

Israeli war crimes that shock the world

by our Arab Affairs correspondent

Iran vows to avenge the death of one of its top generals amid growing outrage around the world following the news of the Israeli air strikes that killed seven aid workers from the World Central Kitchen (WCK) charity and reports of the unspeakable crimes of the Zionist troops uncovered after they withdrew from the Al Shifa hospital after a two-week siege of the medical complex. And last weekend the largest protest demonstrations since the beginning of the brutal attack on the Gaza Strip were held in Israel, demanding early elections to seek a change of government.

The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khomeini, has vowed that Iran will “punish” Israel and make the evil regime “regret” its crime of assassinating the country’s military advisors in Syria. Two senior Iranian commanders who were on an advisory mission to Syria as well as five of their accompanying officers, were killed in an Israeli missile attack on the



Iranian consulate in Damascus on Monday.

The UN Security Council met the following day for an emergency meeting called by the Russians to condemn this flagrant and deadly breach of international diplomatic norms.

The Russians and Chinese, together with most of the representatives on the Security Council, condemned the Israeli attack that could only cause further unrest and chaos in the region.

But the representatives of the United States, Britain and France refrained from condemning the Israeli attack on the Iranian consulate.

In Israel tens of thousands of protesters are demanding the resignation of Benjamin Netanyahu, whose government continues to refuse the offer to exchange the remaining hostages held by Hamas

for the release of 7,000 Palestinian political prisoners. During the marches, relatives of people held by Hamas denounced Netanyahu for failing to negotiate their release.

In the march held in Jerusalem, the leader of the opposition, Yair Lapid of the Yesh Atid (There is a future) party, told the crowd that Netanyahu believes that the call for early elections would paralyse Israel, when the truth is that it already is. Some 100,000 Israelis took part in the protest, and the fact that the Business Forum, which brings together the 200 largest companies in Israel, granted permission to its workers to attend the marches attracted attention.

Meanwhile more evidence of Israeli army atrocities have been revealed following their retreat from Gaza’s Al-Shifa hospital. Dozens of bodies,

some of them decomposed, have been found at the complex after the Israeli pullout, which also left behind a vast swathe of destruction. More than 400 people have reportedly been killed during Israel’s 13-day attack on the hospital. Many of the hospital blocks were torched. All are in ruins.

The Zionists claim that the Palestinian resistance was using the facility to “conduct and promote terrorist activity” but this has been repeatedly denied by Hamas and the other Palestinian militias. Now, the Netanyahu government, under American protection, continues to block UNRWA, the UN relief agency, from bringing food and other aid into northern Gaza, ignores a binding UN Security Council cease-fire resolution adopted on 25th March and continues to

stall on cease-fire and prisoner exchange proposals.

But they won’t win. As the PFLP Palestinian resistance movement said in a recent communique: “Despite all forms of killing, destruction, massacres, starvation wars and siege, the Zionist enemy has failed to achieve any of the declared goals of its aggression against the Gaza Strip, and the resistance continues steadfastly to exhaust the Zionist enemy and is waging a battle of attrition against it. The large losses incurred by the Zionist enemy, and the ability of the resistance to direct its strikes even in areas that were invaded and destroyed, indicate that the Zionist enemy is drowning in the quagmire of the Gaza Strip, and that it is far from and unable to achieve any of its goals.”

FUND

The March appeal closed with last minute donations that came to £964 thanks to supporters up and down the country, including £200 from a Southall comrade, £25 from another in Telford and a score from a Devon supporter. The grand total for March was £2,972 – sadly well short of the £3,500 we need to raise every month to keep going.

We need to pull out all the stops in April to try and make up the losses. We also need to get our message out on the street as we march with the millions in Britain and all over the world demanding an end to Israel’s genocidal war in Gaza.

We’ve won a few more subscribers over the last few months but we need plenty more to help build the fight-back on the street and throughout the labour movement. We want plenty more to effectively challenge the worthless bureaucrats and careerists at the top of the union movement. We want even more to reach out to the millions of workers sick of the Sunaks and Starmers that run our world.

We need a constant and generous flow of money to guarantee our survival. So please support the *New Worker* fighting fund. All donations, big or small, help keep our presses rolling. Please send your donation to: New Worker Fund, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the ‘New Worker’.

To save a stamp you can also use your credit or debit card to send contributions here: <http://newworker.org/ncpcentral/fightingfund.html>

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THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

Take on the Zionists!

The Americans, like the Israelis, want to crush Hamas and the rest of the Palestinian resistance that they believe is the major obstacle to the imposition of a surrender peace that would allow the Israelis to annex the parts of the West Bank they call “Greater Israel” while the Palestinians would get a next to nothing – a powerless “independent” statelet run by quislings that the feudal Arab oil princes need to justify their collaboration with imperialism on the Arab street. Even this “two-state” solution is too much for the Netanyahu government and its Zionist settlers’ bloc. The only thing they want to give the Palestinians is a one-way ticket off the land they want colonise.

Biden, Sunak and the rest of the imperialist pack can ignore and even justify the massacre of tens of thousands of Palestinian Arabs in the Gaza Strip. But the murder of seven Western aid workers this week is a different matter. Three of the innocent victims were British, another was American.

This time round the shock and horror on the street can’t be simply dismissed as pro-Arab propaganda or outright “anti-Semitism”. Nothing the Israelis do with their weasel words about a “tragic accident” and an offer to pay blood money to the families of these hapless victims of Zionist terror can whitewash their latest atrocity in Gaza.

Some say Biden has told the Israelis that he wants an end to the fighting by the end of the week. That may be wishful thinking. Biden and the most venal and aggressive sections of the American ruling class that he represents have given unconditional moral and material support to Israel – support that has enabled the Zionist war-machine to slaughter over 33,000 Palestinian Arabs.

There are, of course, divisions within America’s ruling circles and the British Establishment over the current imperialist stand on Palestine. Arming Israel to the teeth to perpetuate the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights clearly no longer works. The Houthi Yemeni government’s blockade that has closed the Suez Canal to Israeli and Anglo-American shipping is bad news for imperialism. Anger on the Arab street that turns on the oil princes would be a nightmare.

Meanwhile the mass monthly protests that have rocked London for months on end have mobilised public opinion in support of the Palestinians and encouraged others to publicly speak out against Israeli aggression.

Over 600 prominent lawyers, including former Supreme Court justices, have signed a letter warning that the UK government is breaching international law by continuing to arm Israel while a former Conservative minister has publicly accused two Tory peers of working for “the interests of another country”.

Sir Alan Duncan, who served as a Foreign Office minister under Theresa May, says the Conservative Friends of Israel group was “doing the bidding of Netanyahu” and called for two of its prominent members, Lord Polak and Lord Pickles, to be removed from the House of Lords. He also accused several ministers and former ministers of not supporting international law by failing to condemn illegal settlements, including deputy premier Oliver Dowden, Michael Gove, and former home secretaries Suella Braverman and Priti Patel.

Alan Duncan has broken the bourgeois consensus in Sunak’s ranks. Now someone needs to do the same in Starmer’s...

Spectre of Fu Manchu returns to Britain

by Ding Gang

“China could use its electric cars to attack the West” was the title of a commentary I recently read in the *Telegraph*. The article has even more eye-catching content: “Data espionage has become the signature weapon of the Chinese party state”. Several other major British media outlets ran front-page headlines last week about the so-called Chinese cybersecurity threat, “identifying” China as a significant threat to the UK. A wave of Sinophobia is sweeping across the country, reminding me of a name that Chinese people have long forgotten, Dr Fu Manchu.

Fu is a fictional character created by English author Sax Rohmer in the early 20th century. He first appeared in the novel, *The Mystery of Dr Fu Manchu*, that came out in 1913. Fu is depicted as a brilliant but evil genius, embodying the Western archetype of the “yellow peril”. Over the years, the character has appeared in a series of Rohmer novels and numerous movies, television shows, radio dramas and comic books.

The “yellow peril” is a racist ideology that claims that East Asians pose a mortal threat to the Western world. Fu and his adventures inspire and perpetuate fears of the “exotic” and “mysterious” Orient, reflecting and reinforcing Western anxieties about Asian influence and power. Fu’s opponents are usually the British and other Western protagonists who endeavour to thwart Fu’s evil schemes.

As we explore the complexities of modern-day Sinophobia in the UK, it is essential to recognise that the spectre of Fu and the historical prejudices he represents still influence contemporary attitudes toward China and its people.

Few figures in the tapestry of British cultural history have cast such a long and dark shadow over perceptions of China as Fu Manchu.

While today’s Sinophobia is shaped by the realities of the geopolitical and economic chal-

lenges posed by a rising China, it cannot be fully understood without recognising this historical legacy.

Fu is a creation of the early 20th -century imagination that has continued to resonate in the Western collective consciousness for over a century, regardless of Britain’s shift from a dominant empire to its current state as a declining Western power.

This is not to diminish the possibility of an old empire’s fears about an Eastern power, especially one it once colonised, but to emphasise how historical biases can affect our perceptions and responses today.

If we fail to scrutinise these issues, there will be a danger of worsening the conflict and misinterpreting China’s growth and its population in the future, which will pose a significant challenge to the Western world.

The narrative of China as an economic and security threat, engaging in unfair trade practices and threatening jobs in the West, may help politicians gain votes, but it hinders constructive engagement with China. Misunderstanding the country only fuels unfounded fears and narrow-mindedness.

It reveals, in one way or another, how complex, challenging, and long-term the process of Western acceptance of China’s rise has been. However, there is

one thing that even these politicians who promote the “China threat” theory know only too well: China’s rise is unstoppable. What the West needs to do is to sit down with China and find the best way for common development.

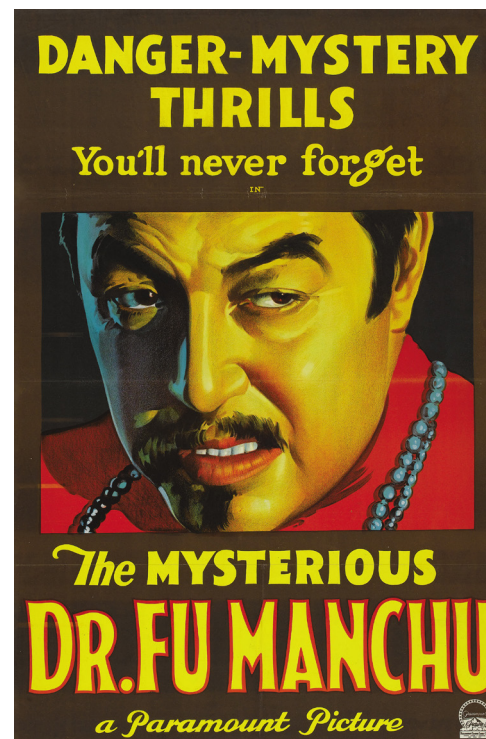
In the face of modern Sinophobia, there are serious shortcomings in Western historical education and views on civilisation. Their insistence on the superiority of Western civilisation often causes them to project their current issues onto external changes, hindering their ability to effectively address such transformations.

As we move forward, let us remember that the shadows cast by figures like Fu Manchu are long. Still, through work and efforts that the sunlight of civilisation’s evolution can shine.

Recognising and addressing the historical roots of Western perceptions can lead to an informed, respectful and conducive approach to engaging with China for a constructive global future, fostering dialogue and exchanges between China and Britain to build mutual understanding and respect.

The author is a senior editor with People’s Daily, and currently a senior fellow with the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China.

Global Times



Workers' Notes

Recognition Battles

by New Worker correspondent

Unite has secured a recognition deal for about a hundred of its members working at the Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT). Regional officer Matt Freeman said that “nearly 72 per cent of staff voted in favour of recognition on a turnout of 90 per cent...we’re pleased to have the confidence of two thirds of staff working at the organisation below senior management level” which will result in the union having bargaining rights when it comes to pay and conditions.

Earlier another recognition agreement was secured by Unite when it won recognition at the walking and cycling charity Sustrans for hundreds of its employees. Alan Scott, the union’s national officer for charities said “Unite members at Sustrans will now be able to shape their working environment. We are committed to creating a fairer future for the workforce”. It sounds as if that is overdue. Its CEO, Xavier Brice, rakes in between £130,000 and £140,000, which is £25,000 more than what even Graham Stuart, the Westminster Minister for Climate Change and Net Zero, gets. Six other Sustrans staff were paid between £90,000 and £100,000, one on £70-80,000 and 12 on between £60,000 and £70,000. It seems nobody gets out of bed to save the planet cheaply these days...

In stark contrast rail union RMT is having to take on the Birmingham based railway company CrossCountry after it derecognised the union which represents all grades. CrossCountry has repeatedly held discussions with other trade unions on matters relat-

ing to pay and policy, but has been “deliberately excluding the RMT from these crucial negotiations”.

The union’s general secretary, Mick Lynch, said “CrossCountry’s refusal to guarantee our representation of members in negotiations is a disgrace and will not be tolerated. Therefore our whole membership in CrossCountry will take strike action on April 13th and our industrial campaign will continue until we reach a resolution”. One wonders what the other two rail unions, ASLEF and TSSA have to say about this.

Meanwhile last week saw two days of strike action in a recognition battle which puts Unite’s seemingly genteel discussions with the RCOT in the shade.

At the Birmingham warehouse (sorry “fulfilment centre”) belonging to Amazon, workers who are seeking a £15 hourly minimum wage and union recognition bravely walked out.

They will have a hard struggle at the flagship £500 million depot which only opened in October after Amazon had closed a nearby warehouse where the workers were getting too uppity. The week before the Coventry centre was also the scene of strike action. As a result of the action 50 workers signed up for Unite. The strikes took place as general union GMB members applied for mandatory recognition to the Government’s Central Arbitration Committee (CAC).

Rachel Fagan, a regional organiser for the union optimistically said “this has been one of the biggest months of strike action in Amazon’s history. Pressure on Amazon to do the right thing is growing and GMB members are determined to win the pay and union recognition they deserve. Amazon cannot stand in the way of their workers’ demands for fair pay and union recognition; it’s time for Amazon to do the right thing and stop trampling on workers’ rights”. That is easier said than done, Amazon is notorious even in its native USA for the ferocity of its anti-union campaigns.

At Sanctuary Housing, the Worcester based social housing provider, CEO Craig Moule is on £380,000 a year and has a surplus of £101 million. However 50 of its Hackney-based workers belonging to Unite have taken strike action after the charity cancelled a £500 retention bonus payment for thousands of staff during the cost-of-living crisis. Another complaint is that their four per cent pay rise imposed in 2023 was effectively a pay cut. Some staff report having to use foodbanks to survive.

Sharon Graham said “Sanctuary is behaving like the worst of corporate employers, but it is a non-profit organisation that should pay its workers fairly. Strikes by its London maintenance workers are growing, with new staff joining the picket line all the time. They have Unite’s backing all the way in their fight for a reasonable pay rise”.

Talks between Sanctuary and Unite took place at the ACAS conciliation service just before Easter, but Sanctuary refused to budge on its fundamental refusal to talk to unions.

Regional officer Matt Freeman warned that “Sanctuary Housing caused these strikes and owe their tenants an apology for forcing their workers to take action. Sanctuary’s leadership needs to come back with an acceptable offer because industrial action will continue to worsen until they do”.

Battle of the Dons

by New Worker correspondent

This year many British universities are facing job cuts. The decline in the numbers of overseas students has resulted in at least 15 universities announcing redundancies. These have kept many universities afloat in recent years as they are charged higher fees. In Scotland these high fees are being blamed for squeezing out local students who get free

tuition.

Some institutions privately fear insolvency. The student accommodation website *Uhome* warns that diminished support for international students resulting from the cuts will send many more away.

At the former Newcastle Polytechnic, now Northumbria University, the University College Union (UCU) has managed to secure a promise from the Vice Chancellor that the university would “formally rule out the possibility of compulsory redundancies” for academic staff.

This was forced upon Management as the union is in the middle of a ballot for strike action. The union said the lesson was one that should be followed in other universities.

Jo Grady, the recently re-elected general secretary said “this is a testament to the strength of our branch at Northumbria, who have faced down a threat to the jobs of academic staff. It should serve as a warning to vice chancellors planning similar job cuts across the country: our members will not pay the price for financial mismanagement and a failed funding model. We will be tireless in organising, industrially and politically, to defend jobs”. The union’s regional official, Jon Bryan, added that while academics were off the hook, admin staff were not so lucky and were still facing redundancies.

In south-east London, Grady’s call has went unheeded by Goldsmiths University. Here more than 87 per cent of UCU’s members voted for strike action to oppose Management plans to cut over 130 jobs. These plans include nearly half the academics in the schools of arts & humanities; culture & society and professional studies, science & technology. The History and Sociology departments are particularly badly hit.

On this occasion Jo Grady said that “the cuts being proposed at Goldsmiths are of such a scale they are almost incomprehensible, and it is no wonder that staff have overwhelmingly voted for industrial action. They are not just defending their jobs,

they are fighting for the very future of this institution”. She also urged “Management to think again and work with us to protect courses and jobs, otherwise Goldsmiths will see unprecedented industrial unrest”.

Further south no less than 398 academic staff are at risk of redundancy as a result of the University of Portsmouth’s “academic reset” programme which is a fancy name for the order of the boot which management say is essential due to recruitment difficulties.

The University of Kent propose cutting 58 posts and nine programmes. UCU say the cuts are unnecessary with the Canterbury university planning a £250 million building programme which it can well afford to pay for out of its £329 million reserves. UCU says the cuts will narrow course and module options, endanger the professional accreditation of certain degrees and reduce lecturers’ capacity for teaching and support.

Jo Grady once again said: “It cannot be right that the university is putting staff at risk of redundancy, while spending more on management and new buildings. If the university seeks to push through eye-watering cuts it will only destabilise the university and face the disruption of potential industrial action.”

Earlier last month over 120 staff at Sheffield Hallam University were told that they had to apply for voluntary redundancy or change to lesser paid jobs. This comes only just after 140 staff had departed on a voluntary redundancy scheme.

Last month also saw the UCU oppose 40 job cuts at the University of Winchester which would involve the closure of several whole departments in an effort to save £6 million.

To conclude on an optimistic note: At Britain’s most northern centre of learning, University of Aberdeen staff voted overwhelmingly in favour of strike action to save the university’s Department of Modern Languages. But it was called off following the

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university's decision to withdraw the threat of compulsory redundancies affecting 26 staff members. As a result the Department has been saved with only a few voluntary redundancies.

Slightly further down the education food chain every single further education college in Scotland will be taking part in a series of rolling strikes throughout April as part of a pay dispute. This escalates action which started in late February under the auspices of the Educational Institute of Scotland's college lecturers' section.

The EIS-FELA say "college lecturers should have received a pay uplift at the beginning of September 2022 but following over a year of protracted negotiations, college employers Scotland have stated that all they can provide is a "full and final" pay offer of £5,000 over three years, this amidst the worst cost of living crisis in generations".

Not So Glorious Anniversary

by New Worker correspondent

This month Paul Nowak, the General Secretary of

the Trade Union Congress marked the 25th anniversary of the National Minimum Wage (NMW) with the usual platitudes bureaucrats reserve for such august moments in labour movement history.

Novak said the minimum wage was "roundly accepted as one of the great policy successes of our time". This is because opponents of the measure such as the Confederation of British Industry said it would cost jobs because of increased costs for employers.

The NMW was Tony Blair's threadbare offering to the trade union movement to compensate for refusing to repeal the previous 18 years of Tory anti-trade union legislation. That was something union leaders were generally not interested in as the Tory "reforms" had re-enforced the full-time union bureaucracy and their "professional negotiators" while sidelining shop-stewards committees and other rank-and-file structures and imposing legal penalties for unofficial industrial action.

The minimum wage started at £3.60 in 1999. On Monday it rose to the dizzy height of £11.44 an hour. Nowak claims that the NMW has been a roaring success on the grounds that it has "gone up substantially. And it's done so with no negative impact on

jobs". It may be true that the number of low paid jobs has not actually declined but increased, which is not the good thing Nowak seems to think it is. But the NMW could just as easily be called the National Maximum Wage for all the good it has done. In January trendy beer maker BrewDog announced that it would start hiring new staff only on the minimum wage.

Nowak fails to mention that the £11.44 he quotes is only for workers over the age of 21. This in itself is an improvement on the previous age of 23. However for younger workers it ranges from a miserable £6.40 for apprentices, the same for 16-17 year olds and £8.60 for those aged 18-20. While the increases are higher than the present rate of inflation the only real benefit is it that it can force bosses to pay more experienced workers further up the food chain a bit more. But it is no substitute for collective bargaining – which the Tory "reforms" targeted to ban closed shops and sympathetic strike action.

In his hymn of praise for the measure Nowak claims the only thing wrong with it is that it is not high enough. It should be £15, and in the fullness of time be equal to 75 per cent of the median wage.

However for him the main benefit is that it represents class collaboration at its best.

Naturally he does not use that precise description, but when he calls it "unfashionable social dialogue" where "employers, unions, supported by independent academics, working with government to deliver a minimum wage" we know exactly what he means.

There are of course many ways for employers to get round the minimum wage. Live-in workers can suffer excessive deductions for accommodation and food. Even Buckingham Palace tried that one out before they were forced to backtrack. More commonly many employers pass on the cost of uniforms and tools to their workers rather than supplying them free where needed – the norm in the halcyon days before the Thatcher era. Unpaid overtime and miscalculating hours are other dodges used by many household names and not just under the arches businesses. Sainsbury's, Argos and even the saintly Marks & Spencer have been fined for breaches of the law, which they claim were accidental.

The unofficial Living Wage Foundation (not a particularly radical body, being supported by furniture retailer Ikea among other major businesses) points out that even the latest increase of 9.8 per cent is unsatisfactory. It calculates that its voluntary Real Living Wage should be £12 across

the UK and £13.15 in London. This is a difference of £1,000 annually, or 18 weeks of food for a household, or 12 weeks of housing and energy costs outside London. In London the gap between the two rates is a more precise £3,334.50

Katherine Chapman, Director of the Living Wage Foundation (LWF) hardly needs to point out that "the rise in the statutory National Living Wage from 1st April is welcome news for the 3.7 million low paid workers across the country, but this still falls short of a wage which takes into account the real cost of living".

While 14,000 employers have signed up to the LWF there are 1.1 million companies employing workers in the UK so paying the living wage is clearly a minority pastime.

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

2nd April 2004

A THOUSAND delegates to the National Union of Students annual conference last Wednesday adjourned the conference to march to Parliament Square to ensure MPs were well aware of their opposition to variable tuition top-up fees.

The students are totally opposed to top-up fees in any form. But that option was not on the agenda in the House of Commons.

The crucial vote the students were trying to in-

fluence was an amendment to the Education Bill that would have removed the right of universities to set their own levels of top-up fees.

This amendment was defeated by 28 votes – not as close as the vote on the Bill in January which passed by only five votes.

But it is still a narrow majority for the Government taking into account the size of the Labour majority.

Around 56 Labour rebels voted against their own leadership but it was not enough to worry Tony Blair or Education Secretary Charles Clarke.

Clarke had made some concessions to win the rebels around. But when looked a closely, these concessions are next to worthless.

The new fees system will come into force – if the

Bill is not defeated in its later stages through Parliament – at the beginning of 2006. Then students will not have to pay fees up front but they will be added to their student loan debt to be paid back after graduation.

One of Clarke's concessions was to cap the rise in variable fees to £3,000 a year – a sum that will still see students with total debts of over £20,000 by graduation.

But there are fears that this cap will not last long. Some of the more prestigious universities are already putting pressure for its removal. In nearly all there will be pressure to raise the fees to the level of the cap as soon as possible.

Those courses most in need of the extra funding are mostly science-based that require a lot of expensive equipment. If fees for these courses are raised above others, fewer students will choose them.

German peace forces have their work cut out for them

by Victor Grossman

Watching genteel the ladies and gentlemen of the Bundestag, the German parliament speechifying, often with forceful words and gestures but mostly polite, it is hard to imagine that their topic is war or peace, possibly world war or peace, even atomic war or peace. A key word was Taurus, Latin for “bull”.

But they weren’t arguing about Zodiac astrology or the myth about the god Jupiter, cheating on his wife Juno by taking on the shape of a bull to abduct a princess. Nor about the starry constellation named for his disguise.

The name of that princess was Europa, and the continent bearing her name was indeed involved in the subject of debate: steel-covered cruise missiles called Taurus, weighing 1000 lbs, 17 feet long, which, if fired from a plane well inside Ukraine can reach and pierce the walls of the Kremlin or destroy concrete bunkers as deep or deeper than Moscow’s subway system.

Of course, Vladimir Zelensky wants them and any weapons or aid in a war now looking less and less like the triumph he predicted a year ago. Should his wishes, which often sounded more like demands, be fulfilled?

That mythical Jupiter fathered three sons with Europa (I hope he was back in the body of Jupiter by then). Three sons of modern Europa met in a hastily arranged “Paris-Berlin-Warsaw” summit in early March to reach an agreement about Ukraine, especially about Taurus.

Eager to fight

Poland’s Tusk, only four months into his top job, is seen as more moderate than his predecessor. But he seems no less eager to supply anything



• Taurus -- what the Ukrainians want

if it damages the hereditary Russian enemy and solidifies Poland’s role as the main American outpost in Eastern Europe. However, he soon had to hurry home to mollify farm tractor drivers blockading borders to protest against cheap Ukrainian grain imports.

Macron, who had spoken boldly of sending in “European” troops to oppose the Russians, toned that down with the words: “Maybe at some point – I don’t want it, I won’t take the initiative – we will have to have operations on the ground...to counter the Russian forces... France’s strength is that we can do it.”

Evidently Scholz has stepped on the brakes with Tusk and Macron: “To say it sharp and clear: as German chancellor, I will send no Bundeswehr soldiers into Ukraine!” So, at least for now – no Taurus!

Was his seemingly bold front a façade for a general German downward skid in Europe? There was a decline of the economy in 2023. A predicted puny plus of 0.2 per

cent for 2024 could mean that Germany is already in a recession, for only the second time since 1945. Economy Minister Habeck warned “we cannot continue this way!” One expert’s brief analysis is that “Germany has lost cheap energy from Russia, flourishing trade markets in China, and an almost cost-free guarantee of

security from the USA”.

Olaf Scholz’s three-party government has rapidly declined in popularity. The Greens, who promised a “green economic miracle” a year ago, have made one ecology compromise after another, like their go-ahead for big docks for liquid gas from US frackers to replace the Russian

gas-oil cut by war, politics and that suspicious explosion of the Baltic pipeline. The new docks threaten both major bird migration stopovers and some of Germany’s most idyllic beach resorts (once peopled, back in the days of the old German Democratic Republic, by happy bathers).

Ecology disputes turned dramatic with Elon Musk’s Tesla giga-factory on Berlin’s outskirts, his first and largest in all of Europe and now capable of turning out 500,000 E-cars a year, beating out VW. That meant chopping down 740 acres of the protective forest ring around Berlin and draining into crucial aquifers.

But Musk now aims at a million cars – costing 420 more forest acres and drying up ponds and creeks. The village hit hardest voted “No!” and one group plans to defy a planned police onslaught in tree houses and platforms. On 5th March a secret extremist group set fire to a high-voltage power pylon, cutting local electricity for a few hours and shutting down production for a few days. Such disputes are getting hotter.

Rounding out the picture, Germany has been facing its biggest strike wave in years: train, bus and tram drivers, airport personnel, public service workers, kindergarten teachers, and even clinic doctors. Their demands are mostly for enough pay to catch up with inflation and frightening rent increases but also – for many – for a 35-hour work week with no cut in pay.

While the compromising Greens strain to hold onto their dwindling professional college-graduate base and the Social Democrats struggle to win back working-class support, the weakest of the three partners, the Free Democrats (FDP), closest to big-biz, keep flirting with the Christian Democrats across the aisle, blackmailing attempts by the



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other two to seem socially conscious by resisting remaining environmental restrictions, preventing rules against child labour on products from abroad, limiting aid for the many poverty-ridden children in Germany, reducing assistance for the elderly and, above all, insisting on keeping or lowering low taxes on the super-wealthy, using the old trickle-down argument. More and more, the coalition is coming to resemble a free-for-all wrestling match. But they agreed on one main issue: in Ukraine, keep that war going! Till victory!

The Greens, always most valiant, with Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock hoping to see Russia “ruined”, are being overtaken as word and banner bearers by the Free Democrats, who now boast a “Defence Committee” spokesperson who is formidable in word, appearance, personality and even name: Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann.

Her imperative calls for more weapons until total victory over the Russians rouse up TV viewers almost every single evening. And even when a majority in the Bundestag ended the Taurus debate by voting “Nein” to a Christian Democratic bill to give Kiev the missiles, she broke the ranks of coalition party discipline and voted “Ja” with the opposition.

Somewhat I haven’t yet heard anyone remark that Düsseldorf, which she represents, is also home to Rheinmetall, Germany’s leading armaments manufacturer since 1889. After great sales records in the First World War, it had gigantic successes in the Second World War, largely by working thousands of miserable POWs and



• German workers rally during last year’s train strike.

forced labourers to the bone.

Now super-good times are back again thanks to its Panther tanks and all kinds of weapons and ammo. Company boss Armin Papperger, who took home a tidy €3,587,000 in 2022 and expects this year’s company earnings to finally top its €10 billion goal made a happy prediction of “a continuing strong growth increase in sales and earnings”.

But who could dare to suspect any connection between Rheinmetall and its Düsseldorf neighbour, Frau Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann? (BTW, big hunks of those handsome sums also go to Blackrock in Manhattan’s Hudson Yards and other solid Trans-Atlantic benefactors.)

But in his crumbling coalition, Olaf Scholz’s leading Social Democratic Party has also been vigorously supporting the Ukrainian cause! It was he who dramatically called for a “Zeitenwende” a “historic turning point” – with an extra fund of €100 billion for a major military build-up – in Ukraine, Germany, the European Union, and NATO, with drones, jets, artillery, ammo, tanks, missiles (but at least not yet the Taurus for Kiev).

But his Defence Minister Boris Pistorius

(Social Democrat) is never satiated. For him, the Bundeswehr is always far too weak. “It must be made fit for the challenges ahead. Germany needs a Bundeswehr that can fight, one which is operational and sustainable. Germany must defend itself because war is back in Europe. The Bundeswehr must become fit for war again. I know that sounds harsh... But I am concerned with nothing other than preventing war. That is why credible deterrence is the motto of the hour – to be able to fight in order not to have to fight. An important signal in this context is the formation of the brigade in Lithuania”.

Despite all disavowals, some beans have recently been spilled about NATO military experts secretly helping Kiev ever since 2014. A mysteriously leaked report on a meeting of top German brass revealed plans for helping Ukraine use the Taurus to destroy the Russian bridge to Crimea.

The whole atmosphere in Germany is becoming frighteningly “kriegstüchtig”, to use Pistorius’s word – “ready for war”. He also raised the question of renewing the military draft whose last vestiges ended 13 years ago – this time perhaps including women.

The proposal was

a trial balloon – and soon dropped, at least for this pre-election season. Another trial balloon came from the Education Minister, Bettina Stark-Watzinger, who called for air raid drills in schools, with renovated or new bomb shelters in the cellars and more visits by officers to prepare children for the worst – or recruit them. When protests against this proposal grew too strong she modified it a bit – to stress, aside from war, readiness for possible floods or other climate catastrophes.

Weapons, weapons, weapons – the more the better! With ever louder talk about “the foe” and “protective measures” as if Putin were amassing troops or manoeuvring warships along German borders – instead of just the opposite taking place in the Baltic and Lithuania – and no longer so secretly in Ukraine. The blitzkrieg-laden spirit of 1941 Germany is all over the media, with no audible recollections of Stalingrad in 1943 or a wrecked and wretched Berlin (and Dresden, Hamburg, and all the others) in 1945.

The reports on Gaza since October contrasted markedly with the anger over the Russian attack on Ukraine. They almost never mentioned Hamas without the prefaced adjective “terrorist” but showed few pictures of

devastated Gaza which, for me, bitterly recalled those German cities I saw a few years after the war, like Dresden.

Over and over we were shown Israeli soldiers bravely firing away; at what? Or digging in wrecked hospitals; for what? Or showing those “compassionate” parachute drops, a sad joke when small crowds of Israelis were somehow permitted to block hundreds of truckloads of really tangible assistance – and while Germany joined the USA in sending weapons to Netanyahu while stymying UN efforts to end the slaughter.

But the heart-wrenching pictures of weeping fathers and dead or maimed children in Gaza could not be ignored. Demonstrations, led by Arabs in Germany but including many others, also Jewish Germans, grew larger, despite all attempts to prevent, limit, or sideline them. Their calls for negotiations and peace sometimes included the war in Ukraine – and a rejection of SPD-FDP-Green-CDU/CSU militarist unity.

But then came the giant rallies against the fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD). In the past often harassed or at best ignored, they were now amazingly well-organised and co-ordinated, clearly promoted from above, and blessed in the media. I suspect they were consciously aimed at deflecting a progressive, pro-peace trend born of horror at the hugely disproportionate Israeli response to 7th October, mis-using a popular anti-AfD cause for the purpose, together with an increased stress on opposing anti-Semitism, while equating it with any criticism of Israeli repression and extreme brutality. It was good that the rallies opposed racism and fas-

cism, but they were no longer leaning toward united left opposition.

Is there now any opposition to top level policies? Yes, of a sort. Or rather of approximately four sorts. Within the ranks of the Social Democrats, while many admire dynamic (and ambitious?) Minister Pistorius, some others may be coming to their senses. Most courageous recently was Rolf Mützenich, chair of the SPD caucus in the Bundestag and long known as a rare opponent of militarism.

During the Taurus debate, he asked the Bundestag delegates: “Isn’t it time not only to speak about waging a war but to start thinking about how we can freeze a war and then end it as well?”

He had hardly finished his brief remarks when the counter-attack began, from fellow politicians and from most of the mass media. Two nasty words recurred shamelessly – “appeasement” and “cowardice”.

Unlike Pope Francis, who dared to voice similar sentiments, Mützenich had no shred of any “infallibility” status, and the truly vicious attacks forced him to stage a partial retreat to save his neck. But the words had been uttered and some may have listened.

As for appeasement, Neville Chamberlain and Daladier let Hitler expand in Spain, then tolerated his expansion eastward to Austria and Czechoslovakia because it meant closing in on the hated USSR. His all-European attack in June 1941 was more analogous to EU-NATO eastward-aimed unanimity than the reverse!

Olaf Scholz often vacillates. But at times, unlike some ministers, he seems to listen to and echo people like Mützenich. “German soldiers must at no point

and in no place be linked to targets this Taurus system reaches...Not in Germany either...This clarity is necessary. I am surprised that this doesn't move some people, that they don't even think about whether... a participation in the war could emerge from what we do."

But then, Scholz certainly learned arithmetic at school. The European elections are due this June, Bundestag elections next year, with key state elections in between. In the polls his Social Democratic party is stuck at about a weak 15 per cent, half its traditional Christian rivals and even behind the Alternative for Germany (AfD). Opinions change frequently but 80 per cent now favour diplomatic negotiations for Ukraine and 41 per cent want fewer weapons sent there. Scholz – or Germany – cannot really change course in such basic matters. But he may think that dragging his feet rather ambiguously might win back more voters.

AfD moves to look respectable

A second group demanding negotiations and an end to the Ukraine war, perhaps very surprisingly, is the AfD. Although it supports big business, NATO, the draft, and German rearmament enthusiastically, it calls nevertheless for negotiations, peace, and a resumption of normal trade relations. It is possible that the AfD simply wants only to further increase its popularity, especially in eastern Germany, where there is the least military enthusiasm – and it is already an amazingly strong (and dangerous)



• German communists on the march

position, at about 30 per cent.

Of course they are called "Putin-lovers". Who knows, perhaps they are. But their top woman in leadership, Alice Weidel, is intelligent, shrewd, and a skilled speaker, and made an eloquent plea for peace while thanking Mützenich and congratulating Scholz for not sending Taurus to Kiev. Thus creating a difficult complication as that party attempts to sound like a reasonable force rather than the dangerous fascist entity it actually is.

And then there is the Linke (Left) party, which has seen itself from birth as the "party of peace". Indeed, over the years it has opposed every deployment of German troops or ships outside its borders, it has opposed the payment of giant sums to Rheinmetall and its siblings at home or abroad, it has opposed the export of German weapons to nearly every oppressive government that could be found, it has opposed every form of militarisation.

A brave and exemplary record, alongside

its fight for a higher minimum wage, more money for senior citizens, for child care, and women's rights. Its stand also forced Social Democrats and Greens to take better positions, if only to avoid a drift of their voters to the small yet potentially growing Linke.

Perhaps it was its successes which became its weak point. Not only the delegates who got elected on the national, state, or local level but also their staffs and assistants had good jobs. Some tended, too often, to become a part of the mistrusted "establishment" in the eyes of dissatisfied and disappointed voters – or then non-voters.

Their increasingly respectable status led to an interest in "identity rights", immigrant rights, and gender rights, but too often to a growing distance from neglected, underpaid, overburdened working people who, of course, include all those groups.

Some leaders, hoping to crown provincial cabinet posts with those in a national coalition, watered down their re-

jection of NATO and its relentless eastward moves and threats. Their rejection of even meagre approval of the giant peace demonstration led by Sahra Wagenknecht last year on flimsy grounds borrowed from the mass media proved the last straw for many members and led to the formation of a breakaway party, called (temporarily it is hoped) Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW).

Some in the Linke, convinced Marxists, think it was a mistake to split and leave the party instead of fighting it out, even though they were outvoted by conformist, status quo leaders who now want to force them out just as they did to Sahra Wagenknecht and her adherents. And some believe that if the Linke again becomes more militant in something whose name is hardly even whispered these days (class conflict) then it can be rescued from menacing oblivion. It is already in great trouble, nationally down to three per cent, which would bar it from the next Bundestag.

As for Wagenkne-

cht's BSW, it stands full square for negotiations and peace, like no other, and certainly for working people's rights and needs. But much of its programme remains vague as yet and seems to be turning out to be less militant than expected.

It polls five to seven per cent nationally, not bad for a newbie with rudimentary provincial structures but less than some had expected in view of Wagenknecht's popularity. The European Union elections in June and the state elections in September will show how the two stand, now as rivals in a divided Left.

As for the bellicose forces, some pro-American "Atlanticists" are worried about being cast adrift after 5th November by that unpredictable man from Mar-a-Lago, or they are studying geriatric tables. Others, the Germanic wing, who reject American infiltration, from music styles to dirty slang, are scheming and dreaming of the good old days of smart uniforms, clicking heels, Iron Crosses and people knowing their

proper place. But they all join Rheinmetall, Lockheed, and the others in hoping the war-ringing may last until they get new chances to win out in broad Eurasian expanses, re-establish Germany's proper position in the world, and perhaps for some, a hope to avenge that disaster for their grandfathers back in 1945. More and more, we are engulfed by all their war talk – and preparatory action.

What is desperately needed, not only in Germany but especially in Germany, is a new consolidation of all those in any party, or no party, who still have enough brains in their heads and a heart in their chests for an end to the killing and starving of Ukrainians, Russians, the Palestinians and the still as yet far too small number of brave Jewish Israelis (like the "refuseniks") to build up a dynamic peace movement like that against the Vietnam war, or against missiles in West Germany in the 1980s, or the marches to prevent the Iraq war or, in recent months, to rescue the tortured million and more innocent people of Gaza – yes, and those 100 hostages as well. Such a movement is desperately necessary; the clock is ticking away. Can the Jupiters of the world be dethroned? For Europa and for the world. Is that possible?

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LETTERS

Dear Comrades

At the United Nations Security Council on 22nd March 2024, Russia and China vetoed a US-led resolution that did not really call for a ceasefire in Gaza. It limited itself to what it called “the imperative for a ceasefire”. The resolution was worded in a way that concealed it was only calling for a lull during which Hamas was expected to surrender its Israeli hostages, with no Palestinians released in exchange, and no abandonment by Israel of its plan to storm Rafah where 1.5 million destitute people sleep on the ground. In this context, the vague promise of more food for Gaza looked rather insulting.

The way 11 delegates out of 15 voted in favour of that resolution measures the level of perfidiousness in its wording. This was happening in an atmosphere where a tremendous pressure was being exerted on the Palestinians to give up. This resolution represented the danger of capitulation. The US and Israeli governments had hoped that convoluted meanings and reassuring words were going to win the day and turn the UN into another battering ram against Gaza.

Over the last few months, the world has been busy with UN resolutions, American and European Union official State visits, delegations back and forth from Qatar to Egypt, talks about who will rule Gaza in the future!

Behind all the brouhaha however, and safe behind the media silence, Israel calmly sells the Palestinian

gas to Egypt – gas that it steals from the large Palestinian deposits lying in the occupied territories and in the East Mediterranean. At least four Western multinationals (Eni Spa, BP plc, Dana, Energiean plc, Newmead) are looking forward to selling this Palestinian gas to the EU.

It is a source of joy, and of hope, to see Russia and China coming closer together to put a spanner in this nasty work. From now on, their double veto is bound to be seen as an implicit recognition of the Palestinian cause, along with that of the millions in the world who support the Palestinians’ cause in spite of growing capitalist intent to jail them.

This conduct on the part of Russia and China indicates that their governments respond to the new anti-colonial elevation happening in the world today. China and Russia both support Mali and its close neighbours, as well as Syria, Iran, Lebanon, Yemen, Venezuela and north Korea, against US-EU-UK imperialism. With their veto, they have taken another step in the direction of the multitudes who feel outrage and alarm at the sight of the colonial order not only retrieving its ancient punitive and Nazi methods but adding to them a new and abominable wish to kill, to exterminate, clear the peoples from their lands in what the colonialists think are their interests.

Whilst the US and NATO see their hegemony slip away, China and Russia show themselves to be in tune with world opinion. And world opinion is on the side of the Palestinians, against such a resolution. This is why no capitalist leader could blame Russia and China for Gaza still getting any relief. No Western leader said that the resolution, having failed, Russia and China

were guilty of having left Gaza to starve.

Realising no one was going to blame Russia and China, Biden tried to keep in tune with the new mood by blaming Netanyahu. David Cameron attacked Netanyahu for his lack of progress in hostage release. And when Antonio Guterres of the UN visited the Rafah gate, he said that the long line of blocked relief trucks outside the Strip is “a moral outrage” when children are dying of hunger a few meters away.

After this vote of course, Gaza was left with no extra trucks of supplies and food bringing relief. In his speech, the Chinese ambassador Zhang Jun gave courage when he mentioned that a better ceasefire resolution from the ten elected UN Security Council members was coming up in a day or two, with a chance of winning (and was eventually passed).

One must feel joy on seeing Russia and China joining hands for a purpose that has protected the Palestinians from the criminal attempt to make them capitulate. In their history, Russia and China not only broke their own colonial chains, but they built states without which the post war colonial revolution would have been much weaker. And they both intervened in support of Vietnam which left an indestructible wound in the side of US imperialism.

Russia and China – both in the BRICS – already intervened selflessly during the pandemic. In this matter of Gaza, they show themselves to be on the side of ‘the many’. Their joint veto has suggested a disposition on their part to give strength and leadership to the more embattled sectors of the BRICS. They now find themselves in a dynamic where they will have to part company, more decidedly

than before, with those in the BRICS, and in their own countries, that remain inclined to surrender to colonial subjugation.

Marie Lynam
London

Dear Comrades

History has witnessed the rise and fall of many great empires. American imperialism is now also in full decline; a process that may be traced back to the major turning point that occurred on 11th July 1953. Marshal Kim Il Sung, the Worker’s Party of Korea and the Korean people with the support of People’s China and the Soviet Union displayed unprecedented heroism in fighting the imperialists to a standstill. The Americans were forced to sign the Korean Armistice Agreement. This was the beginning of the decline of US imperialism.

The Korean people’s victory not only encouraged the heroic fight of the Vietnamese but also the civil rights struggle in the USA and the national liberation movements worldwide. It provided clear evidence that if faced with apparently overwhelming odds a people who are determined, united and committed to socialism can break the chains of oppression. Today there are still many battles to be won. Imperialist aggression is being stepped up in many parts of the world while neo-colonialism continues to control and exploit weaker nations. The American government also exploits its own people. Although being the world’s richest country it is beset with job losses, homelessness and poverty.

Many new struggles are taking place to demand peace and justice throughout the globe. The world has changed with a new unity of purpose. Russia’s renaissance, China’s Belt & Road, BRICS and

continued on page 9...

Diary

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

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.

THUR 9 MAY UNTIL 31 AUG

Working Class Movement Library: Here We Stand: The Art of International Solidarity. WCML, 51 Crescent, Salford M5 4WX.

SAT 6 APRIL

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

SAT 6 APRIL

Korean Friendship Association UK: Meeting to mark anniversaries of Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Un’s leadership and the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army. 14:00-17:00, Kings Cross Neighbourhood Centre, 51 Argyll Street, London WC1H 8E. Register at uk@korea-dpr.com

MON 8 APRIL

Korean Friendship Association UK: Online version of above. Register at: uk@korea-dpr.com or juche007@gmail.com

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 50th anniversary of the Portuguese Revolution. 18:00. In person at MML. Book on MML website.

SUN 21 APRIL

Stop the War Coalition: Concert for Palestinians under attack. 18:00. Earth Hall, 11-17 Stoke Newington Road, Hackney, London N16 8BH. Book on STWC 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 power 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.

WED 1 MAY

Working Class Movement Library: Frow Memorial Lecture: Ewan Gibbs on Energy Workers and eth Transformation of Britain. 18:30-20:00, Old Fire Station, University of Salford Crescent, Salford M5 4NL. Book on WCML website.

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. Includes a 14:00 picket of the US Embassy, Nine Elms, London SW11 7US.

SAT 18 MAY

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

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 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: 40th 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.

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

Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

Last Saturday it was reported that the number of rough sleepers in Glasgow had increased by 50 per cent. According to the housing charity, Shelter Scotland, 15,625 households are in temporary accommodation, including

9,862 children. That is more than double the figure from a decade ago and ten per cent up on the previous year. At the same time 750,000 people are unable to heat their homes and 1,500,000 people live in overcrowded unstable or unaffordable housing.

Four local authorities, Argyll & Bute, Edinburgh, Fife and Glasgow have all declared a "Housing Emergency" in their fiefdoms. By this the mean they are no longer able to meet their basic housing obligations and

need urgent help from both the Scottish and UK governments.

In Argyll & Bute the main problem is too many people buying holiday homes while in Edinburgh houses are being bought up to provide short-term holiday lets. Efforts by Edinburgh Council to tackle this particular problem have been tied in legal knots. In Glasgow the situation has been aggravated by politically well-connected businessmen who have been exploiting the Glasgow housing crisis by providing sub-standard temporary accommodation to refugees for decades. This is a growing business for them.

At the time of this growing crisis the past two Scottish Budgets have seen funding for social housing cut, last December it was by £196 million. The Scottish Housing Regulator expects that the number of new social housing homes will decline from 30,000 annually to 26,000 in the next few years. Nobody except SNP press officers expect to see the SNP's target of 110,000 new social houses by 2032 actually being met. Even on the most optimistic figures 33,000 households will remain on the waiting list until then. The extra expenses of decarbonisation have not been given any funding.

The latest quarterly figures from housing associations show that they are building the fewest numbers of houses since 1988. The construction industry is in a fragile state. Recently two major private house building companies have gone bankrupt while others are sure to follow. This year the number of new build homes being started is down by more than a quarter and the number of completions has declined by six per cent. In the private sector house prices in Scotland have generally

been rising more than in the rest of the UK.

From the 1970s until today the number of properties owned and rented by local authorities or housing associations has declined from over a half to less than a quarter. Mrs Thatcher's Tory "Right to Buy" scheme – started in 1980 and abolished in 2014 – was very popular with the Labour voting public and saw virtually all the better housing stock sold off cheaply. Mrs Thatcher must be spinning in her grave when she thinks of the ungrateful Scottish voters. Some of these former council homes are now in the hands of private landlords expanding their empires. At least six such houses belong to the SNP and now Tory MP, Lisa Cameron.

Partly as a result of an increase in privately owned houses matters relating to social housing have slipped down the political agenda, except for those most urgently affected. The state of the remaining council stock, which has suffered from decades of cuts, does not encourage nostalgia for a golden age.

The SNP/Green coalition has proposed something to solve the problem. It has recently announced a Housing (Scotland) Bill. This imposes on local councils an obligation to regulate the private sector. This could mean some sort of rent controls, although that vital point is not spelt out in any detail.

It will also allow tenants to keep pets and decorate their homes. Patrick Harvie, the Green Housing Minister, said that his measure would see "tenants benefit from improved conditions and security, while good responsible landlords will thrive when their good practice is recognised by regulation". The Bill also demands that hard-pressed councils do more

to ensure people do not become homeless. Councils and the NHS will have to ask about the housing circumstances of those they deal with and provide support. Councils will have to act six months before homelessness takes place, instead of the present two months. It will also force social landlords to devise a policy to support tenants at risk of homelessness because of abuse. All well and good, but this is yet another burden on hard pressed councils for which they receive no additional funding.

Shelter Scotland's Director Alison Watson said of the new measure that it was not realistic to expect councils to fulfil new obligations when they are already clearly failing to meet existing duties: "What we need is urgent action to drive up the supply of social homes, invest in local services and stop councils breaking existing homelessness laws. Instead, we have a housing bill that does none of that and risks diverting frontline staff from the task in hand."

Labour's Housing spokesman Mark Griffin also said "this bill exposes the fact that the SNP government has no clear plan to tackle the housing crisis and homelessness in Scotland after 17 years of failure and decline. It is nothing short of a shocking failure of the most vulnerable in our society".

One group of landlords who will not be affected are those involved in the increasingly commercialised business of student accommodation which will be specifically exempt from rent control. Two years ago temporary rent controls were imposed in response to the cost of living crisis but Scotland has seen the highest rent increases in the UK to parallel the rise in private housing prices.

Living Rent, a Glas-

gow and Edinburgh group welcomed the SNP's measure saying "it is a huge step forward for tenants". Predictably the Scottish Association of Landlords opposed it saying that many landlords will give up and thus the shortage of housing will put up rents. That is true only in a very few cases – mainly those with a spare room or two who may now be put off by the new legislation.

At the time of the last Budget cuts Shelter Scotland said this was "pricing in a rise in homelessness". This is about the same as the cost of the Council Tax freeze which largely benefits those in grander properties.

Shelter also accuse the SNP of choosing: "roads, policing, prisons and play parks over safe and secure housing for children" and "the Scottish government are pricing in a rise in homelessness as an acceptable price worth paying to protect initiatives such as the Scottish National Investment Bank". This is unusually brave for a Scottish charity to speak out like this, but unlike others it is not dependent on Scottish Government funding.

Former Health Minister Alex Neil has noted that such cuts "to the housing budget will put even more pressure on the NHS, as the people affected suffer avoidable physical and mental health problems". So it is clearly a false economy.

The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) points out that rents in social housing are at least half the private sector rents, making them vital to those on low incomes. It says the Scottish Government needs to increase the Affordable Housing Supply Programme budget by at least £700 million – and that is pie in the sky in these days of ongoing austerity.

...continued from page 8

the growing strength and influence of the socialist countries combine to open up a new way forward.

The New Communist Party of Britain, the NCP, expresses solidarity with the people of Palestine as they suffer the effects of war. Starving civilians are bombed while queuing for bread, their hospitals are being destroyed and their ancient lands taken from them. We see the grief of small vagabond children searching the rubble that was once their home, searching in vain for those they will never see again. The Jewish people, who themselves have suffered so much, also need peace and security. Honest negotiations should take place now towards creating a two state solution so that Arabs and Jews can live as friendly neighbours.

While social-democrats fear and the fake-left sneer now is the time to raise the red flag proudly. The Labour Party has abandoned any pretence of being socialist. It seeks to preserve capitalism and endorses the American struggle for world hegemony. Efforts should be made to build unity amongst those genuine left-wing parties and movements that oppose capitalism. The NCP is such a party. Join us today

and take a positive step towards a great socialist future.

**John Maryon
Suffolk**

Dear Comrades

In the first-of-its-kind debate on "sports-washing" in the House of Lords on 21st March, Lord Scriven slammed Formula 1 and accused F1 CEO Stefano Dominecali of "arrogance, lack of professionalism and non-engagement" and "damaging the reputation of his sport as he refuses to engage with the issues around F1 and human rights...he thinks he can just receive the reported £574 million from the Bahrain authorities up to 2036 that makes him and his organisation richer, while having nothing to do with the real issues that his sport is helping to cloak in Bahrain". Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle also raised F1, stating that "the regime has regularly used the Grand Prix to enhance its image, and over the past two decades...there have been numerous human rights violations directly associated with the event itself; we are coming back to bloodstains again".

**John Hughes
Bahrain Freedom Movement
London**



Free, free Palestine!

by New Worker correspondent

Every year on 30th March Palestinians observe Land Day recalling the events on that day in 1976, when six unarmed Palestinians were killed and more than 100 injured by Israeli forces during protests against Israel’s confiscation of Palestinian Arab land.

This year Palestinian solidarity campaigners remembered their sacrifice as they took to the streets all around the world to support Palestinian rights and demand an end to the slaughter in Gaza.

London was no exception. Over 200,000 people marched through central London for a rally on Land Day in Trafalgar Square.

Ben Jamal, the director of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, said: “Many thanks to the more than 200k who filled London with us, on Land Day, the day when Palestinians mark the root causes of this current genocide: 76 years of violent colonisation. We do not stop until the genocide is ended and Apartheid is finally dismantled!”

China condemns provocative visit of Labour politicians to Taiwan

China has voiced firm opposition toward the ongoing visit to Taiwan this week by a “Labour Friends of Taiwan” delegation composed of some Labour Lords and MPs, saying the visit is a blatant violation of the one-China principle and a serious interference in China’s internal affairs, that also sends a wrong signal to the island’s separatist forces for “Taiwan independence.”

The provocative visit, which came after the UK accused China of the so-called cyber-espionage and criticized China for the recently implemented Article 23 legislation in Hong Kong as well as the South China Sea issue, is considered another political manoeuvre that some British politicians have been playing in order to create bargaining chips for themselves, and set back UK-China relations.

We express strong condemnation over the visit said a spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy in London on Sunday. We urge the relevant British politicians to stop

violating the one-China principle and stop interfering in China’s internal affairs. The relevant British politicians must know that any act that undermines China’s interests will be met with forceful responses, the spokesperson said.

A seven-member delegation led by Lord Sonny Leong, co-chair of the “Labour Friends of Taiwan,” arrived in Taiwan on Saturday. They are scheduled to meet the island’s regional leader Tsai Ing-wen, focusing on the trade and business relations as well as technology innovation between the UK and Taiwan.

The visit comes after Foreign Secretary David Cameron warned that a Chinese “blockade of the island” would cripple the global economy while other politicians talk about a big “China threat” alleging that “China state-affiliated actors” are involved in cyberattacks targeting British institutions and MPs – claims that were soon followed by sanctions on Chinese individuals and a company.

“The UK should ful-

ly recognise that it lacks the strength and the genuine will to interfere in China’s Taiwan question and the South China Sea affairs, and those [provocative] actions are... incapable of posing a real challenge to our core diplomatic interests,” says Gao Jian, director of the Center for British Studies at the Shanghai International Studies University.

The UK side is also deeply aware that the Taiwan question is the most sensitive red line in China’s foreign policy, and the UK dares not risk its own diplomatic interests to cross China’s diplomatic red lines, Gao said, noting that thus, minor harassing actions can only be seen as meaningless, devoid of any real diplomatic principles and strategies.

While the UK’s approach toward handling UK-China relations centres on three points, including protecting national security, aligning goals with its allies and strengthening collective security, as well as engaging with China for a stable relationship, some Chinese experts say that

while it is engaging with China, the UK also believes that the so-called challenges from China are increasingly rising.

“The reason some British politicians are making provocations on the Taiwan question is that they want to create bargaining chips for themselves,” says Cui Hongjian, a professor at the Beijing Foreign Studies University.

Besides the UK politicians, a delegation from the European Parliament and the German Bundestag also visited Taiwan recently, reaffirming their so-called support for the island.

Despite the UK having previously signalled a desire to engage with China, including in the economic and trade fields where they indeed have many needs, the overall stance now doesn’t seem to prioritise diplomacy for the UK, Cui noted. “Even within the realm of foreign affairs, issues such as the relationship with the US, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and relations with Europe, might appear more critical to the UK. Therefore, unless something

unexpected happens, China-UK relations will remain relatively cold this year,” Cui said.

“The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) authorities pay an extortionate amount of money to get Western politicians and parliamentarians to visit the island as a means of trying to procure support for separatism,” says Tom Fowdy.

The fact that the alleged cyber-attack happened in 2021 but the “perpetrator” was not

named until three years later shows the political timing of the announcement was deliberate and was also coordinated astutely with the British Conservative aligned press, he noted. As the UK has been continuously making negative moves that could undermine UK-China relations, some experts said the bilateral relations will generally be in a rather chilly state this year.

Global Times

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New Worker supporters groups exist to support the weekly newspaper of the New Communist Party. Individual membership is £10.00 (8 Euros or \$10) for all or part of the calendar year and every member will receive a New Worker Supporters Group (NWSG) card and a copies of the Internal Bulletin for the year.

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Delivering aid to the Donbas

by Russell Bentley

All intelligent and decent people in the world who understand the actual facts about what's been happening in Ukraine since 2013 are on the side of the Donbas, because no decent person can be on the side of Nazis.

The suffering imposed on the people of Donbas over the last decade has been brutal and immense.

When good people see others suffering, it is only natural and normal to want to help, and there are still millions of good people in the West, which is why there has been a lot of human aid coming to the Donbas from the West since the beginning of the war, and it still comes, even today. And most of it gets to where it needs to go, but not all of it. So here are a few examples of how you can help, what to look for and what to avoid, when it comes to pitching in for human aid for Donbas from the West.

I was still in the Khan Spetsnaz Battalion when I did my first human aid fundraiser, back in the summer of 2015. I had made a video of a horrendous war crime in Gorlovka – Ukrainian artillery had hit a civilian house, destroying the house and the family. The father, Yura, was killed, the eldest daughter, Katya, 11 years old, was killed. The mother, Anna Tuv, had her left arm blown off above the elbow, and alone, in her totally destroyed house, with the mangled bodies of her husband and daughter beside her, had to make her own tourniquet, (with one hand) and then dig her three year old son Zakhar, and her two week old infant



daughter Milana, from underneath the rubble of her home by herself.

Two days later, I met Anna in the hospital in Donetsk, and I swore I would help her with some money to try as she could to rebuild her shattered life. I went back to the Khan base and told the Commander I would raise \$10,000 for Anna for a new prosthetic arm. The Commander laughed and said I would be lucky, and he would be impressed, if I could raise even \$2,000.

Forty days later, I gave Anna \$10,000 in cash, to start a new life for herself and her two surviving young children. It wasn't my money, it was money from decent human beings in the West, people like you, who could not see such tragedy and brutality, and beauty, resilience and courage, and not contribute and be involved, who, like me, were morally compelled to do more than click the "sad face" icon on social media, and think they'd done their part. When you

make a real contribution, you change the world for the better, you feel it and you know it, and you can actually make something beautiful out of a terrible situation.

Between my work with Khan Humanitarian, the Essence of Time humanitarian missions, and the Donbas Humanitarian Aid fund I co-founded in 2015, I have been involved in raising and distributing more than one million dollars of human aid in the Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics, mostly to civilians and churches and especially to kids, schools and orphanages. And every single penny of human aid I ever raised, every single penny, went directly to those for whom it was intended, those who needed it. I never got paid a penny, and I never took one, and I can prove it. So, if you want to know how to make a contribution to human aid in Donbas, how to get the most bang for your buck, and how to not get scammed, listen up, here's some

good advice...

First lesson, big names not only don't mean "trustworthy", they often mean "total scam". Good people don't get rich doing good deeds. Period.

Second lesson – numbers count and MUST be public – exactly how much came in, and exactly how much went out, and exactly where it went. If they don't show the numbers, it's mighty sketchy, and probably a scam.

REAL human aid is usually given to the final recipient, in actual material, NOT money. If a human aid group gets a donation of \$1,500, buys five electric generators for \$300 each, and makes and publishes a video of them giving five generators to actual soldiers on the front line, it's a safe bet these guys are legit. As Jesus said "by the fruits of their work you will know them".

So who can you trust? I know 100 per cent solid people who bring human aid from the USA, the European Union and Russia

to the Donbas, who don't care about money, who give more than they get, who risk their lives for those they do not know and who can never thank or repay them, and love doing it.

Those are my kind of people, the kind the world needs now more than ever. Here are a few standout human aid organisations worth checking out – Donbas Humanitarian Aid in the United

States, Russian-Germany Brotherly Souls association in Europe, and the Moscow-Donbas group in Russia.

Einstein once said that the answer to all the world's problems can be found in the space between what people do, and what they could do. Everybody can do something, and we are what we do. You only truly own what you give away, and everything you give away always comes back to you. Human aid literally saves lives, and changes them, and when it comes from a different country, especially a country whose government is antagonistic to the recipients, it has a deep meaning that transcends politics and borders

There is a reason people risk their lives and go through great work and hardship and ask nothing in return. Doing the right thing, helping others, being a true Hero, is its own reward, and it is also the path to a better world for everybody in it, and all who are to come. And that is enough. Davai!

Sputnik

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Russians push forward in Ukraine

A new wave of Russian precision strikes targeted Ukrainian energy facilities that supply their military-industrial complex last week, The Ukrainian authorities confirmed damage in Krivyi Rih. More explosions thundered in the Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporozhie and Kharkov regions.

Massive Russian strikes have inflicted heavy damage to Ukraine's energy infrastructure over the past weeks. The ongoing attacks are aimed at disrupting the military logistics of the Ukrainian army and prevent its military-industrial complex from launching full-fledged operation.

More Russian strikes targeted



• Russians on the move...

Ukrainian military facilities. A training camp of the Ukrainian marines in the Mykolaiv region reportedly also came under attack.

Meanwhile, the Russian army continues pushing the Donbass frontlines to the west. New Russian gains were reported west of Avdeevka. Af-

ter their victory in Orlovka, Russian forces entered Semenovka. No river could protect the Ukrainian garrison in the village and, after the prolonged battles, Rus-

sian forces gained a foothold in the southern part of the settlement. The Ukrainian troops retreated to the north. Together with the western streets of

Berdychi, this is their last stronghold west of Avdeevka. Then, Ukrainian servicemen will be forced to retreat dozens of kilometres through the fields under heavy Russian artillery fire.

At the same time, Russian forces gained new positions on the dominant heights in the Artyomovsk direction. After they took control of Krasnoe, they rapidly expanded their zone of control north of the village and approached the outskirts of the main Ukrainian stronghold, Chasov Yar. The Ukrainian military is preparing for the upcoming Russian assault and new heavy urban battles.

Southfront

French pensioners rally against austerity

by Ed Newman

Last week pensioners rallied in hundreds of towns and cities in France against President Emmanuel Macron's determination for even more austerity cuts amid the inflation crisis. When campaigning in 2017 – seven years ago – Macron promised he wouldn't cut pensions and that their purchasing power relative to

inflation would be preserved.

Seven years later, inflation has progressed by 17 per cent while pensions have increased by just eight per cent. The widely protested pension rollback and retirement age hike by decree in 2023 and the widening gap between inflation increases and pension increases may explain why no sector of society has turned against

Macron more than retirees.

The French parliament has refused to even allow a vote on the age hike, ensuring that President Macron's executive decree would receive no checks, balances, or even oversight, by the legislative branch.

Police have clashed with protesters angry at President Macron and his controversial pension reforms.

The Macron government has warned there will soon be a second round of austerity cuts to the already austerity-driven 2024 budget.

One protester in Paris told reporters "there are so many pensioners who live on less than €900 per month and everyone should be able to comprehend how difficult that is. Many of us also have diseases like cancer and diabetes, and I can

promise you that none of us asked for them. We deserve dignity and not to be treated like we are some sort of lower class citizen just because we have finished our working career."

An alternative to public service cuts would be increased taxes on the rich or corporate shareholders. But the Macron administration says it doesn't want to go digging into the pock-

ets of the French.

While the average household is still reeling from COVID-19 and the disastrous backfiring of European sanctions on Russia, an Oxfam report revealed that the billionaire families of France have gained €230 billion since 2020. That would be sufficient to give €3,400 to every single French citizen.

Radio Havana Cuba