

No arms for Israel! Stop the War now!

by our Arab Affairs
correspondent

Street battles rage throughout the Gaza Strip as Palestinian militiamen fend off the Israeli invaders who have killed over 27,000 Palestinians and damaged or destroyed at least half of all the buildings in the Palestinian Arab enclave. Israel hits militia camps in Syria and Lebanon, and Hezbollah, the Lebanese resistance movement, responds with rocket attacks on Zionist settlements. Palestinians in the occupied West Bank take up the gun to halt a new wave of Zionist settler violence as the Houthi Yemeni government steps up its blockade of Israeli shipping in the Red Sea.

Now other Arab partisans are joining the fight. On Monday two rockets fell near a US military base controlling oil fields in American-occupied northern Syria, just a day after an Arab resistance drone attack killed three US troops and injured 25 others at another US base in Jordan, near the border with Syria.

Human rights campaigners have welcomed the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) decision ordering Israel to take "all measures within its power" to

prevent acts that could amount to genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, and Hamas is studying new cease-fire proposals brokered by Qatar and Egypt. But in Tel Aviv the Zionist leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, says the war will continue until "total victory".

The International Court stopped short of explicitly demanding a ceasefire. But it acknowledged there is a plausible risk of genocide in Gaza and refused to dismiss the case brought by South Africa. And there are renewed calls to suspend imperialist arms supplies to Israel that amount to complicity and violate international law.

Meanwhile, UN Secretary-General António Guterres is meeting with key donors to

UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, after the Americans and their lackeys halted funding for the agency after Israel accused 12 UNRWA employees of helping Hamas stage the 7th October attack. UNRWA has fired nine staffers in response to the allegations and the matter is being investigated. But the UN say the Israelis have not directly shared any evidence to substantiate their claims.

UNRWA say the Israelis have attacked its facilities in Gaza at least 260 times, killing at least 360 Palestinians since 7th October. And at least 20 aid organisations, including ActionAid, Oxfam and Save the Children, have condemned the decision to suspend funding, warning it could lead to

a "complete collapse" of the humanitarian response in Gaza.

In Israel, tens of thousands took to the streets across the country on Saturday to demand the release of hostages, end the fighting and hold fresh elections to get rid of Netanyahu. A former head of the Shin Bet security service told a local rally that: "After 113 days of fighting, 1,400 dead and murdered and more than 1,600 wounded, it's time we move to conclusions. It is not possible for the IDF [Israeli army] to wage war on four fronts at the same time. Our dependence on the US is absolute." Carmi Gillon said: "Every Israeli citizen will bear this mark on their conscience if the hostages, alive or dead, do not return home. My conclusion is that the prime minister does

not want the end of the war and therefore will prevent the return of the hostages in any way. We have no faith in the government that brought us to the brink of destruction. We demand elections now!"

Omri Evron, a leading member of the Communist Party of Israel, who helped to organise the anti-war protests, said: "The killing of thousands and thousands of Palestinians, the vast majority of whom are innocent civilians, is not only reprehensible, it does not serve the security of the people of Israel. It does not bring us security, it only ensures the next massacre, the next cycle of violence," he said. "Currently, they [the protestors] are chanting 'refuse to kill, refuse to fight, refuse to murder' – this is our call."

FUND

This week's post brought us £679. The running total is now £2,027 and we need to raise £1,473 by the end of January to hit our £3,500 target for the month.

We're going to be out this weekend in London and all over the country demanding an end to the carnage in Gaza and justice for the Palestinian Arabs. This is what we stand for and what we've always stood for since the *New Worker* first hit the streets in 1977.

We've always taken the principled stand supporting the anti-war movement in Britain and national liberation movements all over the world. But we can only do it with your help. We rely entirely on our readers to keep our presses going. We've got suppliers to pay and hefty bills to meet to maintain the *New Worker* and expand the print edition and the electronic version that goes all round the world every week.

Keep up the fight for peace and socialism and above all keep our presses rolling, 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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TELEGRAM: T.ME/PALESTINERESIST

WHO ARE THEY?

The Joint Operations Room of the Palestinian Resistance is a joint military operations room that includes the military arms of the major Palestinian resistance factions across Palestine. It was introduced in 2006 by Hamas and PIJ to unite their military factions during battles with the IOF.

WHERE ARE THEY MOST ACTIVE?

Official Joint Operations Rooms in Gaza and Jenin.

ARSENAL

Anti-aircraft weaponry, mortars, advanced missiles, air and naval drones, anti-tank guided missiles, small arms, and advanced explosive devices.

The Joint Room has organized annual joint military trainings for all factions in Gaza since 2020. They are the central body that governs Gaza's military responses. Hezbollah and IRGC are occasionally present.



JOINT OPERATIONS ROOM

THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

The thin red line

The Sunak government has wisely dismissed General Sanders' recent call for a "citizen army" for war with Russia, which in his mind has already begun in Ukraine. "This war is not merely about the black soil of the Donbas, nor the re-establishment of a Russian empire," the worthy general says. "It's about defeating our system and way of life politically, psychologically and symbolically. How we respond as the pre-war generation will reverberate through history. Ukrainian bravery is buying time, for now."

Downing Street says the "British military has a proud tradition of being a voluntary force. There are no plans to change that", adding that "hypothetical scenarios" about potential future conflicts were "not helpful".

The grandees are well aware of the outcome of such a war in which there would be no winners and very few, if any, survivors. They know how deeply unpopular a return to conscription would be with the teenagers who would be the first to be called-up for what was called "national service" until it was abolished in 1960. The same goes for the senior officers who shudder at the thought of injecting the youth culture of today into the armed forces.

General Sanders, the Chief of the General Staff, is a scion of the ruling class who's spent his entire life in the army. He knows all this. He knew he'd get no takers when he made his controversial comments at the International Armoured Vehicles Conference (IAVC) in London last week. His speech isn't the beginning of a new campaign to take us back to the 'good old days', but part of the efforts by the most venal and aggressive sections of the British ruling class to serve US imperialism and maintain and increase British defence expenditure.

The USA is the only country that's used nuclear weapons against a civilian population and since the Second World War they have threatened to nuke other countries including those that don't possess nuclear weapons. Britain is a major arms supplier and its troops are deployed in a growing number of war zones and areas made unstable as a result of imperialist intervention and aggression.

The Americans removed their nuclear missiles from the UK in 2008 after judging that the supposed threat from Moscow had diminished. Now they're coming back.

Now US navy secretary Carlos Del Toro is calling on the UK to "reassess" the size of its armed forces given "the threats that exist today" and the Americans are using the "Russian threat" to create new bases on our soil for their weapons of mass destruction. According to the *Telegraph* the USA plans to place B61-12 gravity bombs, three times as strong as the Hiroshima device, at the RAF Lakenheath air base in Suffolk.

In the corridors of power those who do the bidding of the USA argue that this is the only way to protect the British imperialist interest across the globe. They call it the "special relationship" although the only thing that is special about the Atlantic alliance is that the Americans speak our language. General Sanders, however, speaks theirs.

Wake up to the American blame game

by James Smith

The USA recently asked China to "help" maintain the flow of Red Sea shipping. The USA is currently in a state of conflict with Houthi rebels in Yemen. The cause of the conflict is a failure of the USAQ to push for a ceasefire and peace negotiations in Israel, which has caused regional tensions and instability. The USA and UK, in turn, have responded with a bombing campaign in Yemen. According to US officials, however, it is China who should apparently be making the peace.

We've heard this all before. The USA has also repeatedly stated that it is China's responsibility to ensure peace in the Ukraine conflict too. The reality, however, is that in both scenarios, not only does US foreign policy run completely contrary to the interests of peace but, moreover, the White House has no intention in either instance of attempting a balanced peace scenario brokered on China's terms.

Instead, what is being asked is that Beijing capitulates to enforcing American-centric goals and interests in respect to each conflict. And of course, because US officials know there is no chance of that happening, the goal of these public overtures is merely a propaganda effort to smear China as being responsible or culpable for the given wars that the USA is in fact escalating, and thus to frame China as a threat to the international order.

American foreign policy is not driven by an attempt to ensue balance, peace or stability, but on a pre-requisite goal that it must always maintain unilateralist hegemony at all costs. To this end, contemporary US foreign policy-making, unlike the Cold War, does not yield a notion of compromise with states that it deems

to be adversaries. Rather, its objectives focus on preventing the breakdown of unipolarity and enabling strategic competitors to emerge that challenge the post-1991 status quo. In other words, the USA pursues maximalist goals and does not compromise on 'strategic space' in its diplomacy and continually aims to expand its leverage.

That is why, for example, the USA was not prepared to compromise on the subject of NATO in order to alleviate tensions with Russia or bring a swift end to the Ukraine conflict. Instead, it set itself on a policy that aimed to use the conflict as a means to impose a zero-sum strategic defeat on Moscow so that it could eliminate them as a competitor and destroy economic integration between Russia and Europe. The USA only finds a peace outcome acceptable if it supports all its strategic goals.

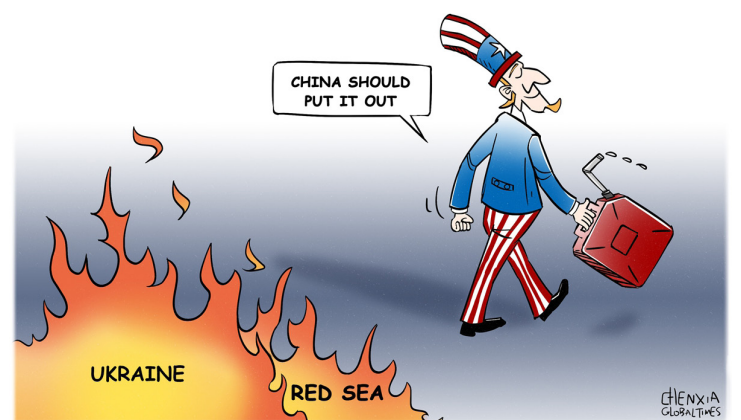
Given this, when China proposed a peace plan for the Ukraine conflict last year, the USA readily dismissed it. Yet at the same time, the USA had repeatedly asked China to put 'pressure' on Russia to end the conflict. What does this mean? It does not mean brokering a peace or a mutually acceptable resolution, but rather subduing Moscow to follow American foreign policy preferences, which is of course a total non-starter. China isn't being asked to make peace or find a mutually acceptable resolution, but to act on the behalf

of the USA.

Therefore, as China will not support unilateralist American foreign policy goals in seeking peace, the USA subsequently uses this to push a narrative that China is a "threat" to the peace. This is the propaganda game played by US officials. It is an act of 'gaslighting' to demand that China supports 'peace', when in fact it means supporting 'American strategic goals'. When China does not comply, it is accused of deliberately prolonging and enabling the conflict.

The mainstream media in turn responds by assuming that China 'supports' the side against the USA in the given conflict. In the process, the narrative then whitewashes the actual culpability America has in having created those wars in the first place through its pursuit of unilateralist and zero-sum policies. One example of this is refusing to compromise on the expansion of NATO, or alternatively, giving Israel unconditional and uncritical backing in the war on Gaza and even resorting to more military solutions when the instability escalates. Yet China, a bystander, who does not have a direct stake in any of these conflicts and would prefer peace and stability as its primary goals, is somehow framed as the threat in a conspiracy against the West. This is the game the USA plays and everyone should wake up to it.

Global Times



Workers' Notes

Rubbish from Council Management

by New Worker correspondent

First in South Tyneside: In a long-running dispute, the local council has resorted to supplying skips for uncollected rubbish that has built up during an on-off strike which began in early November.

One of the causes of the dispute was that, incredibly, some workers were disciplined for helping residents, which is firmly against council rules. More than 80 per cent of the refuse workers are, or have recently been, on formal warnings. According to their union, GMB, their offences include helping an elderly woman with dementia find her way back to her home, and for carrying a wheelie bin back up steep front steps for a disabled resident.

After these grievances were lodged in June an independent investigation was commissioned by the council in September, but no action was taken, thus the binmen voted solidly for strike action.

GMB organiser Mark Wilson commented: "The way these lads have been treated by South Tyneside Council is a disgrace. To get a warning for showing common decency by helping elderly and disabled people is sickening. The time has come to say enough is enough, the bullying tactics have to be put in the bin. After years of promising and failing to tackle the toxic culture in the yard we have had no choice but to take strike action."

Across the country refuse workers employed by Cheshire West Recycling have secured pay rises ranging from seven to 11.8 per cent after 170 workers belonging to Unite voted for strike action. This caused bosses to cough

up an improved deal of £1.25 extra per hour, backdated to last April. The deal also includes an extra two days of annual leave and a guarantee of a future RPI-related increase.

The union's regional officer Samantha Marshall said: "The determination of Unite's members ensured Cheshire West Recycling returned to the negotiating table and made a pay offer that met their aspirations."

Doing well, but not entirely so, are the more than 100 Huddersfield refuse and recycling workers employed by Suez who secured a 10 per cent rise.

Again, the deal was secured by more than 100 workers voting for strike action. The resulting deal is a 10 per cent rise for 2023, again backdated to April 2023, and an RPI inflation rise from April 2024.

Unite regional officer Karl Stephenson correctly observed that: "The unity that our members have demonstrated ensured that Suez returned to the negotiating table and made a pay offer that met their aspirations."

Alas, further south, in Cardiff, things are more like events at South Tyneside. Strike action in the city's council's refuse and recycling department that started on 28th December was originally due to end on the last Thursday of January but will now continue until the third week of February. As in South Tyneside, the dispute is not about pay but the council's failure to address issues such as a widespread bullying culture within the refuse and recycling department and the use of agency labour.

The council has largely ignored union complaints and has announced it attack the annual leave accrual of striking workers.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham demanded that: "The council's priority should be dealing with the bullying culture within the refuse and recycling department and ending the practice of workers waiting four years for a permanent employment contract."

The present action is the 14th week of industrial action since last September.

The union's Wales regional secretary, Peter Hughes, added that: "Cardiff residents are facing rising council tax bills and reductions in their services whilst the council leadership seem intent on doing nothing to resolve this strike. [Council Leader] Huw Thomas' inaction means the council is paying out a fortune in overtime pay whilst residents' streets pile up with rubbish."

These are four separate disputes, involving both direct and contracted-out bosses. Refuse workers could become the new vanguard of the working class. Just a few missed collections make it apparent just how vital decently paid council workers are to the wider public.

Bricks and Mortar Battle

by New Worker correspondent

Another group of blue-collar council workers taking strike action is that of the building workers in the Midlands borough of Sandwell, where about 100 workers are taking 14 days of strike action throughout this month and next over a broken pay promise.

This industrial action will seriously impact council property repairs and cause ongoing delays to its maintenance schedules.

Last August carpenters, bricklayers, plasterers, roofers, glaziers, plumbers, and painters and decorators secured an agreement of a market supplement of £2,900 which the council had calculated. This has now been reneged upon.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "Our members have had enough of Sandwell's disgraceful behaviour. It is refusing to honour an agreement it made over a year ago and making flimsy excuses. These are skilled workers who fully deserve a market supplement in recognition of the higher wages they could earn elsewhere. They are absolutely right to strike and they have Unite's full support

in doing so."

Regional officer Lee Wiggetts-Clinton added that: "Unite has given the council every opportunity over the last year to resolve this dispute. Strike action can still be avoided but that requires the council to pay what it promised."

Our Learned Friends of the Workers

by New Worker correspondent

Seven years ago in 2017, general union Unison won a Supreme Court case against the Government on the issue of imposing fees on claimants at Employment Tribunals (ET). The fees had been introduced in July 2013 with the aim of preventing ETs doing their job, which is to function as a sort of small claims court for workers in dispute with their employers.

In a very rare example of their learned lordships coming down on the side of the working classes, in their final judgement they said that the fall in ET claims when fees were introduced were "so sharp, so substantial and so sustained" that they could not reasonably be afforded by those on low to middle incomes.

Responding to the Government announcement that it is launching a "consultation" about re-introducing such fees, the present Unison General Secretary Christina McAnea said: "The government should be tackling the real issues the country faces, not trying to pick another fight with working people."

"The fact that ministers want to reheat a failed and illegal policy shows that this is a government that ran out of ideas some time ago and needs to step aside."

She added that: "When Unison forced the fees to be scrapped in 2017, the UK Supreme Court said the government had acted unlawfully and unconstitutionally. Nothing has changed. Tribunal fees

were unfair then and they are still unfair today."

The Trades Union Congress agreed. Its General Secretary, Paul Nowak, thundered: "This is another example of ministers taking the side of bad bosses, not working people. Now, the government wants to make it even harder for working people to seek justice if they face discrimination, unfair dismissal or withheld wages." He gave a recent specific example of this: "When P&O Ferries flouted employment law by sacking 800 workers without notice, they did almost nothing about it."

As a result of the July 2013 imposition of fees, claims at ETs dropped by 67 per cent. This is not surprising as in many cases the fees were set at a level that could vastly exceed the value of the remedy sought by claimants. After the 2017 Supreme Court ruling, the number of employment tribunal claims bounced back by 39 per cent.

The Tory Government falsely claimed that most cases were frivolous, when in fact very few were. When ETs were established by Harold Wilson's Government in 1964, net there were no fees for claims or appeals.

As with the Rwanda deportation scheme, the Government has been seeking a way round unfavourable legal judgements. This time round the Tories are asserting that they are following the 2017 judgement.

Mike Freer, Minister for Courts and Legal Services, said that its proposed fees are much less expensive than before, with a claimant paying £55 to issue a claim at an ET and an appellant paying the same amount at the Employment Appeal Tribunal. There will be no hearing fee this time.

In 2013 the Coalition introduced ET fees that started at £100 for simple cases and £250 for more complex cases, with hearing fees on top. ET Appeals started at £400.

Under the new proposals the same £55 fee will cover multiple applicants, with remission from fees for people

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who genuinely cannot afford the fee, (as with the revised "Help with Fees" remission in the other courts) and a few specific ET claims will be exempt. The Government claims this meets the Supreme Court's judgement as the £55 fee "is generally affordable for claimants and appellants". We can be sure that this figure will not stay at £55 if it is imposed.

Railway Times

by New Worker
correspondent

Once again, the railways seem to be the main site of industrial action at the moment.

Rail union RMT has announced strike action on London Overground (part of the capital's local train service) after more than 300 workers rejected a below-inflation offer from contractor Arriva London. The action involves security, station, revenue and control staff on Monday and Tuesday on the 19th and 20th of this month, and on the same days in the first week of March.

After RMT members voted overwhelmingly for strike action, General Secretary

Mike Lynch pointed out that: "London Overground workers do an important job delivering services for TfL [Transport for London] and supporting passengers on journeys throughout London. Our members are furious that they have been given a below inflation pay offer and want to see an improvement that represents the value they bring to the company." He also warned: "If this dispute cannot be resolved then RMT is more than prepared for a sustained period of industrial action to get London Overground workers the pay rise they deserve."

Also in the capital, bus drivers employed by RATP Dev Transit London are already engaged in strike action that will continue until next Thursday. RATP, which serves west and central London, warns that passengers can expect few services on its routes on these days.

To return to the railways, 400 RMT members working on train and track maintenance up and down the East Coast mainline for Hitachi have downed tools at Craighentenny, Bounds Green and Doncaster maintenance depots.

The union claims that a risk assessment of the safety regime of Hitachi in the event of a strike has found it is not

up to standard and thus poses risks to the travelling public.

Hitachi Rail shareholders received £260,179,000 in dividends, which clearly explains why there is nothing left over for the workers.

Mick Lynch said: "We have made every effort as we always do to try and find a negotiated settlement to this pay dispute. However, despite enormous profits and eye watering sums of money paid to shareholders, the company is unwilling to make a proposal that is satisfactory to the people whose work makes the company a success."

At the same time the aristocracy of the railways, the drivers and their union ASLEF, continue their pay struggles by a combination of strike action and a ban on rest day working, the latter being a particularly effective tool as train operating companies are reluctant to train sufficient drivers.

This week and next 17 train companies will be affected, resulting in no service or late starts and early stops on affected days. This come despite action at LNER being called off. Last Tuesday saw full strike action on Southeastern, Southern, Gatwick Express, South Western Railway, Great Northern and Thameslink,

which was followed by full strike action on TransPennine Express and Northern the next day. An overtime ban followed on Thursday, with Friday seeing strike action on C2C, Greater Anglia and LNER. This weekend will see strikes on Saturday at Avanti West Coast, West Midlands Trains and East Midlands Railway, and a Sunday overtime ban. Monday will see Great Western, CrossCountry and Chiltern drivers on strike.

Last April ASLEF rejected the offer of a four per cent pay rise over the next two years (which came only after a year's fruitless talks), which apart from being well below inflation was the first rise since before the pandemic and came with strings. The Tory Government has taken a largely hands-off stand, although Prime Minister Rishi Sunak recently deplored the failure of the Train Operating Companies to make use of its new Minimum Service Level Act.

ASLEF General Secretary Mick Whelan complained that: "We have given the government every opportunity to come to the table but it is now a year since we had any contact from the Department for Transport. It's clear they do not want to resolve this dispute. Many members have

now not had a single penny increase in pay for half a decade, during which time inflation has soared and, with it, the cost of living."

Speaking for the bosses, the Rail Delivery Group merely deplored ASLEF's stand, saying the "leadership need to recognise the financial challenge facing rail". These challenges largely include shovelling vast sums of public money into the pockets of private investors at home and abroad. That suggests this dispute will run and run. Perhaps a shorter all out nationwide strike will bring home the bacon.

At a more modest level it is good to report that contracted-out cleaners on the TransPennine Express (TPE) employed by Bidvest Noonan have forced bosses to cough up a "living wage" of £12 per hour and staff travel facilities, which will bring cleaners into line with directly employed workers. Talks "to develop a roadmap for reaching £15 per hour" have been promised.

Not all is well in the world of trade unionism. In the third railway union, TSSA, the recently elected General Secretary, Maryam Eslamdoust, has been formally accused of presiding over "an atmosphere of anxiety, hypervigilance and worry" resulting in "staff once again feeling demoralised, ignored, distrusted and exhausted". This was part of a letter from the GMB union that represents trade union staff and was leaked to the left-wing Skawkbox website by a former senior TSSA official.

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

30th January 2004

WHEN LORD HUTTON finally delivered his long awaited report into the death of Dr David Kelly he would have would have retained more credibility if he had made some sort of pretence at even-handedness or impartiality.

We had all seen and heard the evidence that was presented to the inquiry last summer – Hutton's conclusions were a matter of interpreting that evidence.

In the face of the evidence he found Tony Blair totally innocent of any deception or improper behaviour, either in distorting the

case for war against Iraq or in releasing Dr Kelly's name as a whistle-blower.

He also found both the BBC and Dr Kelly guilty – Dr Kelly of talking out of turn, "in breach of civil service guidelines", and the BBC for broadcasting the possibility that the Government had manipulated information given to it by the intelligence services to make a case for the illegal invasion of Iraq.

Blair is euphoric. The report was published less than a day after he had won a very narrow victory in the House of Commons in the Bill to raise university top-up fees.

That tiny victory was gained through the now familiar tactic of winning over one of the leading rebels at the last minute, in this case Nick Brown, throwing the rebel camp into confusion.

But what a hollow victory it was. Labour's majority cut from 161 to five as over 70 Labour rebels voted with the opposition to

try and block the university top-up fees Bill.

Many voted against their conscience only because they were afraid that the fight could end in a Tory general election victory.

Blair thinks he has got away with it, he thinks he has survived his two critical tests unscathed.

He may be still standing but he is damaged. Labour has a majority in the Commons of 161. Yet only by threatening to go for a vote of confidence and bring down the whole Labour government was he able to intimidate enough backbenchers to win the vote on top-up fees.

Blair's decision in 2002 to back Bush's illegal war on Iraq put him at odds with the United Nations and with Europe. Powerful forces in the ruling class still want him out and Hutton's whitewash won't placate them.

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To be a socialist one must be an anti-imperialist

Since the writing of the *Communist Manifesto* and the founding of the First International, proletarian internationalism has been a cornerstone of scientific socialism and is a pillar of Marxism-Leninism. Today, in the era of imperialism, putting genuine proletarian internationalism into practice demands that we be consistent anti-imperialists.

Beyond any moral questions, there are two obvious, material reasons for this proletarian internationalist, anti-imperialist unity. On the one hand, every dollar that goes to imperialist war is a dollar that could have been spent on people's needs at home. But even more importantly, every blow struck against imperialism weakens the monopoly capitalist class here.

What imperialism is and what it is not

First, let's be clear on what imperialism means. Understanding the link between imperialism and monopoly capitalism is essential. Indeed, imperialism and monopoly capitalism aren't just linked, they're synonymous. Failing to understand this, some people think any kind of big country is an empire and that any empire is imperialist, from ancient Rome to socialist China. But this is an idealist and metaphysical view. In other words, this view fails to look at how imperialism develops historically, according to definite material processes. It should be obvious that the Roman Empire and the American empire are qualitatively different.

If we look at imperialism historically, we have to understand its relationship to the dominant socio-economic system. Lenin developed the

scientific analysis of imperialism in his book *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, to help the working-class movement understand the demands that this new historical stage of capitalism placed on the socialist movement. In *Imperialism and the Split in Socialism*, Lenin writes: "Imperialism is a specific historical stage of capitalism. Its specific character is threefold: imperialism is monopoly capitalism; parasitic, or decaying capitalism; moribund capitalism. The supplanting of free competition by monopoly is the fundamental economic feature, the quintessence of imperialism."

Lenin goes on to explain that imperialism, as monopoly capitalism, has five principal characteristics: "Monopoly manifests itself in five principal forms: (1) cartels, syndicates and trusts – the concentration of production has reached a degree which gives rise to these monopolistic associations of capitalists; (2) the monopolistic position of the big banks – three, four

or five giant banks manipulate the whole economic life of America, France, Germany; (3) seizure of the sources of raw material by the trusts and the financial oligarchy (finance capital is monopoly industrial capital merged with bank capital); (4) the (economic) partition of the world by the international cartels has begun. There are already over one hundred such international cartels, which command the entire world market and divide it 'amicably' among themselves – until war redivides it. The export of capital, as distinct from the export of commodities under non-monopoly capitalism, is a highly characteristic phenomenon and is closely linked with the economic and territorial-political partition of the world; (5) the territorial partition of the world (colonies) is completed."

This is the historical materialist view of imperialism as it exists today. Thus, Lenin points out that: "Imperialism, as the highest stage of capitalism in America and Europe,

and later in Asia, took final shape in the period 1898–1914. The Spanish-American War (1898), the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05) and the economic crisis in Europe in 1900 are the chief historical landmarks in the new era of world history." The rise of imperialism in the USA led to the colonisation of foreign territories and contributed to the development of oppressed nations within the borders of the USA, such as the Chicano Nation in the South-west, the African American Nation in the Black Belt South, and the Hawaiian Nation.

Dialectically, the era of imperialism has led to the development of four fundamental contradictions operating on a world-scale: the contradiction between labour and capital, the contradictions between the imperialists among themselves, the contradiction between the imperialists and the movements for national liberation, and, following the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, the contradiction between

the imperialist and socialist systems.

It is important to note that some people choose to ignore the historical connection between the development of monopoly capitalism and imperialism. They argue that countries such as China are imperialist because they engage in foreign trade. Looking at the difference between the foreign policy of China and the imperialist countries will help us understand what imperialism is in practice, and what it isn't. Basically, what these people fail to understand is that imperialism is fundamentally exploitative, extractive and violent.

Imperialism relies upon predatory loans, structural adjustment programmes, unequal trade agreements, privatisation and liberalisation, to ensure that it can extract as much profit from its colonies and neo-colonies as possible. Capital is exported to the under-developed countries in order to exploit cheap labour. By locking these oppressed nations and peoples into a permanent state of under-development it is able to achieve a higher rate of exploitation than it can otherwise. This super-exploitation allows the imperialist powers to prop themselves up with these super-profits, using them as a kind of life-support, to prolong the existence of the capitalist system far beyond its natural lifespan.

This inevitably leads to the sharpening of the contradictions between the imperialists themselves and the contradiction between the imperialists and the movements for national liberation. For this reason, the imperialists must back all of this up with military force. For the USA, this includes a network of military bases, spanning the world, and its military alliances, such as NATO, which it dominates.

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• The ugly face of American imperialism.

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It will not hesitate to intervene militarily, or to arm and fund its proxies, such as Ukraine and Israel. It will stage coups and assassinate leaders. There is no price in human bloodshed and suffering that is too high to protect US hegemony and imperialist super-profits.

China's foreign policy in the developing world is nothing like this. It is neither exploitative nor extractive and is based on equal and mutually beneficial trade agreements. It is also fundamentally peaceful. The countries that benefit from trade and development from China are not locked into under-development by China. Nor are they targeted for Chinese military intervention or coups. On the contrary, China provides an alternative to imperialist under-development that many countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America are glad to take.

China doesn't do this

because the Chinese are nice and the imperialists aren't. The imperialists are violent, exploitative and extractive because they must be. The imperialist system is governed by laws, laws inherent to capitalism. China behaves differently because these are laws from which the working class has freed itself in the socialist countries.

Socialism, and China in particular, is thus a counterbalance to imperialism in the world. This counterbalance causes the contradiction between the imperialist and socialist systems to sharpen, leading to a constant barrage of anti-China propaganda and increasing aggression from the USA towards China.

Imperialism and war

Beyond this question of what imperialism is and what it isn't, there is further confusion about what it means to be consistently anti-imperialist

in relation to the question of war. Because monopoly capitalism relies upon military intervention, that is, upon war, to further its aims, progressive people everywhere rightly oppose imperialist war. But it is possible to make a very dangerous error here.

There is a pacifist trend in the anti-war movement that originates in the ideology of the petite bourgeoisie. These people oppose all war, regardless of who is fighting and for what. They see the violence of the imperialists and the violence of the oppressed as equally bad. These are the kind of people who, in the face of Zionist apartheid in Palestine and the US-backed genocide in Gaza, demand first and foremost the movement's condemnation of Hamas. They demand peace, condemning both the reactionary violence of the oppressor and the revolutionary violence of the oppressed. There is a material basis for

this kind of thinking. The petit-bourgeoisie is a class stuck between a rock and a hard place. They are driven down by the monopoly capitalist class, but they also benefit from the exploitation of labour and support the capitalist system. By taking this pacifist approach, they wash their hands of the whole conflict, and try to cling to the status quo.

On the other hand, there are also social-democrats who turn a blind eye towards imperialism. These people believe that 'socialism' can be built within the framework of monopoly capitalism, despite the super-exploitation of the oppressed peoples of the rest of the world. This is why the representatives of this ideology tend to lend their support to the US wars for empire, while they clamour for "socialism" at home. They see "socialism" as social programmes under capitalism, like Medicare, public works projects, the postal ser-

vice and fire departments. Their 'socialism' doesn't challenge the power of the monopoly capitalists but would merely regulate it.

Based on the so-called 'Nordic model', this kind of 'socialism' is really just imperialism dressed in red – they advocate socialism in words but imperialism in deeds. This is what Lenin called "social-imperialism". These reformists argue for class collaboration, denying that the contradiction between the working class and the capitalist class is fundamentally antagonistic. And so, these "socialists" don't understand that the starting point of socialism is the seizure of political power by the working class.

Some of these social democrats are the 'progressive except for Palestine' variety. They support progressive reforms that would help working and oppressed people, but when it comes to foreign policy, especially in regard to support for Israel, they hold social-chauvinist and down-right reactionary positions. Right now, as Israel continues to wage a genocidal war against the Palestinian people, these so called 'socialists' have nothing but praise for Zionism and the Israeli apartheid state, and nothing but scorn and condemnation for principled anti-imperialists who stand in solidarity for the unified Palestinian Resistance.

We must be absolutely clear: victory for the resistance in Palestine is a victory for working and oppressed people everywhere, and that victory is coming closer every day. History will remember the Israeli state together with apartheid South Africa, as a stain on history and a mark of shame to everyone who ever supported

it. As Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) leader Leila Khaled once put it: "The supreme objective of the Palestinian liberation movement is the total liberation of Palestine, the dismantlement of the Zionist state apparatus, and the construction of a socialist society in which both Arabs and Jews can live in peace and harmony." When that day comes, not only will the Palestinian people be liberated from oppression, but a mighty blow will be struck against the monopoly capitalist class in the USA that relies on the Zionist state to maintain its hegemony in the Middle East.

Social-chauvinist thinking isn't a new problem, but it must be addressed again. Indeed, Lenin fought these tendencies in the Second International. Lenin argued that true proletarian internationalism means that socialists should support the defeat of their own imperialist governments in their wars of domination and plunder. Lenin put it simply, saying: "During a reactionary war a revolutionary class cannot but desire the defeat of its government." During the First World War, Lenin fought against those in the socialist movement who called for a 'class truce' during the inter-imperialist war.

Some 'socialists' even supported 'defence of the fatherland', wrongly identifying the interests of the working class with the national interests of the capitalist ruling class. In his 1915 essay *The Defeat of One's Own Government in the Imperialist War* Lenin takes to task those 'socialists' such as Karl Kautsky in Germany and Leon Trotsky in Russia who opposed the slogan of revolutionary defeatism, that is, the call for the defeat of one's own



• Palestinian resistance.

imperialist government and the demand to transform the reactionary inter-imperialist war into a revolutionary, civil war. In his 1916 article *Opportunism and the Collapse of the Second International*, Lenin further attacks these social-chauvinists, saying: “War is often useful in exposing what is rotten...”

But imperialist war is only one side of the equation. The reality is that some wars are unjust and others are just. Mao Zedong put it this way in his book, *On Protracted War*.

“History shows that wars are divided into two kinds, just and unjust. All wars that are progressive are just, and all wars that impede progress are unjust. We Communists oppose all unjust wars that impede progress, but we do not oppose progressive, just wars. Not only do we Communists not oppose just wars; we actively participate in them. As for unjust wars, World War I is an instance in which both sides fought for imperialist interests; therefore, the Communists of the whole world firmly opposed that war. The way to oppose a war of this kind is to do everything possible to prevent it before it breaks out and, once it breaks out, to oppose war with war, to oppose unjust war with just war, whenever possible.”

The wars carried out by the imperialists for hegemony, to divide and re-divide the world, and to protect their super-profits, are unjust. They sacrifice the lives of millions for the sake of profit, to make sure the lines on the graph go up and that the vaults of the shareholders are filled to the brim. This is why the USA gives billions in military aid to its proxies, such as Israel, to maintain its foothold



in the Middle East. No matter the war crimes or atrocities, the USA is always ready with its cheque book. These wars impede progress.

On the other hand, wars that oppose imperialism, that fight for national liberation from foreign capital and their domestic lackeys, are progressive, just wars. From Palestine to the Philippines, people are fighting tooth and nail to throw off the yoke of imperialism and colonialism, to achieve national liberation, independence and dignity. These wars are just and should be supported.

During the Second World War, in the *Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War*, Mao put it like this: “The specific content of patriotism is determined by historical conditions. There is the ‘patriotism’ of the Japanese aggressors and of Hitler, and there is our patriotism. Communists must resolutely oppose the ‘patriotism’ of the Japanese aggressors and of Hitler. The Communists of Japan and Germany are defeatists with regard to the wars being waged by their countries. To bring about the defeat of

the Japanese aggressors and of Hitler by every possible means is in the interests of the Japanese and the German people, and the more complete the defeat the better... for the wars launched by the Japanese aggressors and Hitler are harming the people at home as well as the people of the world.”

Because the anti-imperialist struggle is the strategic ally of the working class movement, Mao explains, “in wars of national liberation patriotism is applied internationalism”.

During the Second World War, the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union transformed the nature of that war. The war began in 1939 as an inter-imperialist war for the re-division of the world between the imperialist powers, but once the Soviet Union came under attack in June of 1941, it was no longer correct to regard the war as a purely inter-imperialist war. The contradiction between the imperialist and socialist systems came to the forefront, leading communists to join in the effort to defeat Nazi Germany, the main danger to the USSR. Further-

more, communist-led resistance movements, particularly in China, Yugoslavia and Albania, were waging just wars for liberation against imperialist occupation.

Friends and enemies

At the core of all this lies an important point, that Mao summed up well when he said “we should support whatever the enemy opposes and oppose whatever the enemy supports”.

Who is the enemy? The imperialist, monopoly capitalist class. Who does the enemy oppose? Everyone fighting against oppression and for liberation, and everyone who challenges their hegemony. Who does the enemy support? Anyone who will serve their interests, who will help them in their drive for domination and exploitation.

Stalin makes this crystal clear in his 1924 book, the *Foundations of Leninism*, when he says: “The revolutionary character of a national movement under the conditions of imperialist oppression does not necessarily pre-suppose the existence of proletarian

• One struggle! One fight!

elements in the movement, the existence of a revolutionary or a republican programme of the movement, the existence of a democratic basis of the movement.”

Stalin gives the example of Amanullah Khan in Afghanistan: “The struggle that the Emir of Afghanistan is waging for the independence of Afghanistan is objectively a revolutionary struggle, despite the monarchist views of the Emir and his associates, for it weakens, disintegrates and undermines imperialism.”

To clarify this point, Stalin contrasts the nationalist movement in Egypt to the Labour Party in Britain. He writes: “The struggle that the Egyptians merchants and bourgeois intellectuals are waging for the independence of Egypt is objectively a revolutionary struggle, despite the bourgeois origin and bourgeois title of the leaders of Egyptian national movement, despite the fact that they are opposed to socialism; whereas the struggle that the British ‘Labour’ Government is waging to preserve Egypt’s dependent position is for the same reason a reac-

tionary struggle, despite the proletarian origin and the proletarian title of the members of the government, despite the fact that they are ‘for’ socialism.”

This may seem strange to some people, but the reason for this is simple. The monopoly capitalist class that is oppressing, in Stalin’s example, the Egyptian independence movement, is the very same monopoly capitalist class that is exploiting the British working class. Their defeat by the Egyptian independence movement weakens them, helping the British working class to overthrow them. There is a strategic alliance that is possible here, even among classes with different interests, because they share this common enemy.

US imperialism is in a state of prolonged and inevitable decline. Since the historic defeat of US imperialism in Vietnam, the USA has grown more and more desperate. Like a cornered beast, it lashes out everywhere. For all of its snarling, biting and clawing, it accomplishes little at great cost. Its place of dominance in the imperialist system, established at the end of the Second World War, is slipping away. The labour movement is seeing an upsurge, the national liberation struggles are advancing, and the socialist countries are gaining strength.

US imperialism fights on many fronts, and each defeat it faces is a victory for the working class here and around the world. Everyone who wants socialism should celebrate every blow struck against the imperialist, monopoly capitalist class.

FightBack News (USA)

LETTERS

Dear Comrades

Once again, it is confirmed that the Israeli plan goes beyond the aggression on the Gaza Strip to affect all aspects of the Palestinian issue, in an attempt by Israel to benefit as much as possible from the support provided by the Western coalition to it – and this time the goal is the Relief Agency and millions of Palestinian refugees.

If the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip was based on the lie of killing children, burning civilians, and beheading, then some Western countries followed it and built on it their political positions and practices towards the Palestinian people, even though the White House confirmed that it has no tangible evidence to confirm the allegations of killing and burning, and that what the American President spoke about this matter was inspired by a phone call with 'Stinky Yahoo' [Netanyahu] and from Israeli reports that were proven to be incorrect even by the Israeli police, who were unable to prove a single piece of information from the dozens of lies spread by Zionist propaganda in the first days of the aggression.

A new Israeli-American project directly targets Palestinian refugees and their right to return, after Israel announced that 12 employees working for the relief agency in the Gaza Strip participated in the 7th October operation, which resulted in a number of Western countries announcing that they would cut their financial contributions to the agency. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), which is considered the primary source in providing educational, health and relief services to millions of refugees who are spread in: Gaza Strip, West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

As a result, Israel quickly picked up on these

positions and announced publicly and explicitly: that the UNRWA will not be part of the day after the Gaza Strip, which confirms that there is a real plan being worked on between a group of countries that targets the UNRWA and its future under the pretext of the participation of some of its employees in the 7th October operation.

Although the Commissioner-General of UNRWA announced the dismissal of a number of employees pending the results of the investigation, which is a surprising and unacceptable measure, a number of Western countries (the United States, Britain, Australia, Canada, Finland and Italy) anticipated the results of the investigation and suddenly announced the cessation of financial support for UNRWA, under Israeli pressure. Which accuses the UNRWA of corruption and subjugation, despite the United Nations confirming that it conducted a number of investigations, all of which confirmed the UNRWA's commitment to the values and principles of the United Nations, and therefore the Israeli allegations are incorrect.

We cannot understand the Western positions regarding the UNRWA except that it is a cheap blackmail tool that some countries have resorted to in the context of continuing the war they are waging against the Palestinian people, and these are measures that can only be explained as a war of starvation. Collectively against millions of refugees in the context of exploiting the current conditions to eliminate the refugee issue and the right of return by targeting the UNRWA, as it is one of the basic foundations on which the right of return is based.

We call on the parties of the world, especially in the countries concerned that support the Israeli aggression, to raise their voices in

rejection of these measures that directly respond to the positions adopted by the Israeli government, which has been inciting for years against the UNRWA and its services, and we affirm that new attempts to target UNRWA on the financial level will be doomed to failure given because the reasons relied upon are false and misleading and lack accuracy and objectivity in all their details.

While we hold the concerned countries responsible for the repercussions of their positions and policies towards the Palestinian refugees who will defend their right to education, health and a decent life free from oppression and aggression. we reaffirm our right to return to our homes and properties from which we were displaced in 1948 by the force of murder and terrorism committed by Zionist terrorist groups with direct support from The British Mandate, which abused the trust of its mandate over Palestine and colluded with the Zionist movement in implementing its historical project of occupying Palestine and displacing its people.

Foreign Affairs Department, Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)

Dear Comrades

As darts champions arrive in Manama for the Bahrain Darts Masters, the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) and Reprieve have called on them to distance themselves from sports-washing and speak out in support of political prisoners and death row inmates. Mohamed Ramadan, a Bahraini man on death row who maintains innocence, has urged players competing at the Bahrain Darts Masters to show support for human rights in the tiny kingdom.

Human rights in Bahrain were raised this week in the Irish Parliament by

Sinn Féin spokesperson Matt Carthy. These concerns were addressed by the Tanaiste [deputy head of government] Micheál Martin (Fianna Fáil), who said there are “ongoing instances of violations ... including violations of freedom of expression, as well as the targeting of human rights defenders”.

**John Hughes
Bahrain Freedom Movement, London**

Dear Comrades

Reactionaries everywhere will be horrified, the fake left will be distraught and the ultra-left filled with anger. I am stirred by thankful emotion.

Two new generation 22220-class nuclear powered icebreakers are to be constructed at the Baltic Shipyard in St Petersburg. One will be named *Leninograd*. Andrei Bochkarev, Governor of Russia's Volgograd region, proposed that the other be called *Stalingrad*. President Putin has approved both of the two names. The President attended a keel laying ceremony on 26th January. marking the 80th anniversary of the ending of the 900-day siege of Leningrad. A long blockade that saw much of the city destroyed and a loss of life greater than any city had ever endured.

Volgograd was called Stalingrad between 1925–1961. The strategically sited city is overseen by the magnificent monument 'Motherland is Calling' and was the site of a major battle between August 1942 and February 1943. Hitler launched a massive offensive to capture the city, destroy the Red Army and secure the Caucasus oil fields. Stalin mobilised the entire population and bitter street fighting took place. Most of the city was in German hands. Soviet General Georgi Zhukov launched simultaneous assaults from two directions

continued on page 9...

Diary

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

EVERY SAT

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.

UNTIL 31 MAR

Martin Parr Foundation: *Photographs from the Miners' Strike 1984–5*. Paintworks, 316, Arno's Vale, Bristol BS4 3AR.

FRI 2 FEB

Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group: Scrap Universal Credit. Picket 12:00–13:00, DWP HQ, Caxton House, Tothill Street, London SW1H 9NA.

SAT 3 FEB

Palestine Solidarity Campaign: National March for Palestine: Ceasefire NOW! Assemble 12:00, Broadcasting House, Portland Place, London, W1 1AA.

SAT 3 FEB

Korean Friendship Association: King Cross Neighbourhood Centre, London. CANCELLED. Contact email uk@korea-dpr.com or juche007@gmail.com for details of evening online meeting.

THUR 8 FEB

Marx Memorial Library: Book launch, David Lane's *Global Neo-liberal Capitalism and the Alternatives: from social democracy to state capitalism*. 19:00. Hybrid event. Register on MML website.

THUR 8 FEB

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament: Exposed! The secret US/UK nuclear weapons agreement. 18:30–19:30. Webinar. Book on CND website.

FRI 16 FEB–SAT 16 MARCH

10 To 4 Productions: *Cable Street*. A New Musical at

Southwark Playhouse Borough, 77–85 Newington Causeway, London SE1 6BD. Book on Southwark Playhouse website.

TUES 20 FEB

Free Assange Campaign: Picket of High Court.

THUR 22 FEB

Marx Memorial Library: Andrew Feinstein on Armaments and Global Trade. 19:00. Hybrid event. Register on MML website.

SAT 24 FEB

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

SAT 2 MARCH

Women Against Pit Closures: 40th Anniversary, Durham. Details TBC.

WED 6 MARCH

Marx Memorial Library: Mary Davis on The Labour Government of 1923–24: a constitutionalist takeover of a working class party. 19:00. Hybrid event. Register on MML website.

SAT 9 MARCH

Essex County Association of Trades Councils: Essex and the 1984–85 miners' strike. 10:00–15:00, Friends Meeting House, Chelmsford CM1 2QL.

SAT 9 – FRI 22 MARCH

ScreenCuba: Festival of Cuban cinema. Garden Cinema, 39–41 Parker Street, London WC2B 5PQ. Details at screencuba.uk

SAT 9 MARCH

1984–85 Miners' Strike commemoration, Doncaster. Details TBC.

THUR 14 MARCH

Marx Memorial Library: John McDonnell MP on The Labour Governments 1974–76: challenging the rights of capital. 19:00. Hybrid event. Register on MML website.

...continued from page 8

and eventually trapped the Nazi army of Von Paulus. Most historians believe that the great victory marked the turning point of the war.

The Soviet Union lost 27 million people, both civilian and military, during the Second World War. Without the Soviet people, the Red Army and the leadership of Joseph Stalin the world today would be a very grim place without any freedom and whole races would have been eliminated.

Naming the icebreakers after two great Soviet leaders represents far more than just nostalgia or symbolism. It is a practical statement of recognition and respect for the courage and supreme sacrifice of millions of Soviet people. A defiant population led and inspired by two great leaders – Lenin and Stalin.

John Maryon
Suffolk

Dear Comrades

‘Human Rights Watch’ provides updates on the state of freedoms and liberties worldwide. It has been particularly critical regarding the current, ongoing situation in Rwanda.

There the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) continues to stifle “dissenting and critical voices”. It also continues to target those perceived as a threat to the government. Not even family members are safe.

Also, the space for political opposition, civil society and the media has “remained closed”. And a number of high-profile critics – including members of the opposition and commentators on social media – have gone missing, been arrested or just threatened with dire consequences if they continue to speak out.

Arbitrary detention, ill-treatment and torture are “commonplace”. Amongst those also targeted are street children, sex workers and petty vendors.

Alan Stewart
Wakefield

Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

As Nicola Sturgeon’s appearance at the UK COVID enquiry took place after the New Worker went to bed we will leave dissection of that matter until next week. Instead, we take a look at the recent achievements of the Scottish Parliament.

At the moment there are 23 Bills presently before Holyrood to keep the 129 MSPs occupied. In comparison, the House of Commons has 143 under its gaze at present, so MSPs are clearly not overworked. As MSPs are also not noted for being particularly

dynamic, only four have found the energy to promote their own legislation

One is the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) (Scotland) Bill, proposed by the Green MSP for Central Scotland, which seeks to prevent religious groups confronting women attending abortion clinics. Although a well meant measure it is something of a sledgehammer to crack a nut as a few elderly Catholics sitting on folding chairs are hardly a major threat, and preventing people making a point in public could also set a dangerous precedent for people making protests outside banks and arms firms.

To demonstrate the dynamism of Holyrood, it was lodged in May 2022 and a public consultation (naturally carefully targeted at those who would agree with it) closed that August. A final version was lodged last August but it has yet to be debated, although 62 of the 129 MSP have expressed support for it.

Another Member’s Bill was to incorporate the European Charter of Local Self-Government into Scottish law. This is remarkable curiosity. Introduced by former Green MSP Andy Wightman, it completed all its stages in 2021 but has not come into force for some reason, although it probably does not matter very much in the great scheme of things.

The same seems to have happened to the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill, which is still technically in progress despite being vetoed by Westminster and the SNP having given up on the legal appeal process.

Most of the 23 Bills deal with fairly small technical matters, some of which in pre-devolutionary days would have been speedily and efficiently dealt with by Scottish Office civil servants over an agreeable lunch at the New Club.

The most important

measure presently exercising minds at Holyrood is the annual Budget Bill, which will no doubt be passed in the fullness of time.

Major controversy has also surrounded one Bill: that to establish a National Care Service. This has not been much heard of recently because it has aroused almost total opposition from all interested parties, from professional bodies to trade unions. As it plans to take away a traditional local authority function even many SNP councillors oppose it. The small print suggest it would become a goldmine for private contractors.

There have been frequent calls for Holyrood to have a second chamber to revise laws. These have arisen because it has long been clear that MSPs are generally hopeless at challenging ministers or doing any serious detailed work in committees, so the solution offered is to have more of them. This has not proven very popular with voters so the plans are routinely dropped.

Holyrood debates can be watched on the BBC Parliament channel – but readers seeking powerful cut-and-thrust debate will be sadly disappointed as it is noticeable by its absence, with most members reading from scripts. In one recent case an SNP MSP came to fame when he mistakenly read out his concluding remarks at the opening of the session, saying that it had been a useful debate and praised the contributions that nobody had made.

Petitioning the Scottish Parliament seems to be a hobby enjoyed by very small numbers.

On Tuesday, the four petitions launched in January recorded 7, 22, 47 and 890 signatures, the largest relating to screening for a rare medical condition while only seven people cared about licensing private ambulances

These low figures, and

the fact that turnout at Holyrood elections has always been lower than for Westminster, suggest that Holyrood has not exactly been the “Workers’ Parliament” the Scottish TUC hope it would be.

It is telling that the forensic COVID inquiry that has shone considerable light on the SNP’s handling of the crisis has come from London, not Edinburgh. Ministers never have to face the brutal questions they sometimes receive at Westminster.

The Holyrood Building

Like the 190 year old Palace of Westminster the Holyrood building, which dates back all the way to 2004, needs urgent restoration work. The building (on the site of a disused brewery) was a project of the old Labour/Liberal Democrat coalition that led the Scottish government from 1999–2007.

The building was scheduled to open in 2001 but was only officially opened in 2004 at a cost £414 million, compared with original underestimates of £10–40 million, so it set a good precedent for the famous ferries.

The increased costs were blamed on design changes, such as belatedly bomb-proofing it and a sudden realisation that they needed to accommodate lots of civil servants who need to be close at hand to tell ministers what to say.

Inevitably, for a building which won architectural prizes, it soon developed structural problems. A large wooden beam in the chamber came loose during a debate. Leaky roofs (whoever thought it would rain in Scotland) have also been a problem due to the eccentric design, which the architect said was to recall upturned herring boats.

In 2017 no less than £1.75 million was spent

changing the light-bulbs in the debating chamber so that so that MSPs could be seen to better effect on TV.

According to some architects the present building will come to the end of its life in 2060. The architect of the near contemporary Museum of Scotland said if the project had been properly managed the building could have been constructed for £150 million.

After a critical inquiry into the rising costs, which showed that nobody was to blame, the then First Minister said that in future there would be a “fundamental reform of the civil service, with trained professionals being recruited to handle such projects”, but no evidence for that innovation can be seen.

To help pay for its upkeep visitors can buy a number of souvenirs from the gift shop, such as £63.50 for a pair of cuff links. There is also a £6.50 ‘parliamentary mug’, which surprisingly is not a small doll of an MSP but a cup for drinking hot beverages out of. They also sell packets of coffee that will be essential for anyone who has just watched a debate.

Snooze News

The first local government by-election of the year has taken place. It occurred in Dunblane & Bridge of Allan, the posh commuter ward of Stirling Council, after the sitting Tory who served as Provost (mayor) stood down on health grounds.

The ward near the University of Stirling was, predictably, held by the Tories. The victor secured 38.3 per cent of the vote on the first count, but it took six counts for him to secure a 1,998 to 1,531 victory over the SNP in a 36.6 per cent turn out.

Although Labour has only five of the 23 council seats, it provides the Leader of the Council in an anti-SNP coalition with the Tories.

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For peace!
justice!
socialism!

I would like to join the New Communist Party....
I would like more info about the NCP....

Name.....

Address.....

postcode.....

phone.....
Send to NCP, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ.



The Chinese threat: a baseless slander

In response to the reports that British police are establishing a new unit to “counter threats posed by China, Russia and Iran”, Chinese experts point out that the UK intends to shift the blame for its domestic under-development issues onto foreign countries while blindly following the USA’s diplomatic policies.

The police say they’ve set up the new unit because they were very concerned about “risks ahead of a national election expected this year”. Matt Jukes, the head of counter-terrorism policing, said the evidence and the sense among his officers was that the challenge posed by hostile states was “greater now than since the days of the Cold War”.

This move by the British security agencies, however, especially the naming of certain coun-

tries, is only to shift the focus from the government’s inability to handle domestic affairs onto external issues, rather than being based on justified security considerations.

In the last few years, especially after Brexit, the UK has faced numerous difficulties, including economic under-development and a domestic cost-of-living crisis, says Zhang Jian, vice president of the China Institutes of Contemporary Interna-

tional Relations.

“The ruling Conservative Party has been unable to address these problems and has instead blamed external factors, such as countries like China and Russia,” Zhang said.

Some extreme right-wing Conservatives are constantly seeking out the so-called threats and enemies after Brexit in order to divert public attention, he noted. “Especially with the upcoming general election in the UK, the

issues of the Conservative Party’s ineffective governance are becoming more prominent, prompting them to work harder to blame their problems on foreign countries.”

Observers pointed out that the Conservative Party has been leaning toward the USA in its post-Brexit foreign policy, and the establishment of an anti-China unit is part of that policy. “This is because after Brexit, the UK has had to rely

more on the USA,” Zhang said.

The UK enacted a national security act in December 2023, which the government stated “will help ensure that the UK remains the hardest operating environment for malign activity undertaken by foreign actors”. Before the act was enacted, the UK has repeatedly accused China of stealing its information or operating unofficial agencies in the country, which China

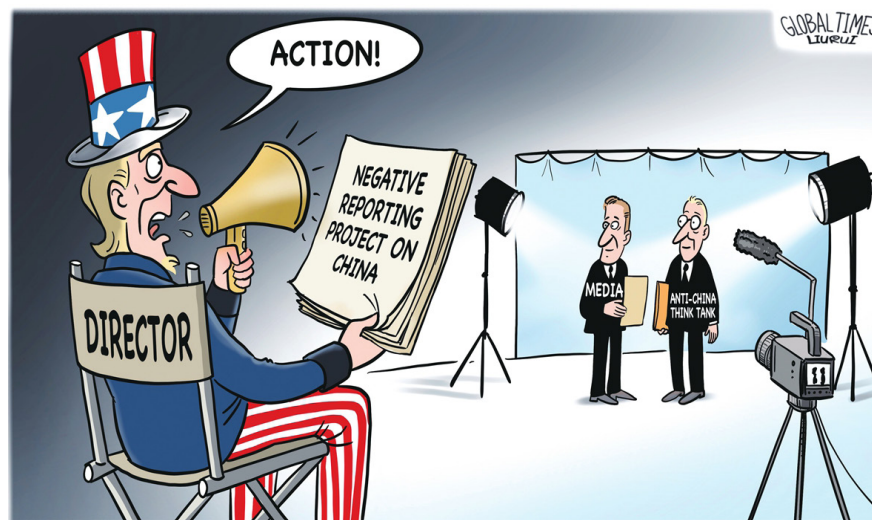
has firmly opposed.

The claim that the Chinese side is suspected of “stealing British intelligence” is completely baseless and malicious slander, said a Chinese Embassy spokesperson in London in September 2023. “We urge the relevant British authorities to stop manipulating anti-China politics and cease this self-directed political farce.”

Earlier in April 2023, the Chinese Embassy also made it clear that there are no so-called Chinese overseas police stations. “It is important that some from the UK side respect the facts rather than spread false accusations,” said an embassy spokesperson.

In June, a police investigation into “secret Chinese police stations” in London has concluded that “no criminal activity” has taken place.

Global Times



China’s economy on track

The long-term trajectory of China’s development remains promising. Betting against China has never succeeded in the past and will not succeed in the future, China’s Ambassador to the UK Zheng Zeguang said recently in a keynote speech delivered at the Asia House Annual Outlook 2024 Launch in London.

On China’s economy, Zheng said that the year 2023 saw China continue to be a key engine for the world economy. Despite various challenges, China’s GDP grew by 5.2 per cent year-on-year, ranking among the fastest of the world’s major economies.

Internal drivers were

stronger and domestic demand contributed more than 110 per cent to growth. Even with weak external demand, China’s total import and export of goods rose by 0.2 per cent. In the first 11 months of last year, the number of newly established foreign-invested enterprises in China grew by over 36 per cent year-on-year. And China’s economy has become more digitalised and greener.

Investment in high-tech industries expanded by 10.3 per cent, and foreign demand for ‘the new three’, namely new-energy vehicles, lithium-ion batteries and photovoltaic products, grew rapidly, and their exports exceeded one-trillion yuan (\$140 billion) for the first

time. China’s contribution to global economic growth once again exceeded 30 per cent.

Zheng emphasised that all these conveyed a clear message to the world that betting against China has never succeeded in the past and will not succeed in the future.

In 2023, China’s annual GDP reached 126.06 trillion yuan, registering a 5.2 per cent growth compared with the previous year. Facing global headwinds, the country’s economy demonstrated resilience and rising momentum, achieving a new milestone in overall economic development.

Certain foreign media outlets have attempted to paint a negative picture

of the Chinese economy, claiming that it is “in serious trouble”. Facts speak louder than words, and these compelling economic data highlighted the strong internal dynamics of the world’s second-largest economy.

On the path of China’s development, Zheng pointed out that there will still be headwinds in 2024 but that the long-term trajectory of China’s development remains positive.

China’s confidence comes from at least five areas, he said. “First, China’s strong political leadership and the consistency of major policies; second, the demand generated by a super-size market of more than 1.4 billion people, in particular, a middle-income group that

is 400 million strong; third, the supply supported by a fully-fledged industrial system. China is the only country with industrial lines across all categories in the UN industrial classification; fourth, abundant talent, capital, and data resources; and fifth, innovation under-pinned by the rapid development of high-tech industries. China is now home to about 400,000 high-tech enterprises, and the number of unicorn companies in the country ranks second globally.”

Citing Chinese Premier Li Qiang’s recent speech at Davos 2024, Zheng stressed that China is firmly committed to high-standard opening up.

As a major trading partner of over 140 coun-

tries and regions, China has cut its overall tariff level to 7.3 per cent. In the recent five years, the return rate of foreign direct investment in China has been around nine per cent, which is quite competitive globally.

In the following five years, China is forecasted to import \$17 trillion worth of goods and services. The country will continue to foster a market-oriented, law-based and world-class business environment. “The door will open even wider to the world, and businesses from all countries including the UK, are welcome to expand co-operation in the Chinese market,” Zheng said.

Global Times

Washington is the biggest threat to peace

by Sun Shifeng

In recent years, the USA has turned a blind eye to its own serious issues of forced labour and racism. Sticking to a Cold War mentality, zero-sum thinking and hypocritical double standards, it challenges justice with its hegemony to advance its self-interests under the guise of ‘democracy’, ‘freedom’ and ‘human rights’.

It fabricates the lies of “genocide” and “forced labour” in North-west China’s Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, attempting to contain China and hinder its peaceful rise and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. This seriously violates international law and the basic principles of international relations while interfering in China’s internal affairs. The people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang are outraged by this and are firmly opposed to it.

Human rights are related to the dignity and well-being of humanity. In history, through systematic institutional designs, the USA bru-

tally massacred, forcibly displaced and subjected Native Americans to assimilative education. Today, the country faces widespread human rights abuses such as gun violence, police brutality, torture in private prisons, racial conflicts and gender discrimination. The USA is a source, transit and destination country for victims of forced labour and involuntary servitude, and the world’s greatest perpetrator of human rights disasters.

Firstly, the USA is the world’s largest creator of war. According to the *Smithsonian Magazine*,

since 2001, the USA has conducted military operations in about 80 countries in the name of “war on terror”, spreading to more than 40 per cent of the world’s countries. The series of wars unilaterally initiated by the USA has caused numerous humanitarian disasters, seriously harming local peoples’ rights to life, survival, health and development. For the USA, war is a game for slaughter and profiteering, making the country a cruel war machine.

Secondly, the USA is the world’s largest aggressor threatening people’s lives and the biggest contributor to the world’s refugee crisis. In order to maintain hegemonic interests, the USA illegally invades sovereign countries at the cost of innocent lives. In Afghanistan, the USA’s 20-year-long illegal invasion and occupation has caused 174,000 deaths, while 2.6 million people have been forced to flee abroad, 10 million displaced and 18.9 million still face food shortages. The USA has also launched wars in many

other parts of the world, causing extensive harm to the lives of innocent civilians and violating their right to choose their own development path. Yet, the USA tries to hide the truths, refuses to apologise and evade its responsibility.

Thirdly, the USA is the world’s biggest initiator of unilateral sanctions. Pursuing hegemonism and unilateralism, it arbitrarily suppresses countries and regions that do not comply and imposes unilateral sanctions on countries such as Russia, Cuba, North Korea, Myanmar, Iran, Libya and Iraq. As a result, Washington’s unilateral sanctions have increased from 912 in 2000 to over 9,400 in 2021. During the Donald Trump administration alone, 3,900 unilateral sanctions were implemented, meaning that the country, on average, launched three new sanctions per day. Over the years, the USA has engaged in widespread exploitation in many countries in the Middle East and Latin America. It intervenes in their do-

mestic politics, subverts elected governments and promotes ‘colour revolutions’. This has triggered extensive crises in human rights, security and politics.

Lastly, the USA is the biggest destroyer of democracy and human rights in the world. This war machine shamelessly profits from creating human rights disasters and deaths in other countries. The ‘rules-based international order’ advocated by the USA is essentially an order centred on the country itself to allow arbitrary military aggression, interference in the internal affairs of other countries and the overthrow of legitimate governments. It has created global chaos in the pursuit of its self-interests.

The USA proclaims itself as a “human rights defender” and “beacon of democracy”. In reality, however, it abuses its dollar dominance and advantages regarding military and technology, placing its domestic laws above international laws. It uses international rules as a ‘fig leaf’ to cover its

long-arm jurisdiction. It has shown ruthless and barbaric hegemony in various spheres, including politics, military, economy, technology and culture.

The USA, with its notorious track record and blatant wrongdoings in human rights, should stop acting like a thief crying “stop thief!”. Going against the global trend will only make the country an international laughing-stock.

The author is an official of the Turpan Municipal Committee of the Communist Party of China in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region



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General strike rocks Argentina

by New Worker
correspondent

Argentinian workers shut down the country last week in a one-day general strike called by the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) in protest at the Milei government's offensive against the unions. Javier Milei, a tool of US imperialism, was elected president seven weeks ago vowing to "dollarise" the economy, deregulate businesses, privatise state-run industries, slash workers' wages and crack down on civil liberties, including the right to hold protests.

Hundreds of thousands of protesters



marched on the square in front of Argentina's Congress, banging drums and pots

and carrying posters accusing Milei of being a "traitor". Others raised banners bearing

the portrait of working-class icon Evita Peron who, together with her husband Juan,

• **Marching on the Congress.**

led the Argentinian revolution in 1946.

CGT secretary-general Hector

Daer told the crowd that Milei's decree "destroys individual rights of workers, collective rights and seeks to eliminate the possibility of union action at a time in which we have great inequality in society".

Eduardo Belliboni, the leader of Polo Obrero (Workers Party), told reporters: "There's a violation of workers' fundamental rights in Argentina. They are attacking our wages. People are being denied the right to protest brutal adjustments that will affect the poor. Workers are suffering wage cuts by a government that benefits the interests of the big business owners."

Fuelling the conflict to save his skin

by Oleg Burunov

Doubts about the West's willingness to further prop up the Kiev regime may drive Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky to stir up the Ukraine conflict even further by ordering riskier attacks against Russia, Time magazine reported. Zelensky is already taking "bigger risks" in order to turn the conflict around and bolster his political standing at home the US publication said.

The *Time* report comes after the *American Conservative*

pointed out that Zelensky has issued frenzied orders to attack civilians in order to fuel the conflict and secure further assistance from the West.

Every one of these actions is ripe with the potential for Russian retaliation, which may in turn deepen the hostilities and directly drag in NATO, *Time* notes, adding that neither Moscow nor Brussels wants such a development.

Armed conflicts "take on a life of their own, particularly with one of the key players – in this case Zelensky – becoming a

wild card to watch," the magazine concluded.

This follows Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov telling reporters that Zelensky is in a pickle now his Western allies have gone lukewarm on providing Ukraine with aid.

"Zelensky is in a tough position. He has stopped receiving money, there are not enough shells for him abroad, he is also facing a tense situation inside the country, and many people are dissatisfied. In order to cloak his positions, he resorts to disguising them with utterly

ludicrous decrees. It is unlikely that this can help the Kiev regime in any way. Difficulties will only mount. This is despite the fact that there certainly are still more or less bright minds who understand what needs to be done to get out of this situation," Peskov said.

On 21st January, 27 people were killed and 25 more wounded when Ukrainian troops shelled the Kirovsky district of Donetsk. The shelling was preceded by the Ukrainian military's strike on the Russian city of Belgorod on 30th December, which killed 25 civilians and

wounded 109 others. Moscow slammed the murderous attack as an act of terrorism.

Last month President Vladimir Putin stressed in an interview with Russian media that Moscow has "no reason and no interest – neither geopolitical, nor eco-

nomic, political, and military – to fight with NATO countries". Russia and NATO members do not have any territorial claims against one another, Putin noted, adding that Moscow is unwilling to spoil relations with the alliance.

Sputnik

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