

## China calls for Gaza peace as talks break down in Cairo

by our Arab Affairs correspondent

**Palestinian commandos strike deadly blows against the Israeli invaders in Gaza as cease-fire talks break down in Cairo. People's China repeats its demand for an immediate end to the fighting and the forces of the Houthi Yemeni government have sunk an American-owned freighter off the coast of Aden.**

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi denounced Israeli aggression and renewed Beijing's calls for an immediate cease-fire last week. Speaking to journalists at the second session of the 14<sup>th</sup> National People's Congress of China Wang said this "humanitarian catastrophe" was "a tragedy for humanity and a disgrace to civilisation".

He continued "the disaster in Gaza once again reminded the world of the fact that it is no longer possible to ignore that the Palestinian territories have been occupied for a long time". Expressing China's support for the full membership of the State of Palestine at the United Nations Wang said "the long-awaited desire of the Palestinian people to establish an independent state can no longer be avoided, and

the historical injustice suffered by the Palestinian people cannot continue for generations without being corrected".

The Israelis have killed more than 30,000 Palestinian Arabs in the Gaza Strip since the war began in October. The Gaza Health Ministry say most were women and children. Some 85 per cent of the besieged enclave's residents are starving, according to the United Nations.

Stephane Dujarric, the spokesman for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterre, says "countries with the greatest influence on Israel should use it to obtain a ceasefire and the introduction of aid...what we are seeing is the result of the ongoing Israeli military operation in Gaza. We need a humanitarian ceasefire, we need the release of all hostages. Without a ceasefire, we cannot perform our humanitarian work in the required way, we cannot meet the needs of people on the ground. Now, we are doing humanitarian

work whenever we have the opportunity to do so, we are trying to reach the needy as much as possible," he said.

Meanwhile a Hamas delegation has left Cairo after Israel rejected the Palestinian conditions for an end to the fighting. The Zionists, with Joe Biden's blessing, had offered a six-week temporary "pause" in the fighting to exchange prisoners and allow much needed medical aid and food supplies into the beleaguered Palestinian enclave. They were backed by their master in Washington who claimed both sides were close to agreeing a pause in the fighting over Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting that starts this weekend. Though the White House implied this could lead to a proper truce no Palestinian can trust the words of an American – while the Israelis maintain that they will not give up until Hamas is crushed. And while the Americans bleat on about a "two-state" solution the

only "solution" the current Israeli government wants is their permanent occupation of the Gaza Strip supported by a local "autonomous" administration run by any Arab quislings they can find to do their bidding.

Unsurprisingly the Palestinians are insisting on a complete cease-fire and a complete withdrawal of all Israeli forces from the Strip before a prisoner exchange can happen. A Hamas leader, Osama Hamdan, told the media in Beirut that no prisoner exchange can go forward until its demands – including the withdrawal of all Israeli forces from the Palestinian enclave – are met. "We have affirmed our conditions for a ceasefire: complete withdrawal from the sector, the return of displaced persons to the areas they left, especially in the north, and the provision of sufficient aid, relief, and reconstruction," Osama Hamdan said.

An American-owned cargo ship, the *True Confidence*, has sunk following a Houthi missile attack that set the ship on fire in the Gulf of Aden. "The targeting operation came after the ship's crew rejected warning messages from the Yemeni naval forces," a Houthi spokesman said. When the current round of fighting broke out in October the Houthi Yemeni government imposed a blockade on all Israeli vessels entering the Red Sea. This has now been extended to British and American shipping following Anglo-American reprisal attacks against the Yemenis. This is the second ship the Houthis have sunk – though many others have been hit in a blockade that the Yemenis say will continue until the war in Gaza ends. Their campaign has closed the port of Eilat – Israel's only Red Sea outlet – and reduced traffic through the Suez Canal by 45 per cent.

### FUND

This week's post brought in £845. Our grand total for February was £3,245 – sadly £255 short of our monthly target. Special mention this week goes to a Harrogate comrade who donated £100 and two Dagenham supporters who sent in £110. A Hereford friend sent in £25 and a pillar of the fund from Essex gave us £30. Many thanks to all who helped us on our way. Let's see if we can more than match their effort in March.

Huge demonstrations are rocking London and Washington. Mass protests on either side of the Atlantic are shaking the Establishment in the capitals of the imperialist heartlands. Dissent is growing within the Labour Party and "Genocide Joe" Biden's Democrats. People are sick of their leaders' support for Israeli aggression. They want the Israelis to get out of Gaza. They want justice for the Palestinian Arabs. We are part of that struggle.

Every pound helps our solidarity work for the Palestinians and the Arab resistance. Every pound keeps our presses rolling. The *New Worker* depends entirely on the support of friends and comrades to keep its presses rolling.

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# THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

## Robbing the poor

Though the Tories care little or nothing for the working people they exploit to keep the bourgeoisie in clover they have to pose, like virtuous Roman Senators, as impartial governors of the state machine – especially in the run-up to the general election. When the going is good the bourgeoisie will sacrifice a tiny fraction of their immense wealth to maintain the health service and what's left of the “welfare state”. When times are hard – and they certainly are now as we enter the 16<sup>th</sup> year of a recession that still shows no sign of recovery – they will try to pass the entire burden onto the backs of the workers with austerity measures that they call the “national interest”.

This week's Spring Budget was no exception. Jeremy Hunt tinkers around income tax and national insurance contributions but at the end of the day it was as Keir Starmer said “just another short-term cynical political gimmick”.

This is a budget for the wealthy drawn up a government that represents the ruling class. People on low incomes or benefits will be hit by cuts in the social wage. Pensioners face an average £1,000 hit to their incomes because of the tax changes. The Labour leader says the Tories “give with one hand and take even more with the other” and “nothing they do between not and the election will change that” – and on this occasion he's quite right. But Labour has nothing to offer in exchange.

The renationalisation of all the utilities, industries and services that were once in public ownership would pour billions back into the Treasury. The health service could be rescued by restoring the wealth and profit taxes of the Wilson era and scrapping the Trident nuclear arms system could easily provide the funds to end the homelessness crisis. But the Starmer leadership is committed to maintaining the tax-break regime that began after the Tory come-back in 1979.

Paul Nowak, the General Secretary of the TUC slammed “a deeply cynical budget” packed with “wishful thinking on productivity and pre-election gimmicks”. We need a government that will take responsibility for growth, Nowak said, with stronger public services and strengthened public infrastructure not least to meet the climate crisis. For working people up and down the country a change of government cannot come too soon.

Indeed. We will all be glad to see the back of Sunak. But we've also got to defeat the class collaborators and bureaucrats who run Labour and most of the unions these days. If we don't we can only expect the same again from Starmer & Co.

## A slap in the face for Starmer

**Galloway bagged almost 40 per cent of the vote in the Rochdale by-election last week that was dominated by the war in Gaza. Starmer and the sad-sack Blairites that surround him told us that the average Labour voter wasn't interested in Palestine. Last week proved them wrong.**

Though there is a substantial Muslim minority in Rochdale the swing to Galloway and his new Workers' Party of Britain went far beyond the Muslim community. Disowning their own candidate for supporting Palestine and making remarks deemed to be “anti-Semitic” by the Starmer bureaucracy didn't help Labour either.

Galloway says he believes his win will “spark a movement, a landslide, a shifting of the tectonic plates in scores of parliamentary constituencies”. But, of course, we've heard all this before.

The MP kicked out of Labour for opposing the imperialist invasion of Iraq in 2003 returned to Parliament on two previous occasions on his old Respect platform. But Respect never took off as a national party. Whether Galloway is third-time lucky this time round remains to be seen but without the mass support of the union movement that seems unlikely.

Nevertheless George Galloway's victory was a slap in the face for Starmer & Co. It augurs well for Jeremy Corbyn's re-election in London and it was a warning shot to Labour to never take their traditional vote for granted. Now it's their turn to look over their shoulder. Let them wonder where their slavish support for Israeli aggression and boot-licking the Americans is taking them...

# Trust in politicians hits spectacular low

by Mark Blacklock

**Nobody who has watched British civic life in recent years will have been in the least bit surprised that a recent study by the country's Office for National Statistics (ONS) has found only 12 per cent of the public trust their politicians, a spectacular low. Why is that?**

Well, first of all, people feel increasingly alienated from those who are supposed to have been elected to represent their interests. Worse, they feel unable to influence the heedless parliamentary apparatus which seems to be being used to serving the politicians more than it serves the people.

The job of the ONS is to gather, process and analyse data about the United Kingdom's economy, society and population, and is widely regarded as a professional and impartial authority. This makes the findings of its annual Trust in Government survey so striking.

Trust in political parties is an unimpressive 12 per cent this year, which is down from an already lamentable 20 per cent in the previous analysis. The proportion of adults trusting the government itself also fell - from 35 percent to 27 per cent - and trust in parliament, the institution where the politicians operate, plummeted from 34 per cent to 24 per cent. These figures echo a study from a market research company last year, which said only nine per cent of people trusted their politicians to tell the truth (the lowest level in 40 years). The inevitable conclusion to be drawn is that most Britons think that the political class that has the power to make decisions that control their lives are liars.

One reason the UK public is so disillusioned with their politics is the prevailing doctrine which favours political centrism. Party leaders are reluctant to appear too leftist or rightist for fear of driving support away, so they gravitate toward the centre. These are not the politics of conviction

or ideology, but of opportunity for self-serving individuals who are willing to change their policies and even opinions to give themselves the best chance of winning.

A general election is expected in Britain this year, in a country that has essentially been a two-party system for generations. The Conservative and Labour parties are electorally dominant and regularly alternate in government, largely because of the country's outdated, unfair and anti-democratic first-past-the-post electoral system, which works to marginalise and exclude voices outside of the centre. This makes it difficult for other relevant parties, such as the Greens and especially smaller groups such as communists, to be represented in Westminster.

This feeling of alienation from the process of government is exacerbated by the closeness of the two main parties. At the election, there will be little to choose between the main parties' candidates in important aspects of policy. In fact, Rishi Sunak's Tories and Keir Starmer's Labour have recently accused each other of stealing their policies and mimicking stand-points. Neither of them spoke out against the war in Gaza, for example, until it had been raging for months. Both parties have declared support for rules that prevent families from receiving a state benefit for more than two children - something

that affects many low-income households.

At the other extreme, both parties are prepared to lift a cap on bankers' bonuses - something which was devised to discourage reckless investment behaviour - and allow them to make unlimited payments. Both parties have also declared the need to continue with austerity-style policies which are blamed for the declining nature of Britain's economy. Both parties favour cracking down on illegal immigration, and approve of higher defence spending, keeping the Trident nuclear deterrent (despite a recent failed test-firing of one of the £17m missiles) and continued support for Ukraine.

If the people, despairing at the lack of choice among those who seek to govern them, should dare to speak out and protest, the establishment has been devoting a lot of time and effort into devising laws aimed at discouraging and restricting demonstrations. The temperature has been further raised by the politicians themselves complaining that the strength of dissent has put them in danger. They call protest marches “hate marches”.

But if there is one that the people hate, it is being lied to and not being served by those whose job it is to serve them. And that is why so few people trust or believe them.

*Global Times*





## Workers' Notes

*This week we take a look at the state of local government and some of the struggles of workers employed by town halls. These lines were typed in blissful ignorance of what the Chancellor of the Exchequer pulled out of his red box on Wednesday, but even with an election in offer the words of Labour's 1997 campaign song "Things can only get worse" would be appropriate.*

### Facing a bleak future

by New Worker correspondent

**Many councils are teetering on bankruptcy in England. Since 2021 six local authorities have declared themselves effectively bankrupt. In January a poll of English councillors by the Local Government Association reported that a quarter of councillors expected their council to follow suit.**

At a time when central government has cut funding by 40 per cent between 2010 and 2020 in real terms councils are facing greatly increased demand for statutory services such as social care for adults and children to say nothing of temporary accommodation and homelessness support.

These cuts have left councils more dependent on funding from the locally raised council tax and business rates. These do not make up for the drop in central government support. Local authority spending power has effectively fallen by 17.5 per cent between 2009-10 and 2019-20. Even with the extra Covid-19 funding it was still 10.2 per cent below pre-pandemic levels.

The extent of the crisis can be surmised by the fact that there were more section 114 notices (warnings from council finance officers

which report they are nearly bankrupt) in 2023 than were issued in the entire 30 years before 2018.

The Tories blame workers for having the outrageous impertinence to expect decent wages and their unions for calling their members out on strike. But the Institute of Government (IoG) notes that, being labour intensive organisations, councils are highly exposed to rises in the National Living Wage (NLW), this will rise by 9.8 per cent in 2024/25, after increasing by 9.7 per cent in 2023/24.

Another less talked about problem is the recent increase in interest rates. Now libraries and swimming pools are being closed so that international bankers can buy new yachts.

The late 2023 finance settlement for local government did not take sufficient account of inflation. Local authorities' 2024/25 spending power is now 4.7 per cent lower than if inflation had not increased in 2022.

The IoG also makes the predictable point that since 2010 Conservative Government cuts have fallen most heavily on the most deprived local authorities, which is understandable from their point of view as they do not normally vote Tory. This was slightly reversed just before the pandemic but it has now has reverted to form and last year's settlement was distributed with little regard for need.

This has led to devastating cuts for council services on whom many depend. Or as the IoG puts it: "By abandoning the redistributive approach of recent finance settlements, the government could therefore further squeeze the finances of local authorities that are already seeing some of the most intensive demand pressures".

According to Michael Gove, the Minister of Leveling Up, Housing, and Communities, the root cause is easy to find: it is mismanagement by councillors and officials. This has indeed been the case in some councils such as Thurrock and Woking which made foolish investments. But most of the bankruptcies are due to more mundane matters. The largest one so far is Birmingham

which has been blamed on an equal pay case resulting in previously underpaid workers getting long overdue back pay.

At Nottingham even critics acknowledge that it was due to insufficient funding at a time of rising demand for social care services. When private landlords turf people out in favour of those who can afford to pay higher rents, it is the council who has to rehouse the unfortunate evictees.

While local authorities are rarely models of efficiency it is underfunding from central government which is responsible for their failures. The IoG sagely observes that "the margin of error for council mismanagement is now paper thin. A council might have been able to absorb the cost of a management misstep in 2010 by making savings elsewhere in its budget. In 2023, that same misstep could force an authority to issue a section 114 notice". While some of the bourgeois of Birmingham will be up in arms about cuts to the city orchestra it is the unemployed and homeless who really suffer. No Christmas lights are the least of it.

Apart from cuts to services, rising costs of using sports centres deter users resulting in greater health costs which will be a burden on the NHS.

Some county councils such as Kent and Hampshire have called for a reduction in the statutory obligations on councils, which will only make a bad situation worse, but then there are always food-banks.

Allowing councils to raise more money by giving them more leeway over Council tax and Business Rates is unlikely to be popular among those voters who would have to stump up for council services.

The IoG argues that uprating property values is long overdue as the council tax system is highly regressive and is still calculated using property values from 1991. That is hardly a revolutionary demand, and it would only require the Government to implement its own 2016

Fair Funding Review, which would update funding formulae to direct more money towards the most disadvan-

taged parts of the country, but the landed gentry don't want to see any more funding going to the inner cities.

In Wales the picture is also bleak, despite the devolved government cuts in other departments areas going some way towards protecting local authority services and the NHS. These cuts have already brought the staff of the National Library of Wales out on strike.

The Welsh Local Government Association tugged its forelock and commented: "These are not easy decisions, and we would support the minister in protecting local government core funding in 2023-24," before warning that: "The funding available will not cover it all and we face a considerable funding gap."

### Same Thing With a Kilt On

North of the border uncivil war has broken out between the SNP Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) with latter body formally announced it was "In dispute" with the Government.

As might be expected the dispute is about money. Councils are up in arms about both the amount of money they are getting from the Scottish Government and that which they can raise from the Council Tax.

Councils are particularly irate about the fact that the SNP suddenly announced a freeze in Council Tax at their annual conference in October. This was a crowd pleasing measure by the new First Minister to get him through a difficult event.

Raising the Council Tax is always gong to be controversial. While councils of all political stripes and local government unions want more money, voters, and not just those with desirable taxable properties often have differing views on that matter. In Scotland the base of the council tax bands are 1993 house prices. This benefits well-heeled house owners but puts a heavy

burden on council tenants who pay a much higher per cent of their income in Council Tax. Abolishing Council Tax was one of the 2007 SNP election manifesto promises, but not much is heard about that today.

A particular bone of contention about the Council Tax freeze are the false claims by the Edinburgh government that it is fully funded. The SNP offered councils £147 million extra funding and, later under CoSLA pressure another £62.7 million was found from behind the sofa for those councils which toed the line.

CoSLA wanted the freeze to be flexible, allowing councils the right to increase it by five per cent, and that more Barnett consequential should go to councils rather than in to mysterious Scottish Government coffers.

The freeze is as much political as financial. At present 80 per cent of council funding comes from central Government with the remaining twenty per cent from the council tax. This of course gives Holyrood great powers. While no Scottish councils have followed certain English councils into bankruptcy it is clear than some are not far off it.

Ever since they came to power the SNP have never liked local councils as they were alternative centres of power, with old fuddy-duddy Labour councillors ruling the roost. The removal of police and fire services from local control a decade ago is just one sign of this. Even with SNP councillors in power little has changed in central-local relations, with councils being starved of funds while extra responsibilities are laid upon them. Ruling SNP councillors have speedily taken on board the dodgier practices which took generations of Labour councillors to perfect.

While Labour councillors were willing to put up a fight with Labour or Tory occupants of the Scottish Office, today SNP councillors rarely put up much of a fight for increased resources for councils. In Glasgow the SNP controlled City Council agreed to the

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freeze, despite the SNP leader earlier describing it as a “no-brainer”. One effect of this is to put 172 teaching posts at risk of redundancy to save £27.8 million.

Jane Gow, the Secretary of the Glasgow association of the Educational Institute of Scotland will not be alone in complaining that “Glasgow schools simply can’t take any more cuts in teacher numbers. Staffing is stretched to the limit as it is, with some secondary schools reporting a current long-term shortage in subject specialists”.

Given that such teachers will pay extra tax for the privilege of teaching in Glasgow rather than Manchester that situation is likely to remain.

To the fury of the SNP things have got so bad that some councils have despaired of Holyrood and have written to the Aberdeen born Michael Gove pleading for more cash: “Without additional support, there will be inevitable cuts to essential services provided by the four nations, which could have a detrimental impact on sustained efforts to mitigate against poverty and homelessness”.

Other councils are presently setting their annual budgets. In Midlothian council-

lors voted to freeze council tax which involved no cuts to services, but put up council tenants rent by five per cent and cancelled plans to build a school and extend existing ones. A five per cent Council Tax increase will be needed next year to balance the books.

So far only Argyll & Bute Council’s Tory and Liberal Democrat coalition and Labour run Inverclyde have voted to ignore the freeze. Argyll voted for a ten per cent rise, a move which roused the First Minister to complain about their insubordination. Inverclyde say their 8.2 per cent rise will cost residents only £1.99 a week.

Even CoSLA’s resources spokesperson Katie Hagmann, an SNP councillor in Dumfries & Galloway, rejected the freeze saying: “Council Leaders were absolutely clear today that it is not appropriate for Scottish Government Ministers to interfere in the democratic decision making of Councils”.

## Pay Battles Ahead

by New Worker correspondent

Last week the three main

local government unions, GMB, Unison and Unite, who between them represent about 1.4 million workers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, submitted their annual pay claim. This is for all council employees to receive a wage rise of £3,000 or 10 per cent, whichever is higher. This will go some way towards reversing the fact that local government wages have fallen by 25 per cent in real terms since 2010.

This is essential says Unison “to make up for more than a decade of declining real wages which have fallen by a quarter, and to retain workers” adding that “unless councils and schools can pay competitive rates, employees will find better-paid, less-stressful work elsewhere and new recruits will be thin on the ground”.

Unions also complain that the workload is increasing due to higher demand for essential services. Mike Short, Unison’s local government head said “a decent pay offer is essential. And with so many councils struggling financially it’s more important than ever that the Westminster government invests properly in the local government and school workforce.” A similar claim from the Scottish unions will be made soon.

## Stirring Up Apathy

by New Worker correspondent

Election fever barely extends beyond the union gravy train these days with candidates who are barely known beyond the cognoscenti who run the factions that prop up the full-time bureaucrats and the time-servers on the NECs.

Few bothered to vote in shopworkers’ union USDAW national elections. Turnout ranged from 3.5 to 4.6 per cent in the five regions which were contested. In two others. North Eastern and Scotland, the turnout was zero as they were uncontested.

The low turnout will be greatly to the satisfaction of the incumbent General Secretary and his senior full-time officials. The last thing in the world that they want is an NEC with mass, grass-roots support that could disturb the quiet life they currently enjoy. On these pages on the 19<sup>th</sup> January we reported an ex-Usdaw member, disgusted by the union being too close to big supermarket chains, suggesting that its initials could stand for “Useless Seven Days

A Week”. That is not going to change if there is such low interest among the membership about union affairs. Little wonder that USDAW only represents about ten per cent of shopworkers.

Slightly better was the recent elections for post of General Secretary of the University and College Union. Here the turnout was a magnificent 15 per cent with 17,279 members of the 114,310 strong union making their views known. The result was a narrow victory of the incumbent Jo Grady who initially won just over a third of the votes (5,990) in the first count in the four cornered contest. In the third count she finally squeaked home winning 7,758 to 7,576 against a King’s College London Law professor who said the union needed drastic changes. That may or may not be true but with an 85 per cent abstention that is not going to happen any time soon.

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

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

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

*HUNDREDS of workers who have lost all or most of their pensions when their employer went bankrupt last Tuesday lobbied their MPs in Westminster – the same day as the inadequate Pensions Bill had its second reading in the House of Commons.*

*Former workers from the bankrupt Allied Steel and Wire (ASW) were there in force. They were supported by the general union Amicus and the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation.*

*They were also joined by current and former employees from the United Engineering Forgings (UEF) from Chesterfield, Birmingham and Scotland and Dexion from Hemel Hempstead and many others in a similar situation.*

*Amicus general secretary Derek Simpson said: “Some of these people have made 30 years of compulsory pension contributions but now face destitution instead of the safe and comfortable retirement they had saved for.*

*“The Government say they want to encourage people to behave responsibly for their retirement but they are only likely to do so if they believe their contributions are safe.*

*“Confidence in the UK pensions scheme will only be restored if our members at ASW, and others in the same situation, are provided with the safety in retirement that they saved for and were told was guaranteed.”*

*ISTC general secretary Mike Leahy said: “This lobby will raise attention to the plight of people who have been failed by successive UK government who have not lived up to their responsibilities to protect people who have*

*saved for their retirement as they were urged to do.”*

*The GMB is also putting pressure on this issue. The union criticised the Pensions Bill for not going far enough in tackling the pensions crisis because its limited measures place the onus on employees rather than employers.*

*GMB general secretary Kevin Curran welcomed the Government effort to address the issue, but added: “Without introducing compulsory employer contributions, this Bill is like a plaster when the crisis calls for major surgery.*

*“The Pension Protection Fund should become an important tool to safeguard workers’ pensions from failing companies. But there is nothing in the Bill to stop employers transferring this cost directly to employees.”*

*A recent survey conducted by Amicus showed that 40 per cent of workers have no savings at all and will depend entirely on the state pension and tax credits to top it up.*



# Yemen: Responding to Gaza

by Sergio Rodriguez  
Gelfenstein

The transnational media have spread the idea that the Houthis act under the influence of the government of Iran. Neither Iran nor the Houthis have denied belonging to an axis of resistance to imperialism, colonialism and Zionism, an axis that also incorporates political forces from Lebanon, Syria, Bahrain and Palestine itself. Simplifying the equation to a relationship of subordination however, is still superficial and banal, given the Yemeni people's own history of struggle.

In the Middle East Israel's growing aggressiveness and the interventionist presence of the United States have polarised the political situation. Iran's recent agreement to settle differences with Saudi Arabia, as well as other agreements have brought Egypt and Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, among others, closer after years of distancing. All this added to the cessation of the war in Yemen and pointed to a weakening of the imperialist-Zionist pole and strengthening of the resistance.

In this context, due to history and geographical location, the role of Yemen and the Houthi movement is decisive. It is worth saying that the Houthi Ansarallah movement has never hidden its relationship with Iran. They are united by their common membership of the Shia branch of Islam.

Both the founder of the Ansarallah movement and his brother, who leads it today, spent part of their lives in the Iranian city of Qom training politically and ideologically and at the same time studying the Shia philosophy.

Shiaism is based on the idea that the legitimate succession of the Prophet Muhammad corresponds to the descendants of his son-in-law Ali. The Sunnis believe that Muhammad's successors should be the Prophet's companions. Sunni comes



• Houthis march through the capital, Sana'a.

from "Ahl al-Sunna," which translates as "the people of tradition," and Shia comes from "Shiat Ali," which means "the party of Ali".

None of this means that the Yemenis are simple accessories of Iran. Beyond the financial, military, communication and political support it has received from Tehran, the Ansarallah movement has demonstrated autonomy. It made its own decisions regarding its strategy and the execution of its actions in the war against Saudi Arabia and its allies since 2015 and now in support of Palestine.

In addition to its aid to Palestine, Yemen has a direct conflict with Israel due to the support that the Zionist entity gave to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) during the war that began in 2015. This support allowed the UAE to occupy the strategic Socotra archipelago — which are Yemeni islands located in the Arabian Sea about 350 kilometres south of the country's coast — to establish a series of spy bases there. These bases gather intelligence information throughout the region, particularly the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb into the Red Sea.

The UAE/Israeli base in Socotra also benefits the United States military, since, through it, the American military could control the port of Gwadar in Pakistan, which is part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Beijing developed this port so that goods unloaded there

could be shipped overland to China, particularly its western region.

However, in relation to current events, it should be known that Yemen's actions in support of Palestine began almost immediately after 7<sup>th</sup> October. On 19<sup>th</sup> October an American warship shot down missiles and drones fired by the Houthis against Israel.

On 27<sup>th</sup> October six people were injured when two drones fell on Taba, an Egyptian town bordering Israel, after their interception by the Israeli air force. On 31<sup>st</sup> October the Houthis claimed responsibility for a drone attack against the Zionist entity, whose army reported that it had intercepted a missile launched from the south.

Houthi military spokesman, General Yahya Sari, said that they had launched a "large number" of ballistic missiles and drones toward Israel and that there would be more attacks in the future "to help the Palestinians achieve victory". In response, Israeli National Security Advisor Tzachi Hanegbi said the Houthi attacks were intolerable but declined to elaborate when asked how Israel would respond.

In mid-November, Ansarallah announced that its armed forces would attack all ships sailing under the Israeli flag or owned or operated by Israeli companies. A few days later, General Sari indicated that, "The Yemeni armed forces continue to prevent ships of all

nationalities heading to Israeli ports from sailing through the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea, until they transport the food and medicine that the Palestinians need" in the Gaza Strip.

Faced with this decision, and after the first attacks on ships heading to Israel, four large shipping companies (the world's largest container line, the Mediterranean Shipping Co, based in Switzerland, the Danish Maersk, the French CMA CGM and the German Hapag-Lloyd) suspended the passage of their ships through the Red Sea. These companies transport approximately 53 per cent of the world's maritime containers and around 12 per cent of global trade in terms of volume. It must be said that 30 per cent of the world's container traffic passes through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

In response, on 19<sup>th</sup> December the United States proposed creating a naval alliance to launch an operation they called "Prosperity Guardian" supposedly dedicated to "ensuring freedom of navigation in the Red Sea". In reality, this meant declaring war on Yemen and militarising that sea. But the Yemenis have remained loyal to their position. Their armed forces have stated that "any attack against Yemeni assets or against Yemen's missile launch bases would stain the entire Red Sea with blood" and that they have "weapons to sink your aircraft carriers and destroyers".

The escalation of actions

since then has been evident. On 20<sup>th</sup> December the leader of Ansarallah, Sayyed Abdul Malik Al-Houthi, declared that the responsibility of the Islamic world in the conflict in Palestine was great, especially that of the Arab region, as it is "the heart of that world". In this sense, he deplored the Islamic-Arab position at the summits that were held to debate the issue, especially the one held in Saudi Arabia. He characterised that view as weak.

Al-Houthi noted that there should be a commitment by the Arabs and Muslims to support Palestine. The Yemeni leader said that his nation did not expect a positive position or role from the Americans or the Europeans towards Palestine. For these reasons, he said that the perspective of the resistance axis should be aimed at raising the level of military support for Palestine.

Al-Houthi warned that Ansarallah was going to "attack American warships if his forces were attacked by Washington after the launch of Operation Guardian of Prosperity". The United States is not trying to protect global shipping but rather seeks to militarise maritime space.

However, the United States did not achieve a consensus to carry out the missions of the created naval alliance. Disagreements arose with the Arab countries which were called to form part of the coalition. This failure has made a coherent response to the Houthi attacks against ships transiting the Red Sea difficult.

Two key countries in the region involved in the long war against Yemen — the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia — maintain opposing positions towards the Houthis. These differences are a major obstacle to the American plan to end maritime attacks. One possibility considered by Washington is to carry out a military attack against the Houthis, but some

*continued on page 6...*



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Arab allies have refused to do so. These prefer to insist on diplomatic channels and reinforced maritime protection for ships.

Analysts agree that the objectives of the operation are vague. The naval commanders have not been given precise missions. Likewise, coalition ships, although equipped with advanced weapons, can be limited to only repelling missile attacks and escorting merchant ships with warships, which is questionable, since Yemen's missile arsenal is inexhaustible.

In light of the actions undertaken over the last eight years, in addition, "neither the management of global shipping companies, nor the captains of merchant ships, nor insurance companies will be willing to play this lottery," says Ilya Kramnik, a Russian naval forces expert.

Likewise, Michael Horton, co-founder of Red Sea Analytics International, an independent advisory firm dedicated to providing impartial analysis of security dynamics in the Red Sea, noted that the Houthis "have only deployed a portion of their weapons, without using missiles — longer range, more advanced drones and sea mines that are difficult to detect".

In this situation, US Vice Admiral Kevin Donegan noted that "the United States has also been accepting as normal the persistent attacks ... by the Houthis." According to the *New York Times*, this has led to President Biden being forced to face a difficult choice related to future Houthi deterrence plans. To do this, he must consider that Saudi Arabia is not seeking an escalation of the conflict that could sink a truce

with the rebels that was negotiated with great effort. For his part, Tim Lenderking, US special envoy for Yemen, stated in mid-December that, "Everyone is looking for a formula to reduce tensions".

On the other side of the conflict, on 24<sup>th</sup> December, the commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, Major General Hossein Salami, announced that progress could be made towards a total naval blockade of Israel, including the Mediterranean, the Strait of Gibraltar and other navigable waterways.

Yemen has already managed to almost completely block the Israeli port of Eilat, located on the Red Sea. It is worth saying that Ansarallah's military forces managed to hit an Israeli ship deep in the Arabian Sea, near India, a long distance from Yemeni territory. For its part, Iran has drones and long-range hypersonic missiles that, in the event of an all-out war against Zionism, could easily target commercial ships moving through the Mediterranean towards Israeli ports.

Likewise, in prepa-

ration for a combat of other dimensions against Israel, the Yemeni army announced that it has 20,000 reservist soldiers trained and willing to fight alongside the country's armed forces against the Zionist entity and the coalition it leads.

On 28<sup>th</sup> December Yemen warned the United States and its allies about the militarization of the Red Sea and stated that it will intensify its attacks against enemies if the blockade and bombardment of Gaza continue. In this context, a day earlier, the main commanders of the Yemeni Armed Forces met to discuss the latest regional developments and review the combat readiness of the troops. At the end of the meeting, they stated that they were ready to carry out the orders of the leader of Ansarallah.

On 4<sup>th</sup> January, after a Yemeni naval contingent came face to face with American military forces in the Red Sea, with the Yemenis losing three small boats and 10 fighters, the commander of the Yemeni Coastal Defence Forces, General Muhammad Al-Qadiri, warned that his country

would respond by selecting the target in each case on the islands, in the Red Sea and in "the bases where the Zionists and the Americans are stationed".

If the United States and its alliance ultimately decide to directly challenge the Houthis in the Red Sea, they will face a vast naval war from the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. If that were to happen, an unstoppable spiral of confrontations of incalculable dimensions would be unleashed.

In any case, Yemen has already managed to use its strategic position as a force in global balances. It has become an important part in the ongoing confrontation by expressing one of the bravest forms of support for the Palestinian people who face the Israeli-backed war machine that is backed by the United States and Great Britain. The Yemeni position contributes important pressure against Zionism and its North American mentor.

Controlling the Suez Canal means controlling 90 per cent of world trade that directly in-

volves Israel and can affect its economy. In this sense, the Houthis have managed to do what Israel and the United States have tried to avoid at all costs until now: "to turn the genocide in Gaza into a global crisis".

Lebanese journalist Khalil Harb, citing the World Bank in an article in the online magazine *The Cradle*, stated that the "occupation state [Israel] imports and exports nearly 99 per cent of goods via waterways and shipping" and "more than one-third of its GDP depends on trade in goods."

For his part Eduardo Vasco, a Brazilian journalist specialising in international politics, pointed out that in addition to the direct impact that the Houthi movement is causing in the region, its actions are "paralysing the world economy, that is, the very functioning of the capitalist regime, which is at the root of the problem of the war of aggression in the Middle East".

In this framework, Vasco believes that the United States and Israel are limited in carrying out a direct attack on

Yemen, because there could be reprisals against the United States' allies in the region, "mainly against their oil fields, which would brutally aggravate the economic crisis with one of oil (which has already started). For this reason, while the UAE wants strong action against the Houthis, the Saudis are cautious".

Yemen has already attacked an American ship transporting supplies to Israel, thus responding to recent American attacks against Yemeni naval forces. Likewise, responding to the statements of US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, the deputy foreign minister of Yemen, Hussein Al-Ezzi, said Yemen would respect, "the security of navigation to all destinations, except the ports of occupied Palestine" categorically denying the false information disseminated by Washington, London and Berlin regarding the safety of navigation.

The preceding lines show the capacity and decision of the Yemeni people to assume an active role combating Israel's war against Palestine. By their deeds, they make it clear that, even though Yemen is a relatively small country and marginalised globally and regionally from economic development, it maintains a will to fight that expresses the ancient feeling that it exists as an independent nation. The Yemenis call into question the main world powers by placing obstacles and impediments to the imperial execution of their policy in the region that they express through their full support for Israel.

*The author is a former Director of International Relations of the Presidency of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Ambassador to Nicaragua for Venezuela.*



• Solidarity in Sana'a.



# Clara Zetkin and International Women's Day

*"She who is a Communist belongs as a member to the Party, just as he who is a Communist. They have the same rights and duties. There can be no difference of opinion on that score."*

Lenin

German Marxist Clara Zetkin was a contemporary of Lenin. She had organized among women workers and published a socialist women's newspaper titled *Die Gleichheit* (Equality) for 25 years (1892–1917). In 1910 at the Second International Socialist Women's Conference, Zetkin and others proposed that an International Working Women's Day should be held annually; it passed unanimously.

Over a million people joined the first IWWD demonstrations, held throughout Europe in March 1911. Zetkin represented the Communist Party in the German parliament, the Reichstag, from 1920 until the party was banned in 1933.

Zetkin met with Lenin in the autumn of 1920 and recorded their discussion. Lenin's remarks show that he respected Zetkin and treated her as a comrade and not an inferior. He spoke with the familiarity of a friend and mentor. It is clear that he valued her efforts regarding women's place in society while offering his opinion on how that work should proceed and her role in that work.

Zetkin wrote: "Comrade Lenin repeatedly discussed with me the problem of women's

rights. He obviously attached great importance to the women's movement, which was to him an essential component of the mass movement that in certain circumstances might become decisive. Needless to say he saw full social equality of women as a principle which no Communist could dispute".

Lenin said to Zetkin "we must by all means set up a powerful international women's movement on a clear-cut theoretical basis. It is clear that without Marxist theory we cannot have proper practice. A committee is still in charge of the matter. It is to draft a resolution, theses and directives but has made little progress so far. You must help it".

Zetkin and Lenin agreed that women could only achieve full emancipation in a socialist society and that the middle-class suffrage movement would fail to free the women of the working class. Bourgeois feminism was a reformist movement that would keep the class structure intact.

Zetkin praised what Lenin and the Bolshevik Revolution had achieved for proletarian women, which he described: "in Petrograd, here in Moscow, and in other cities and industrial centres, proletarian women showed up splendidly during the revolution. We would not have won without them, or hardly. That is my opinion".

Lenin continued "what courage they showed and how courageous they still are! Imagine the suffering and privation they are enduring.



• Clara Zetkin.

ing. But they are holding out, because they want to defend the Soviets, because they want freedom and communism. Yes, our working women are magnificent class fighters. They are worthy of admiration and love".

A Marxist analysis of any aspect of bourgeois society must acknowledge that private property is the foundational component at the core of the struggle between the ruling class and the worker, man or woman. This cannot be stressed enough.

Lenin offered Zetkin advice on how to proceed in discussions among women, that they should critique bourgeois feminism using a Marxist framework to ensure that individual relational problems do not supersede the class struggle. He said that class consciousness needed to be raised

among working women and that relationship issues should be "dealt with from the point of view of mature, vital historical materialism [which] presupposes wide-ranging, profound knowledge and the fullest Marxist mastery of a vast amount of material".

Zetkin shared her vision for a congress of women workers: "In my opinion, the congress ought first to discuss the women's right to engage in trades and professions. In doing so it should deal with the questions of unemployment, equal pay for equal work, legislation on the 8-hour day and labour protection for women, organisation of trade unions, social care of mother and child, social measures to relieve housewives and mothers, etc. Furthermore, the agenda should deal

with the status of women in marriage and family legislation and in public and political law".

Lenin was fully supportive of Zetkin's vision, although the congress never materialised. Again and again Lenin stressed the vital part women play in the new society under communism. In fact, he was clear that he believed the revolution would be imperilled if women were not equal partners. He counselled Zetkin that the emancipation of women can only come when private property is abolished. It was her belief too, but she must have welcomed the straightforward words from Lenin.

Lenin told Zetkin "the communist women's movement itself must be a mass movement, a part of the general mass movements; and not only of the proletarians, but of all the exploited and oppressed, of all victims of capitalism or of the dominant class. Therein, too, lies the significance of the women's movement for the class struggle of the proletariat and its historic mission, the creation of a communist society.

"We can be legitimately proud that we have the flower of rev-

olutionary womanhood in our Party, in the Comintern. But this is not decisive, we have to win over the millions of working women in town and country for our struggle and, particularly, for the communist reconstruction of society".

Lenin said that when speaking at a Party Congress, women should be encouraged to "speak out loudly and clearly like fighters should ... a congress is a battlefield in which we fight for the knowledge we need for revolutionary action. Show that you can fight. In the first place, of course, against our enemies, but also within the Party, should the need arise. After all, the broad masses of women are at stake".

Zetkin and Lenin were comrades in the vanguard who shared ideas, critiqued each other's arguments and offered their solicited and sometimes unsolicited opinions. Their warm kinship comes through in Zetkin's account as well as their unguarded ease with each other. Most importantly, it is a true testament that Lenin's understanding of the "women question" is just as profoundly relevant today.

Workers World (USA)

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## LETTERS

***A Tory press media campaign has forced the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) to withdraw its invitation to a veteran Palestinian freedom-fighter to take part in a fund-raising event in Birmingham. Leila Khaled, a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), is best known in the West for her role in two PFLP plane hijackings in 1969 and 1970. She was expected to speak on video link at a £25 charity dinner organised by the PSC's West Midlands branch in Sparkwood. The event has now been cancelled. This is the PFLP's response:***

### **Dear Comrades**

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine confirms that the incitement by the *Times* newspaper – known for its right-wing tendencies – along with the Zionists and the Zionist media against comrade Leila Khaled, a fighter and leader in the Front, following her announcement of participation in a fundraising event organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign in Britain, is a failed attempt to silence the Palestinian resistant voice and abort any impact of her participation on the British public. The British people are increasingly uncovering the atrocities and crimes of the Zionist entity, and the reality of the official Western support for the genocidal war waged by this colonial settler criminal entity against the Palestinian people.

The Front renews its assertion that our people's resistance is legitimate and guaranteed by international laws and norms, and that those who carried out the heroic operation on 7<sup>th</sup> October are fighters for freedom, and that the fighter Leila Khaled is a symbol and an iconic figure of Palestinian struggle. She

represents our people's shining image of struggle. Her participation in solidarity activities with our people in the Gaza Strip is natural and comes within the national duty to expand the avenues of Western solidarity with the Palestinian cause, and to press more on the Western right and the official British authorities and other Western governments to stop their complicity and participation in the genocidal war against our people in the Strip.

The Front adds that there have been significant shifts on the British street since the beginning of the Zionist aggression on the Strip, one of the most important indications being the million-strong and massive marches that flood the British streets, and the declining popularity of the Conservative and Labour parties due to their biased stance with the occupation. This angers and shocks the Zionist lobby, and explains their attack on any Palestinian solidarity activity, and the significant incitement, especially against the Popular Front in recent days and comrade fighter Leila Khaled in particular.

The Front affirms that comrade fighter Leila Khaled will remain the resistant voice of Palestine that has not and will not fade, and neither the Zionists nor the entire Western right-wing system will succeed in silencing this voice or in aborting the wide solidarity with the Palestinian cause in British and European circles.

**The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine Central Media Department**

### **Dear Comrades**

Imperialism's ruthless plunder of the world during the colonial era was justified by embracing racist prejudice. In their

greedy quest to steal natural resources and enslave the indigenous people's they not only created dependence and poverty but also destroyed rich and ancient cultures. Social systems which in many cases were more respectful, democratic and sustainable than the corrupt decadence of western societies. The height of hypocrisy occurred when missionaries were then sent to save the souls of the 'savages'. Today vestiges of perverse attitudes still persist among western nations. Hence exceptionalism and arrogance remain cornerstones of Imperialist policies.

Western civilisation developed rapidly in ancient Greece and Rome. Scientific understanding, philosophy, architecture and art flourished. However these developments had been preceded in Egypt, and Asia where civilizations had developed in Mesopotamia, the Indus valley in India and Pakistan and also along the Yellow river in China. Chinese culture is rich and diverse. It is said to incorporate the philosophy of Daoism which preaches harmony with the universe and Confucianism which focuses on the importance of moral values, proper conduct and human relationships. These philosophies, along with many others, are not understood or valued by many in the dog-eat-dog western capitalist societies.

There are lots of non-Western contributions to human progress that are ignored. Mathematics developed significantly in the Islamic world. Algebra was advanced by Khwarizmis in the 8th century and included an early understanding of algorithms, so important in computer science today. It was Korea that invented metal plate

printing some 300 years before Europe which was a comparative late-comer in many established fields. Europe generally resorted to aggression, racism and chauvinism as essential props for its emerging imperialism.

Successful socialists build upon inherited social, cultural, technical and scientific achievement as they embark upon the road to build their beautiful new societies. Imperialists the other hand, blinkered by greed and self delusion, will trample and destroy any progressive achievements that restrict exploitation and greater profit. The Rochdale by-election result was a major debacle for the Tories and Starmer's Labour. It shows an awareness that change is necessary and that people have had enough of aggression, austerity and arrogance. Western nations are falling behind and their privileged existence is being challenged by the new world orders. Capitalism is reaching the end of its shelf life. The future is building socialism- but we must fight for it. The time is ripe to take civilisation to a new and higher stage with communism as our goal.

**John Maryon  
Suffolk**

### **Dear Comrades**

John Maryon's excellent letter to the *New Worker* of 16<sup>th</sup> February makes a correct analysis of how working class people in the Western world are clearly not living in free and democratic societies. Free thinking is definitely discouraged, whilst the imperialist narrative in the bourgeois media certainly does not like to be questioned or challenged.

Of course, the USA's ruling class would like nothing better if the

*continued on page 9...*

## *Diary*

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

### **UNTIL 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.

### **UNTIL FRI 22 MARCH**

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

### **UNTIL 31 MAR**

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

### **SAT 9 MARCH**

1984–85 Miners' Strike commemoration, Broadway Hotel, Dunscroft, Doncaster DN7 4HB. 09:30-11:00, march to Hatfield Colliery for rally.

### **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.

### **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.

### **SUN 17 MARCH**

Marx Memorial Library: Annual oration at Karl Marx's grave at Highgate Cemetery by John Hendy KC. 13:30, Highgate Cemetery, London, N6 6PJ.

### **TUE 19 MAR**

Abingdon Peace Group: 'Revealed: Military Influences

on UK Nuclear Power Decisions'. 20:00-21:00. Zoom: ID: 913 1513 4101 Passcode: 015836

### **TUES 19 MARCH to 24 APRIL**

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

### **THUR 21 MARCH**

Marx Memorial Library: Ravi Raham on *Global Labour and Peripheral Capital*. 19:00. Hybrid book launch. Register on MML website.

### **FRI 22 MARCH**

Medical Aid for Palestine: Irish Musical Night for Palestine, 19:00. Cock Tavern, 23 Phoenix Road, London NW1 1HB Tickets, £10 from www.tickettallor.com

### **SUN 25 MARCH**

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

### **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 at Library.

### **WED 24 APRIL**

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

### **SUN 28 APRIL**

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



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progressive peoples of the world believed the nonsense about how the present American empire is not like the empires of times past, which were built on colonies, conquest, and the ‘white man’s burden’. Further, the US would like us to believe that the US of A is not in the era of the United Fruit Company, when American corporations needed the US marines to secure their investments overseas. We are encouraged to believe that their 21<sup>st</sup> century imperialism is a completely new invention in the annals of political science, a global hegemony, whose “attributes” are so called free-markets, human rights, and democracy, enforced by the most awesome military power the world has ever known.

They also claim that they are a uniquely fair and noble imperialist nation, that remembers how it secured its independence by revolt against an empire (British), and now liked to think of themselves as the friend of “freedom” everywhere in the world. They are constantly “shocked” that their “good intentions” arouse hatred and resentment worldwide.

Of course, this empire-light narrative is meant to sound appealing along with their banal talk about American exceptionalism etc, etc. Commenting on their assertions, American socialist historian, Howard Zinn, wrote the following “only people blind to the history of the United States, it’s obsessive drive for control of oil, it’s endless expansion of military bases around the world, it’s domination of other countries through it’s enormous economic power, it’s violation of the human rights of millions of people, whether directly or through proxy governments, could make such an interpretation”.

A McKerl  
Fife

# Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

**“Fighting like rats in a sack” was how Scottish Labour Deputy Leader Dame Jackie Baillie described the SNP’s latest bout of internal warfare which was sparked off by SNP Deputy Leader Keith Brown (an MSP now without Cabinet office) saying that SNP should think about withdrawing from Westminster in the something akin to what Sinn Féin have done for over a hundred years. This was promptly slapped down by the First Minister, Angus Robertson, the former Westminster leader, and Stephen Flynn, the present Westminster leader, although the Finance Minister, Shona Robison was more ambiguous, perhaps because she had not read the newspapers that morning.**

There have been grumbles from the rank and file about MPs enjoying the high life in the Westminster bubble and going native in London. The longest serving SNP MP, Pete Wishart, even expressed hopes of becoming Speaker of the Commons. Going one step further. Ian Blackford has said that the SNP should accept seats in the House of Lords, as does Plaid Cymru. One wonders who he has in mind.

Fergus Ewing, the hereditary SNP MSP, has just undergone the harrowing punishment of being suspended from the party’s group at Holyrood for daring to vote for a non-confidence motion aimed at the Green minister,

Lorna Slater. He was unrepentant saying the SNP alliance with the Greens had brought “dismal mismanagement” and “duff policies” to Holyrood. Representing a Highland area he is keen on improvements to the main north-south road, which the Greens oppose.

Ewing also deplored that rules imposed in 2021 which prevent SNP councillors and MSPs making the mildest criticisms of the Government. He said “the SNP has now become an authoritarian party requiring strict obedience to the leadership at the expense of personal freedom for any individual member.” He concluded by saying “if my constituents wanted a doormat, they would have gone to B&Q.”

## The Tories

Last weekend also saw the Scottish Tories, the Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party, hold their annual conference at Aberdeen, the heart of the North Sea oil industry. They do not sound too unhappy and expect at least to hold on to their present six seats, despite them doing very badly in the UK polls. This is because all elections are battles between opposition claims that “it’s time for a change” and incumbent warnings about “don’t let the other lot ruin things”. That logic is bad for the Tories in the UK as a whole, but possibly positive for them in Scotland. If Tories are in line for a heavy defeat in England that makes it safe for anti SNP voters in Scotland to vote for them as there is no danger of them forming a government. The hero of Rochdale, George Galloway, has advocated this policy before, but tactical voting has never really caught on in Scotland, although

it helped both Labour and Tories to gain a few seats in 2017.

All the Tory seats have the SNP in second place and Labour and Liberal Democrat loyalists are hardly going to vote SNP to thwart the Tories in a national election in which the polls predict a Labour landslide. In a few other places such as Keir Hardie’s birthplace such as Ayr, Carrick & Cumnock unionist Labour and Liberals voters can safely deal a blow to their mortal enemies in the SNP by holding their noses and voting Tory.

The Tories constantly remind people of their stand on the discredited and unpopular Gender Recognition Act while posing as the only reliable defenders of the union with England. But they also pass themselves off as the only reliable defenders of the oil and gas industries while Labour and the SNP have confused policies on the industries which seem to depend on which day of the week it is.

## Health Notes

In the run up to the UK Budget the SNP’s Westminster trade spokesman, Richard Thomson, demanded that the Chancellor reduce the tax on spirits by at least five per cent, saying “anything less would be a betrayal of the Scotch whisky industry”. He seems to have forgotten that his own Edinburgh colleagues had already increased the price of a bottle of whisky through their controversial Minimum Unit Price scheme which was raised less than a month earlier. Unlike the alcohol duty which makes up the bulk of a bottle of spirits the MUP goes into the pockets of retailers and is not used by the Government to support the NHS or

buy missiles. If the MUP was abolished Thomson’s desire for cheaper whisky could easily be met for good or ill.

Another ill-fated health measure from the SNP took the form of a plan by the Minister for Public Health, Jenni Minto to ban supermarket promotions of certain foods. The proposed ban predictably covered foods such as soft drinks, crisps, cakes and shortbread, all of which are essential components of the Scottish diet. More surprisingly the list included porridge, a foodstuff heartily recommended by the British Heart Foundation, and which sustains this column as well as the *Guardian* readers’ proverbial favourite, muesli. But, curiously enough, it misses out alternative breakfast foods such as the worthy sausages, bacon, black pudding and eggs...

## Tartan St Trinian’s

Scotland’s main teaching union, the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), is up in arms about a serious danger facing their members. That is the little darlings they are supposed to teach.

Standards have declined so far that the SNP have stopped contributing figures to the OCED’s international comparisons. However it seems that Scotland’s youth will be well equipped for future careers in the armed forces. Even primary school pupils are showing great promise. 42 knives were confiscated from primary school children in the past three school years according to figures squeezed out of the SNP Government last year. These primary pupils have highly developed technical skills,

their weapons include crushed Christmas baubles.

The EIS is not so impressed, by these skills. The EIS’s Aberdeen branch recently complained that a third of their members had been assaulted and that 92 per cent were dealing with violent classroom violent disruption every day.

The Education Minister washed her hands of the matter saying she had not read the report, and in any case “it was not her job to direct the local authority”.

Teachers complain that the Scottish government’s “Curriculum for Excellence” is too vague about what is to be taught. Some schools have even dropped some subjects because the results were poor and concentrated on easier subjects so that the figures look good.

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# Remembering the past in Gloucester

by New Worker correspondent

Last month the Chinese Embassy held a special reception in Gloucester for the families of a war-time tragedy in the Chinese seas and to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

On 1<sup>st</sup> October 1942, an American submarine sank a Japanese troop-ship off Shanghai. Some 700 Japanese soldiers scrambled to safety when the *Lisbon Maru* went down.

The 1,800-odd British POWs on board the ship were not so lucky. Many died trapped in the holds that had been sealed by the Japanese soldiers. Others managed to break through the hatches to take their chances in the water. Some were picked up by Japanese craft. Others, 384 in all, were rescued by local Chinese fishermen.

On 24<sup>th</sup> February the families of the survivors joined hundreds



of other guests at an event that recalled the sacrifice and the heroism of those who have gone before. Tributes to the days when China and Britain fought as one were given by the Chinese ambassador Zheng Zeguang and the Mayor of Gloucester as well as Wu Buwei, a relative of one of the Chinese fishermen from Zhoushan who participated in the rescue, and Major Brian Finch, a retired officer who over the years has been committed to collecting the historical documents on Lisbon

Maru.

Ambassador Zheng recalled the time when China and Britain fought side by side against fascist aggression in the Second World War. History may be in the distant past but history shall never be forgotten. We must always keep in mind the friendship between the two peoples, treasure the hard-won peace we enjoy today and make joint efforts for a better tomorrow he said.

"China has always been a staunch force for peace, stability and development

in the world. Facing increasing uncertainties and turbulence, at home, we will stay the course of high-quality development, and advance the building of a strong country and national rejuvenation through the Chinese path to modernisation. And internationally, we call for an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalisation.

Co-operation between China and the UK is beneficial to both

countries and to the world. Differences between the two countries should be properly handled on the basis of the principles of mutual respect, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit.

The potentials for China - UK co-operation are far from being fully tapped. Both sides should make joint efforts to enhance dialogue and communication, expand mutually beneficial cooperation, and bring more benefits to the people of our two countries.

Wu Buwei, representing the families of the Zhoushan fishermen, shared the heroic deeds of his grandfather in rescuing three British POWs, and displayed a precious photograph of his grandfather with the British soldiers from that time. He called for the family members of the Chinese fishermen and the British POWs to be promoters and guardians of China-

UK co-operation, and together preserve this special friendship forged on the battlefield.

Denise Wynne, the daughter of one of the survivors, fought back tears while retelling the story of her father's rescue saying that she would always be grateful for the Zhoushan fishermen who risked their own lives to rescue the British soldiers.

The reception featured a variety of cultural activities, including the display of Zhoushan fishermen painting, fishing knots, as well as the making of dumplings and Tangyuan rice balls. Artists from Zhoushan performed splendid songs, dances, and opera pieces such as *Yuloh Song*, the *Butterfly Lovers' 18-li Farewell*, *Da Lian Xiang*, and *Flowing Water*. Chinese and British singers also performed British songs like *Scarborough Fair* and *Auld Lang Syne* together, receiving rounds of applause from the audience.

# Boycott Israel!

by New Worker correspondent

Around 120 people turned out despite the cold, wind and rain last Saturday in Camden, north London, in solidarity with the people of Gaza and all Palestinians.

This was just one of dozens of local protests across Britain with the focus on Barclays Bank as a major financial supporter of the Zionist state.

These protests took place against the background of a reactionary campaign, to



which prime minister Rishi Sunak has now given his backing, to claim that the pro-Palestinian protestors were seeking "mob rule" and threatening the "democratic" system in Britain.

The Government, deeply embarrassed at the growing opposition to Israeli aggression that has swept the country, is now putting pressure on the police to crack down on protesters. On this occasion there was a brief standoff when police asked everyone to move to the other side of the road but eventually the stewards agreed and the situation remained calm.



# People's China and the world we want

by Andy Brooks

*New Communist Party leader Andy Brooks took part in a seminar on China's diplomacy and building a community with a shared future for humanity at the Chinese embassy in London in February. This is his contribution to the discussion.*

The key issue of the 21st century is what kind of world do we want and how are we going to build it. It revolves around peace. The struggle to abolish nuclear weapons is crucial for the survival of humanity and eliminating the causes of war is central to averting a Third World War. That is why communists have always understood that the struggles for peace and socialism are indivisible. The Chinese communists are striving to achieve lasting world peace, so that all countries can enjoy a peaceful and stable external environment and their people can live a happy life with their rights fully guaranteed to build a world that is free from fear and enjoys universal security. China's perspective is based on the concept of 'one country, two systems' and the principle that 'a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought'. But the most aggressive sections of the American ruling class now at the helm in Washington clearly believe in "one world, one system"

and that nuclear war is, under certain circumstances, entirely winnable.

This is the era of the "global village" and "globalisation". But what does that actually mean? It clearly means different things to different people.

For China and the other countries of the Global South it means working together to build a universally beneficial and inclusive economic global system that meets the common needs of all countries, especially the developing countries, and properly addresses the development imbalances between and within countries resulting from the global allocation of resources.

In America, however, globalisation simply means US hegemony. Some call it the "new world order" – others the "American dream in the 21st century" but there's nothing new about the American dream of world domination.

US imperialism and its lackeys destroyed the Yugoslav federation and the Libyan Jamahuriya. It fans the flames of war in Ukraine and the Middle East, blocks the return of Taiwan to its Chinese homeland and prolongs the unhappy partition of many countries including Cyprus, Kashmir and Korea. US imperialism has, indeed, established its hegemony over Western Europe – forcing British, French and German imperialism to accept the model of subservi-

ence imposed on Japan by US imperialism in 1945.

This is what the Americans call the "free world" and "rules-based" order. But the "freedom" they recognise is that which allows the big corporations to exploit and plunder and the only rules are Rudyard Kipling's rules of the jungle. But the dreams of the bourgeois elites who talked about the 'end of history' and a new golden age of capitalism that they said would inevitably follow the collapse of the Soviet Union died on the streets of Baghdad and the hills of Afghanistan.

Wherever there is oppression, there is resistance and now imperialism is on the defensive. The Palestin-

ian Arabs keep up the fight against Zionist aggression. Cuba, Iran and the DPR Korea stand firm in the face of the US blockade and the people of the Donbas remain steadfast in resisting the Nato-backed Ukrainian onslaught.

Capitalism is in the throes of a deep crisis. The slump that began in 2008 continues without any sign of real recovery while China and the Global South build an alternative economic and political system based on mutually advantageous terms and equal shares for all.

Some 85 per cent of the world's population live in the Global South – the 'developing' world that is still largely excluded from the inter-

national institutions set up by US imperialism after the Second World War with the support of the weaker imperialist forces who rely on American might to defend their global interests now that their colonial empires have long gone.

The people of the Global South are sick and tired of the fact that the Americans and their minions in Western Europe have economically dominated the world for decades, forcing and imposing transactions in dollars with the fear that failure to comply with US directives would result in economic and financial sanctions or even "regime change" à la Iraq and Libya.

Now new structures like the BRICS bloc are challenging

the old imperialist system of oppression and exploitation. The BRICS bloc, named after Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa who set it up some 15 years ago, has become a pivot for the Global South in the struggle to end the economic and political stranglehold of Anglo-American and Franco-German imperialism in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

BRICS is open to helping countries develop, as well as promoting investment and trade without strings or preconditions. BRICS is fighting against the concept of a new Cold War and opening the possibility of building a fairer and more equitable international economic order from which the world can benefit. The BRICS bloc is helping to build the multi-polar world that will put an end to the American dream of the "new world order" and world domination. No wonder Argentina, Egypt, Iran, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia have applied to join the group. Many more will follow in the future.

A new world is indeed possible but it's not the European Union or the hell-hole of the United States. It's the world being built now in People's China and the new institutions of the Global South that offer an even playing field to all countries to trade and peacefully resolve disputes to build a better future for everyone on the planet.



• CPB leader Rob Griffiths and Andy Brooks at the seminar.

# A better world for all

by María Josefina Arce

**In 1947, Prague, the capital of the then Czechoslovak Republic, was the scene of the First World Festival of Youth and Students, an event that over time has become a space for the defence of peace and in favour of a better world for all.**

For 77 years this meeting has promoted solidarity, friendship between peoples and an exchange between young people from all over the world who oppose all forms of domination and exploitation.

The World Youth Festival is the largest global youth event. It

brings together the most passionate people from all over the world and this year it opened on 1<sup>st</sup> March in the city of Sochi on the Russian Black Sea coast. Cuba always has an outstanding presence at these festivals and this year the Caribbean island has sent a delegation of more than a hundred young people from various sectors of society.

As usual, the voice of Cuban youth will be raised to defend the just causes of humanity and the urgency of building a more just, equitable and democratic world.

Cuba has the satisfaction of having hosted the youth event



on two occasions. The first was in 1978. Those intense and emotional days were especially significant

because of the outstanding participation of the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro.

Nineteen years later, the Cuban capital would once again vibrate with the enthusiasm and impetus of young people from different latitudes. Once again, Fidel would be an indispensable presence.

Fidel was undoubtedly an enthusiastic and committed promoter of the World Festivals, and always accompanied the progressive youth movement of the world. Hence, several of these meetings were dedicated to his thoughts and actions in favour of the dispossessed of the world.

Like the one held in 2017 also in the resort city of Sochi. It was in recognition of the validity

of Fidel's legacy. But the 17<sup>th</sup> Festival held in 2010 in Pretoria, the capital of South Africa, also paid special tribute to the historic leader of the Cuban revolution. Fidel has been present at every meeting, not only for his tireless struggle for peace and the welfare of humanity, but also for his confidence in the new generations to build better societies.

Now will be no different, the young Cubans, with the strength that distinguishes them, will bring to Sochi the truth of Cuba and its commitment to world peace and social justice, principles that Fidel upheld throughout his life.

*Radio Havana Cuba*

# Nuland goes: hard times ahead for Zelensky

by Ekaterina Blinova

**US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has announced that Victoria Nuland, a senior American diplomat known for her ardent support of the Kiev regime, has decided to step down in coming weeks. A career diplomat, John R Bass, was picked as her temporary replacement, while the American media believes that Team Biden is likely to tap current US ambassador to NATO Julianne Smith to fill Nuland's shoes in the near future.**

Her decision to step down was most likely caused by her frustration over slowing down support for continuing the conflict in Ukraine within the

corridors of power says Dr Matthew Crosston, a professor of national security and director of academic transformation at Bowie State University.

"Given what a staunch anti-Putinist Nuland was and how fervently she wanted to continue to utilise Ukraine as a platform in which to continue to weaken and/or slight Russia on the global stage – and perhaps even up the ante in that conflict with her support of sending ballistic missiles into Ukraine," he said.

The academic said it was likely Nuland had become frustrated with the loss of support for her pet project in the US Congress, which has blocked the White House's request for

more than \$60 billion in additional military aid to the Kiev regime.

"She undoubtedly understood that if American support lessens or wanes, Ukraine loses, period," Crosston pointed out. "Perhaps she did not want to be in the Administration that would be responsible for that outcome".

Nuland's decision to step down was a surprise, says CIA veteran Larry Johnson.

Her temporary replacement, John R Bass, is little-known internationally. He served as an US ambassador in the former Soviet republic of Georgia and during a botched coup in Turkey. In both countries he came under heavy criticism for

meddling in those nations' domestic affairs.

Bass was also a hot-swap replacement for then acting Ambassador in Afghanistan during Team Biden's botched withdrawal from the country in August 2021. Now he is expected to oversee the Ukraine crisis.

"Everyone seems to be emphasising his 'acting' role, which in America always implies a temporary status where he will eventually be replaced by someone else more permanently," stressed Crosston. "So I am not entirely sure that Bass is going to be the holder of any great responsibility in terms of formulating new policy in the role."

In light his role in the chaotic and bloody evacuation of Kabul, Bass'

new assignment is a hint that the Americans are about to abandon Ukraine as well.

"It creates some new speculation beyond the standard 'send more weapons to Ukraine' mantra that has existed so intensely for the last year," the professor argued.

While Crosston did not think Bass' appointment automatically means that USA is going to throw Ukraine down the drain, but Nuland's resignation means the Kiev regime has definitely lost a very influential supporter.

"One thing is certain: as long as Nuland remained in that chair, there was literally no chance such talk could even be theorised. Now

it can," the professor said.

Dr Crosston does not believe White House climate change envoy John Kerry's reported decision to step down has anything to do with either Biden's poor election polling or Nuland's departure.

"It is nothing more than just a very aged, long-lived, politician who wishes to step down and move on to life outside of formal political service," the professor said. "Unlike Nuland, where there were certainly other important policy evolutions in play powering her decision, I would be shocked to learn Kerry's decision was anything more than wanting to end his long run on the DC hamster wheel."

*Sputnik*