is potentially independent of capitalist relations. It existed without capitalist relations in the past and for the longer period of human history and will continue to exist in the future without capitalism!

Labour, therefore, has greater potential autonomy over capitalism. It assumes a force in asserting its needs beyond the existing rules of the game and can determine the trajectory of history.

The process of workers

emerging as a class that is conscious of its aims is different from the workers' existence with respect to production relations. A worker in a factory or working in a small shop, agricultural labourers and gig workers all have specificities related to their condition of work and occupation. The commonality is they all must sell their labour power in order to survive. This commonality is a material condition existing passively that the worker must live with, it is a materiality that is internalised by anyone working in similar field. But from there arises another kind of commonality, through confronting capitalism: capitalism as exploiter, oppressor or expropriator, and such confrontations creates class consciousness.

The formation of this class consciousness is not a one-shot game, as EP Thomson says in the *Making of the English Working Class*: "The working class did not rise like the sun at an appointed time. It was present at its own making.

"It is a process of making where working people from diverse occupations and with different degrees of solidarity relations identify their common cause of misery. While making of the class, the working people do not bear or represent a pre-given structure rather it is expressed through their collective conscious intervention that compel structures to undergo changes."

challenge for capitalism

The biggest challenge for capitalism has always been workers. Regimes of accumulation had to be changed to control workers' autonomy because even if the labour power is being sold by the worker, the expenditure of labour from the human body is not pre-given and automatic, rather it is subject to contention. This is a unique feature of 'labour power' compared with all other commodities in the world, where the worker is subjectively able to retain



"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."

Communist Manifesto

control over expenditure of labour and this continues to be the greatest worry to the capitalist class.

Capitalism of the 20th Century invented the Ford assembly-line primarily to destroy the autonomy of artisanal workers and build a production process that involves co-operation amongst fragmented labour. The productive capacity increased to a great extent as a result, by which capitalism could eschew pre-capitalist forms of production but it could not escape its eternal rival. The workers involved in the assembly line individually lost control over the production process as compared with artisanal workers, but eventually they could realise that this larger network of co-operation in the production process is the material basis of wider solidarity and potential terrain of class formation.

Capitalism had to acknowledge the rise of working class as a force that would not allow monetary wages to fall whenever

allow markets a lower wage. This was the real context of Keynesian intervention to displace the crisis of 'involuntary unemployment', where higher investment of the government was suggested as a necessary recipe for increasing effective demand and to create employment. Therefore, there had been efforts on the part of the capitalist class always to decompose the solidarity of the working class and give rise to a new regime of accumulation, as happened in the late 1970s by destroying trade unions and particularly the miners' strike in Britain, which signified the inauguration of Thatcher-Regan led neoliberalism. But history has shown on several occasions that the laws of capitalism are not immutable nor are the structures fossilised to the extent that class agency of the working people is entrapped into unchangeable structures. The myth of objectivity has been broken time and again

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by real struggles that condense years of effort into moments of change.

The making of the class

It is now about three to four decades that the working people of the world had been under the sway of neo-liberal reforms which came along with an assault on the rights of working people, a regime of freedom of capital but unfreedom of labour. Neo-liberalism seems to have reached a phase whereby the process of accumulation creates a challenge to the very existence of humanity in terms of rising inequality, the destruction of ecology and climate change.

The squeezing of surplus on the basis of labour arbitrage by having access to differentiated labour across the globe has given rise to great divergence in income, which on the other hand created the material basis of new convergence towards resistance in different parts of the world.

declining real wages

Moreover, this time the scope of converging interests has widened to a significant extent. It includes peasants and farmers who are dispossessed and expropriated by global and local corporates, the agricultural workers experiencing declining real wages, the gig workers who emerge to be the new segment of the proletariat under the techno-normative regime of new technology, the factory workers who increasingly face the heat of fire-and-rehire, casualisation and contractualisation, the middle-class employees of the public sector who see rampant privatisation that not only creates threats to their entitlements but facilitates the looting of public assets and critical national resources, the health workers who mediate the healthy growth of

the new population are increasingly underpaid and denied rights, and the home workers and the huge mass of self-employed many of whom earn an income less than hired workers; the vast pool of unemployed, skilled and unskilled, educated and young constitute the widened class of the exploited, oppressed and dispossessed.

The multi-national corporations and corporates create threats to humanity by destroying forests and ecology. Global warming and climate change triggered by profiteering and productivist ideas of development can be held responsible for the destruction of livelihoods and proliferation of disease. It is time to put a halt to this unbridled exploitation of human beings and nature by capital.

History never ends with the narrative of capitalism, howsoever 'objective' they try to portray it to be. It is once again the battles of classes that make history, and every new phase of the struggle against capital demands an appropriate configuration of class formation defined by new boundaries of friends and enemies.

It is the 'class-for-itself', conscious of its aims and purpose, the becoming of the working class who recompose themselves through struggle, build the largest possible solidarity of working people because their lived lives tell them every day that they can't fight alone against capital, neither can they escape capital's rule through individual negotiations.

With these rich experiences of struggle the working class in the making emerges to be the potential force most committed to change the rule of capital because they have nothing to lose but their chains and a world to win!

**People's Democracy
(India)**

USA: Another form of gig work: sex-work

by Janisse Miles

Three years ago, people in the USA were notified that they had to celebrate Women's History Month in their own homes as thousands of organisations were shutting down for what was hoped would be two weeks but proved to be longer. The Covid lockdown that started in mid-March would push on well into the summer months, and in that time 25-million workers would lose their jobs due to companies being unable or unwilling to adapt to such unique circumstances.

This, however, didn't stop the bills from coming in, leaving many with the dilemma of needing a source of income that also adhered to safety procedures that the lockdown required. And like any period of nationwide financial uncertainty, this led many, primarily women and gender-oppressed people, to pursue sex work.

What made this period unique, however, was specifically the boom in virtual sex work. By the end of 2020, 85-million users joined the website OnlyFans, known for its sexual content provided by independent creators. In March 2021, the number had risen to 120 million users, a substantial upswing in both consumers and creators. Not only that, but several 'camming' websites, specialising in sexual livestreams, saw a 75 per cent increase in sign-ups, with established models increasing their work hours by 22 per cent.



With strip clubs being closed and hotels often being used as Covid centres, consumers looking for a sexual outlet were directed online, making it a lot more lucrative for the providers. What made virtual sex work so attractive was the lack of physical contact between the professional and the clientele, which was thought to be less dangerous but came with its own struggles.

Doxxing = stalking

The stalking that all sex workers are at an increased chance of experiencing took place in the form of doxxing. This is when identifying information such as a full name, address and social security number is obtained by public records searches, personal accounts and/or IP addresses and

leaked to the internet with malicious intent.

Sex work has historically been a women-dominated field catering to primarily male clientele. The combination of misogyny, lust and entitlement leads many men to the conclusion that, even though women are taught to believe that their worth is in their beauty and that they will be sexualised regardless, they should not be allowed to benefit economically from that sexualisation.

Since virtual sex work is in front of a camera, it's considered pornography instead of prostitution, and is therefore protected under law. So, in an effort to punish sex workers in the new age, thousands of people doxxed their favourite/most hated sex workers and

reported them to the Inland Revenue Service, hoping to get them in trouble for tax fraud. This movement was spearheaded by the so-called 'Men's Rights Activists', who believed they needed to hold sex workers accountable for 'manipulating' men into giving them money via their sexuality.

Pornographic websites across the internet were flooded with stolen content of sex workers in paid sessions, essentially converting it to public content and violating the sex workers' consent. And although there was an increase in male sex work as well, those getting punished for it were overwhelmingly women.

Another way sex workers tend to be discriminated against is by money-sharing sites such as cashapp, PayPal, etc that require personal information to be shared with the sending party, specifically to lead sex workers away from the platform – although the money-sharing companies were the ones popularising these apps in the first place. A sex worker can also be flagged by PayPal



**COVID may not kill us,
but hunger and
desperation will kill sex
workers.**

– Sex worker organisation,
Latin America



under suspicion of performing sex work and can be investigated because of it.

The year is 2023, several years after the lockdown when over one-million people in the richest country in the world were left for dead and many more have become too disabled to be considered useful for the capitalist machine.

Although inflation persists, wages don't keep up – meaning that the economy has only worsened for the working class and sex work is still on the rise, only this time outside of a screen too.

Escorting in the Western world has faced a notable increase, with many stating that the ever increasing cost of living has pushed them into survival sex work, leaving them at the mercy of dangerous clients emboldened by the lack of legal protection escorts have.

On Tik Tok, the romanticisation of being a 'sugar-baby' and escaping the financial ruin of student loans is preached to a generation that graduated on Zoom, leaving them at the mercy of older men hoping to take advantage of their lack of life experience and general naïvety.

Sex work is becoming another notch on the gig-economy belt. With the increased danger of being a sex worker, the decriminalisation of sex work needs to be a key demand. Providers must be able to find and build support, without the looming threat of being arrested for prostitution or having it used against them when seeking protection.

Workers World (USA)

France: Running out of steam

French capitalism has run out of its accumulated dividends. It's reached a critical point.

The reform of the pension system is a key issue related to national competitiveness, especially for developed countries such as France, which have entered the era of welfarism.

As one of the important engines of the European economy, the reform of France's pension system is closely related to its development in the post-industrial era and the competitiveness of the entire EU. In the era of globalisation, France faces economic challenges not only from within the EU but also from competition from the USA, China and other emerging economies.

The current economic strength of France is based on the historical foundation of more than 500 years of Western colonial expansion, as well as the achievements of hard work by one or two generations after the end of the Second World War.

Today, France still controls the currency of 14 former West African colonies, with the franc being their legal currency, and these countries must deposit 50 per cent of their foreign exchange reserves at the French Public Treasury. This is one of the reasons why the French still enjoy almost the most generous social welfare system in the world, including pensions.

In the competition amidst globalisation, the French people are running out of the

dividends accumulated by their predecessors. The country still has money and can provide significant military support to Ukraine. With the continuous increase of the elderly population in the future, however, the pension system will face a deficit. This is why French President Emmanuel Macron insists on reform.

As an important part of the welfare system, pensions are an important factor to reflect the fairness of secondary distribution. Moreover, the experiences of many countries show that pensions can only be increased and are difficult to cut. Therefore, the issue of how to continuously make the pool of pension funds bigger has become a problem related to how to distribute it more fairly.

For France, the arrangement of making everyone work longer is not fair, which means that the vast majority of blue-collar workers, including those who work in polluted and dangerous environments, will have to share the burden. But their job nature is completely different from those who work on computers and play with stocks and securities. The reform is seen as another exacerbation of the wealth gap.

France used to be known for a relatively small wealth gap within Europe – but this gap has been widening in recent years. Data from the World Inequality Lab of the Paris School of Economics shows that income and wealth inequalities have been

on the rise nearly everywhere since the 1980s. Analysts believe the wealth tax (IFI), a tax on the real estate assets for individuals, which has replaced the solidarity wealth tax (ISF), has led to an 'acceleration'

of spirit. Whether France can continue to maintain its strong competitiveness also faces a dual challenge at both systemic and spiritual levels.

Looking back at history, European capitalism has been

Even under welfare capitalism, however, it does not change the nature of capitalism and its inherent flaws, which has inevitably led to the widening of the wealth gap.

It seems that the French people cannot



• Anger on the streets

of inequality.

The challenges faced by France, a world-class economic power, are not just about money. How many people from the new generation who enjoy this welfare system will be willing to continue to work hard to create sustainable economic growth, especially at the bottom and manufacturing levels, like their predecessors did?

Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy's famous words "work more to earn more" were considered right a few years ago, but they are now widely rejected by many French people, especially young people.

Reform of pensions is not only a systemic issue therefore, but also a matter

exploring between efficiency and fairness to constantly find reforms. The European people chose a different path from that of the USA – a path that emphasises welfare and fair distribution.

find a way out now. Neither can the USA. Capitalism seems to have reached a critical point and although it will not disappear quickly, the future path is uncertain.

Global Times

THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

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LETTERS

Dear Comrades

Recently, we have formed a new news agency under the name 'MART Corp' to reflect our position to progressive forces abroad from Ukraine and Russia.

The MART Corp news agency expresses an independent view of the broad circles of the Ukrainian people who are opposed to the Kiev authorities.

We wholeheartedly welcome and support the launch of a major campaign by the public of the USA and other countries for peace in Ukraine!

For our part, we are looking for opportunities to express the opinion of Ukrainian citizens in support of the movement for Peace in Western countries and to ask them to voice the following points of our views:

The Kiev regime uses chemical weapons in the conflict zone in Ukraine, in violation of all existing conventions on the prohibition of chemical weapons.

This may provoke asymmetric retaliatory measures on the part of Russia. At the same time, US President Biden is inflating the Pentagon budget to the detriment of US citizens. The ruling circles of the USA are curtailing a number of projects to support socially vulnerable segments of the population, primarily people of colour and the unemployed.

The regime of dictator Zelensky in Ukraine is based on power dictatorship and repression. Dictator Zelensky, for the sake of preserving his undivided power, wants to drag the NATO countries, the EU and the USA into an all-out war with Russia, where there will be no winner.

If peace is established in Ukraine, the dictatorship of Zelensky is over!

The Kiev regime has no interest in peace in Ukraine. The present-day US and UK politics of sanctions must end!

The sanctions do not stop the conflict. They play to prolong the conflict in Ukraine for benefit of ruling elites in the USA and the UK!

We ask you to voice these views and, if possible, depict one or more of these points on your posters.

This will express your solidarity with the struggle of the Ukrainian opposition for peace in Ukraine and show the dictatorial regime of Kiev that the opposition is alive and capable of action, and not completely destroyed in the dungeons of the Kiev security forces, in bloody repressions and prisons!

Our great and warmest wishes for success in Your struggle and with great wish for peace.

**Dimitri Dezhnev
The Union of Political
Emigrants and Political
Prisoners of Ukraine**

Dear Comrades

On 19th March the Facebook page of the Korean Friendship Association of the UK (KFA UK) was 'unpublished' by Facebook, which meant that it was no longer visible to Facebook users and we could no longer publish on it. The page had built up a following of 12,000 people and was the product of 11 years of hard work. Subsequently the page has been deleted as if it never existed.

Many hours of hard work were destroyed at one click by the censors of Facebook. This act of terrorism by Facebook against KFA UK. It is an act of extreme censorship, a totally arbitrary action by Facebook.

We had started having problems with Facebook back in 2020 and these seemed to escalate over the last year. On numerous occasions Facebook simply deleted posts without giving a reason and also seemed to take exception to pictures from some DPRK websites such as Voice of Korea and friend.com.kp. From last year Facebook started to impose restrictions on the KFA UK page and limit it.

Facebook used the pretext of the banning that we had shared videos from the Anti-Imperialist National Democratic Front of south Korea that went

against 'Facebook community standards'. However, probably the reason is that the south Korean fascist puppet authorities were afraid that south Koreans would see them and asked Facebook to ban the KFA UK page. Moreover, Facebook is a monopoly capitalist tech giant with links to the deep state in the USA and UK. They took down the page so people cannot see the reality of People's Korea and also to stifle solidarity with People's Korea.

We strongly denounce the unjust and arbitrary censorship of Facebook. We will not be silenced.

**Dermot Hudson
South London**

Dear Comrades

Brexit has turned into a great missed opportunity.

Free at last from the Brussels bureaucrats, representing Franco-German imperialism, Britain had an opportunity to trade without restriction with the whole world and to pursue its own independent foreign policy. Of course, being an imperialist power itself, no such positive changes occurred as the Conservative government immediately adopted a policy of total submission to the USA. The support for US hegemony and its unipolar global domination has been a disaster.

Rats normally leave a sinking ship, but the Tories have abandoned one for another. As its uncompetitive economy falters, with a looming financial crisis and the imminent fall of the petro-dollar, the USA has become even more aggressive. US hegemony, justified by their assumed exceptionalism, is failing as other powers continue to develop rapidly in the new multipolar world. The Tories have responded, without question, to all US demands, including sanc-

tions against Russia and measures that they hope will weaken and isolate China.

Capitalism has not recovered from the effects of the financial crisis of 2008 and has received a further setback as COVID19 spread. Serious economic problems have also been turned catastrophic by the sanctions policies and attempts to decouple from China. This grim picture has been made worse by the new banking failures as capitalism approaches its terminal crisis.

It is of course the working class who are being made to suffer with decades of austerity, cuts in public spending and reduced real wages. The very rich, on the other hand, 'have never had it so good'. There are now 177 billionaires in the UK, an increase of six in the last year, with a combined wealth of some £653 billion.

In Britain the Tories have been able to get away with it due to a weakened labour movement and the full support of the bourgeois mass media that has conditioned the public into a docile acceptance of the status quo. A theatre of stark reality in which the poor are forced to depend upon foodbanks whilst the rich bloated capitalists are laughing all the way to their tax havens.

As the class struggle intensifies the importance of making our voice heard is more vital than ever. Your *New Worker* seeks to expose the unjust and unequal society within which we live and to support workers as they struggle for a better life. Your newspaper also supports those who fight for their freedom in the many conflicts and wars, from Donbas to Syria, all engineered by US imperialism. We seek to stand with others on the road to building socialism.

**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

MON 3 APRIL
No2Nato Scotland:
Launch event in
Glasgow. MacLeod
Hall, Pearce Institute,
840-860 Govan Road,
Glasgow, G51. Book
on Eventbrite

THUR 13 APRIL
Marx Memorial
Library: Book launch:
Michael Roberts's
Capitalism in the
21st Century through
the Prism of Value.
19:00. Online and
onsite, Book on MML
website.

FRI 14 APRIL
Working Class
Movement Library:
Right to Roam. (Film
showing) 19:30-21:00,
Book on WCML
website.

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

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 Festi-
val. M Shed, Princes
Wharf, Wapping Rd,
Bristol BS1 4RN.

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>

MON 1 MAY
May Day: London:
Assemble 12:00,
Clerkenwell Green,
London EC1R 0DU

THURS 11 MAY
Marx Memorial
Library: What Kind
of Federalism? Panel
Discussion lead
by Pauline Bryan.
19:00, Online and
onsite, Book on MML
website.

SAT 13 MAY
Palestine Solidarity
Campaign: Nakba75
march 12:00-16:00
Assemble at BBC,
Portland Place London
W1A.

THUR 18 MAY
Marx Memorial
Library: John Foster on
Class mobilisation and
class consciousness:
language and the
'practical moment'.
19:00, Online lecture.
Book on MML
website.

SAT 20 MAY
Levellers' Day:
Republicanism, Then
and Now, 10:30-16:00
Burford, Oxfordshire,
OX18 4RY

SAT 20 MAY
Campaign for Nuclear
Disarmament: Protest
against the return of
US nuclear weapons
RAF Lakenheath,
Wangford Road,
Brandon, Suffolk, IP27
0SJ. Details on CND
website.

SAT 20 MAY
Society for
Cooperation in Russian
and Soviet Studies:
Jane Rosen on 100
Years of SCRSS 14:00,
SCRSS, 320 Brixton
Road, London, SW9
6AB.

THURS 25 MAY
Marx Memorial
Library: John Foster on
Class mobilisation and
class consciousness:
contemporary
understandings. 19:00,
Online lecture. Book
on MML website

THUR 25 MAY
Musicians for Peace
and Disarmament
concert in memory of
Bruce Kent. Details
TBA. St James's
Piccadilly, 197
Piccadilly, London,
W1J 9LL

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

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Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

Humza Yousaf, the new leader of the Scottish National Party, was voted in as First Minister of Scotland in the Scottish parliament this week. The support of the SNP and their Green allies made his election a foregone conclusion. The same, however, cannot be said of his victory in the race to succeed Nicola Sturgeon.

After sending out 78,000 ballots, 50,494 or 69.95 per cent voted. In the first ballot Yousaf secured 24,336 votes or 48.2 per cent of the vote, Finance Secretary Kate Forbes received 20,559 votes or 40.7 per cent. The distant runner-up Ash Regan had 5,559 votes or 11.1 per cent. When her second preference votes were doled out Yousaf maintained his lead, securing 26,032 or 52.1 per cent against Forbes's 23,890 or 47.9 per cent.

Not exactly a resounding victory for Yousaf, considering that he had the party machinery discreetly behind him. The 50,494 who voted match almost precisely the 50,000 members lost in recent years.

One sign of dissatisfaction came from former SNP defence spokesman Stuart Crawford, who said the SNP had "signed its own death warrant" by electing Yousaf and that he was merely "keeping the seat warm until other more senior politicians like Angus Robertson return to the fray".

Yousaf will now have to watch his back. Certain nationalist critics were quick to cry "fix" claiming that HQ kept him informed of the ballot's progress and are suspicious of the comparatively turnout for such an important election, which was largely an online affair. The 2,142 votes that

divided Yousaf from Forbes are less than the surplus votes sent out, which will keep nationalist conspiracy theorists occupied for some time.

Perhaps the true victor will be Kate Forbes, whose strong showing means she will be able to sit tight and wait for Yousaf to live down to his widely used nickname of 'Youseless' and depart under a cloud sooner rather than later. As a reward for her fierce attacks on him during the contest Yousaf tried to demote her from Finance Secretary to the Rural Affairs Portfolio, but she chose to depart from the Government.

To mark the occasion, Public Health Scotland published the last set of figures that demonstrated what a success Yousaf was as Health Secretary. The A&E waiting times when he started the job saw 86.6 per cent of patients seen on time, now it is 62.9 per cent. The number of those experiencing extreme delays rose by 1100 per cent during his reign.

It is appropriate that his first Cabinet appointment was that of another failed Health Secretary, Shona Robison, to be Deputy First Minister. It was Robison who presided over increased cancer waiting times and the worst drug death-rate in Europe during her stint.

When the Tories were changing their leaders with alarming frequency the SNP always demanded a General Election on the grounds that the new leader had no mandate, but now they maintain a dignified silence. One group that will be fairly happy however are the Greens, who said they would leave the coalition which keeps the SNP in office were either of his rivals to be elected. Yousaf kept them happy by announcing that he would continue to contest at the Supreme Court the Westminster veto of the controversial Gender Recognition Reform Bill. Given that measure was the straw that seemingly broke Sturgeon's back, it is clearly not the high road to popularity.

Soon after accepting the job Yousaf said he

would make another ritual demand for a Section 30 Order from Westminster to hold another independence referendum. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's spokesman played his part in this well-established routine by also conforming to script and telling him: "I think you know our well-established position."

Why did she go?

Speculation continues as to why Nicola Sturgeon resigned so unexpectedly, not long after saying she would lead the SNP into the 2026 Holyrood election. She lost a £100 bet with the Scottish Tory leader on precisely this point.

Ms Sturgeon has vigorously denied claims that a Police Scotland investigation into alleged SNP corruption involving her husband, SNP CEO Peter Murrell, was behind her decision to resign as party leader and Scottish First Minister. Ms Sturgeon was confronted with the issue less than 24 hours after 'Mr Sturgeon' was forced to quit over a separate scandal to cover up an exodus of more than 30,000 former members from the party.

Another more innocent theory is that she had wanted to go for ages, being fed up with the lack of progress on independence and getting blamed for the actions and inactions of her government. She had to stay on however, because she wisely deemed all her other ministers unsuitable with the exception of the Education Secretary,

who already had done an unsuccessful stint as leader and did not want a re-run with added ministerial responsibilities.

Given that senior SNP figures such as John Swinney and Angus Robertson, who would know where any bodies are buried, let pass their only likely chance of leadership, it is not unreasonable to suspect that they feared the ultimate prize was a poisoned chalice.

Salmond again

Some on the Scottish political fringe think the demise of Sturgeon and the fissures exposed in the leadership battle open the way for the return of Alex Salmond, now with his breakaway Alba Party.

Salmond will, of course, be delighted at the departure of his protégé who tried to destroy him, but he will be deluding himself if he thinks that he has any chance of a comeback. In last year's council elections Alba lost all its incumbent defector councillors. In recent council by-elections it only propped up the rest of the result tables. Even if it improves its performance, we can be sure that whenever claims arise that Salmond was the innocent victim of an establishment plot to destroy him, the SNP will be able to point to the admissions he made in his sexual assault trial from which he emerged with 'not guilty' verdicts after claiming his actions were merely "high jinks".

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Down with the Kiev fascist regime!

by *New Worker* correspondent

We had a good turn-out at the International Ukraine Anti-Fascist Solidarity campaign (IUAFS) picket in Whitehall on Saturday. NCP leader Andy Brooks joined comrades and friends at another picket organised by the IUAFS campaign to highlight the plight of political prisoners jailed by the Zelensky regime and to stand by all those bravely fighting the fascism in Ukraine.

Some 30–40 supporters joined the lively protest including Paul Cannon, the general secretary of the Workers Party of Britain,



and supporters of the new No2Nato campaign who came along with their banner, which was attached with the others on the railings opposite Downing Street.

"We are protesting today because we believe that the British people should be aware of the crimes committed by forces that our government has spent billions of dollars and arms supplies to prepare. We are well aware that many people are very confused by what is actually happening in Ukraine, as the media is flooded with claims and counter-claims, but we also know that media reporting in the UK is overwhelmingly one-sided and hostile to Russia and

the people's republics of the Donbas," one of them said.

The demonstrators called for the release of Ukrainian political prisoners, the restoration of full political freedom and freedom of the media, as well as an end to arrests, beatings, torture and murder in Ukraine.

Theo Russell, the IUAFS campaign organiser, was interviewed by Bernie Holland, the musician and independent film-maker whose 22-minute report is now up on the IUAFS Facebook page and YouTube. A brief report of the protest filmed by another independent media maker is now also doing the rounds on social media.

21st Century Communism

by Robin MacGregor

The International Communist Movements – Annual Report 2019–2020 by Academy of Marxism, Chinese Academy of Social Science; 2022. Marx 21 Edizioni, Bari. 328 pp; €18:00 from: www.marx21books.com

This volume is a welcome collaboration between the Academy of Marxism, which is part of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and the Italian publisher Marx 21 Edizioni of Bari. CASS is not just another think-tank but plays an important role in shaping party and government policy in China.

It is "an English and compressed version" of a work first published in Chinese in June 2020. Both Editors, Xin Xiangyang and Pan Jin'e, hold senior positions in the influential Academy of Marxism, whilst the individual authors and translators (all Chinese) share the same affiliation. It seems this is the second such report

a widespread interest in Marxism at the expense of reactionary traditional nationalism, which resulted in the foundation of the 50-strong Communist Party of China in 1921.

These are followed by an account of the global balance of forces since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Despite the fall of socialism in the Eastern Bloc, capitalism has not got it

Party of Vietnam in the run up to its 13th National Congress that took place in 2021. The two articles on Cuba and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) both focus on constitutional developments that both countries made in 2019, when the DPRK made important amendments to its constitution and Cuba brought in an entirely new one. Finally,

activities. It does so fairly and, unlike some Soviet era publications on this theme does not pretend that they on the verge of revolution.

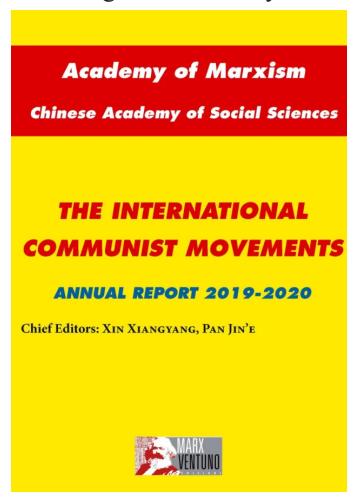
This is paralleled by a similar piece on activities in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe where there have been some positive results under very difficult circumstances, particularly the legislation passed in some countries and in the EU that brazenly equates the liberators of Auschwitz with its builders. This is followed by a useful summary of those parties involved in the European Left, which had as setback in the 2019 elections for the EU's so-called parliament. This section also includes a more detailed account is of the Workers Party of Belgium, which has had an unexpected electoral success.

The article entitled *The Communist Party USA: 100 Years in Struggle for New Development* is interesting but does not really live up to its title because it largely revolves round the CPUSA's 2019 Convention. The informative article entitled at on *New Developments of the Japanese Communist Party* is more accurate. This gives a detailed account of the party's recent policies, achievements and activities. The article does not

shy away from addressing the party's recent decline.

On the whole the translations are decent enough with few obvious howlers, but on occasion a native English speaker should have been on hand to give a final polish. The title of the Belgian article, *Revival of the Workers' Party of Belgium and its Enlightenment*, could obviously have been improved upon.

These, however, are small grumbles that a reviewer feels entitled to make. The volume provides useful concise outlines of subjects that for British readers are normally below the horizon. We hope to see another volume, which is promised in the introduction, before not too long.



all its own way thanks to China's powerful economy, which will be the anchor of a new order with "a community of shared future for mankind".

There are four articles on the recent activities of the ruling parties in Cuba, People's Korea, Laos and Vietnam. That for Vietnam covers the Communist

that on Laos deals with the Lao People's Revolutionary Party's policy on developing the party's cadres.

The final section deals with recent developments of non-ruling communist parties. This starts with a general survey of activities of Western European communist parties, their congresses and electoral

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Re-birth of a Great Nation – The Rise of China

by John Maryon

Millions of workers were inspired during first half of the 20th Century by the unprecedented growth of the world's first workers' state. Under the leaderships of Lenin and Stalin the Soviet Union made many historic achievements.

Revisionism ultimately destroyed the USSR, but the Red Banner is today carried forward by People's China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Vietnam, Laos and Cuba. I would like to examine the impact of the dramatic rise of China under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and its role in the world today.

The new people's governments in both Russia and China faced similar challenges with peasants and an emerging working class living in near feudal conditions with mass poverty. Each applied Marxism, adapted to their own specific conditions, to build socialism. Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC and chairman of the Central Military Commission, was re-elected as President of the People's Republic of China for a further five years at the 2023 National People's Congress. Xi, who comes from a humble background, has remained a man of the people and is well respected in his homeland.

At the 2023 National Congress, Xi Jinping spoke of the challenges facing the nation and the objectives for the current development period. He said that China would unswervingly advance high quality development on the journey of building a great modern socialist country. The President called for innovation and open development that was green and would benefit everyone. Whilst rural poverty had been eliminated, further efforts were still needed to advance rural revitalisation. He also spoke of the need for self-reliance in the face of US sanctions and called for protecting the nation's security with "A Great Wall of Steel". He stressed that Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan were integral parts

of People's China.

China's GDP grew by three per cent during the last year to 121 trillion Yuan and is planned to rise by 5.2 per cent in the current year as the country emerges from its strict Covid restriction measures. In size its GDP is second only to that of the USA. China will soon surpass the USA, but when population is taken into consideration its per capita value is much less.

The USA, alarmed at what they see as a challenge to their world domination, have done much to try to undermine China's economy. They have applied sanctions, disrupted supply chains and imposed selfish trade restrictions. No doubt they hoped that companies such as Huawei would be bankrupted, but the company has responded with an ambitious programme of research and development.

It in the field of space research that China has been able to demonstrate its rapid advance in science and technology. Soil samples have been returned from the Moon and a rover vehicle soft-landed on Mars. Being banned by the USA from the so-called 'International Space Station' has not been a problem. They have built their own and are looking forward to working with other nations in its laboratories. Ambitious plans for the near future include the construction of a manned research station, in co-operation with Russia, at the lunar South Pole.

China's military expenditure is set to rise by 7.2 per cent in 2023. By comparison, Japan's rise will be over 20 per cent and Germany 17 per cent. China's defence spending remains at 1.5 per cent of GDP compared with four per cent for the USA.

The Chinese military is being strengthened and modified to meet increased threats of US aggression. The current US spend is 855 billion dollars compared with China's 225 billion dollars. Xi Jinping said last year that China does not want war but that the era of being bullied was over.

Unlike the USA, China accepts the fact that we live



• China: the workshop of the world

in a multi-polar world. Its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is designed to promote mutually beneficial co-operation and bring peoples together with investment projects that foster trade and development.

China's foreign minister, Qin Gang, described the BRI as a "high quality public good initiated by China and jointly built by all partners, whose benefits are shared with the world". The BRI has provided vital infrastructure, created over 420,000 jobs in countries along the route and helped to lift 40 million people out of poverty. The BRI is the world's broadest and largest platform for international co-operation and offers colossal business opportunities on a win-win basis.

One of the great achievements of the CPC has been to lift billions out of poverty. Life expectancy in its rural regions, including Tibet and Xinjiang, has more than doubled since people's power was established in 1949. After

the eradication of absolute poverty in 2020 China has continued to revitalise its rural areas, which have been left far behind the big cities. Residents of rural areas have less disposable income than urban dwellers. As called for by the People's Congress, the building of new rural homes is being accelerated and greater investment in agriculture, rural infrastructure, education, health and social care are being stepped up. Greater efforts are being made to provide greater opportunities for young people to stay in their home villages.

The USA is stepping up its efforts to cause trouble and create tensions throughout the globe, in order to provoke wars and conflicts that support its own hegemonic ambitions.

China on the other hand has emerged to become a powerful force for peace and diplomacy. Two important recent examples were as follows.

Firstly, Iran and Saudi Arabia have agreed to es-

tablish diplomatic relations following a conference hosted by China. This will be a major setback for US imperialism.

Secondly, China's peace proposals for Ukraine contained in a 12-point peace plan for the Ukraine conflict. China has called for respecting sovereignty, abandoning the Cold War mentality, ceasing hostilities and resuming peace talks. It has also called for resolving the humanitarian crisis, protecting civilians and prisoners of war, keeping nuclear power stations safe, reducing strategic risks, facilitating grain exports and the stopping of all unilateral sanctions while keeping supply chains sta-

China's defence spending remains at 1.5 per cent of GDP compared with four per cent for the USA.

ble. And as you would expect from China, the promotion of post-conflict reconstruction.

China's progress in building up its infrastructure has been amazing and has become symbolic of its modernisation. Investments in civil engineering projects, the power network and expansion of the transport network, including rail, air and roads, have

been impressive. The total length of China's railways now exceeds 155,000 km, of which 42,000 km are high-speed.

A further 2,500 km of high-speed links will be added this year. The China-Laos railway, which opened at the end of 2021, has brought economic benefits to both countries, increased trade and encouraged an increase in people-to-people contacts. Regular freight services now operate between China and Europe.

China is forging new relationships with the multi-polar world. Xi Jinping made an important speech at the recent *Dialogue with World Political Party's High-Level Meeting*. He called for respect for the diversity of civilizations, underlining the principles of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness. Stressing the importance of the common values of humanity, Xi said: "Peace, development, equality, justice, democracy and freedom are the common aspirations of all people."

The president urged countries to keep an open mind in appreciating the perception of values by different civilisations. He called for more people-to-people international exchanges to promote mutual understanding and friendship. He discussed China's path of modernisation and peaceful development that was at variance to the crooked path taken by others in their pursuit of hegemony in a uni-polar world.

In People's China a great nation has been re-born. A dynamic new political force has emerged, under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, which seeks to unite all people and nations to create a beautiful, new multi-polar world. A respectful, peaceful new society based upon Marxism and equal, shared values.

One of the great achievements of the CPC has been to lift billions out of poverty.



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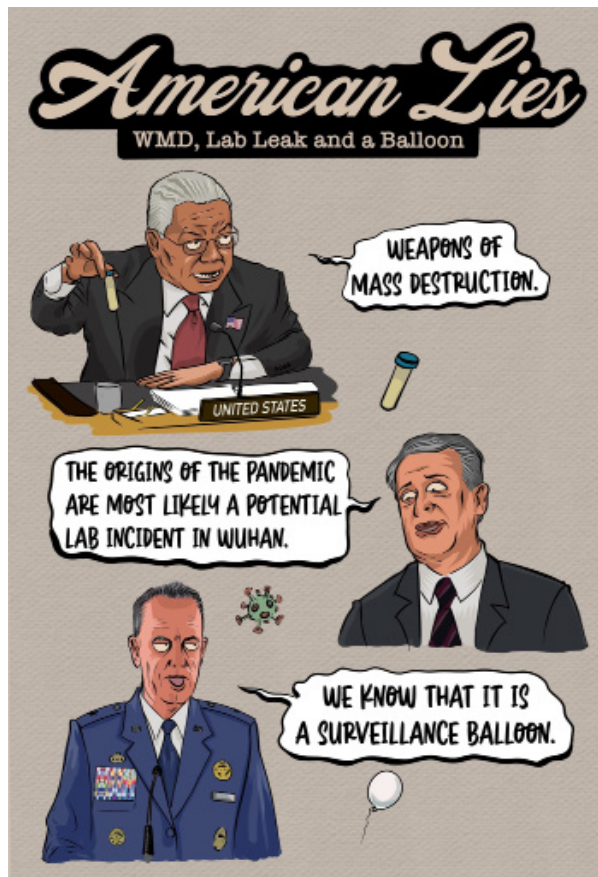
America's fake democracy

In 2021, with the debut of its so-called Summit for Democracy, the USA attempted to fool the world but desperately failed. Now, the second episode is set to start.

For a country stuck in democratic disorder at home and obsessed with bullying abroad, the forthcoming summit is bound to be another failure. The gathering will show how Washington manipulates 'democracy' to stoke up confrontation, divide the world and advance its hegemonic agenda.

The essence of democracy should ensure that the people are the masters of their country. But US democracy, designed to serve capitalist interest groups, is inherently incapable of prioritising the majority's interests, thus degenerating into a 'democracy for the few'.

Little wonder the list of challenges troubling US society is ever-growing. Aggravated political polarisation, a widening wealth gap, growing social divides and deep-seated racial discrimination, all have made the narrative of American democracy even less convincing. "A government of the people, by the people, for the people," the ideal democratic government of the USA depicted by Abraham Lincoln in his



landmark Gettysburg Address, remains an illusion.

As money politics penetrate all aspects of US elections, legislation and administration, American democracy is never "of the people" but a game for the rich. Under the slogan of "one person, one vote" is the reality that a handful of elites governs the country.

Data shows that candidates who win 91 per cent of the Congressional elections have greater financial support. Those so-called "representatives of public opinion" usually work for their donors after being elected instead of for the public.

Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel Prize-winning economist,

once observed that the top one per cent of Americans control 40 per cent of all the USA's wealth. "Virtually all US senators, and most of the representatives in the House, are members of the top one per cent when they arrive, are kept in office by money from the top one per cent, and know that if they serve the top one per cent well they will be rewarded by the top one per cent when they leave office," says Stiglitz.

The US political system is hardly governed "by the people". Instead, the people are denied the power to participate in national governance. After elections, public power is hijacked by a few oligarchies whilst the people's needs are ignored. The country's widespread gun problem and the tottering legislation procedures on issues related to people's livelihoods are reminders that partisan battles and veto politics don't bring good governance.

Princeton and Northwestern Universities compared nearly 1,800 US policies enacted between 1981 and 2002 with the expressed preferences of average and affluent Americans and special interest groups. They concluded that "economic elites and organised groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on US government policy,

while mass-based interest groups and average citizens have little or no independent influence".

In his book *The Power Elite*, US political sociologist C Wright Mills expressed concern about the "revolving door" between the government and large corporations, as power elites cycle through economic, political and military spheres and form interwoven interests. No wonder former US President Jimmy Carter said the USA functions more like an oligarchy than a democracy.

What's more, "for the people" is another lie. In a capitalist-based democracy, the people can't have their fair share of the fruits of national development, to which the growing gaps between the rich and poor and the widening class divide attest.

According to a report by the US Federal Reserve, the total wealth of the wealthiest one per cent reached a record \$45.9 trillion at the end of the fourth quarter of 2021, and their fortunes increased by more than \$12 trillion, or more than a third, during the pandemic. In contrast, the share of wealth held by the bottom 90 per cent of Americans has declined since the pandemic.

More worryingly, the

unfair economic distribution contributes to the concentration of political power. According to the *Economist*, rising inequality means that resources are concentrated in the hands of a few. "The evidence that concentrated wealth contributes to concentrated power is troubling. It suggests that reducing inequality becomes less likely even as it becomes more urgent. It implies that a vicious cycle of rising inequality may be developing, with a loss of democratic accountability as a nasty side-effect."

The USA's 'democratic' system is only in form, not substance. Despite its inability to illuminate its own backyard, the self-branded 'shining city on a hill' is under a delusion that it can shine its light on others. With such faulty logic, Washington has grown ever more addicted to lecturing other countries, peddling its false narrative of 'democracy versus authoritarianism', and seeking to divide the world along a line based on US self-interest.

What can we expect from the upcoming summit? Sadly, nothing more than a political farce and tool of geopolitical coercion.

{Xinhua}

UN refuses to investigate Nord Stream blast

The UN Security Council has refused to adopt Russia's draft resolution on a probe into the Nord Stream blasts but Russia says it will not let the matter drop.

The Nord Stream and Nord Stream 2 gas pipelines, built to deliver gas under the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany, were hit by explosions last September. Nord Stream's operator, Nord Stream AG, said that the damage was unprecedented and that it was impossible to estimate the time repairs might take.

Russia considers the explosions of the two pipe-

lines an act of international terrorism. There are no official results of the investigation yet. US journalist and Pulitzer Prize winner Seymour Hersh alleged that the explosions were organised by the USA with the support of Norway. The USA has denied its involvement in the incident.

On Monday, the UN Security Council voted on a Russia-drafted resolution asking for a UN-led investigation into Nord Stream gas pipelines sabotage. Only Russia, China and Brazil voted in favour. The rest abstained, so the motion fell.

Kremlin spokesman

Dmitry Peskov said that the Russian government regretted the decision. "We believe that everyone should be interested in an objective investigation involving all interested parties, all those who can shed light on the customers and perpetrators of this terrorist act, we consider this extremely important," Peskov told reporters.

Russia will continue to make efforts to prevent the topic from being silenced by Western countries. "We regret that our initiative did not pass. But the Russian side ... will not let this topic be silenced," Peskov added.

Meanwhile, Germany is actively arming Ukraine, and getting more and more involved in the conflict, Peskov stressed. "Germany takes an active part in arming Ukraine, pumping Ukraine with weapons. Germany is directly and indirectly increasing the level of its involvement in this conflict. Therefore, such actions and decisions will not result in anything positive."

On Monday, Ukraine received 18 German Leopard 2 Tanks and 40 Marder armoured infantry fighting vehicles. In addition, Berlin is seeking to boost the budget fund from which

aid to Ukraine is financed from €2.2 billion to €5.4 billion this year.

Back in Washington, the Russian ambassador said the US government's comments about Russia's plans to station nuclear weapons in Belarus were a "vivid example of hypocrisy". Anatoly Antonov pointed out that Washington supports deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in five non-nuclear states, namely Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey, and co-ordinates nuclear policy with the UK and France within NATO.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said last week that Moscow and Minsk had agreed to station Russia's tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, which does not breach Russia's commitments to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Putin noted that Russia was not transferring its nuclear weapons to Belarus but was doing what the US has been doing for decades – stationing its tactical nuclear weapons on the territories of its allies and training their crews to operate the weapons.

Sputnik