

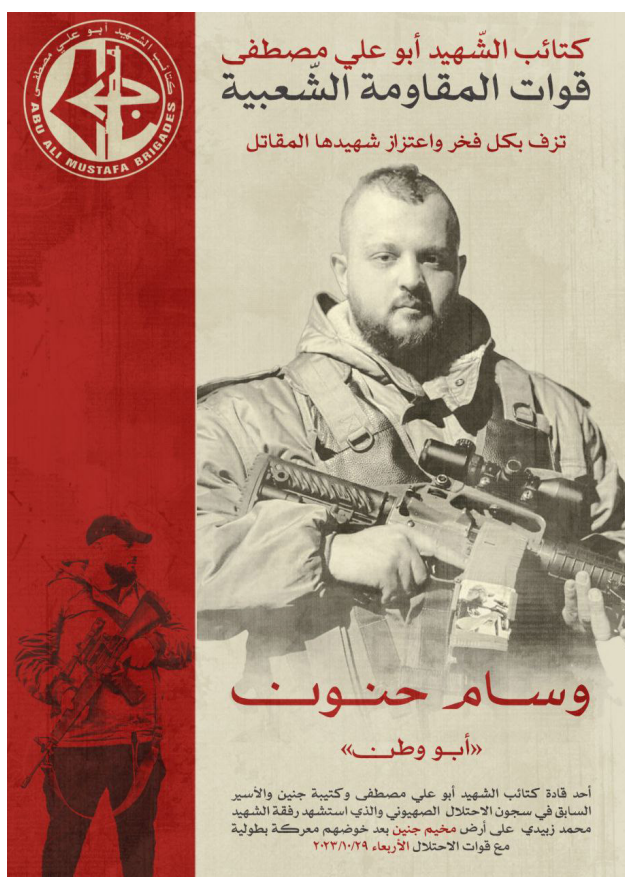
Gaza in flames: Palestinians resist Israeli invaders!

by our Arab Affairs correspondent

The Israelis are mercilessly pounding civilian settlements in Gaza following the end of the “humanitarian pause” in the fighting to enable a prisoner exchange between the Zionist authorities and the Palestinian resistance. Israel has now resumed the fighting with the guaranteed support from their American masters that allows them to brush aside global demands for a permanent cease-fire.

Now the Palestinians are fighting tooth and nail to stop the Israeli invaders in the Gaza Strip. Hundreds of Israeli troops, including two commanders, have been killed in street fighting. Many more have been wounded by the resistance fighters.

The Americans have launched a feeble attempt at shuttle diplomacy as a sop to their feudal Arab allies while continuing to block calls for a ceasefire in Gaza at the United Nations. And three cargo vessels, flying flags of convenience but belonging to Israeli businessmen, came



• Another PFLP martyr in the Battle of Gaza.

under Yemeni Houthi missile attack in the Red Sea on Sunday. The Yemenis have attacked a number of Israeli-linked ships in the Red Sea since mid-November, forcing them to take the more costly shipping route around Africa. This longer route could add 18 extra days to their schedule.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin held crisis talks with Arab leaders in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia before returning to meet Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in Moscow.

More than three-quarters of Gaza’s population has been made homeless, with some two million people forced into a 90-square-mile area in the south that Israel is bombing relentlessly. UNRWA, the main UN agency in Gaza, says

Israeli air-strikes are ongoing even where people are being forced to flee, such as Rafah on the Egyptian frontier. “No place is safe, not there and not anywhere in Gaza. A brutal war continues, unabated,” the agency said.

UNRWA commissioner-general Philippe Lazzarini says what Israel is undertaking cannot simply amount to “collateral damage” given the

The New Worker will soon be taking its traditional fortnightly winter break.

The last issue of the Old Year will be published on 22nd December.

The first issue of the New Year will come out on Friday 12th January.

incredible number of civilians killed and facilities hit.

Over 16,000 people have been killed in Gaza during the war. Most were defenceless civilians.

Among the dead is Sofyan Taya, the president of the Islamic University of Gaza and a renowned researcher in physics and applied mathematics. Taya was killed along with his family in an Israeli airstrike last weekend in Jabaliya, just north of Gaza City. Sofyan Taya was ranked among the top two per cent of researchers globally and was appointed UNESCO chair for Physical and Astrophysical Sciences in Palestine.

One Palestinian woman, living with dozens of her family members in the centre of the Gaza Strip, says she feels like they are living through a “famine”. “No aid or food

is being provided, prices are skyrocketing – and that’s an extreme understatement,” said Tarneem Hammad, an advocacy and communications officer with Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP). “A kilo of salt used to be \$0.25; now it’s \$4.25. Flour is now \$60; it used to be \$7.”

She stays in her home, where 45 of her family members are also sheltering, including 15 children. “We’re a couple of miles away from Israeli tanks separating us from the south. We hear bombs and tank shelling from both Salah Eddin Street (Gaza’s main north-south route) and the seaside,” she says. “I think, here in the middle area, we’re left with one option: to accept death. Like it does not matter whether we move or relocate. Any minute now may be our last!”

FUND

We weren’t able to collect anything from our post box this week due to problems caused by Royal Mail which has halved the collection opening hours at our local post office. Banker’s orders and cash donations in London brought in £435, pushing the total for November to £2,295 – way short of our £3,500 monthly target.

The December appeal starts now and we desperately need to step-up donations to ensure the survival of our communist weekly over the festive season. As the guns blaze in Gaza and the people of the Donbas beat back the Kiev fascists, our task is to keep up the struggle for peace and socialism in Britain and build solidarity with all the peoples of the world fighting imperialism.

December is a short campaigning month and the *New Worker* will soon be taking our winter break over Christmas. The last issue of the Old Year will be published on 22nd December. The first issue of the New Year will come out on Friday 12th January. Make sure it does by sending 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

Take action for Palestine!

It didn't take long for Israel to resume fighting in Gaza. The Netanyahu government has shown its true colours, jeopardising the lives of the remaining Israeli prisoners held by the Palestinian resistance by its indiscriminate bombing that is clearly intended to make the Gaza Strip uninhabitable for many years to come.

On the Arab street millions upon millions are demanding action to stop the carnage. Across the world, not least in Britain, millions more are demanding an end to the fighting and justice for the Palestinians.

The Sunak government crawls to US imperialism and turns a blind eye to Israeli war-crimes. The Labour leaders who soon hope to form the next government do much the same. But the mass protests that week after week rock the streets of London and the protests that are taking place right across the country are fuelling the opposition to Starmer & Co within the broader labour movement.

The demand continues for a ceasefire and for our politicians to halt their support for Israel's war crimes. Make sure they hear it by supporting the protests until the fighting stops.

Kissinger leaves the stage

Although it ill behoves anyone to speak ill of the dead it would nevertheless be hard to find a good word to mark the passing of Henry Kissinger, the former US foreign minister who passed away last month at the ripe old age of 100.

Kissinger, the academic turned diplomat who served US imperialism during the Nixon era will, of course, be remembered as the pioneer who made a historic contribution to the normalisation of American relations with People's China. He was also a supporter of detente which led to the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) negotiations between the USA and the Soviet Union that curbed the nuclear arms race during the 1970s.

The political career of the man who was said to be the master of "realpolitik" in his hey-day ended in 1977 with the defeat of the Republicans in the presidential elections. Kissinger returned to academia to promote his own legend while retaining an advisory role in Republican ruling circles right up until his death in November.

Kissinger may have called his dealings with the USSR "reciprocity" or "realism"; in reality it was just horse-trading with the Brezhnev leadership that was pursuing a futile attempt at achieving nuclear parity with the Americans to divide the world into Soviet and American spheres of influence.

But in what US imperialism considered to be its own "sphere", Kissinger merely continued the Cold War tactics of supporting worthless kings such as the Shah of Persia and military dictators throughout the Global South who willingly sold themselves to US imperialism while supporting what we would now call 'regime change' with disastrous results for the people of Chile and Cambodia.

In reality Kissinger achieved little during his years in Washington. While he remains one of the few post-war US foreign ministers any can recall, this is simply because those that followed him were much, much worse.

A Caravan of Losers in Washington

by Ilya Tsukanov

Liz Truss, the former prime minister who spent 50 days in office before being forced to resign in October 2022, arrived in Washington last week with Tory colleagues to try to convince the Republican Party's MAGA wing to reverse its stance on Ukraine funding. But given her sorry record at home, the ex-PM's chances are anyone's guess, a leading UK politics expert says.

With less than two weeks left in the current legislative calendar to pass Joe Biden's new proposed package of aid to Ukraine, the president has called out the big guns to try to lobby conservative Republicans.

Liz Truss, a well-known 'specialist' on Eastern European affairs, who once confused a pair of Russian regions for Ukrainian ones and vowed that London would always support its "Baltic allies across the Black Sea", arrived in Washington to explain to sceptical Republicans why the USA needs to shell out more money for Kiev in its failing proxy war with Moscow.

Biden wants some \$61.4 billion in assistance, as part of a \$106 billion all-in-one bill that also includes US aid to Israel, funds to stoke tensions with China in Asia, and money to address the crisis at the USA's southern border with Mexico.

Truss, who expressed her support for a Republican returning to the White House in 2024 before heading off to Washington, is now in the US capital along with former Tory leaders Iain Duncan Smith and Michael Howard, as well as Jack Lopresti MP, with the politicians planning to hold about two dozen meetings with conservative, MAGA-supporting politicians and think-tanks through the week.

"We've targeted

Trump-leaning or Trump-supporting Republicans to try to get them to think strategically," Lopresti said of the planned lobbying agenda. "If you want to avoid conflict in the future, you have to have a strong deterrent...it's cheaper and cleaner and quicker to actually solve it now, send a message," he said, referring to the need to continue to inundate Kiev with cash to fight Russia.

Duncan Smith, who never made it to the prime minister's office himself, has sought to link Ukraine to China's purported "threats" against Taiwan, throwing red meat to Republicans with talk of a "new axis of totalitarian states" led by Russia and China that must be stood up to by the "free world".

Newly appointed Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson has criticised attempts to speedily ram through funding bills focusing on an array of disparate issues, but expressed confidence this week that Congress would be able to push through supplemental funding for both Israel and Ukraine, so long as new aid to Kiev is accompanied by changes to the administration's border policy.

"Listen, Israel is a top priority for the United States, and supporting our ally there is critical. It's one of the things we did...It's been sitting in the Senate and on Chuck Schumer's desk. And so we're encouraging him to get that done," Johnson said, referring to the bill passed by the House earlier this month, which Schumer and the Democrats blocked due to its lack of aid to Ukraine.

"Ukraine is another priority," the Speaker said. "What we've said is if there is to be additional assistance to Ukraine – which most members of Congress believe is important – what we have to also work on [is] changing our own border policy. And so

there's been a lot of thoughtful negotiation ongoing with that. I think most of our Senate colleagues recognise that those two things need to move together because we owe that to the American people."

Alistair Jones, an associate professor specialising in British politics at De Montfort University in Leicester, says it's anyone's guess whether Truss can advance the Ukraine funding agenda, suggesting her disastrous record at home may be balanced out by her ideological familiarity with Republicans in the USA.

"The prime minister of the UK for less than 50 days, [Truss has] basically [been] an unmitigated disaster as a prime minister. But if you look at this delegation as a whole, ideologically, they are free market neo-liberals. And that ideological position is actually in line with many of the Trump supporters in the Republican Party," he said.

"The idea here is to point out to the Republicans that if you 'let Russia get away with this aggression', other countries are going to do the same," said Prof Jones.

"Now the delegation itself, if you were to ask people to identify who the delegates were, most people in the UK would not know, even though three of them, including Liz Truss, are former Conservative Party leaders."

As for Duncan Smith, he "was actually removed as party leader...without ever fighting a general election. He was replaced by Michael Howard. Now, Lord Howard, who is also in this delegation, heavily lost the 2005 general election in the UK. So all three of these ex-conservative leaders do not exactly have stellar records in leadership, but they are very much committed to this neo-liberal agenda, free market economics and support of Ukraine," he summed up.

Sputnik

Workers' Notes

Shining Path to Victory

by New Worker correspondent

Lighthouse keepers are more famous for going mad in horror fiction than for participating in the class struggle, but a struggle which has been brewing since March at the Northern Lighthouse Board (NLB) has resulted in a substantial victory for its workers. While there are no longer any constantly manned lighthouses the NLB still employs Able Seamen, base assistants, cooks and technicians to maintain its 208 lighthouses and beacons around Scotland and the Isle of Man. Even in these days of satellite navigation it remains a vital service, especially for smaller ships and amateurs who take to the sea thinking a mobile phone is all they need.

Although the NLB's HQ is in leafy Edinburgh most staff are based at Oban, where there are maintenance workshops and its two ships are anchored.

After an original offer of two per cent (after a pay freeze last year) was rejected as insulting, Unite members took 24-hour strike action in June and July after which the 40 workers voted 100 per cent on a 98 per cent turnout to accept secure a rise of up to 15 per cent for the lowest paid.

The 2023/4 pay offer will see sliding-scale wage increases with the lowest paid benefiting from the highest increases. Marine-based workers will receive a minimum uplift of £2,285. In addition, there are extra holiday entitlement and a consolidated overtime allowance increased to 20 per cent of salaries. As icing on the cake, a reduction in the working week from 42 to 37 hours will also mean that overtime rates will apply after the lower hourly threshold.

Unite industrial officer Alison MacLean concluded that: "The NLB workers provide a vital public service which helps keep mariners safe on their travels. The wage deal secured by Unite is a recognition of that invaluable

Hospital workers stand for Gaza!

by New Worker correspondent



NHS workers held a moment of silence in memory of their colleagues killed during the brutal Israeli onslaught against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip at a solidarity picket outside St Thomas' Hospital in central London on Tuesday. Hospital staff and Palestinian solidarity activists called for an urgent and permanent cease-fire to end the slaughter of defenceless civilians that has already claimed the lives of over 11,000 Palestinian Arabs during the Israeli invasion.

War on the Wards

by New Worker correspondent

One of Britain's most powerful health service unions has recently secured an extra 4.95 per cent pay rise that is on top of the six per cent it secured earlier this year. This comes after unprecedented strike action earlier this year that saw its members take to the picket lines.

This offer is now being balloted on by the membership, but the union warns that the re-ballot for industrial action remains open, and if passed, would enable consultants to call further strikes next year (2024) if the offer is rejected.

Apart from the pay rise changes that will be made to the members' pay scale structure, enabling them to reach the top of the pay scale five years sooner than under the current schemes, at the same time starting salaries and top-of-the-pay-scale salaries will both increase.

The reforms will particularly benefit women who take time out for caring responsibilities and are disadvantaged under the current system. Rights for enhanced shared parental leave will be extended, making "considerable progress" at tackling the gender pay gap.

Other unions in the same line of business were not terribly impressed. The 4.95 per cent was secured by the British Medical Association (BMA) on behalf of

their consultant members.

Further down the NHS food chain, the Society of Radiographers (SoR) who had joined the consultants on picket line were among those feeling left out, with their last strike action carefully timed to coincide with the Tory Party conference.

The SoR has demanded that this month's Health Secretary, Victoria Atkins, treat them in the same way. It warns that: "If the Minister is willing to show the same level of engagement with us as she has shown with the BMA, that progress is possible, further action will be avoided." It also bravely warned that while: "No professionals want to strike but if this is the only way to force this Government to engage constructively then further industrial action will be likely in 2024."

It complains of uncompetitive starting rates for new professionals at Band 5. This is positive discouragement of top recruitment that is causing staff shortages and overwork for existing staff, many of whom are looking for the exit. Another grumble is that the NHS prevents access to paid time off for training and professional development.

The government has said they cannot and are unwilling to discuss an improved 2023–24 pay offer for members as they were now actively discussing the 2024–25 pay round.

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) takes the same view. General Secretary Pat Cullen complains that "100,000 of its

members in England voted in favour of continued strike action just a few months ago in a clear indication that the profession continues to feel undervalued", before adding that: "The government has now shown it has the political will to negotiate on pay reform for some of the highest earners in the NHS in contrast to our members who received the lowest pay rise in the public sector."

A particular problem highlighted by the RCN is that many nurses spend their entire career on Agenda for Change Band 5, which is the lowest band of all regulated professionals in the NHS. The RCN complains that in the last pay negotiations it was offered a commitment to explore a separate nursing pay spine but, as might be expected, nothing was done.

On the Rails and Buses

by New Worker correspondent

There is mixed news from the railways. Firstly, the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) ended their long running (18 months) industrial action and accepted a pay deal from 14 train firms, including a backdated five per cent pay rise for 2022–23 along with much needed job security guarantees. This will ensure no industrial action until the spring – but talks regarding pay

for the current financial year are continuing.

General Secretary Mick Lynch said: "Our members have spoken in huge numbers to accept this unconditional pay offer and no compulsory redundancies until the end of 2024. I want to congratulate them on their steadfastness in this long, industrial campaign." He also warned that: "We will be negotiating further with the train operators over reforms they want to see. We will never shy away from vigorously defending our members' terms and conditions, now or in the future. This campaign shows that sustained strike action and unity gets results and our members should be proud of the role they have played in securing this deal."

RMT members at the 14 companies affected voted overwhelmingly to accept the deal, with the largest majority for acceptance being at Cross Country at 85 per cent.

The other main rail union, ASLEF, the drivers' union, is however continuing industrial action. The action began earlier this week and is supplemented by an overtime ban from 1–9 December. Different train networks will be affected on each day to enhance the impact.

The strike began at EMR and LNER on Saturday; with Avanti West Coast, Chiltern, Great Northern Thameslink and WMT on Sunday; Greater Anglia on

continued on page 4...

...continued from page 3

Tuesday; and so on, until Friday's action involving Northern and TPT drivers.

This is the latest round of action that saw ASLEF call 14 one-day strikes between late July and early October and a ban on rest-day working. Drivers voted by over 90 per cent in most cases. The most militant was the Island Line on the Isle of Wight, which voted 100 per cent for action.

Mick Whelan, ASLEF's general secretary, said: "We are going on strike again not to inconvenience passengers, but to express our disgust at the intransigence of this government, and the bad faith shown by the private companies which employ us."

He added that: "It is clear that the Tory government does not want to resolve this dispute. We haven't had a meeting with Mark Harper, the Transport Secretary, since December 2022."

"We are determined to win this dispute," he said, "and get a significant pay rise for train drivers who have not had an increase since 2019 while the cost of living, in that time, has soared. Don't forget that inflation, at one point, was running at more than 12 per cent."

ASLEF complains that what offers that have been made come with strings, indeed a veritable: "Land grab for all our terms and

conditions – was made in the full knowledge that it couldn't – and wouldn't – be accepted."

ASLEF further complains that the Tory government could easily end the dispute, and that if allowed it could deal with terms and conditions with individual companies.

Another issue affecting the railways is job cutbacks in rail maintenance, which has been highlighted by the third rail union, TSSA.

TSSA has warned that Network Rail's cut's on scheduled maintenance has caused serious problems, including broken or cracked rails on the route from London Paddington to Didcot Parkway.

This, says TSSA, is only the beginning, with Network Rail announcing a reduction of almost 500 jobs, especially the High Output Track Renewals Team, which replaces old rails and sleepers using highly-specialist on-track machinery.

Maryam Eslamdoust, the new General Secretary, warned: "We are deeply concerned to see faults of this nature going undetected. Luckily on these occasions no one was hurt, but on any other day this could have led to catastrophe."

"We strongly believe that the changes Network Rail are looking to implement – reduction

in staffing numbers; changes to ways people work and the significant reduction in routine inspection and maintenance work – pose a very real threat to the future safe running of the railway."

There's more trouble brewing in the north of Ireland and it's down to the British Government's inaction to settle a transport pay dispute. Unite, GMB and SIPTU are calling for properly funded public transport services in Northern Ireland as well as a cost-of-living pay increase. Both their employer Translink and its sponsor, the Department for Infrastructure, highlight inadequate funding under the budget imposed by the secretary of state as the reason for a lack of a pay increase.

Speaking after a successful strike, Unite's Sharon Graham said: "Translink workers are facing a huge real-terms pay cut. This is completely unacceptable and must be reversed. Last Friday's strike action shows the strength of feeling among our members."

A SIPTU Regional Organiser added that: "Chris Heaton-Harris appears to want to adopt a 'pick and mix' approach where he can intervene to direct policy when it suits him on some issues but then can claim he has no powers to intervene when it comes to improving workers' pay. The reality

is that he is using these brutal budgets as a weapon to corral the political parties back into government. That amounts to a policy of collective punishment of workers and the most vulnerable and will never be acceptable."

Across the Irish Sea, bus drivers in the north east of England have been more fortunate and have secured an 11.2 per cent pay rise after a long period of strike action.

The details are that a driver now earning £12.83 per hour will see their pay rise to £14.17 backdated to July and then rising to £14.27 in January. If inflation was then at four per cent in July 2024 their pay would then increase to £14.84 per hour. The same pay award has also been secured for all engineers and administrative staff earning up to £40,000 per year.

At the chalk front

by New Worker correspondent

Even readers who have nightmares about school dinners in their younger days should raise a cheer to celebrate the victory by Unison over the catering company Dolce, who have been forced to pay workers on the north west of England thousands of unpaid

wages after cutting their hours.

The three-year battle began in December 2020, when school meals staff employed by Dolce were told that their hours would be reduced by a 20–25 per cent while others were told they would be moved to zero-hours contracts. They were, however, still expected to work the hours that they were originally contracted to do. Workers on 30-hour contracts had their hours cut to 25 and were told that if they worked 30 the extra five would have to be claimed as overtime.

National Officer Leigh Powell pointed out that: "The employer's argument was that, on returning to school after the COVID-19 lockdowns, school meals uptake was low and therefore profits were too low."

Unison brought a claim of unauthorised deduction of wages on behalf of 50 workers affected, winning thousands of pounds. An additional 23 workers who had TUPE-transferred to different employers have also settled for a substantial sum.

The union's Salford City branch secretary, Diane Ogg, said: "These are people who were classed as frontline workers in the pandemic, and had to endure immense stress at the hands of an employer who informed them that their hours and pay would be cut."

Leigh Powell confirmed that: "Whilst we are delighted that our members have got the money they are due, this issue highlights how lower-paid workers, particularly women, are losing out in the fragmented market that our school meals service has been reduced to."

Unison missed a chance to call for the contract being taken back in house. At North Tyneside the Council has announced it is going down the privatisation road and withdrawing from school catering from the end of March.

Stuart Gilhespy, GMB Organiser, said: "GMB members are up in arms – they don't want to leave council employment." Speaking from experience, he added that: "When private companies have taken over public contracts elsewhere in North Tyneside, the first thing they squeeze is workers' pay, terms and conditions. The council is trying to save money by reducing services to some of the most vulnerable people in society."

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

12th December 2003

CIVIL SERVANTS employed by two major Government departments are balloting for strike action against an imposed pay deal, which they describe as "discriminatory and derisory".

The resultant strike action organised by the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) could involve 100,000 civil servants in the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Home Office.

In the DWP ballot, 94 per cent rejected the deal that introduced a new performance-related pay scheme.

This scheme penalises women taking maternity leave, staff who try to improve their skills through study and even those serving in the Territorial Army in Iraq.

In addition to this pernicious bonus scheme, the basic pay rise was 2.6 per cent, which is below inflation. It equates to less than £1 per day after tax and National Insurance deductions for nearly 90,000 administrative staff.

PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka said: "This is not a step taken lightly but it seems that by imposing a derisory pay offer, management are hell bent on engineering a dispute.

"Their approach has been high-handed and will do nothing to end the endemic low pay that is rife in the department and nothing to motivate on the front line, providing services to the people from the cradle to the grave.

"It further highlights the dangers and mess of delegated pay in the civil service."

Meanwhile staff at the Home Office voted by 81 per cent in a ballot to reject a 1.3 per

cent pay offer.

PCS negotiations officer Jeremy Gautrey said: "With inflation at three per cent, council tax rising and National Insurance contributions up, a cost-of-living increase of 1.3 per cent comes as a slap in the face.

"This will do nothing to motivate those working on the fight against crime and those on the front line tackling immigration."

Earlier this month staff at Glasgow jobcentres walked out spontaneously as the DWP imposed its new package on them. These walkouts could spread as feelings are running high.

One PCS union officer told the New Worker: "The prospect of strikes across the civil service is a result of the employer's failure to deal with the issues of low pay.

"In the DWP 10,000 staff earn less than £10,000 per year and many have to claim benefits in order to live."

The World Does Not Want War

by Vijay Prashad

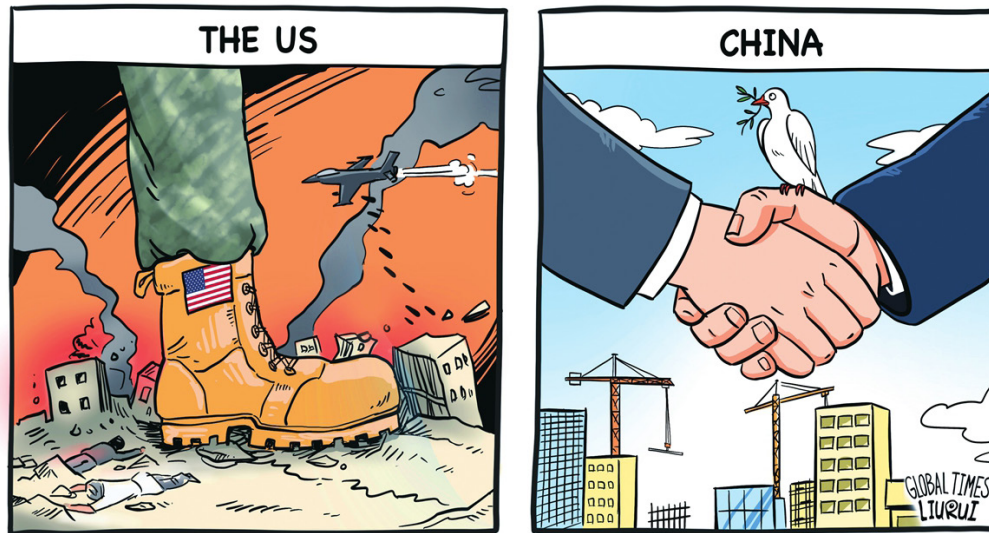
BOTH the wars in Ukraine and Gaza have accelerated a new mood amongst people around the world against conflict and for peace. This mood had been growing before 2022, when Russian troops entered Ukrainian territory, but has only increased since then. Faith in the West's role in the management of world affairs declined during the COVID-19 pandemic, when certain older trends continued to the horror of large sections of the world.

These trends included: the failure of the Western governments and their health system to manage the pandemic in their own countries; the refusal of the Western governments to prioritise the distribution of vaccines across the world, but their insistence that their populations must have far more vaccines than needed; and the insistence that governments in the poorer nations continue to service their odious public debt owed to wealthy bondholders in the west.

It became clear that Western claims to superiority and to benevolence – already eroded by the West's failure to win its illegal wars of the last 20 years (Afghanistan, Iraq) – could no longer be sustained. The emergence of several powerhouses of the global south, alongside these failures, hastened these changes.

A new report from the European Council on Foreign Relations (*Living in an à la carte world: What European policymakers should learn from global public opinion*, 15th November) illustrates the depth of this new mood with data from across the world. The report is based on polling data from 21 major countries: the CITRUS states (China, India, Turkey, Russia and the USA), 11 major European countries, and five major non-European states (Brazil, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and south Korea). The polls

MIDDLE EAST IN THE PAST DECADE



from these countries show that we are not in the era of polarity, with large majorities of the people wanting to live in a world without “one fixed set of partnerships”; instead, people who were polled want their governments to be in contact with all governments and to work with different governments on different issues. Because of this more pragmatic political landscape, the report notes that “much of the rest of the world (outside Europe and North America) wants the war in Ukraine to stop as soon as possible, even if it means Kiev losing territory. And very few people – even in Europe – would take Washington's side if a war erupted between the US and China over Taiwan”.

Vast majorities of the peoples polled in these countries do not accept the Western arguments for the wars in Ukraine and in Palestine. For instance, the report notes that “large numbers of people outside the West think that the war in Ukraine could be less a moral struggle than a proxy war between great powers”, with NATO expansion eastwards seen as the author of the conflict. The entry of Russia troops beyond the Donbas region is not seen as the start of the war, but in fact a part of a long-drawn out conflict that has simmered in eastern Europe as the USA has tried to install by any means (including coups) governments favourable to the West.

“The West (Ukraine, the EU or the US) is seen as the bigger problem not just by people in Russia and China”, the report notes, “but also by those in India, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.” Not only do people believe that the West is to blame for the war in Ukraine, but people believe that “Russia will win its war in Ukraine within the next five years”.

People's China

Perhaps the most striking part of the data in this report is on the issue of Taiwan. Since the USA established diplomatic relations with the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) in 1979, it has adopted the One China Policy. This One China Policy means that the USA has acknowledged that Taiwan is a part of China. That same year, the USA government passed the Taiwan Relations Act, which defines the non-diplomatic links between the USA and Taiwan – keeping alive the false hope in Taiwan that the USA believes that it is independent and that the USA would defend Taiwan from full incorporation into China.

This duplicity – diplomatic relations with the PRC and the Taiwan Relations Act – has defined Washington's links with Taiwan over the last 44 years. Tensions increased over the last five years, after the USA passed the

Taiwan Travel Act (2018) that allowed US and Taiwanese high officials to come to each other's countries. Since 2018, the USA has inflamed tensions with China over Taiwan, as part of the broader US pressure campaign against China.

Half of the Chinese public believes that the USA will start a shooting war against China, while over a third of the population in the West believes that such a war is inevitable between these two important countries. If there is any such war, 62 per cent of the population in the largest European states would like to remain neutral (only 23 per cent said that they would support Washington). Only eight per cent of Europeans would welcome their troops being involved in a war against China over Taiwan, while only 32 per cent of the US population would cheer on the troops.

In both Europe and the USA, large majorities are opposed to such a suicidal war. They want closer ties between these countries, which is perhaps why US secretary of state Antony Blinken flinched in discomfort when US president Joe Biden called Chinese premier Xi Jinping a “dictator”; such language undermines the difficult diplomacy that is underway to re-establish working contact between the two countries.

The sensibility of the population, however, is not captured by any of the

major political forces in the North Atlantic world and certainly not in any anti-war or peace movement. A sharp information war continues to accuse anyone who calls for a ceasefire in Ukraine or for peace between the west and China as, respectively, agents of Russia and China. There is simply no room for the adult conversation to reflect on the new mood illustrated by this polling data. The growth of the anti-war movement in the West has not been a result of these majorities regarding a war with China, precisely because few people believe that it could actually take place; the actual spur for the revitalisation of this movement has been Israel's genocidal bombing of the Palestinians in Gaza.

Palestine

The report from the European Council did not have data on attitudes around the world regarding Israel's barbarous war on the Palestinians of Gaza. There are, however, other indicators that reflect the new mood. Massive protests against the apartheid Israel bombardment of the Palestinians of Gaza continue. An entire new generation has been radicalised by these mobilisations, which have brought tens of millions of people to the streets from Jakarta to Istanbul to Washington, with large marches in Australia and Ireland, as well as in Brazil and Britain.

These protests – despite the bans on them in several western countries – call not only for a ceasefire but for an end to the occupation of the Palestinians. Workers have refused to load and unload ships with goods from or bound for Israel, with particular emphasis on weapons deliveries. Calls for International Criminal Court (ICC) warrants against high officials of the Israeli government now not only come from the streets, but from offices of important governments such as South Africa and Colombia (many countries

continued on page 6...

...continued from page 5

have either withdrawn their ambassadors or threatened to break ties altogether with Israel). If there was large-scale polling, it would reveal that majorities of people want the Israeli bombing to end and the Palestinians to be given a path to a dignified life.

The attitude within the USA – let alone Europe – around the Israeli attack on Gaza is astounding. A Reuters/Ipsos poll last week shows that the US public support for Israel's war dropped from 41 per cent (after 7th October) to 32 per cent, figures that include equal numbers of Democrats and Republicans. Despite the reluctance of all the leading political forces in the USA (from

President Joe Biden to the Republican contenders for next year's presidential election) to back a ceasefire, support for an end to hostilities is at 75 per cent among Democrats and 50 per cent among Republicans with an overall 68 per

cent for a ceasefire. Other polls concur, which makes this an adequate illustration of the US public view of the war in Gaza.

Only 33 members of the US Congress out of 535 members (and one senator out of the 100 senators) back

a ceasefire, however, showing how alienated the elected leaders are from their own constituencies (almost all of those who back the ceasefire call are non-white). Congresswoman Becca Balint was the first Jewish representative to call

for a ceasefire, saying that while she is "one generation removed from the horrific trauma of the Holocaust, which impacted my family", she believes that "killing civilians and killing children" in Gaza "is an abomination and categorical-

ly unacceptable – no matter who the civilians are, and no matter who the children are".

Not one Republican elected to Congress has joined the ceasefire call. They gathered for a pro-Israel rally in Washington attended by Israel's president – who had said that civilians in Gaza are a legitimate target – and Pastor John Hagee – who is a known anti-Semite who has said that Jews were responsible for the Holocaust. The views of men such as Herzog and Hagee as well as most of the US elected representatives are out-of-touch not only with the views of the world, but even of large majorities of people of the USA.

*People's Democracy
(India)*



• China calls for Gaza cease-fire at the United Nations.

Clinging to the colonial past

by Mark Blacklock

It is possible to present an argument in favour of a museum's relics being retained and displayed and not returning them to their land of origin. It doesn't hold up, however, when you hear the other side. One argument in favour of repatriation that overwhelmingly tips the rhetorical balance is quite simple: The objects do not belong to them.

For the last 60 years, the British Museum has relied upon a very convenient law that prohibits the return of artefacts to their home countries, regardless of how they were plundered or misappropriated. This is why the museum's trustees refuse

to hand back Chinese artefacts or those from other nations, such as Greece.

They say such objects are legally theirs and would be safer if kept in London (an assertion undermined when it was recently alleged an employee had taken almost 2,000 objects from

the museum's collection – including gold objects and semi-precious stones – and sold them on eBay).

It gets worse. Britain's intransigence and its arrogant attachment to the bygone age of Empire – when up to a quarter of the world's land surface was ruled from Whitehall – cre-

ated a preposterous diplomatic incident between the UK and Greece.

When the British Empire conquered, colonised and subjugated about 458 million people at its height, it was considered perfectly acceptable to steal the antiquities of other

cultures to cart home as trophies. Although Greece was never part of the British Empire, it was subjugated by the Ottomans, and it was from them that Britain's ambassador to Greece in 1801 says he was given permission to take antiquities from the Parthenon. Nobody

asked the Greeks what they wanted. Even in Georgian England, the acquisition was controversial, with some accusing the diplomat of cultural vandalism. The country's elite, however – in the form of parliament – closed ranks around him and declared his actions legitimate.

It is well known that Greece has for generations insisted the stone carvings taken from the Acropolis in the early 19th Century belong in Athens. In Britain, where they have remained since 1803, they are called the Elgin Marbles, named after the British lord who swiped them. Greeks, on the other hand, call them the Parthenon Marbles, after the Classical archaeological site where they had



remained safely for more than two millennia before the British tore them down.

Last month the Greek Prime Minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, arrived in the UK ahead of a planned meeting with Rishi Sunak. Topics such as the war in Ukraine, the Middle East crisis and climate change were said to be on the agenda. It was widely anticipated that the Parthenon Marbles would also be raised.

Mitsotakis was interviewed on BBC television and repeated his country's long-held position that the Marbles in the British

Museum should be reunited with the other half of the frieze, currently in Athens' Acropolis Museum. He said that leaving half in the UK would be "like cutting the Mona Lisa in half". For Greece, the Marbles are about much more than ownership, they are a direct link to their illustrious forebears in 5th-Century Athens and a symbol of immense national pride.

Just how sensitive Britain is about its historical piracy was then revealed by Sunak's wildly disproportionate reaction, "irritated" by the Greek

PM's comments. He cancelled the meeting the two had long planned. Hours before the 45-minute meeting scheduled for Tuesday lunchtime, the British called it off. Mitsotakis flew home without discussing the Marbles, or anything else on the agenda. He was probably as baffled as most people about why Sunak took such umbrage.

Sadly, Britain has a track record of holding on to other countries' heritage objects, as China knows well. In August, China joined a growing list of nations demanding that the British Museum repat-

riate artefacts from its collection, in Beijing's case about 23,000 Chinese national treasures that were improperly acquired. The request was met with the same response given to the Greeks – that the British Museum Act of 1963 forbids the return of any object unless it is duplicated, damaged and no longer of public interest. The law, however, was designed to keep in Britain what patently does not belong to Britain, and perhaps a reasonable government – once its prime minister has calmed down – might consider new laws that would allow justice to

be done. Even so, this is not about the law.

Both the British Museum and the British government claim that the artefacts were legitimately acquired and are legally owned. They fail to see that the law is not the overriding issue here. It is a moral issue. It's about doing the right thing.

Britain still clings to its colonial past like a child to a comfort blanket. Many see the UK's colonial legacy not as one of exploitation but as a reminder of a past when Britain really could be called "Great". This provides a warped justification for institutions here to

hoard cultural objects that don't belong to them. They also miss the point that justice, rather than legality, is the issue here – restorative justice, perhaps with an acknowledgement of wrongdoing. It would be a way of apologising for the wrongs of the Empire; failure to do so perpetuates the outmoded ideas that have enabled places such as the British Museum to build such a fabulous collection of eight million objects – many of which come from ancient civilisations and don't belong there.

Global Times

COP28: A new attempt to stop the climate crisis

by María Josefina Arce

The 28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28), a new attempt to curb the climate crisis that the planet is experiencing, has opened its doors in Dubai, the biggest city in the United Arab Emirates.

The outlook for this meeting is not at all hopeful. A first report on the Paris Agreement, signed in 2015, showed that the world is far from meeting the objectives to contain global warming below two degrees.

In fact at the current rate of greenhouse gas emissions, the cause of global warming, the world is heading in the



current century to an increase in its average temperature between 2.5–2.9 degrees.

This is confirmed by the annual report on emissions of these harmful gases, which is a serious warning of the catastrophe the planet may face in the not too distant future.

Inger Andersen, executive director of UNEP, the United Nations Environment Programme, urged

developed nations, which are responsible for 80 per cent of these emissions, to take the lead in reducing them effectively.

Experts believe that a change is needed, to encourage even more the use of renewable energy sources and the abandonment of fossil fuels. An urgency that clashes with the interests of the most industrialised countries and the major producers of

oil, coal and gas.

Another issue to be taken into account is support for the least developed countries to achieve this energy transition and mitigate the negative consequences of the climate crisis, because although they are the least polluting countries on the planet, they suffer the most from the phenomena associated with climate change.

This is the case of the small island states, which face the degradation of the natural resources that sustain their economies and, worse still, are in danger of disappearing as a result of rising sea levels.

In the face of record global temperatures and the increasingly frequent and intense natural phenomena affecting the world's population, it is urgent

to adopt more ambitious actions and commitments in favour of the planet.

COP28 is a new opportunity on this path that must not be missed because time is running out and the survival of humanity is at risk.

Radio Havana Cuba

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LETTERS

Dear Comrades

On 30th November comrade Alejandro Cao De Benós, the president of the Korean Friendship Association (KFA), which our KFA UK is part of, was suddenly arrested at the request of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and held for a number of hours before being released.

Supposedly, comrade Alejandro was arrested because he had broken US sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The US sanctions against the DPRK are illegal and have no validity outside of the USA.

The arrest and detention as well as the threatened extradition to the USA of comrade Alejandro is most unjust. It is a politically motivated action and part of an intrigue by the deep state of the USA and some other countries to destroy the KFA. They want to criminalise support for People's Korea! It is part of a wider agenda to shut down dissent towards the status quo in Western countries.

The incident shows how false are the so-called 'democracy' and 'human rights' advocated by the imperialists and their liberal friends. Supposedly we live in a 'democracy' – but those with opinions that are different to the status quo are arrested or kicked out of jobs.

US laws can only apply on US soil, not in Spain or anywhere else. The allegations against comrade Alejandro are anyway inaccurate and completely false. The USA is a gangster state and the Spanish government is acting as its puppet.

There must be full solidarity with comrade Alejandro and the KFA!

**Dermot Hudson
London**

Dear Comrades

The 17th May 1974 Dublin-Monaghan bombings, in which 33 civilians and an unborn child were killed, occurred while the Dáil was debating the Offences Against the State (Amendment) Bill. Before the explosions, many commentators expected the amended bill giving the State greatly enhanced powers against the IRA to fail, but following the explosions, the amendment was passed. Justice Henry Barron's 2003 report into the bombings concluded it was likely that British security force personnel or MI5 intelligence had been involved in planning the attacks.

Civil rights campaigners see parallels between the 1974 bill, which ushered in the repressive Irish Offences Against the State legislation, and the anti-democratic Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill being rushed through the Irish parliament, the Oireachtas, in the wake of the Dublin riots.

Reports circulating online speculate that the arson during the riots in Dublin two weeks ago may have been orchestrated by British intelligence assets embedded with right-wing hate groups operating in Ireland. Based on a single, shocked eyewitness account of "three men speaking with English accents" being the perpetrators of the arson attacks, one would have to regard the possibility of MI5 involvement in the riots remaining in the realm of speculation until firmer evidence is produced.

The gardai have identified 14 "agitators" and say they are investigating at least five well-known far-right activists for their involvement in organising the riots.

Can the current Gar-

da Commissioner Drew Harris, who many believe to have in his possession files of undisclosed information on the perpetrators of the Dublin-Monaghan bombings and who is known to have long-standing connections to MI5, be trusted to lead any investigation into the Dublin riots?

**Bill O'Brien
Ireland**

Dear Comrades

On 23rd November the Saudi authorities arrested Dr Abdullah Al-Ahdal in Mecca because of an article he wrote criticising the weak stance of Arab rulers towards the Gaza war. Dr Al-Ahdal, a Yemeni national and a prominent scholar, is a founding member of the Muslim World League and the Vice President of the Council of Sunni Scholars in the Hadhramaut. The SANAD Organisation for Human Rights has condemned the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahdal by the Saudi authorities and calls for his immediate and unconditional release.

Child defendant Abdullah al-Derazi is at imminent risk of execution in Saudi Arabia. He has recently lost his appeal in the Saudi Arabian Supreme Court, meaning that he could be executed at any time. Campaigners have raised the issue and urged people to take action to stop the execution.

On this day 13 years ago the Saudi authorities sentenced a prominent academic and one of the 'Jeddah reformers', Saud al-Hashimi, to 30 years in prison, to be followed by a travel ban of the same length and a fine of two million Saudi riyals. He remains in custody and human rights activists are calling for his release.

The MENA human rights group sent a letter to the Bureau Internation-

al des Exposition (BIE) member States urging them not to vote for Saudi Arabia to host the WorldExpo 2030. The international community should not give such a global platform to a regime that consistently violates basic human rights, they said.

As the COP28 climate conference in Abu Dhabi (30th November–12th December 2023) proceeds voices have been raised about the policies of the host country, especially in the fields of human rights and oil exploration. Calls have been made for the release of at least 26 political prisoners, including human rights defender Ahmed Mansoor and 24 others known as the UAE94.

**John Hughes
Bahrain Freedom Movement
London**

Dear Comrades

Reports that Israel is using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to generate 'targets' in Gaza are disturbing. Not so long ago there were reports of how AI can generate nonsense ('hallucinations'). This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

**Brendan O'Brien
London**

Dear Comrades

The Black Panthers were founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale on America's West Coast in 1966. But perhaps the most advanced political activist and thinker in its ranks, Fred Hampton, was based in Chicago.

Hampton was born in a working class suburb in the aftermath of the Second World War. Both his parents were trade union activists.

He studied law because he wanted to help African Americans deal with Chicago's notoriously racist Police De-

continued on page 9...

Diary

Check the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and Stop the War Coalition websites for emergency Gaza protests across the country.

EVERY SATURDAY

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

SAT 9 DEC

National Demonstration for Palestine: Full Ceasefire Now – Stop the War on Gaza! Assemble at 12 noon at Bank Junction, London EC3V 3LA.

SUN 10 DEC

Korean Friendship Association: People's Korea: Continuing the Revolution and Living Its Own Way. Online Skype meeting 15:00 (Time to be confirmed) Skype link from juche007@yahoo.co.uk

MON 11 DEC

Liberation: End the war on Palestine! Living in peace is a human right! 17:30 Online meeting. Register at liberationorg.co.uk

UNTIL 14 DEC

Townsend Theatre Productions: *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*. Neil Gore's one person adaptation. Nationwide tour, see TTP website for venues.

UNTIL 30 DEC

Working Class Movement Library: *That Impudent Little Party: The Independent Labour Party 1893–1975*. Exhibition, Wed–Fri afternoons, WCML, 51 Crescent, Salford M5 4WX.

TUE 5 DEC

Socialist History Society: Jad Adams on Decadent Women: *Yellow Book* Lives. 19:00 Online Zoom meeting. Log on at <http://www.socialisthistorysociety.co.uk>

UNTIL TUE 12 DEC

International Brigade Memorial Trust: *The Brigaders Return*. Film about the return of the British Battalion in London on 7 December 1938. See IBMT website for UK wide venues.

TUE 9 JAN

Marx Memorial Library: Marxism, the State and Revolution. Eight week online course. Register on MML website.

WED 17 JAN

Anglia Ruskin University: Sir Christopher Pissarides on Automation and its impact on the labour market. 18:00–19:00. Virtual event. Book on Eventbrite.

SAT 20 JAN

Marx Memorial Library: Symposium to Commemorate the centenary of Lenin's death 1924–2024. 11:00. Hybrid meeting. Book on MML website.

SAT 27 JAN

Cuba Solidarity Campaign: Latin America Conference 2024. 10:00. Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD.

SAT 24 FEB

Palestine Solidarity Campaign: AGM 9:30–16:30. Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London, WC1 4RL.

SAT 2 MAR 2024

Women Against Pit Closures 40th Anniversary, Durham. Details TBA.

SAT 9 MAR

1984–5 Miners' Strike, Doncaster. Details TBA.

SUN 28 APRIL

Workers Memorial Day. See TUC and STUC websites for local events.

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partment.

He also helped to build-up his local branch of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People) before joining the Panthers.

The Panthers had a 10-point programme for racial equality. They confronted racist cops on the streets with their own guns; and they campaigned against the Vietnam War where African-Americans accounted for 25 per cent of combat deaths in the conflict.

In time Hampton, who was explicitly socialist, rose to become deputy chair of the Black Panther Party nationally. It was this that brought him to the attention of the police and the FBI.

In 1968 they tried to frame him for the theft of \$71-worth of ice cream from a street vendor. Then on 4th December 1969 armed officers burst into his apartment and shot him dead in his bed. He was only 21.

Ten years later the Hampton family was awarded nearly \$2 million by the Chicago police. It was a “tacit admission that his murder was nothing short of an extra judicial execution” (*Counterfire*, October 2023).

But his inspiration for socialists and his ideas live on. Hollywood has now brought out a biopic of his life, called *Judas and the Black Messiah*. See it on Netflix.

**Alan Stewart
Wakefield**

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

Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

It has generally been a quiet period in Scottish politics. The Health Minister is keeping a low profile in the hope he can cling on to his job. A predictably bad set of education statistics competed with the news that another leading SNP figure has announced he is giving up as the highlight of the week. Michael Russell, the former MSP and Minister, announced he was stepping down as party president despite being re-elected as recently as October. He hopes to get on the quango gravy train and become Chairman of the Scottish Land Commission, a post which requires the approval of Holyrood where the SNP is in a minority.

Heroes of the Scottish Working Class

The recently passing of a former member of the now-defunct Trotskyist International Marxist Group (IMG) has been widely covered in the British press. His apprenticeship of trying to sell its paper to bemused Edinburgh railwaymen clearly fitted the late Alistair Darling (Baron Darling of Roulanish to be precise).

He soon abandoned ‘revolutionary’ politics to climb up the greasy pole of the politics of the mainstream labour movement to end up becoming the saviour of British capitalism when serving as Gordon Brown’s Chancellor of the Exchequer

at the time of the 2008 financial crash.

Darling was born in London but his parents came from Lewis in the Outer Hebrides.

His grandfathers were both Liberals and one great-uncle, Sir William Darling, had been Lord Provost of Edinburgh and later served as an Edinburgh MP, representing the Scottish Unionist Party (the precursors of the current Scottish Tories).

Darling’s family moved back to Scotland when Alistair was 12 and he was sent to the country’s oldest boarding school, Loretto, near Edinburgh.

His career, which saw him serve as local government councillor in Lothian, also saw him spend the entire New Labour Blair Brown years of 1997–2010 in high office. Starting as a humble Chief Secretary of the Treasury, he served as Work and Pensions Minister, Transport Minister, Scottish Secretary President of the Board of Trade and finally Chancellor.

Around the same time of his passing, the annual *Herald*-sponsored Scottish Politician of the Year awards were handed out. This event was a useful reminder that many other Scottish politicians have followed a similar trajectory as Darling.

This year the main award went to Dame Jackie Baillie, a right-winger distinguished for being a temporary Leader of the Scottish Labour Party during the frequent periods when it was found necessary to replace the Leader for one reason or another.

Her other distinguishing feature was being an MSP since the foundation of Holyrood and actually sitting for a proper constituency, rather than getting elected on a Regional List as a reward for coming second.

Another winner was the highest-ranking Scot-

tish working class person in British politics. This is the well-known figure of John McFall, who because he is 79 received the “Lifetime Achievement Award/Outstanding Political Achievement”.

To give him his Sunday name, The Right Honourable John McFall, Baron McFall of Alcluth, is of course the Lord Speaker who presides over the red benches of the House of Lords, London’s premier retirement home.

He was a Labour & Co-operative MP for his home of Dumbarton between 1987–2010, after which he went to the Lords. His career in the lower House reached a peak when he chaired the Treasury Committee. His 1995 private member’s bill to ban the hunting of mammals was a failure at the time but bore fruit in later years.

His present lofty post came in 2021 after serving as Deputy Speaker for the previous five years. The very model of a modern Labour MP he was a teacher before entering the Commons, having graduated from the Open University sometime after leaving school with no qualifications.

Awards Galore...

But to return to the lofty “Scottish Politician of the Year” awards. This has been an amusing part of the Scottish political scene since 1999. Some of the awards have gone to pretty obscure recipients.

The category of “One to Watch” has gone to such figures as the Tory MSPs Gavin Brown and Derek Brownlee, as well as Labour’s John Park whom I had never heard of before looking up the full listings on Wikipedia. In 2006 the entire Parliamentary group of seven

Green MSPs received this particular award for some reason.

It is not difficult to get noticed in a 129-seat chamber.

The most notable event in the history of this august ceremony, however, was the occasion of the 2004 awards when former Labour MP Michael Goodall Watson, Baron Watson of Invergowrie, presently the opposition spokesman on Education in the Lords, enlivened proceedings by setting fire to two separate sets of curtains at the venue, Edinburgh’s Prestonville Hotel. This saw him convicted and imprisoned for “fire-raising”, taking up residence at another of Her Majesty’s residences, and being forced to resign from the Scottish Parliament and the Board of Dundee United.

Anyone who is anyone in Scottish politics seems to get one or other award, if only they just hang around long enough. All the present party leaders, except the Tory leader Douglas Ross, have one or other.

Labour’s Anas Sarwar received the main award and “Debater of the Year” last year and was earlier “Community MSP of the Year”. Competition for the debaters’ award at Holyrood is not particularly stiff, and actually asking a few questions on behalf of constituents is enough to win the latter award.

Nicola Sturgeon got the main award four times, the first in 2008; her now mortal enemy Alex Salmond only twice. All the First Ministers except Henry McLeish have won it.

So that non-MSPs do not feel neglected there are awards for the “Best Scot at Westminster”. This year’s winner was Tory Scottish Secretary Alister Jack. A notable absentee is the SNP’s previous Westminster leader, humble crofter Ian Black-

ford. Gordon Brown has been the most frequent winner. Other winners include Jim Murphy in 2009 and 2010, who went on to lead Scottish Labour into the 2015 wipe-out. Robin Cook seems to have won it in 2003 for resigning rather than for his ministerial achievements.

Outside of Holyrood, awards are given to the best “Public Campaign/Campaigner of the Year” for those who stand up to the SNP Government. This year it went to those who campaigned for an inquiry into a clumsy NHS surgeon.

There is also a “Councillor of the Year” for local worthies.

Those who are addicted to their mobiles can qualify for the “e-Politician of the Year” category, which was not awarded this year.

Others apart from John McFall who have secured the “Lifetime Achievement Award/Outstanding Political Achievement” award include (again) Gordon Brown, Menzies Campbell, the former Liberal leader, and the important Joe Quinn, former Scottish Political Editor of the Press Association. The latter gives hope to the *New Worker*.

Scraping the bottom of the barrel is the “Committee/Committee Member(s) of the Year”. It goes to both individuals such as Kenneth Gibson of the SNP and Labour’s Richard Leonard MSP, and whole committees such as the Public Accounts Committee, thus assuring that most MSPs technically get an award simply for doing the job they were elected to and paid for.

Other specific awards have fallen by the wayside over the years.

It is hardly surprising that the “Free Spirit” award has vanished as it would be difficult to find any plausible candidate to whom it could be awarded.

Stop the Slaughter in Gaza!

by New Worker
correspondent

The first Saturday of December saw the latest round of pro-Palestine solidarity events calling for a ceasefire, with unions joining the protests for the first time. Local protests were held all around the country and all over London. London comrades joined demonstrators at two of them.

In North London, protesters marched down to a rally outside Camden Town Hall in Bloomsbury sending a vocal message to the Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer, the local MP who still refuses to back calls for a ceasefire.

RMT President Alex Gordon addressed the rally, speaking of the need for union representation at these events, and pledged his union's ongoing support and solidarity.

Liz Wheatley, from Camden Unison, spoke



• Marching through Camden.

of the overwhelming support for a ceasefire among the Camden Council workers that her branch represents, and how no Camden Labour councillors have called for a ceasefire.

Sabby Sagall of Camden PSC and Sam Weinstein of IJAN (International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network) both spoke of how their Jewishness informed

their support for the Palestinian cause and people, and that to them being Jewish meant always being on the side of the oppressed and not the oppressor, echoing the words of Warsaw Ghetto Uprising leader Marek Edelman.

There were also speakers representing predominantly Bangladeshi Muslim local Community Groups.

Among the points they made were that opinion polls in Camden suggest 90 per cent local support for a ceasefire, even higher than the 74 per cent national average, and that our representatives, at both local and national level, do not represent the communities they are supposed to serve.

South of the river supporters of the Palestine Solidarity

Campaign along with the South East London People's Assembly gathered outside Lewisham Library to demand an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, as well as to mobilise support for the big rally on the 9th of December and to support the boycott of Puma.

Speakers said that

the oppression of Palestinians did not start on the 7th of October but existed long before that. The local Labour MP Ms Janet Daby was notable by her absence and was denounced by one speaker for not supporting the motion in parliament for an immediate ceasefire.



• Marching through Lewisham.

Defending the Korean people!

by New Worker
correspondent

British Korean solidarity activists pledged to redouble their efforts to defend Democratic Korea at an international solidarity meeting in Spain last month.

Over the weekend of the 25/26 November the international Korean Friendship Association (KFA) met in Barcelona for its annual conference, which brought together militant defenders

of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) from the four corners of the globe.

The meeting was presided over by KFA President Alejandro Cao De Benós and Dermot Hudson, the KFA UK Chairman.

Alejandro de Benós said: "The year 2023 has been a very significant one, Korea celebrated great anniversaries for the victory in the fatherland's liberation war and the foundation of the Republic.

"Although it was not possible to join them together with our comrades, we participated in online and public events to contribute with our grain of sand to the marked days."

Dermot Hudson said that: "The 75th anniversary of the DPRK on 9th September this year was an event of tremendous significance not just for the people of the DPRK but for the world progressive and revolutionary people. The DPRK is the only

socialist state in the world to have celebrated its 75th founding anniversary. Others that were proclaimed to be 'ideal models of socialism' by some fell by the wayside.

"Various prophets of doom of the mainstream media and bourgeois academia and even some so-called communists predicted the 'collapse' of the DPRK not just once but many times but the DPRK celebrated its 50th anniversary, then

55th anniversary, 60th anniversary, 65th anniversary, 70th anniversary and now its 75th anniversary, proving the cynics and doom-mongers totally wrong."

Many other delegates joined in the day-long discussion that also heard messages of support from all round the world, including one from the KFA Cuba which said: "This year we managed to get the friendship group's website to reach 380 followers, of which

approximately 80 per cent are Cubans. On this page we are able to show Cubans what the life of the north Korean people is like as well as explain their way of life, in this way we eliminate black legends and myths regarding the nation."

After the meeting the participants enjoyed an excellent meal in a local Chinese restaurant, and went on a tour of the centre of Barcelona and the docks area the following day.

Lenin Was Right: The Ukrainian war proves that

International Ukraine Anti-Fascist Solidarity held a successful 'hybrid' meeting in central London earlier in November. Speakers from Britain, Ireland, Ukraine, the Russian Federation and Poland spoke on the platform or via Zoom on the topic 'The struggle against Banderite fascism and the future of Ukraine'. This is the contribution from Konrad Rękas, a Polish journalist and political commentator.

In 1913, the world was convinced that the threat of war was completely impossible, which was related with the progress of civilisation, the development of science, and especially the international system based on the so-called concert of powers, international conferences during which colonial empires shared global spheres of influence. In reality, however, under the skin of this alleged belle époque there were insurmountable contradictions and class conflicts, and enlightened minds already saw the spectre of a crisis that would surpass all previous problems of capitalism.

Nevertheless capitalism always tries to move forward, changing itself just to continue its basic goal: unlimited, infinite accumulation, achieved thanks to the exploitation and oppression of the working class. And precisely so that these oppressed and exploited did not see their chains, the demons of xenophobia, racism, chauvinism

and jingoism were invoked. The world war meant not only new, gigantic profits. It was also a great draining of workers' blood, a release of emotions and the lowest human instincts, as a result of which British, German, French and Russian workers murdered each other instead of turning their weapons against their real enemies: capitalists, plutocrats and the imperialist governments corrupted by them.

Historical mistake

One hundred and nine years ago, even a huge part of the European left got carried away by false, nationalist emotions, widely joining the camp of the global war. Those few who called for peace, for solving real, pressing social problems, were murdered, such as the Frenchman Jean Jaures, or imprisoned, such as the Scotsman John Maclean.

The war, started under the pretext of a secondary incident in the distant Balkans, covered almost all of Europe, and a significant part of the colonies in Africa and Asia, claiming nearly 20 million victims. A war that almost no one believed was a threat a year earlier...

In fact, only one major socio-political movement opposed the war from the beginning, rightly seeing it as just another stage of capitalism and imperialism. Only the Bolsheviks from the beginning condemned the primitive blackmail of pseudo-pa-



Konrad Rękas

dziennikarz

triotic nationalism used to draw nations into war. And only the Bolsheviks acted in accordance with the best interests of the global proletariat, implementing the programme: "War on the palaces – peace to the huts!". For there is no other just struggle than the class struggle, the struggle of the oppressed against the oppressors, the struggle of those who have nothing to lose except their chains, against those who have everything.

Peace, Land and Bread

We have met a few days after the 106th anniversary of the Great October Revolution and immediately after the 105th anniversary of the end of the war in 1918, and we still find this programme relevant. Peace, Land and Bread.

War, unimaginable yesterday, is today an everyday reality for

Ukrainians and Russians, Palestinians and Jews. Land, water and natural resources are the subject of increasing accumulation. We are observing the takeover of Ukrainian agricultural production by global corporations such as Bayer-Monsanto, DowDuPont/Corteva and BASF. The legendary fertile Ukrainian chernozem or black soil is today used to produce artificial toxins in the interests of globalists. The same applies to the gas deposits in the sea shelf of the Gaza Strip, over which the Zionists want to take direct control.

Nazism – the last resort of capitalism

Concentration of ownership is also a constant for the Western world. Even more so when we face the growing Nazism today. Nazism is always

the last weapon of capitalism. Today, global liberalism has summoned two of its historical dogs of war to the idea: Jewish fascism: Zionism, and Ukrainian Nazism: Banderism. Genocide has been going on in Gaza and in the whole of Palestine since 1947, now escalated by an obviously Zionist provocation.

Similarly, the Western takeover of Ukraine is marked by genocide: the provocations in Kiev in February 2014, the mass murder in Odessa on 2nd May 2014, the relentless attacks by Kiev troops against the people of Donbas, resulting in over 20,000 people killed and injured in the last nine years.

The wars in Palestine and Ukraine are parts of the global war against Nazism, but also the manifestation of class struggle.

In Ukraine, this war is taking a particularly harsh, cruel, dehumanised course, under the authoritarian rule of oligarchs and compradors who deny the working class basic rights, even those formally guaranteed during the liberal oligarchy period after 1990.

The Ukrainian work-

ing class is exploited without even a theoretical right to resistance, and at the same time, millions of Ukrainian migrant workers join the reserve army of labour not only in Poland but also in Western countries, such as the UK. This phenomenon has an objectively negative impact on the position of the Western working class, supporting ethnic prejudices inducted by the capitalists to prevail against the common class cause.

Revolution will prevail!

The cyclical nature of the crises of capitalism and imperialism are a necessity, directly as Marx predicted, and the same is about our obligation to hold active resistance. The liberation of Ukraine from Nazism is therefore today not only a Ukrainian issue, but also a deeply internationalist issue. And as internationalists we must say clearly today: just as our forefathers defeated Nazism by raising the banner in Berlin over the Third Reich's Chancellery and the Reichstag, today we must do it again in Banderite Kiev and Zionist Tel Aviv!

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Who Will Pay for Zelensky's Wall?

by Ekaterina Blinova

President Vladimir Zelensky says that Ukraine has now entered a new phase of the conflict. He wants to build defensive structures from the Donbas to the Black Sea. But will it succeed?

Zelensky told the US media that Kiev has failed to achieve the desired results during the summer counter-offensive. "There is not enough power to achieve the desired results faster. But this does not mean that we should give up, that we have to surrender."

Now the Ukrainian leader is seeking to build new fortifications across the entire front. But Russian military expert Ivan Konovalov believes that despite his brave face

Zelensky's latest initiative shows that Kiev is in a no-win situation.

"This is an acknowledgement that the Kiev regime is losing: they are changing tactics from offensive to defensive," Konovalov said. "Of course, Zelensky is unable to admit this officially. However, the very statement about the creation of fortified

areas and structures in cities, that is, layering [of defences], is precisely an admission that no-one believes that the Ukrainian front will hold. It's an admission that the moment is approaching when it will really collapse. And therefore, [Zelensky] is creating approximately the same as what Hitler did in accordance with

his city defence plan. Everyone remembers how it all ended, what situation Nazi Germany had faced. Obviously, for the Kiev Nazis it will end in much the same way."

Meanwhile, some Russian military observers have calculated how much Zelensky's defence line would cost. The total length of the defence line would be at least

1,700 miles long. It would take at least eight to nine months to build such a line, let alone a multi-layered defensive system, and cost at least \$10 billion.

Konovalov says Zelensky's plan is just "mission impossible". It can't be done, he says. "Therefore on one hand we need to remember that this is

just a declaration. On the other hand we should never forget that any undertaking of the Kiev regime is mired in corruption."

He pointed out the lack of any oversight over Kiev's spending, which will make it absolutely impossible to calculate how much money would be really spent on construction and how much would end in the pockets of Ukrainian politicians.

"How much do they already intend to steal? This is the big question that needs to be raised," Konovalov stressed. "And at the same time, one needs to ask Zelensky and his entourage how much money they intend to make out of this, because they want the West to pay for all this madness."

Sputnik



• Russian troops on the move.

Will Israel be excluded from the Olympics?

by Oscar Sánchez Serra

If the world were to adhere to the ideals of the Olympic spirit: culture, friendship and peaceful competition – it would have to be crowned with a laurel wreath, like the victors of the sporting events in ancient Greece. The planet in which we live, however, increasingly convulsed by petty aspirations and the unquenchable thirst for power, has overturned that pure message.

The ancient Olympic Games took place every four years from 776 BC to 393 AD. It began in an era marked by fratricidal

wars between the city-states of the Hellenic universe. In the rules of those athletic events, however, a sacred truce was decreed throughout Greece.

That truce, called Ekecheiria, originally lasted for one month. It was then extended to three. Bearing arms was forbidden in the territory of Elis where the Games were held. At the same time, it forbade any obstacle to athletes, official missions or even spectators going to the Games that were held at the sanctuary town of Olympia in Elis.

In the modern world, three Olympic compe-

titions were aborted by war. In 1916, the First World War frustrated the 6th Olympic Games. The Second World War prevented the 12th and 13th Games.

This month Russia again raised its disagreement with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) over the future of its athletes. But Russia will continue contacts with the IOC, despite the statements of its president, Thomas Bach, who called on international sports federations not to participate in Russia's 2024 World Friendship Games.

The IOC called on sporting federations to

ban athletes from Russia and Belarus from participating in competitions due to the hostilities in Ukraine and banned Russia and Belarus from organising international sporting competitions of their own last March. But it has agreed to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes who neither support the military operation in Ukraine nor are linked to the army or security forces, to participate in sports events under a neutral flag.

It is vital to shield the Olympic movement from double standards because history is full of them. None of the European colonial powers, namely

France, the UK, Germany and Italy, hungry for power and exponents of the nationalism of the so-called Old World – the main causes of the First World War – ever received a single IOC warning, much less a sanction.

Neither Germany nor Japan, who unleashing the second world conflagration, were ever sanctioned by the IOC. The USA razed Iraq to the ground, made Afghanistan ungovernable, has tried to overthrow more than 30 governments of different countries, is suffocating Cuba with a genocidal blockade,

and the IOC has not even warned it.

In the Donbas, in the border area between Russia and Ukraine, a beach full of children was razed to the ground, and Russia was sanctioned for defending itself against NATO's encircling intentions, with its neighbour, Ukraine, as the spearhead.

There has been no pronouncement from the IOC on the Israeli massacres in Gaza, which in five weeks claimed over 11,000 Palestinian lives. Will Israel be excluded from the Olympics in Paris next year?

Granma