

## Palestinians stand firm against Israeli terror

by our Arab Affairs correspondent

**Fierce fighting continues in the Gaza Strip as the Israelis continue their assault on the Al-Shifa Medical Complex in Gaza City. Canada has agreed to halt all arms exports to Israel and South Africa has warned dual citizens fighting for Israel in Gaza that they will be arrested if they return home.**

The American foreign minister, Anthony Blinken, has returned to the Middle East for talks with the Saudi and Egyptian leaders and indirect negotiations between Israel and Hamas continue in efforts to bring about a ceasefire and a prisoner exchange. But Hamas says Israel has responded “negatively” to the Palestine resistance movement’s latest truce proposals and that the current mediation talks in the Gulf state of Qatar could lead to a “dead end”.

Israeli forces stepped up their operation around Al-Shifa hospital this week carrying out a number of air strikes on the complex that the Zionists claim had been turned into a Hamas base. Al-Shifa, the largest hospital in the Strip



is one of the few healthcare facilities that is even partially operational in the north of the enclave. It housed more than 7,000 patients and displaced people before the Israeli invasion.

The Israelis, who have surrounded the medical complex in the north of the Palestinian enclave, claim to have killed 90 Palestinian commandos in the fighting over the past few days but Hamas say all the victims were wounded patients and displaced people. Ismail al-Thawabta, the director of the Hamas administration’s media office said: “The Israeli occupation army practises lying and deception in spreading its narrative as part of justifying its continuous and

law-breaking crimes, which violate international law, international humanitarian law.” Some of the wounded and sick have now managed to get to the Baptist Hospital in Gaza City for treatment.

Hamas has also rejected a report issued by UN official Pramila Patten that alleged that Palestinian resistance fighters had committed “rape and sexual violence” during their raid into Israel on 7<sup>th</sup> October.

“This came,” Hamas said “after failed Israeli attempts to prove this false charge, which was confirmed to have no basis in truth, except to demonise the Palestinian resistance and to cover up the United Nations rapporteurs’

report about the existence of conclusive evidence of horrific human rights violations suffered by Palestinian women and girls by the Israeli occupation forces.

“Despite Ms. Patten’s claims and her false and baseless accusations against the Palestinian fighters, her report did not document any testimony of what she calls victims of those cases, but relied in her report on Israeli institutions, soldiers, and witnesses selected by the occupation authorities, to push toward trying to prove this false charge, which was refuted by all investigations and international reports.

“Ms Patten’s claims are clearly contradicted by the testimonies of Israeli women about the good treatment by

the fighters towards them, as well as the testimonies of the released Israeli female prisoners, and what they confirmed of the good treatment they received during their captivity in Gaza.

“This false accusation will not succeed in obscuring the ugliness and horror of the Israeli crimes committed in the Gaza Strip, which resulted in the killing of about 40,000 Palestinians, most of them women, children, and civilians, in a mass crime and ethnic cleansing, and a deliberate disregard for the resolutions of the International Court of Justice and other international reports, which documented parts of the crimes and atrocities committed in Gaza by the new Nazis.”

### FUND

We’re on the second lap of the March appeal with £676 in the bag thanks to a Southall comrade who sent in £200, a Dagenham supporter who gave us a fiver and a Brixton pensioner who brought in his small change that added another six pounds to the collection. Banker’s orders, of course, are the foundation of all our efforts but as we need to raise a further £2,182 by the end of the month we are calling on all our friends to consider giving us a bit extra!

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### INSIDE

**MORE SPY LIES .. P2**

**YEMEN .. P5**

**GAZA .. PP10&12**

**STAND WITH DIANE! .. P11**

**PUTIN WINS .. P12**

# THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

## A landslide for Putin

Vladimir Putin was swept back to the Kremlin in the Russian presidential elections last week. In a 77 per cent turn-out an overwhelming 88 per cent of the electorate voted for Putin, the leader of the ruling United Russia party, in last week's poll much to the dismay of the Western media that routinely dismisses all elections that Putin wins as rigged.

Despite the best efforts of imperialist intelligence their fifth column inside the Russian Federation failed in its feeble attempts to disrupt the ballot while the Ukrainian raid across the border ended in yet another spectacular defeat for the fascist regime in Kiev. Putin now has a renewed mandate to lead the country in its confrontation with the United States and the rest of the imperialist pack.

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) candidate came second with just over four per cent of the vote followed by two other candidates from right-wing parties in the Duma, the Russian parliament, as people closed ranks around their veteran national leader in times of war. But the communists ran a good campaign that they believe will lay the future foundations for Party growth throughout the Russian Federation.

"The party did a great job," the CPRF said. "We participated in all debates, presenting our programme in all the constituent bodies of the Russian Federation and understood that the party and our patriotic union have great support. Our candidate was backed by one million supporters and we believe that's a big deal. As a result, the CPRF candidate came second and the party confirmed its status as the country's main opposition party."

## Stop the slaughter

**Israel has now killed over 31,000 Palestinians in its genocidal assault on Palestinian Arabs in the Gaza Strip. Many more are trapped beneath the rubble of their own homes. We must keep taking to the streets in solidarity with Palestine.**

The Israelis want to drive the Palestinian Arabs out of the Gaza Strip to make room for Zionist settlers. Starvation is being used by Israel as a weapon of war. The Palestinians in the besieged enclave are desperately short of food, water and other essential supplies and UN experts warn that Gaza is facing imminent famine.

But the partisans stand firm. No street or alley is safe for the Israeli marauders in Gaza or indeed for the Zionist settler gunmen whose reign of terror has fired a new wave of armed resistance in the occupied West Bank.

The Establishment, which as a whole does whatever the Americans say, has been rocked by a wave of protests that has turned into a mass movement demanding an end to British support for Israeli aggression. That's why the bourgeoisie demonise the demonstrators and want to stop the demonstrations.

But nothing can silence the cry for justice for the Palestinian Arabs. We will keep demanding an immediate and permanent ceasefire and an end to the UK-Israel arms trade. We will keep protesting until Palestine is free. Let them hear it in Tel Aviv! Let them hear it in Washington!

# The voice of China: Sunak's absurd spy claims

The UK government is considering limiting the number of Chinese nationals who can enter the UK on official business. According to *Bloomberg News* this is because the Sunak government fears that this is being "abused to bring spies into Britain". The UK's approach to the so-called national security threat posed by China once again reinforces people's impression of its endless paranoid and spurious interpretation of national security.

This is not only a corny political speculation based on subjective assumptions, but also a typically selective, discriminatory move. The British side made the absurd accusation against Chinese nationals out of nothing but "fear" without showing any evidence. Some British politicians have fallen into severe anti-China paranoia, and their unfounded slander against China is intended to cover up their own incompetence and failure in solving political, economic and social problems in the UK.

The purpose of such hype is to make their people believe that Sunak's government is tough on China, as the prime minister is under pressure due to the upcoming election. At this time, he can't afford to be the slightest bit weak on his China policy, or he may lose more votes, says Li Guanjie, a research fellow with the Shanghai Academy of Global Governance and Area Studies

at the Shanghai International Studies University.

In August last year, it was reported in the British media that a "Chinese spy" was alleged to have contacted British officials through LinkedIn, the well-known professional networking site, which is another typical case of the UK hyping up the so-called "China threat" theory. Later, the Chinese Embassy in the UK called the accusation "pure speculation" and "malicious slander" that was perpetuated without any evidence.

Why does the UK repeatedly stir up the topic of "Chinese spies"? The reason behind it is worth pondering. On the one hand, it essentially reflects the consistent anti-China stance of some British politicians. It is easy to understand: their prestige relies on this sort of political manipulation and the "China threat" is a perfect trope. Only by continuously fabricating and maximising the "China threat" can these people highlight the supposed value of their careers and gain greater political benefits.

On the other hand the British government closely follows the USA by smearing China against the backdrop of US-China competition. Some American politicians have frequently fabricated bogus "Chinese spy" incidents in recent years.

In January, the Americans also restricted Chinese students entering the USA on the grounds of national security. In order to ride on the USA's chariot to

contain China, Britain is ever willing to serve as an American pawn.

In sharp contrast to the UK's visa restrictions, China has adopted a visa-free policy for Switzerland, Ireland, Hungary, Austria, Belgium and Luxembourg since 14<sup>th</sup> March. As of now, China has signed mutual visa exemption agreements with 157 countries. The Western rhetoric of "China's self-isolation" collapses on itself. If the UK wants to carry out visa restrictions and become more and more self-isolated, just like the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the boomerang of more than 200 years ago is now seemingly going to backfire on the UK. Such consideration of Sunak's government that turns back the wheel of history will in the end only ruin the UK.

Some British politicians are, however, concerned that any move to restrict diplomatic activity now would "risk inflaming tensions with China". This shows that there are still voices of reason in Britain. China is always seeking to build an equal and mutually beneficial relationship with the UK. In the face of the current political situation, if Sunak's government attempts to challenge China's diplomatic interests, then China will certainly impose reciprocal diplomatic measures on the UK. What is the right way forward? What is the sensible choice? This question isn't difficult to answer.

*Global Times*



# Workers' Notes

## Remembering

### Marx

by New Worker correspondent

London comrades joined hundreds of other communists and friends to commemorate the life of Karl Marx at his tomb

in north London last weekend. Karl Marx died in his study at half-past two on the afternoon of Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> March 1883. He was buried three days later at Highgate Cemetery. The annual event was organised by the Marx Memorial Library and conducted by Library chair Alex Gordon. This year's graveside oration was given by Lord John Hendy, the President of the International Centre for Trade Union Rights and a vice president of the Campaign for Trade Union Freedom.



## On the Rails

by New Worker correspondent

**On the railways all three rail unions are involved in major actions, albeit not as well co-ordinated as they might be.**

At the beginning of the month ASLEF drivers took strike action on NLER and Northern rail as part of their long running pay dispute. General Secretary Mick Whelan, said "we are fed up to the back teeth with the bad faith shown, day after day, week after week, and month after month by these two companies. We always stick to agreements which we make. These companies think they can break agreements ... this is a shot across their bows and a sign of things to come". Apart from not having a pay rise since 2019 drivers often have to work on rest days

Also on the Northern rail franchise contracted out gateline ticket sellers and inspectors have walked out in a dispute over pay, union recognition and working conditions.

RMT members working for Carlisle Support Services (CSS) on Northern rail are demanding the end of zero hours contracts and the removal of the Timegate app which has failed to accurately calculate pay and leave allowance. CSS do not provide sick leave or holiday pay and needless to say pay lower wages to their staff compared to directly employed Northern workers.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch warned that "ultimately the only long term solution is to end contracting out and bring the

gateline contract back in house with all the benefits of direct employment from Northern."

In Scotland TSSA is calling out its Operations Team Manager grades over the Easter weekend. Maryam Eslamdoust, TSSA's General Secretary, deplored ScotRail's inaction saying "it's simply not acceptable to have ScotRail stick their heads in the sand and ignore the pressing concerns of our members. Our union only goes on strike as a last resort and I would urge ScotRail to come back to the table with meaningful proposals regarding our numerous concerns about the terms and conditions of on call duties".

At South Western Railway (SWR) TSSA has issued a 'failure to agree' notice to the company which is the initial stage of the long winded official process before a strike. The dispute centres around a proposed requirement for staff to source their own cover for Sunday shifts. This not only makes it impossible for workers to plan consistent leave but also leads to unpredictable and strenuous rostering practices.

Gareth Theobald, TSSA Organiser for SWR, observed that "this isn't merely a shift in working patterns. It's a stark deviation from well-established norms, and we urge SWR to return to the negotiating table without delay to resolve this issue."

On the London Underground TSSA also balloted on a similar issue over plans to drastically alter the roles of Customer Service Managers. This will dramatically reduce their CSM roles, and see worsening terms and conditions and could see them sent to distant stations at a moment's notice.

TSSA had unsuccessfully been to ACAS to try to resolve the issues.

## Driver Only Operations

RMT are also involved in another dispute with Scotrail over the introduction of Driver Only Operation (DOO) trains. ScotRail say that new trains on some suburban routes will only need a driver.

Mick Lynch said "Scotrail are trying to sneak through DOO via the backdoor by putting train drivers in a difficult position, giving them the power to decide whether a train runs or not without a second staff member on board. It is important for safety and the comfort of passengers that a second person is on these ScotRail services. We will resist all attempts to endanger our members' jobs." This will initially affect over a 100 hundred conductors on three routes out of Glasgow Central.

ScotRail naturally deny jobs are at risk and claim that they will recruit nearly 120 additional members of staff. There was a similar battle on South Western Railways a few years ago.

DOO is strictly when the only staff member on a train is the driver who is then responsible for opening and closing the centrally-controlled doors.

RMT is firmly opposed to DOO, but the drivers' union ASLEF is not getting involved. However ASLEF's Mick Whelan does say "the train drivers who do it, hate it, feel it's unsafe. We believe it's inherently unsafe."

DOO has been in operation on some trains since the 1980s and

it is the norm on 45 per cent of British train journeys, and most of the shorter ones. But even on the same routes practice varies. On the Brighton to Gatwick Airport route Thameslink trains are driver only while Southern trains on the same service always have an on-board supervisor as well.

The Office of Rail and Road says that DOO "fully meets legal requirements for safe operation" but passenger groups are sceptical. More than a decade ago the House of Commons reported that "we are very concerned that proposals to reduce staffing at stations and on trains could make the railway less safe, particularly at night, and deter women and vulnerable users from travelling by train" and recommended that "the Government develops a strategy for improving the security of the rail network, as well as perceptions of how safe the network is." However that would defeat the main purpose of running the railways which is to make vast profits for shareholders.

## Unfair Fares

The rail unions have at least united to denounce the latest rise in train fares. Fares rose by 4.9 per cent in England and Wales at the start of this month. Maryam Eslamdoust deplored this saying "we remain in a cost of living crisis and this outrageous rise in rail fares will add hundreds of pounds to annual travel costs for many commuters," adding that "it's as though the government is unable to see further than the demands of the profiteering rail companies who will again be the

only winners".

ASLEF chipped in to say that "this is a fare rise made in Downing Street. Fares are set by the government, with train operating companies then paid to run the service. Despite this fare rise, and others over the last three years, the passenger service is getting worse but the private operators' profits are increasing". Mick Whelan, pointed out that none of this goes to those to keep the railways running.

"We have seen fare rises across the piece for the last three years with the privately-owned train operating companies making millions of pounds in profit and paying big dividends to shareholders - money which leaves the system, and often leaves this country - while rail workers have not had a pay rise for four years" he declared.

Things are very different north of the border. Nationalised ScotRail has not yet increased its fares, but on the 1st April commuters will be stung with a heftier 8.7 per cent rise.

## On the Buses

About 300 bus drivers and engineers employed by Arriva Northumberland at the Blythe and Ashington bus depots are being balloted by their union, Unite, after rejecting a miserable four per cent pay offer. In contrast other nearby bus workers such as those at Go North East, have have won better deals after action by Unite. In accordance with long standing custom even Arriva's best-paid drivers earn less than

*continued on page 4...*

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those employed by Go North East and Stagecoach.

Sharon Graham, Unite's general secretary said "Arriva's behaviour is deplorable; this is a profitable company which has been caught red handed trying to inflict a real terms pay cut on its workforce".

Regional officer Dave Telford said: "This ballot will demonstrate the strength of ill-feeling at Arriva over the poor pay offer they've offered our members when energy bills and mortgages have gone through the roof. Unite will be backing them 100 per cent."

There are signs that the era of deregulated bus services are coming to an end. The Labour Welsh Government has published plans entitled *Our Road to Bus Reform* which will bring an end to the deregulation of the bus sector.

Bus-drivers' union Unite which had a hand in drawing up the plans said "this will shake-up the way the public transport system works in Wales. We know the current system is all about returns rather than benefiting local communities.

"It's high time operators put the public before profit and they will no longer be able to get away with sacrificing decent terms and conditions for their workers as a means to win contracts."

Strathclyde Passenger Transport (SPT) has also announced it is backing the introduction of franchised bus services in its large patch of Scotland. SPT is

spending £15 million drawing up plans for the next five to seven years which do not mean renationalisation.

Labour councillor and SPT vice-chair Alan Moir said: "The preferred options presented by SPT today have the potential to revolutionise local bus services in the west of Scotland to the clear benefit of bus passengers". That's not likely. The sums involved are clearly too small for any major changes.

## All at Sea

Two years have passed since P&O ferries sacked nearly all its UK based workforce. This was marked by a demonstration outside Parliament on Wednesday afternoon organised by the officers' union Nautilus International and RMT.

At the time the then Transport Secretary Grant Shapps was forced by widespread outrage at the brutal and illegal sackings to make vague promises to do something. Although he did write some stiff letters to P&O demanding reinstatement and declared that the Government would ensure this never happened again, nothing of any substance was done

Five hundred of the sacked workers were Dover based with others at Hull, Liverpool and Cairnryan in Wigtownshire. Nautilus and RMT called for a boycott. P&O's owner DP World claimed the drastic measure were

essential to stem huge losses, despite them paying out a £270 million dividend in 2020 and later greatly benefiting from pandemic furlough.

A brief occupation took place at Dover, with service suspended before new cheaper foreign crews arrived. Many of these agency workers speedily left when they became aware of the situation.

Over the past two years the only government actions have been the introduction of the Seafarers' Wages Act and the Seafarers' Welfare Charter. The former extends the National Minimum Wage to seafarers on ferries calling into a UK port 120 times per year. Nautilus points out that the Act did not apply to its members who were on better rates and it did nothing to prevent ship-owners from employing seafarers from abroad on much weaker terms and conditions and pay.

The Act did nothing about drastic changes to rosters. Former agreements which saw seafarers working two days on – two days off have been replaced by much more week-on/week-off patterns. Sackings after nine months are increasingly common.

Nautilus point out that the Seafarer's Welfare Charter is a dead letter as it is purely voluntary allowing P&O to ignore it. Nautilus is now demanding it be made mandatory, something Labour now promises, but no doubt Sir Keir Starmer will be watering down that pledge.

Nautilus general secretary,

had spiralled out of control.

Susan McKee-Lewis delivered a letter to Tony Blair which called for a limit of two credit cards per person and tighter controls to prevent other people falling so heavily into debt.

In particular, credit limits should be tighter, she said. Her husband had still not reached his credit limit when he committed suicide.

She is backed by her local Labour MP John Mann, who said: "Mr Lewis got himself into debt he could not cope with. He started drawing cash on one card to pay the minimum payment on another.

"He could not stand being bombarded with default notices and solicitors' letters threatening him. There was a brief inquest but the credit debt did not unravel and reveal itself until after the inquest happened."

John Mann said Lewis, a production worker at an engineering firm, should never have been allowed to obtain so much credit. He added he could even have

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Mark Dickinson, said: "We need an employment bill to close the legal loopholes and once and for all outlaw fire and rehire. Our nation's maritime professionals, the backbone of our economy, deserve better."

## And finally

Pilots belonging to the British Airline Pilots' Association (BALPA) working for Bristow Helicopters the American owned, but Aberdeen based, company which serves the North Sea oil and gas industry are on the march. After months of unsuccessful negotiations they voted 96.31 per cent on a 92.74 per cent turnout for action this month which involves strikes

on Wednesdays.

After the vote, Amy Leveridge, the union's new general secretary said: "Our members in Bristow Helicopters, have endured years of pay cuts and freezes and are now saying enough is enough. These pilots and technical crew (winch paramedics and winch operators), operate in some of the most treacherous conditions providing vital search and rescue services and transporting workers to the oil and gas rigs in the North Sea." She added that pilots had "remained loyal to Bristow in difficult times, and now the company is booming, and oil and gas is raking in unprecedented profits, it is wholly unreasonable to expect them to remain on austerity pay".

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

**19<sup>th</sup> March 2004**

A YOUNG WIDOW and mother of two children, whose husband committed suicide in July last year after running up £70,000 in credit card debts, has called for new restrictions to be brought in to prevent people running up such huge debts.

Stephen Lewis, of Worksop in Nottinghamshire earned £22,000 a year and owed. £70,000 on 19 different credit cards.

When he hanged himself he was being pursued by banks and other financial companies to repay the debts, which

paid off the debts using his mortgage if he had received proper advice.

Three major high street banks – the Royal Bank of Scotland, Barclays and HSBC – have all recently reported record profits and have been criticised for profiteering from personal loans. These loans have been heavily advertised in the last few years.

The pressure on people to borrow beyond what they can afford is now enormous. Barclays is reported to have issued a credit card to a homeless *Big Issue* seller in the North, who was approached by a woman with a clipboard and offered a credit card.

He declared his reservations but she urged him to fill in the form and the card arrived at his postal address a few weeks later with a £300 credit limit.

Barclay's chief executive admitted he would not run up debts on his credit card because "it was too expensive a way to borrow money".

# Houthis Go Hypersonic?

by Ilya Tsukanov

*How Ansar Allah's Advance in Missile Tech Could Trigger US Defeat in the Middle East. A military source close to Yemen's Ansar Allah (Houthi) movement has informed the Sputnik news agency that the militia has carried out a successful test flight of a hypersonic missile and is preparing to add it into its arsenal. So Sputnik asked a leading Russian military observer about the development's strategic implications.*



Sputnik's source indicated that the new Houthi missile can accelerate to speeds up to Mach 8 (nearly 10,000 km per hour), and that it is powered by a solid fuel engine – which typically reduces launch preparation time dramatically and eases transport.

“Yemen intends to begin manufacturing it for use during attacks in the Red and Arabian Seas and the Gulf of Aden, as well as against targets in Israel,” the source, who was not at liberty to speak publicly due to the sensitive nature of the information, said.

The Houthis themselves have dropped hints about their efforts to develop a hypersonic missile amid their increasingly fierce confrontation in the Red Sea with American, British and European warships, and a partial blockade of vital international shipping lanes – which has all but shut down Israel and Europe-bound commercial travel through the strategic maritime choke-point.

“Our enemies, our friends and our people will see a level of achievement of strategic importance which will place our country and its capabilities in the ranks of few countries in this world,” Houthi leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi said in an address last week, adding that Ansar Allah has “surprises” in store for the Americans and Israel.

Yemen has been locked in a brutal civil conflict since

2014 involving a number of warring factions – including the Houthi-led Supreme Political Council, which is concentrated in the country's north and controls most of the Yemen's population centres, the separatist Southern Transitional Council controlling much of the territory of the former South Yemen, and the ‘Republic of Yemen’, the UN-recognized state entity in control of lands in the north east of the country.

Although Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the Middle East the Houthis have shown themselves to be masters of asymmetric warfare, regularly targeting American forces and their regional allies using cheap-to-build kamikaze drones and time-worn but effective ballistic missiles.

Divided during the Cold War, the southern Arabian nation was flooded with vast stocks of Soviet armaments, from portable anti-tank weapons to long-range Scud ground-to-ground missiles and sophisticated 2K12 Kub anti-air missile system defences, modernised into the Fater-1 (Innovator-1) and used to shoot down at least five American-made reaper drones to date.

In addition to the modernisation of old Soviet weapons stocks, the Yemeni militia has managed to capture vast quantities of military equipment from their Saudi Arabian coalition-allied adversaries in the course of the 2014-2022

conflict, from light vehicles to gunboats, sea mines and artillery installations.

The Houthis pride themselves on the creation of weapons “developed with purely Yemeni expertise”. Western officials and Washington's Middle Eastern allies have often alleged that the Houthis are getting help from outside, most notably from Iran. Iranian officials have not shied away from saying that they support the Houthis politically, but have repeatedly emphasised that this support does not extend to military-technical or planning support. The US Defense Intelligence Agency claimed in a February report that the Houthis receive technical assistance from the Islamic Republic, but no conclusive link has ever been established.

Sputnik's source did not offer any additional details about the hypersonic missile being tested by the Houthis, with its range, warhead weight

and other key characteristics remaining unknown. But observers say that if the information about Houthi hypersonics pans out, it will be an unprecedented game-changer for the region.

“If the Houthis really have managed to accelerate a missile to Mach 8, that will mean that the ship-based air defence systems of the American naval group will be powerless,” says veteran Russian military observer Alexei Leonkov.

“The air defences of the carrier strike group presently parked off the coast of the Arabian Peninsula and sporadically firing at the Houthis will not be able to intercept these missiles if they approach at Mach 8. And if the Houthis have managed to make them even a little manoeuvrable, that's it, they won't be possible to intercept. If the Houthis learn to accurately hit warships with these missiles, we will see America's defeat,” Leonkov said.

Facing off against hypersonic missile-armed Houthis, the Americans would receive “something akin to Vietnam,” in the military observer's estimation, with the Yemeni fighters receiving strike capabilities far outmatching those they currently enjoy, which have already managed to throw the Western-led international trading order into chaos, even if they haven't sunk many ships.

“If they start using such missiles to attack ships, warships, the [result] will be devastating. How the United States will respond is an open question, of course,” Leonkov said, warning that he could not rule anything out – even a desperate turn to tactical nuclear weapons. Worryingly, the latest US Nuclear Posture Review in 2022 did not prohibit the president from launching a nuclear first strike, even against non-nuclear-armed adversaries.

“For the Americans to start thinking about using a weapon of last resort to impact the Houthis, they would have to sink an American aircraft carrier,” the observer said. “The Houthis do things incrementally. They started with commercial ships, and almost didn't touch warships. Then warships began intercepting rockets being launched at them. If the Houthis get a hypersonic anti-ship missile, a rocket flying at hypersonic speeds, the result could be very different,” says Leonkov.

Sputnik



# Gaza: Starvation is a War Crime

by Vijay Prashad

Speaking in Rome the head of the United Nations World Food Programme Cindy McCain said: “If we do not exponentially increase the size of aid going into the northern areas” of Gaza, ‘famine is imminent. It’s imminent’. Over 30,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza by the genocidal Israeli war, and the Palestinians in Gaza are on the verge of famine. Palestine’s Permanent Observer at the United Nations Riyad Mansour said that over half a million people are ‘one step away from famine’. ‘What it means for mothers and fathers to hear their babies and children cry of hunger day and night, no milk, no bread, nothing’, he added. Indeed, babies and children already have begun to die due to the famine-like conditions in Gaza. With Ramadan already begun, the situation is not only physically acute, but also mentally torturous.

There are currently 2,000 medical workers who are trying their best to operate basic medical care in northern Gaza. They are working without access to any hospital facilities and often with no power or water, including very limited supplies of medicines. Now, the Palestinian ministry of health in Gaza has said that these workers are themselves in a dire situation. The staff, said the ministry, ‘will start Ramadan without Suhoor or Iftar meals’. ‘Doctors will die. The nurses there will die. And the world will witness the largest number of victims of hunger



in the coming days’, said Ashraf al-Qudra, the ministry’s spokesperson.

## War crime

In June 1977, at a conference on humanitarian law in armed conflict, the member states of the United Nations extended the Geneva Conventions (1949) to add Protocol II. Article 14 of that protocol says that ‘starvation of civilians as a method of combat is prohibited’. The belligerent power is ‘prohibited to attack, destroy, remove, or render useless’ any ‘objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works’. Two decades later, when the UN member states wrote up the Rome Statute (1998), they added in a section on starvation under the heading of war crimes (Article 8); ‘intentionally using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare by depriving them of objects indispensable to

their survival, including wilfully impeding relief supplies’ is a war crime. The Rome Statute is the treaty that formed the International Criminal Court (ICC), which has thus far remained silent on its obligations to act on its own founding document.

On 29<sup>th</sup> February trucks with humanitarian aid came into the northern part of Gaza. When desperate people rushed to these trucks, Israeli soldiers fired on them and killed at least 118 unarmed civilians. This is now known as the Flour Massacre. In its aftermath, 10 UN experts released a strong statement, which noted, ‘Israel has been intentionally starving the Palestinian people in Gaza since 8<sup>th</sup> October. Now it is targeting civilians seeking humanitarian aid and humanitarian convoys’. The UN special rapporteur for food, Michael Fakhri, who signed that statement, later expanded this accusation against Israel. ‘Israel’, he told the UN Human Rights Council, ‘has mounted a starvation campaign against

the Palestinian people in Gaza’. These statements are very pointed. Words such as ‘intentionally’ and phrases such as ‘starvation campaign’ directly accuse Israel of war crimes based on Protocol II and the Rome Statute.

Fakhri focused on Gaza’s fishing industry, which had provided important food security for the 2.3 million Palestinians who live there. ‘Israeli forces’, he said, have ‘decimated the Port of Gaza, destroying every single fishing boat and shack. In Rafah, only two out of 40 boats are left. In Khan Younis, Israel destroyed approximately 75 small-scale fishing vessels’. This destruction, Fakhri said, has pushed Gaza ‘into hunger and starvation’. ‘In fact,’ he added, ‘Israel has been strangling Gaza for 17 years through a blockade, which included denying and restricting small-scale fishers access to their territorial waters’.

At the UN General Assembly, Palestine’s Riyad Mansour said that Israel has bombed

‘every bakery and farm, destroying livestock and all means of food production.’ In the first month of the bombardment, Israel bombed the major bakeries of Gaza City. In November 2023, Abdelnasser al-Jarmi of the Bakery Owners Association in the Gaza Strip said that bakeries have not been able to function for lack of fuel and flour. As a consequence of the absence of bread, families have begun to gather a weed called khubaiza (or Malva parviflora) and to boil this as the main meal. ‘We are dying for a piece of bread’, said Fatima Shaheen as she built a meal for her two sons and their children in northern Gaza.

## Crossings

Israel has refused to fully open the crossings into Gaza at Beit Hanoun and Karem Abu Salem as well as refused to allow complete opening of the Rafah crossing that links Gaza to Egypt. Since these land crossings are closed, and since Israel destroyed the Yasser Arafat In-

ternational Airport in 2001, there are no easy solutions to bring food aid into Gaza. Delivery of food and supplies through the air is not sufficient – indeed it is a drop in the ocean (which is where some of the aid packages landed). There is now talk of building maritime corridors, but since Israel has bombed the Port of Gaza this is not an easy option. That the Americans have said that it would build a temporary pier off the coast of Gaza’s southern half is ridiculous. It would be so much easier to open the Rafah crossing to allow at least 500 trucks a day into Gaza. But Israel will not permit this option.

International law is clear as daylight on the point of starvation as a war crime. There are no loopholes in Protocol II (1977) or in the Rome Statute (1998). Friends in Gaza are finding this Ramadan month to be more difficult than any previously. Starvation is their general condition. But, unlike with other Ramadans, there is no early morning meal (Suhoor) and no late-night meal (Iftar). There is only the perennial noise of Israeli fighter jets mirrored by the groans of hunger in their bellies.

*People’s Democracy*  
(India)

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

# Kim Jong Suk: fighter for the liberation of Korea

by Princess Harmony

*“My mother passed away too early. Her life, though short, was truly worthwhile.” – Kim Jong Il, General Secretary of the Workers’ Party of Korea.*

While love might motivate any child to say this about their parent, never were truer words spoken about any mother. Kim Jong Suk, the first wife of Kim Il Sung and the mother of Kim Jong Il, served the people of Korea — all Korea, including the currently occupied south — in their liberation fight, first against the Japanese Empire and, after the Second World War, against American imperialism.

Born to peasant parents at the end of 1917, Kim Jong Suk struggled under a semi-feudal society. Instead of being able to play and be a child, she had to fight to aid her family and the families of others under the reigning system of the day. Living in Korea, she saw the need for revolutionary change.

While Kim Jong Suk’s entire life could take up many volumes, and full biographies have been written, the central theme is that she saw first-hand the oppression of both the feudal system and the reign of Japanese imperialism over Korea. This motivated her to join the Young Communist League.

In September of 1935, Kim Jong Suk joined the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army — the predecessor of the current Korean People’s Army in the Democratic People’s

Republic of Korea — and served as a fighter for Korea. Her contribution was notable not only because she fought for the people there, but also because the capitalist nations would never allow a woman to serve as a fighter or serve as a high-ranking official in the military. She served as a political agent for the founding leader and first president of modern Korea, Kim Il Sung, whom she married in 1941, and also as a brave warrior and talented shooter.

Establishing herself as both a communist and anti-imperialist, she was among the first to join the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland. When Kim Il Sung was nominated to be this movement’s leader, she studied the founding documents of this important organisation. She understood the necessity of having organised, selfless leadership in the fight for Korea and against Japanese imperialism.

The fight for Korea led the Korean People’s

Revolutionary Army into battles in both Korea proper and Manchukuo (Japan-occupied Manchuria, a province of China to Korea’s north). Throughout the war in Asia during the Second World War, she was there giving her time and energy selflessly to the cause. She even risked her life to a greater degree by entering enemy-controlled areas.

Japan cracked down on Korea’s people after seeing the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army and the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland’s successes. The Hyesan incident — two different waves of arrests of Korean patriots by Japanese imperialists — highlighted the importance of secrecy and security. Kim Jong Suk helped to train the agents of revolution while maintaining this secrecy while at the Paektusan Secret Camp, the “home base” of the Korean revolution.

Seeing the need for revolutionary change in Korea and the world, in 1937 Kim Jong Suk

joined the Communist Party, the predecessor of the Workers’ Party of Korea. The importance of this cannot be exaggerated. Had the Communist Party not fought for Korea’s freedom and won in the north, the entire peninsula could have come under occupation by the United States of America after the defeat of the Axis. Otherwise, the Koreans would be getting rid of Japanese occupiers only to see them replaced by U.S. occupiers.

Toward the end of World War II, Kim Jong Suk watched over and trained the women guerrillas. She taught them the works of Kim Il Sung and other revolutionaries. She also served as an icon of success in revolutionary activity, constantly studying, teaching and fighting. After the battle at Hongtoushan in 1937, it was noted that she had killed 40 enemy troops.

By the end of World War II, word of the unconditional surrender of Japan reached the ears of Kim Il Sung and Kim

Jong Suk, along with the rest of the Korean patriots. They celebrated and triumphantly returned to their homeland after the withdrawal of the defeated Japanese from Manchukuo. They saw what the final defeat of the Axis Powers meant: the freedom of Korea and the countries occupied by the fascist alliance. Kim Jong Suk and her family — including her spouse Kim Il Sung and her son Kim Jong Il — celebrated their victory at Mangyongdae, a neighbourhood in the Pyongyang area of Korea.

Even after Japan’s defeat, Kim Il Sung required security as he fought for the Korean nation and people. Kim Jong Suk served as part of his security force, being alert and preparing for the West’s plots against Korea. She also prepared to transform the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army — a guerrilla force that fought for Korea — into the modern Korean People’s Army. She fought, literally and figuratively,

for a people’s republic in Korea. After the founding of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, she carried out duties as the spouse of the president.

Sadly, after her life of selflessness and struggle, she died of an ectopic pregnancy in 1949. She still serves as a symbol of fortitude and honour for Korean women and women around the world. Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il both mourned her loss in their books and documents. This Women’s History Month, we need to remember the women who fought fascism and imperialism.

Workers World (USA)

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## LETTERS

### Dear Comrades

When revisionists and traitors destroyed the Soviet Union and the people's democracies of Eastern Europe became subverted or bombed by NATO, world socialism did not collapse. Cuba and the socialist countries of Asia remained firm and resilient. They did not sacrifice people's power to join the junk heap known as capitalism. The President of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Kim Il Sung, took the bold initiative to convene a meeting, attended by representatives of Communist and Socialist parties. The historic Pyongyang Declaration, signed in April 1992, by 70 parties, including the New Communist Party of Britain, called for a struggle to open up the future of human race with a firm conviction in the cause of socialism.

Those countries that abandoned socialism or were brutally overthrown – in the case of Romania their leader, Nicolae Ceauşescu, and his wife Elena were both shot dead – have failed to achieve the promised prosperity. Reactionary repression has replaced social progress as most have become mere vassals for imperialism. Degenerating to become sources of cheap materials and labour as large numbers of their younger people moved abroad to find work.

A majority of former socialist countries have joined the aggressive NATO block to adopt a status of unsinkable aircraft carriers for the United States, in very dangerous times. Many have entered a new Dark Age. However Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia and Belarus are attempting to resist imperialist hegemony.

Today the number of signatories for the Pyongyang Declaration has risen to 300. It unites political parties from many different

countries that oppose imperialism. Meanwhile those former socialist countries that eagerly embraced the European Union must now realise that they have joined a sinking ship. The DPRK has shown what can be achieved.

Imagine a land with warm and friendly people who have rebuilt their economy from scratch and now enjoy a stable and rising prosperity. A land where impressive new buildings have risen from the rubble of imperialist aggression and houses are free. Envisage a society that enjoys a free health service, free education and cares fully for its children, mothers and those who have grown old. A peaceful new society led by a Workers Party that includes comrades from all walks of life and an elected leader who works tirelessly for his people. The DPRK fulfils all these criteria.

**John Maryon**  
Suffolk

### Dear Comrades

Two students at Jahangirnagar University (JU) have been suspended for a year for painting anti-rape graffiti over an old painting of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founder president of Bangladesh, on a wall of the new arts building of the university. The students are Amartya Roy and Riddha Anindya Ganguly of the university's archaeology department. They are the president and general secretary of the Bangladesh Chhatra Union's JU unit.

The anti-rape graffiti includes a flag with a woman's figure and six skulls lying near the country's flag. Next to it, they wrote "Freedom from Rape and Tyranny".

Amartya, one of the suspended leaders of the Chhatra Union, said they painted the graffiti to protest against a recent rape that took place on their campus.

Regarding the graffiti, Amartya Roy said: "Before the painting of Bangabandhu, there was anti-corruption graffiti during the time of former Vice-Chancellor Farzana Islam. That graffiti was a protest against the corruption in the university." He said no walls of the university are particularly allocated to anyone, and as the last graffiti was almost ruined at that time, they painted the anti-rape graffiti on that wall.

We want your attention and solidarity. Condemn the suspension of our comrades by Jahangirnagar University. Your solidarity can make a difference. We need emergency solidarity. Send your messages to: [piregumikha@gmail.com](mailto:piregumikha@gmail.com)  
**Mikha Piregu**  
Vice President  
Bangladesh Students Union  
Dhaka

### Dear Comrades

Even the *Sun* feels time is up for the Tories. Harry Cole, Political Editor, says that "something in the party has snapped" (15.03.24). There has been a "flop budget, more by-election defeats, a defection and a donor scandal". Tory MPs report getting a very hostile reception on the doorsteps. They are so desperate that some even want to replace Sunak with Penny Mor-daunt, the Leader of the Commons. She is someone Tory MPs previously described as "woke, vacuous and lazy".

**Alan Stewart**  
Wakefield

### Dear Comrades

Last week the Bahraini opposition in the UK held a seminar/Press Conference to mark the 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Saudi-Emirati incursion into Bahrain. On 14<sup>th</sup> March 2011, one month after the eruption of Bahrain's Pearl Roundabout Revolution, forces from both countries crossed the Saudi-Bahraini causeway and took an active part in

attacking the protesters at the Pearl Roundabout and in other towns. Several people were killed. The seminar was addressed by several people including Sinn Féin MP Mickey Brady who represents Newry & Armagh in northern Ireland.

On 12<sup>th</sup> March the Bahraini regime imposed prison sentences of three months on six Bahrainis for participating in protests in support of the people of Palestine. The six were detained on 11<sup>th</sup> November: They had joined a demonstration to condemn the killing of the people of Gaza. They were snatched by the torturers from the court soon after the judge announced his political decision. Many Bahrainis have been arrested for their pro-Palestine stands.

The Bahraini regime's misuse of national funds has been, once again, exposed by the failure of their attempt to rescue the faltering McLaren racing team. The owners of McLaren, the Bahraini royal family, have hired bankers to find a buyer for their stake in the British car maker after investors were forced to pump it with £1.5bn in funding to prop it up in the wake of the pandemic. Mumtalakat, Bahrain's sovereign wealth fund with a 50 per cent holding in the McLaren Group, is said to have drafted in advisers at JP Morgan following an order from the king, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, to stem losses. It follows repeated cash calls on investors from the company, known for its supercars, the Sunday Times reported. Mumtalakat has owned a major stake in McLaren since 2007. It was forced to help fund a £300m emergency cash infusion to the car maker in 2020 as its finances were devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**John Hughes**  
Bahrain Freedom Movement  
London

## Diary

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

**UNTIL 31 MARCH**  
Martin Parr Foundation: *Photographs from the Miners' Strike 1984-5*. Paintworks, 316, Arno's Vale, Bristol BS4 3AR.

**UNTIL TUES 24 APRIL**  
Marx Memorial Library: British Labour History 1780-1990 Labour Race and Empire. Online weekly course. Book in MML website

**UNTIL SUN 26 MAY**  
Townsend Theatre Productions: *Behold Ye Ramblers*, play by Neil Gore. See TTP website for nationwide venues.

**SAT 23 MARCH**  
Strike Map: Tom Mann Internationalist Tour. 09:00 [sic.] Online. Register at [bit.ly/TomMann24](http://bit.ly/TomMann24).

**SAT 23 MARCH**  
Free Julian Assange Campaign: Protests, 13:30 HMP Belmarsh, Western Way, London SE18; 16:00-18:00 Eros statue, Piccadilly Circus, London SW1

**SUN 24 MARCH**  
Scottish *Morning Star* Supporters: Conference on military and social spending. 12:00-16:00 STUC 8 Landressy Street, Bridgeton, Glasgow G40 1BP.

**THURS 28 MARCH**  
Socialist History Society: Paul Preston on *Perfidious Albion: Britain & The Spanish Civil War*. 18:30 on Zoom. Register on SHS website.

**WED 10 APRIL**  
Marx Memorial library: Albano Nunes on the Portuguese Revolution 50 Years on. 19:00 Online lecture. Register on MML website.

**SAT 13 APRIL**  
Marx Memorial Library: Booksale. 11:00. 37a Clerkenwell Green, London, EC1R 0DU.

**THURS 18 APRIL**  
Marx Memorial Library: Three films to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Portuguese Revolution. 18:00. In person at MML. Book on MML website.

**WED 24 APRIL**  
Cuba Solidarity Campaign Merseyside: Cuba Vive - medical aid fundraiser. 19:30, The Casa, 29 Hope St, Liverpool L1 9BP.

**THUR 25 APRIL**  
Scottish CND: Nuclear pow-

er costs the earth Webinar, 19:00-20:00. Register on Scottish CND website.

**SUN 28 APRIL**  
Workers Memorial Day. See TUC and STUC websites for local events.

**WED 1 MAY**  
International Workers Day. See TUC and STUC websites for local events.

**SAT 11 MAY**  
Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament: Join the Day of Action against US nuclear weapons coming to Britain. See CND website for local events.

**SAT 18 MAY**  
Burford Levellers Day. 10:30-15:00, Burford, Oxfordshire OX18, starting at the Green by Warwick Hall.

**UNTIL 26 MAY**  
Townsend Theatre Productions: *Behold Ye Ramblers*, play by Neil Gore. See TTP website for nationwide venues.

**THURS 30 MAY**  
Marx Memorial Library: Reds on the Green: A Walk through Radical Clerkenwell. 18:30 from the library. Register at [islington.museum@islington.gov.uk](mailto:islington.museum@islington.gov.uk) for free ticket.

**SAT 8 JUN**  
Derby Silk Mill Rally: commemoration of the 1833/34 struggle against pay cuts. 10:00 - 16:00, Cathedral Green, Full Street, Derby, DE1 3AF.

**TUE 18 JUN**  
Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign: 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary Annual March and Rally. Sheffield. Details TBC.

**SAT 22 JUN**  
Cuba Solidarity Campaign: AGM. 10:00, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BB. Open to non-members.

**SAT 29 JUN**  
TUC Women Chainmakers' Festival. 11:00-16:00, Mary Macarthur Gardens, Lower High Street, Cradley Heath, B64 5AB.

**SAT 6 JUL**  
International Brigade Memorial Trust: Commemoration of British volunteers in the Spanish Civil War, 13:00-14:00, Jubilee Gardens, Southbank, London, SE1 7PG.

# Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

At the start of this month our police made an announcement that will delight petty criminals throughout the country. Police Scotland will no longer investigate every low-level crime committed in Scotland, particularly when there is no CCTV or witnesses.

This will supposedly allow them to focus on other priorities. Helpfully the report of a 12-week pilot in the North East Proportionate Response to Crime gives advice on which crimes can now be safely undertaken.

Vandals can damage car bumpers in car-

parks, steal garden ornaments or mobile phones from unattended bags in public parks, though in the latter case, the case will be reopened if the phone's location can be determined.

Apparently people like being told promptly nothing can be done which makes it all right.

The plod's staff association, the Police Federation, takes a fairly neutral stand, saying "we simply cannot service that demand without changing the process we have".

The SNP's Justice Secretary responsible for Police Scotland washed his hands of the matter by saying: "The decision to roll out the pilot was a matter for Police Scotland". But the Tories argue that "the rollout of this dangerous scheme formalises the SNP's surrender to criminals as official policing policy"

while Labour more realistically says "thousands of crimes are now set to be given a free pass because policing is so dangerously overstretched – it is utterly scandalous that things have reached this point".

However if stealing garden gnomes under the cover of darkness is no longer an offence, the SNP have invented a whole new raft of offences in their Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act, 2022.

It has made special provision for people to report such offences. A number of "third-party reporting centres" have been listed, these include a mushroom farm in North Berwick and a Glasgow sex shop in addition to the normal 101 and 999 numbers.

This promises to be a rerun of the 2011 Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act, which was repealed in March 2018 after attaining the hard fought award for "the worst piece of legislation in Scottish parliament history".

That measure was supposed to end "sectarianism" which in this context means preventing rival football fans being rude to each other. But it was so badly drafted that it rapidly became unworkable. Hard bitten no-nonsense Sheriffs refused to convict because the Act was so badly drafted that what constituted offensive behaviour was totally undefined.

The common Glaswegian habit of singing the British or Irish national anthems to wind up the opposition could have become a criminal offence. Shortly before repeal the Law Society of Scotland pointed out that the 287 fans charged under the Act in 2016-7 could just have easily have been dealt with

under existing laws if offensive behaviour had actually taken place. The same applies to the present legislation. However it has to be said that the 2011 Act did have some success in reducing sectarianism for a while as it briefly united normally warring Rangers and Celtic fans against it.

To return to the incoming measure. It provides protections to particular characteristics: age, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation and transgender identity, but in line with SNP tradition, not women. A new offence of "stirring up hatred" has been created, which could affect the New Worker and all manner of left groups for stirring up class hatred. In contrast to gnome stealing all allegations of "hate" will be followed-up.

David Kennedy, the general secretary of the Scottish Police Federation, predicts the Act will be a "recipe for disaster", as "hate crime is an increasingly fluid term with ever increasing sections of society demanding special status for their particular group".

Police training materials about implementing the new act that appeared on the front page of Tuesday's *Herald* gives us helpful clues about what is intended. The police will be spending their time watching theatre performers to make sure they don't breach the new act. That sounds easier than chasing burglars or fishing headless corpses out of the Clyde.

It is a mystery as to why this act is needed at all. The SNP endlessly tell us that the Scottish people are much more tolerant than those south of the border which logically means there cannot possibly be any need for such legislation in such a blessedly tolerant society...

## Culture Vultures

Eyebrows were raised when Creative Scotland (CS) gave £84,555 in January to fund "a magical erotic journey through a distinctively Scottish landscape". The 45-minute film called REIN, by Leonie Rae Gasson, was said to merely "push the boundaries of what it means to create and show dyke sex on screen". But when the details of this "erotic journey" – which included "non simulated" sex acts – were made public last weekend it proved to be too much even for the worthies on our hub of culture and they want their money back.

After the content was made clear and subject to widespread ridicule the Scottish Minister for Culture, Angus Robertson, belatedly told the arts agency to claw back the money. CS claims that unauthorised changes had been made after the sum had been agreed, but reading between the lines these were very small changes.

Anyone who had seen earlier examples of Leonie's work knows that she does not do the Teddy Bear's Picnic. She once put on a publicly funded show involving 16-year-olds making sex toys.

CS boasts of having very rigorous application processes. That great investigative newspaper, the **Sunday Post**, quoted another disgruntled applicant as saying the application process was extremely detailed and involved a panel of 10 people, adding that "it's like a dissertation, the funding process. Their claims about not knowing about it are completely farcical".

Creative Scotland has a budget of about £90 million a year. Their CEO is on £185,000, the HR boss gets £115,000,

the screen director £125,000 while the media & communications boss has to scrape by on just £100,000. So it looks as though at least some of the Scottish arty tribes are not starving in garrets.

Neil Bibby, Labour's shadow justice secretary said "it has become very clear this is something that never should have received public money, and we insist there must be full transparency and openness, including publishing the original application".

One organisation which was denied funding is the Edinburgh Deaf Festival whose 2023 bid for a sum about equal to Ms Gasson's was turned down just weeks before it was due to begin. It has also been denied funding which would secure its future as part of the Edinburgh International Festival. Obviously CS has missed the Scottish Government pledge to make Scotland the "best place in the world for British Sign Language users to live, work, visit and learn"...

## Meantime...

...there are plenty of matters Police Scotland could be occupying themselves with. Sean Clerkin, the nationalist who made the initial complaint about the missing £600,000 from SNP accounts which lead to the downfall of Nicola Sturgeon has been making inquiries as to why the investigation is taking so long. He is not alone in raising concerns about the matter.

The SNP have asked the police for their famous impounded campervan back in time for the general election campaign. That might not be a good idea as the presence of the actual campervan will be much more of a talking point in the campaign than whatever slogans adorn it.

### FROM THE NEW COMMUNIST PARTY

- The Middle "Class"** by Neil Harris. £2 plus 50p p&p (New Worker reprint).
- The ruling class, fascism and the State** by Neil Harris. £2 plus 50p p&p (New Worker reprint).
- The poisoned well** (an insight into imperialist intelligence work). £2 plus 50p p&p (New Worker reprint).
- Communists and the united front** by Neil Harris. £2 plus 50p p&p. (New Worker reprint).
- New technology and the need for socialism** £2 plus 50p p&p.
- Communists in Britain today** £2 plus 50p p&p (New Worker reprint).
- Peoples's China in perspective** £2 plus 50p p&p (New Worker reprint).
- The case for communism** £2 plus 50p p&p.
- The basis of scientific socialism**, the 1st chapter of *Anti Daring* by F Engels. £2 plus 50p p&p.
- On Stalin £2 plus 50p P&P** (New Worker reprint).
- Stalin & the BRS** £2 plus 50p p&p.
- How we got in the State we are** by Daphne Liddle. £1 plus 50p p&p (New Worker reprint).
- All in the family** by Daphne Liddle. £1 plus 50p p&p (New Worker reprint).
- Arab nationalism and the communist movement** by Andy Brooks. £1 plus 50p p&p (New Worker reprint).
- Killing ourselves to live** by Daphne Liddle. £1 plus 50p p&p (New Worker reprint).
- The first 30 fighting years of the New Communist Party of Britain** £2 plus 50p p&p (New Worker reprint).

NCP Lit. PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ.  
(cheques to New Worker)

# Shenzhen orchestra wows London

by New Worker  
correspondent

One of Asia's leading orchestras came to town last week when the Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra arrived in Chelsea for the London leg of a debut tour of Britain that includes London, Birmingham, Manchester and Edinburgh. Over 100 musicians performed an impressive programme of film scores and orchestral pieces at the Cadogan Hall on 13<sup>th</sup> March that included excerpts from the award-winning movie *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* that was composed by the orchestra's principal honorary conductor, Tan Dun.

Honoured guests



included the Chinese ambassador, Zheng Ze-guang, who congratulated the Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra and expressed his appreciation to all the individuals and organisations from

China and the UK who helped make this debut tour of the UK such a success.

Ambassador Zheng stressed that China will stay the course of high-quality devel-

opment, and advance the building of a strong country and national rejuvenation through the Chinese path to modernisation. This will surely generate more opportunities for practical

cooperation and cultural and artistic exchanges between China and the UK. It is hoped that the cultural and artistic communities of both countries will enhance engagement and cooperation and inject new vitality into the friendship between the Chinese and British people.

The concert at Cadogan Hall was the second leg of the Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra's tour of eight cities in the UK. Under the baton of Lin Daye, the orchestra's music director, the orchestra worked with Chinese cellist Nie Jia-peng and British violinist Tamsin Waley-Cohen to perform Tan Dun's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, Chausson's *Poème*, Saint-Saëns' *Introduction* and *Rondo Capriccioso* as well as Respighi's *Pines of Rome* and *Fountains of Rome* and other masterpieces from the Chinese and Western repertoire.

Lin said "it has been a dream for a long time to bring the Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra to the UK. We hope to welcome orchestral audiences new and old with a programme that includes exciting drama, serene beauty, and virtuosic brilliance."

The musicians received enthusiastic applause and cheers from the audience and returned to the stage to perform encores presenting the audience with a musical feast blending both Chinese and Western cultural elements.

## REVIEW

by Ben Soton

***The Last Devil to Die* by Richard Osman; Penguin, London 2024 Pbk £9.99 432 pp.**

*The Last Devil to Die* is the fourth instalment in Richard Osman's Thursday Murder Club series based around a group of elderly crime-solving amateur sleuths. Once again Ron, Joyce, Ibrahim and Elizabeth are brought together to solve the murder of an antique dealer. Meanwhile a hundred, thousand pounds worth of heroin goes missing; naturally the two events are closely connected. The plot of the novel revolves around various and often fatal attempts to locate the box.

As one might expect elderly characters have

a limited shelf life and it appears that Osman is preparing for life's most definite certainty by bringing in new characters. In this case a computer expert known as Computer Bob and Mervyn, a septuagenar-

ian who appears to be a victim of an online dating scam – who, at face value, may not make the best of detectives. However, this character might be in the novel to remind us that not all pensioners are as street

wise as the main characters.

Mervyn's tragic situation provides an interesting side story to the main plot of the novel whilst at the end of the novel we hear of the arrival of a new resident – Edwin Mayhew. Meanwhile the relationships between the secondary characters continue to develop. Bogdan and Donna consider marriage and Ibrahim, a psychiatrist, visits the convicted criminal Connie Johnson in prison.

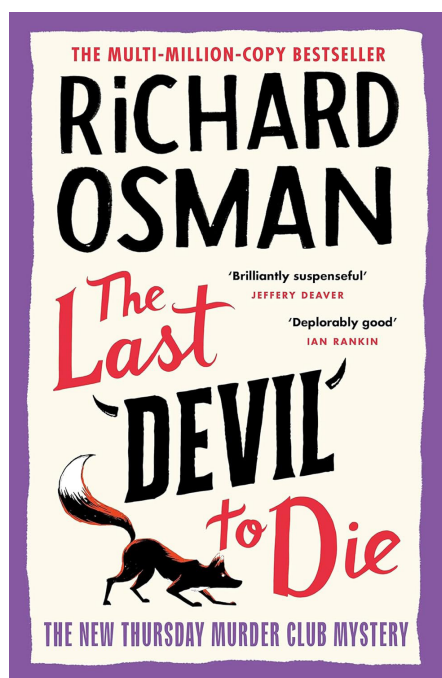
*The Last Devil to Die* also shines a light on the tragic and delicate issue of dementia. We see Stephen, Elizabeth's husband, entering the final stages of the illness. For many years he has been a keen chess player and often plays it with the local handyman, Bogdan.

However, as his memory fades, he now believes that Bogdan is going to teach him how to play the game. The question arises as to what point do you lose a loved one when they have the condition – there will come a point when Stephen is no longer aware who Elizabeth is.

This aspect shows the darker side to old age. Not everyone in their seventies and eighties is as mentally active as the main characters. However, the main characters; Ron, Joyce, Elizabeth and Ibrahim are as mentally astute as ever. Whilst unlike Agatha Christie's somewhat implausible Miss Marple, a seventy something spinster who has barely set foot outside her West Country village, this gang of four actually has

a wide-ranging set of life experiences.

The question is, has Richard Osman come up with an ultimately unique idea? A group of pensioners, living in a Kent retirement home have become the new amateur sleuths of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Perhaps more plausible than Miss Marple, Poirot or even Sherlock Holmes...



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# Stand with Diane!

by Theo Russell

Diane Abbott received a rapturous welcome from around 900 people at a rally outside Hackney Town Hall in east London last week to protest against the vile attack on the MP by multi-millionaire Tory donor Frank Hester. The chant repeated again and again was “We stand with Diane!”.

A speaker from the local black women’s group, Sistah Space, told the crowd that Diane’s parents endured the racism of the Windrush generation. “Diane was the first black woman elected to parliament and is the longest serving black MP. She’s a living legend...we are under attack and we have to be vigilant!”

Criticising Labour leader Keir Starmer’s suspension of Diane Abbott from the Parliamentary Labour Party, the singer and rapper Lowkey said: “The Labour Party has come to power in the past with the support of black voters, and we want our money’s worth!”

Former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, whose par-

liamentary seat is in neighbouring Islington, said: “I’m proud to be here. We are here to celebrate Diane. We ain’t disappearing and we ain’t going nowhere!”

Diane Abbott herself said: “It is the people of Hackney who selected me, who worked hard to get me elected, and who have stood by me for so many years. We need to stand up

for the young generation so that they don’t have to go through what our parents experienced. Thank you for your support and help. Now we need to go forward.”

Diane Abbott is immensely popular in Hackney and enjoys massive respect from the local community as their representative, but she also has a

magnificent track record of anti-colonialism and opposing imperialist wars from Ireland to Africa and Palestine to Afghanistan.

Although some MPs have been given police protection against threats and Rishi Sunak warns that extremists are “threatening our democracy”, Tory business minister Kemi Badenoch has dismissed

Hester’s comment that Diane Abbott should be shot as “trivia” while the black community feel that the Labour leadership has also failed to stand up for Dianne.

While parliament debated the very subject of Hester’s outright racism, the Speaker – a Labour MP – disgracefully failed to call Diane Abbott to speak even though she stood to be called 49 times.

After Rishi Sunak’s shameful failure to return Hester’s millions his popularity has sunk to new lows, but Labour also has to realise that the feelings of black British voters can’t be trampled on, that they need to feel fully respected, and that that includes bringing Diane Abbott back into Labour’s parliamentary party.



## Putin landslide leaves the West frustrated

by Hu Xijin

**Russian President Vladimir Putin has won the latest presidential election, which means he will remain in power until at least 2030. Many Western media outlets claimed that this is a “nightmare” for the West.**

According to the Russian Central Election Commission, Putin leads with 87.32 per cent of the vote after 99.43 percent of ballots were counted as of Monday, which is a record victory in Russian elections.

This election was held more than two years after the Russia-Ukraine conflict broke out. Currently, Russia has a clear advantage in military forces and fire-power and the Ukrainian army faces difficulties on all fronts. Ukraine is facing serious difficulties with a need for more soldiers, and some people even demand that

the police be sent to the front.

Putin has demonstrated his strong ability to control the situation over the past two years. The “special military operation” did not end as quickly as Moscow planned, but the comprehensive sanctions imposed by the US and the West on Russia did not crush Russia as they had hoped. Their military aid supported the fight in Kiev, but failed to create the expected advantage on the Ukrainian battlefield. Russia not only shows a powerful military capability, but also maintains stability in the economy and overall unity in society. Data from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the Levada Centre, Russia’s independent polling organisation, show that around half of Russians “strongly support” the war with Ukraine, and 28 percent “somewhat support” the war.

Russia has abundant

food, energy and minerals. The West estimates that Russia’s artillery shell production capacity is about three times that of the US and Europe. Despite the support of the entire West, Ukraine is still at a disadvantage, lacking in artillery and ammunition. In addition, Russia is a nuclear power with extremely strong strategic deterrence.

French President Emmanuel Macron recently stated many times that he could not rule out the deployment of NATO ground

troops in Ukraine in the future. In response, Putin stated on Sunday that doing so would be “one step away from a full-scale World War Three”. Macron’s stance has faced open questioning and opposition from countries like the USA, UK and Germany with only Finland expressing support.

As long as Putin remains in power, Western countries as a whole will be unable to ease relations with Russia. Donald Trump has stated that once in of-

fice he would seek to end the Ukraine war. However, Western animosity toward Russia and Putin runs too deep. Issues such as the Ukraine crisis, Baltic and Central European hostility toward Russia, and the Syria crisis remain unresolved, with the West unable to unify its stance to address them.

The Western media heavily promoted calls from some supporters of late opposition leader Alexei Navalny to vote against Putin on Sunday at

noon, but those voices were too few.

Regarding China-Russia relations, after his election victory, Putin described it as a “stabilising factor” in international relations. On the Taiwan question, he stated Taiwan is “without any doubt an integral part” of the People’s Republic of China.

Chinese people should welcome and support Putin’s re-election, applaud Russia’s firm stance against the West, and strongly advocate for the continuation of the strategic partnership between China and Russia. We should also support China in making efforts to balance its relationship with the West regarding the Ukraine issue and maintaining overall strategic stability. This should be the mainstream perspective and framework of Chinese people’s understanding of the outside world.



• Results coming in at the election commission in Moscow.

## Russia foils Ukrainian sabotage raids

by Ilya Tsukanov

**The Ukrainian military launched large-scale offensive operations across the northern Russian border last week. The attacks came amid dwindling NATO arms aid for Kiev and successful Russian efforts to gradually push through heavily fortified Ukrainian defences in the Donbas in recent months. And they all failed.**

The Russians waged a week-long campaign to secure the Belgorod and Kursk border regions. The Ukrainians, who were “decisively repelled”, suffered heavy losses

“All attempts by sabotage and terrorist gangs consisting of regular

enemy units and foreign mercenaries and all sorts of scum...to break into our territory have failed,” the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, told federal security (FSB) officers last week. The saboteurs’ goal was to carry out a successful “terrorist raid” but instead they suffered heavy losses, Putin said.

“The most important and intense part of your work today of course is associated with the special military operation. The range of tasks here is the broadest,” Putin said. These range from the neutralisation of enemy agents, terrorists, and sabotage groups to “successful operations on the front lines and in the enemy’s rear” as well



• Russian units advance.

as “counter-intelligence support for military units and formations”.

Putin said the trace of Western intelligence services is clearly visible behind manifestations of terrorism and extremism in Russia today. “Much depends on our counter-

intelligence organs. This applies both to the sphere of anti-terrorism and the fight against extremism, manifestations of which are often accompanied by the ‘protruding ears’ of Western intelligence services, and other important areas. We’re talking here about

the neutralisation of the reconnaissance and subversive activities of foreign intelligence services, the protection of confidential information of a strategic nature, including state and military control systems, advanced technologies,

and promising groundwork in the defense and other spheres,” the Russian leader said.

“From the FSB and employees of all Russian special services, the people of Russia are expecting tremendous concentration and great dedication, effective and offensive operations,” Putin said, calling on the intelligence services to “seriously strengthen” their anti-terrorist operations across “all areas” on the “understanding that we are dealing with a strong and dangerous enemy whose arsenal includes broad informational, technical, and financial capabilities”.

*Sputnik*

## The tragedy of Gaza

by Guillermo Alvarado

**The Gaza Strip is already experiencing a humanitarian catastrophe of great proportions due to the massive and indiscriminate bombings that the Zionist State of Israel is carrying out against the civilian and unarmed Palestinian population, which is overcrowded in that territory.**

According to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Israel’s attacks have already cost the lives of more than 13,000 children, a figure higher than all the infants killed in armed conflicts around the world during the last four years.

Catherine Russell, UNICEF’s executive director, said that thousands of minors were wounded and many of them are unaccounted for, although

it is presumed that a large number may be under the rubble. She added that the institution had never seen such a high mortality rate in any other conflict on the planet.

Many of the survivors are having a hard time because of the lack of food and some are so malnourished that they do not even have the strength to cry.

This is one of the most barbaric and inhuman acts

of recent times and the most serious thing is the high degree of impunity enjoyed by its perpetrators, protected by the United States and some of its main Western allies, who supply weapons and military equipment to Israel.

Just as serious is the indifference of many governments which, despite the intense mobilisation of their peoples in defense of the Palestinian cause, refuse to apply measures

against the regime of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

During a march held in Chile several participants called on humanitarian organisations to move from declarations and condemnation to concrete measures. One of the proposals was to apply to Israel an isolation similar to that which most countries imposed against South Africa to eliminate

apartheid.

It is criminal to maintain economic and commercial relations with a nation whose hands are bathed in innocent blood, they said. The fact is that the catastrophe announced a short time ago by the UN in Gaza is already happening, but there is no proportional response from the international community which is either deeply afraid of Israel, or cares very little about the lives of millions of Palestinians.

*Radio Havana Cuba*

## CIA stokes Cuban inflation

**Distorting Cuban finances is part of the ongoing strategy of the US intelligence community. Recently leaked information reveals the manoeuvres carried out to stoke inflation within the Cuban market, based on shortages, induced inflation, supply boycott**

**and financial blockade. International demands, with the use of vulture funds, are also part of this offensive.**

The aim of the most recent onslaught of the CIA and its associated agencies is to undermine the Cuban currency – not only to generate hyperinflation but

also to reduce production; to alter the distribution of goods by taking them to the informal, private sector markets at overpriced prices, and to attack the economic actions of the Cuban Government.

The first phase of implementation limits to the maximum the

entry of foreign currency, mainly dollars, hindering the people’s access to food, medicines and other essential goods. Emphasis is placed on tourism and medical services.

A second stage includes the use of platforms financed by the Americans, such as El Toque, to stimulate inflation.

Similar procedures were employed by the US government in Nicaragua, Zimbabwe, Argentina and Venezuela. The common denominator is the use of social networks such as Facebook, Whatsapp and Telegram, in which anonymous individuals set the price on the open

market for the Cuban peso.

The main objective of the CIA’s manoeuvres is to manipulate the prices of products and subvert order in Cuba.

The third and fourth part of the operation is the boycott and the financial blockade, with restrictions that lead to prosecutions, blackmail and denial of licenses to potential sources of supplies.

*Granma*