

Arabs hit back as Israelis march on Rafah

by our Arab Affairs correspondent

Nakba Day. The day Arabs remember the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians by the Zionist gangs that began in 1948. Nearly a million Palestinian Arabs were driven out of their homes in the war that began on 15th May 1948 following the end of British colonial rule and the proclamation of the State of Israel. And this week Arab leaders gathered in Bahrain for a summit dominated by the current Israeli onslaught on Gaza while Palestinian guerrillas strike back with a vengeance in northern Gaza hitting Israeli patrols in deadly rocket attacks and ambushes. The Israelis are using stalling tactics at cease-fire talks in Cairo to prolong the fighting. The Lebanese resistance is stepping up its daily barrage of rocket and missiles in northern Israel. Israeli firefighting teams are battling to douse the flames that have swept through the Tel Hashomer military base near Tel Aviv. And hundreds of thousands of Palestinians flee from Rafah as the Israelis advance on the biggest Arab city in the south of the Gaza Strip.



Meanwhile the White House rejects claims of genocide in Gaza despite a death toll of over 35,000 Palestinians – mostly women and children – and hides behind the claim that the definition of genocide requires intent which the Israelis astonishingly insists is not happening. At the same time the Biden administration plans to send a new billion-dollar tranche of military aid to Israel despite Washington's supposed opposition to a full-scale invasion of Rafah in southern Gaza and concerns about rising civilian deaths. And a Jewish staffer in the Biden administration has resigned in protest against America's continued support for Israel amid its war on Gaza. Lily Greenberg Call, a special assistant to the chief of staff in the US Interior Department, wrote in her resignation letter that she could not "in good conscience continue to represent" the administration, as Biden was "making Jews the face of the American war machine".

Back in Israel rifts are openly emerging in Netanya-

hu's wartime coalition with two retired generals turned politicians voicing their differences in public. Defence Minister General Gallant publicly stated that Israel should not be involved in military rule in Gaza once the war is over. He's been backed by another member of the war cabinet, General Benny Gantz, who said Gallant speaks the truth and that it is the leadership's responsibility to do the right thing for the country at all costs. Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid, who runs the liberal-Zionist Yesh Atid (There is a future) party, says the Netanyahu administration had lost control. "Relations with the US are collapsing, the middle class is collapsing," Lapid said. "Soldiers are being killed every day in Gaza and they fight among themselves on television. The cabinet is disassembled and non-functional. Ministers protest in front of cabinet meetings."

"Seventy-six years ago, over half of the Palestinian population fled or were driven from their homes during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. Many

of them and their descendants became refugees in the Gaza Strip," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said during Wednesday's regular news conference. "Seventy-six years on, the historical injustice suffered by the Palestinian people, far

from being redressed, has further worsened."

People's China firmly opposes the expansion of the fighting to Rafah and opposes collective punishment on the people in Gaza. We support the establishment of an independent State of Palestine that enjoys full sovereignty based on the 1967 border and with east Jerusalem as its capital. And we support making Palestine a full UN member state as soon as possible," he said.

Wang noted that China will continue to work with the international community to promote an early, comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question, to end the Nakba once and for all, and to realise peaceful coexistence between Israel and Palestine as well as harmony between the Arabs and Jews.

FUND

This week's postbag brought in £831 for the fighting fund. The May appeal now stands ££1,823. We now need £1,677 by the end of the month to hit our £3,500 target.

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THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

The old remember...

...the young people wait. The 15th May is Nakba Day. On that day in 1948 the first ArabIsraeli war began. It has never ended. But the tragedy of the Palestinian Arabs began when British imperialism first occupied their land in 1918 and encouraged Zionist immigration through the Balfour doctrine. British imperialism sought to create a community of Zionist settlers that would prolong their occupation of Palestine indefinitely. The Zionists helped British colonialism crush the Palestine Revolt in 1936. But following the defeat of the Axis in 1945 the Zionists seized the opportunity to push for a separate state of their own. In 1948 the British colonial mandate ended and the State of Israel was proclaimed.

The first war led to the expulsion of around a million Palestinian Arabs from their homes by the Zionist regime. Those refugees and their descendants have never given up their right to return to their land. And this is the heart of the crisis that has led to five fullscale conflicts, endless confrontation and the current war in Gaza.

The Zionists originally wanted the entire Middle East "from the Nile to the Euphrates" and Israel's ruling cliques still cling to the dream of turning the whole of Palestine into a "Greater Israel". They claim to serve a mythical Zionist ideal as a bulwark against persecution. In reality they simply provide imperialism with cannon fodder for the strategic aims of American imperialism. Far from being a Zionist paradise, Israel today is one of the worst places for Jews to live, racked by continuing conflict with Palestinians and economic hardship due to its isolation and total dependency on American imperialism.

Israel is economically and politically entirely dependent on American arms and economic assistance and successive Israeli governments exist simply to serve the needs of American imperialism in the region. And those needs are to weaken and divide the Arabs to ensure that the big oil corporations can continue their exploitation and plunder of Arab oil until it eventually runs out.

At the end of the day Israel is an American protectorate that can do nothing without the say-so of Washington. The tail does not wag the dog and Israel and the American "Zionist lobby" do not dictate American foreign policy. They serve it.

The Americans say they want a "twostate solution" that would leave Arab Jerusalem and large swathes of occupied Palestinian West Bank territory under Israeli occupation in exchange for largely under-developed land around the Gaza Strip. The Palestinians get a powerless, puppet regime in what's left of the West Bank and the refugees, now millions strong, get nothing. And even these crumbs are too much for the current Israeli government, which wants to keep all the occupied territories open for continued Zionist settlement.

The Americans think they call all the shots in the Middle East today. They believe that all resistance can be crushed and they hope to find willing Arab tools to do their bidding, hoist up the white flag and sign a surrender peace.

But imperialist violence always leads to an equally violent resistance. Imperialism's refusal to recognise this has led to the spiral of violence and terror that triggered the first Arab-Israeli war that has now spread across the entire world. A lasting solution must be based on the right of return of refugees and an independent Palestinian state with Israel giving up all territories seized since 1967.

The cyber attack that never was...

by Mark Blacklock

The British media went into a feeding frenzy last week, accusing China of hacking into a Ministry of Defence (MoD) computer system. However, one crucial aspect was largely downplayed. The defence secretary himself, Grant Shapps, not only pointedly refused to blame China, but also gave a thoroughly plausible explanation of why he did not.

The story broke when one news broadcaster claimed – in an "exclusive" supported by an unattributed tip off – that British officials believed China was behind the cyberattack. Pretty soon, just about every print, broadcast and online news medium in the country had followed up and had conveniently found their own "anonymous sources" to support their own stories painting China as the villain. This invites the question: are there suddenly lots of anonymous sources roaming the UK's media landscape – or is it just one organised, focused, and plausibly deniable source (perhaps not unadjacent to someone in government)?

Following the coverage of the issue, it was raised in the House of Commons, and politician after politician queued up to accuse China of sinister, underhand interference at the MoD, including well-known anti-China hawks like Iain Duncan Smith, Alicia Kearns and Tobias Ellwood. One even went so far as to suggest a cyber-attack could justify the activation of NATO's Article 5. If the media was frenzied, then politicians were hysterical.

Fortunately, during the debate, one Member of Parliament mentioned the elephant in the room: that it was obvious the government had been briefing off-the-record against China, enabling the allegation to gain traction in the news – and as a result embed itself in the public and

political consciousness – while not having the courage to blame China publicly. Shapps said that "due process" must be followed and warned against jumping to conclusions before investigations were completed.

In refusing to lay the blame at China's door, Shapps, the MoD, and even Downing Street were swimming against strong currents of popular, political and press opinion which they themselves had so obviously stirred up. Shapps would only go so far as to blame a "malign actor" which theoretically could include criminal hackers rather than another state. He even admitted that the government did not believe the data containing the names and bank details of up to 270,000 serving, reserve and retired personnel had even been lost. China is not only being blamed for a hack, but for a hack in which nothing was stolen. So, was this a storm in a tea cup? Perhaps it would have been, had a decision clearly not been taken by someone in authority to leak that officials suspected China of the attack. Whatever the outcome of investigations, it is obvious that a decision was shamelessly taken to try and gain political capital from the scandal, whether it was real or imagined.

Shapps' caution in refusing to overtly point the finger may have been wise. For one thing, he repeatedly responded to MP's questions during the Commons debate by referencing the Butler Review. This was an inquiry conducted in the aftermath of the Iraq War, in which secret intelligence was used by British politicians to shape public opinion in favour of the conflict. The review found that politicians, including the then prime minister Tony Blair, used the raw data to reinforce their preconceptions, leading to a distorted analysis. However, there is another consideration.

One of the few laudable traditions of the UK's archaic parliamentary system is that

telling lies to your colleagues in the House of Commons is considered a heinous offence. To knowingly, deliberately mislead your fellow MPs is a transgression considered worthy of punishment by exclusion from the chamber, and perhaps even resignation.

So if Shapps had told Parliament in his statement last week that China was the state actor behind the hacking, and it was subsequently shown not to be, he could have landed in deep trouble.

Common sense tells us that the repeated "leaks" from someone within the corridors of power must have had official sanction. Even some MPs think so. It makes no sense to consider that there are many anonymous sources prepared to tell exactly the same story to a wide range of media outlets – rather, it makes complete sense to believe there is but one source, repeating the same story again and again. Could this have been Shapps' way of circumventing the requirements of the Butler Review in order to raise the profile of the story (and possibly of himself)?

An alternative is that he did not want to get caught deliberately misleading the House, which would mean that he knows China is not the hacker but wanted to benefit in stature from the outrage the misinformation created.

You don't have to be a conspiracy theorist to consider the blaming of Beijing for a cyberattack in which nothing was stolen as a cynical attempt to exploit the almost ubiquitous anti-China sentiment in the Western media and political circles. Journalists and politicians are like hungry piranha which churn up the water in a feeding frenzy whenever a China-critical story emerges. Unfortunately, this time the story had more holes in it than a fishing net.

Workers' Notes

Culture and Class Struggle

by New Worker correspondent

Liverpool has often been at the sharp end of the class struggle. In 1911 it was the scene of violent general strike involving the city's transport workers. In 1919 it had a police strike that was so effective the police were banned from striking. In the 1990s it was the scene of the last major dock strike in Britain. Today it is the city's museum workers who are at the forefront of the city's class struggle.

The National Museums Liverpool (NML) is perhaps unique for being a body nationalised by Margaret Thatcher when she rescued the near bankrupt city's cultural institutions.

So far eight weeks of strike action have taken place causing closures at the Museum of Liverpool, the World Museum, the International Slavery Museum and the Maritime Museum, the Walker Art Gallery, Sudley House and the Lady Lever Art Gallery.

The dispute is over the fact that of the 200 government departments, agencies and non-departmental public bodies the NML is one of the few which is refusing to pay 300 workers a £1,500 cost-of-living payment which workers at many other similar bodies have received.

Fifty-six days of action has already taken place since mid-February, including five days this month already and will continue for another two days, nine in June and two in July, mostly over weekends, if matters are not resolved. A new temporary exhibition, National Treasures: *Velazquez in Liverpool* at the Walker Art Gallery is the latest to be affected.

The union involved, PCS is publicly optimistic that NML will concede, but they said that a month ago. 94 per cent of members voted for strike action on a 69 per cent turnout.

PCS general secretary, Fran

Heathcote, said: "Our hard-working members at National Museums Liverpool love their jobs but are angry and feel undervalued because NML is the only one of more than 200 employers covered by the civil service pay remit guidance to withhold the £1,500 cost-of-living bonus." She also warned that "this dispute can be easily resolved if the employer agrees to pay our members what they are owed. If the employer fails to do that, our members will go back on strike over the next three months". PCS members at NML have voted to reject a "final offer" of a £750 one-off non-consolidated payment, which was dependant on ending the strike before Easter. A meagre sweetener of an increase in annual leave to 30 days (from 28), closing on Christmas Eve and even free tea, coffee and milk in staff rooms was rejected.

NML claim that as it is not part of the civil service, which is technically true, but it is a well-known fact that many other similar bodies are on the same civil service pay scales.

The National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth and seven Welsh national museums have also taken strike action on this very issue. NML say average wages have increased by 14 per cent since 2019/20 at a cost of an additional £2.4m a year. It claims meeting the £1,500 demand would cost £750,000 overall and put the museum below its minimum reserve level. NML has lost £6 million in Grant Aid funding since 2010.

However, Matt Exley, a PCS branch rep at NML said: "We're civil servants when it suits them, and we're not civil servants when it suits them. The ball's always in their court."

PCS points out that some NML workers live below the poverty line. Security guards are the worse affected, but other workers have their grumbles. And local Labour MP Kim Johnson says: "I want to see the issue resolved as soon as possible because it's impacting not only the workers and the museums but our city."

Not Just Liverpool

This dispute only highlights the general picture of live in the heritage sector. At last year's TUC Congress, coincidentally at

Liverpool, the matter featured in a fringe meeting organised by the high caste civil servants Prospect union, entitled *World Class Heritage, Second Class Pay*. This pointed out that Liverpool was not the only museum suffering hardship. Indeed things are much worse in municipally funded institutions where some are facing not just cuts to opening times, but sales of objects to keep afloat. We shall leave for the time being the recent case of a British Museum doing some private de-accessioning.

Even popular national museums such as the Victoria & Albert Museum in Kensington which pull in the tourists suffered a £10 million cut in its grant last year.

At the TUC delegates unanimously passed a Prospect motion which deplored "brutal funding cuts have led to closures and cutbacks" and called for an end to the "regime of second class pay", but we should not hold our breath waiting for action.

At Prospect's fringe meeting Negotiations Officer Jo Livesey pointed out that 42 per cent of heritage workers earn less than the real living wage. John Wilson, a Prospect representative at NML, pointed out that PhDs in the sector generally earned much less than those with equivalent qualifications elsewhere. A National Trust wildlife conservationist reported that despite 15 years in the sector and holding a Masters degree, his pay only exceeded £20,000 in 2022.

Labour's Shadow Employment Minister, Alison McGovern, the MP for nearby Wirral South pointed out that the heritage sector is one of the fastest growing parts of the economy. She might have added, but didn't, that is because everything else is turning to dust. She also claimed that Labour's promised "New Deal" would greatly improve things, but that has been watered down already.

The same union has 10,000 members (out of a total of 158,000) in such bodies as the British Museum, the Royal Academy; National Galleries of Scotland; Royal Botanic Gardens and the Science Museum, and privatised archaeological trusts. It has recently launched a new Heritage Sector of Prospect to represent them.

Museums and libraries are often seen as an easy target for cuts by hard pressed local authorities. In October Glasgow two major museums saw staff taking strike action in opposition to job cuts planned by the city's arms' length organisation, City Life. It wants to save £7.1 million with £1.5 million of that coming from 38 job cuts. At the same time the city's central library wanted to reduce its conservation section to a single person.

Unison said cutting the number of conservators could cause a "high-profile accident" and valuable collection pieces could be damaged. In particular: "Deep cleaning of display venues by specialist Conservation staff will greatly reduce or completely disappear. World-class textiles at the Burrell Collection, taxidermy specimens at Kelvingrove and other vulnerable organic objects will be at particular risk of pest damage without regular, vigilant cleaning by highly-trained specialists."

To return to the Land of Song the new Welsh First Minister, Vaughan Gething, recently openly said the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff, could be shut saying its deteriorating condition was a result of prioritising the NHS and Transport. While he had to issue a hasty correction the Museum is already planning to cut 90 jobs.

Public Library Battles

In the local government supported public library world industrial action has been taking place up and down the country.

One of these was at the two south London boroughs of Bromley and Greenwich where the two library services are run by Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL). The GLL was founded in 1993. It runs more than 250 sport and leisure facilities and 115 libraries on behalf of local authorities in London and elsewhere.

The GLL is a "social enterprise" which claims to be charitable but its charitable activities largely revolve around supplying large salaries to senior managers rather than to its 10,800 largely low paid employees. These lavish salaries are often the reason such organisations are set up in the first place – so that councillors can get large salaries rather than make do with local

authority expenses for sitting on their boards.

GLL calls itself a "staff-led organisation". In theory it elects staff to a representative board called a 'society', which is a normal company's Board. But the majority of the workers are on zero-hour contracts and not classed as "staff" which means they are excluded. GLL does not recognise trade unions or negotiate on pay.

In late March staff belonging to Unite in the two boroughs walked out for a day complaining of low pay and poor working practices which include extensive use of zero hour contracts and poor sick pay schemes. These low wages, which are below local authority norms are the reason why many councils like to outsource their services.

The strike brought some success as a 20 per cent increase in sick pay was secured for all employees across the UK.

Unite general secretary, Sharon Graham, said "while this is a welcome step in the right direction, Unite won't stop here. Our members deserve better pay and conditions and GLL is in a position to improve its offers across the board". Mary Summers, a regional officer added that: "this win has been achieved through industrial action only, but we aren't done yet. We must secure all the improvements that our members deserve, and are confident that together we will attain just that."

Elsewhere public libraries are often the first to face cuts by hard pressed councillors. The County Councils Network (CCN) notes that since 2010-11 when English councils budgeted nearly £1.6 billion on library services, culture, heritage, and tourism the 2023-24 figure is £472 million less at £1.1 billion, an absolute decline aggravated by higher inflation.

The same report notes that demand for care services are increasing and that for 2024-25 many local authorities are planning further reductions to the tune of £650 million in arts support and funding for libraries to give an extra £500 million for care services.

While it is a common assumption that in this internet age public libraries are something of a luxury from an educational

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point of view and that there are more urgent priorities than supplying copies of the latest Mills & Boon they do still perform vital functions. Not everyone can afford internet access at home. Libraries can provide internet facilities which are sometimes the best way of obtaining cheap rail travel. They provide literacy lessons to toddlers and offer free or cheap space to all sorts of local societies and groups. But while councils have a legal obligation to provide an "adequate library service", the concept is not defined.

Councillor Sam Corcoran, Vice Chair of the CCN, deplored the fact that "councils have found it extremely hard to avoid significantly reducing their spend on libraries, culture, and tourism since 2010 with funding being prioritised towards life-critical care services. We know how much residents value cultural services, but the reality is that we have been unable to avoid reducing support for them". He did not say what should be done.

Nevertheless budget cuts are coming in places such as Denbighshire, Nottingham and Swindon. The Local Government Association has warned that about a fifth of councils are tottering on the brink of bankruptcy. Denbighshire council is saving £360,000 a year by cutting hours by 40 per cent despite 90 per cent of the 4,500 responses to the consultation opposing.

Swindon it was not closing any of its five core libraries but will make £600,000 unspecified cuts. Nottingham city council, is losing 31 library jobs to save £1.5 million. In bankrupt Birmingham at least 26 of its local libraries are at risk of closure.

In South Gloucestershire local government union Unison is opposing planned cuts of £473,000 which it says will prevent the council meeting its legal duty to provide an adequate library service. Here 3,900 people responded to the official consultation, mostly opposing the plans, but recently 12 branch libraries had their hours cut by 40 hours a week each to save £273,000.

North of the Border the past 15 years has seen the number of public libraries fall from 627 to less than 500 as the SNP government crush the life out of local government with their long standing council tax freeze which is aggravated by their cutting local government funding by more than a fifth in the past decade.

Something Completely Different

by New Worker correspondent

As the holiday season looms ever closer the British Airline Pilots Association (BALPA)

are threatening strike action at budget airline EasyJet after pilots rejected a deal which would have brought experienced pilots presently on £164,000 a year up to £190,000 in October and nearly to £200,000 next April.

Slightly further down the aviation food chain Senior First Officers would have secured £112,879, an increase of £20,000, while First Officers would have got around £75,446. 96 per cent of the airline's pilots voted to reject these offers and opted for strike action.

This is what comes of workers holding all the cards, as pilots cannot be easily replaced in the way that food delivery workers can. In the good old days Fleet Street printers had the same hold as the slightest delay in the print shop would see tens of thousands of copies lost. A bad summer for an airline is just as bad.

EasyJet can easily afford such salaries. Its last annual profits were a record £455 million and is increasing its dividend by 20 per cent.

The bourgeois press like to attack comparatively well paid workers such as the train drivers when they take industrial action by taking note of the salaries paid to the most experienced workers. It these victories in precisely these areas that give less well off-workers confidence to take on their bosses. However the pilots' hardship fund need not be a top priority for readers.

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

14th May 2004

AKHMAD KADYROV, the President of the Russian autonomous republic of Chechnya, was killed on Sunday when a bomb exploded under his rostrum during the Victory Day celebrations in the capital, Grozny. Thirteen others were killed and many more injured including the Russian commander General Valery Baranov.

According to Chechnyan Interim Interior Minister Alu Alkhanov, the explosive device was planted in concrete stand of the stadium during recent construction works. Before the celebration, police searching the stadium

for explosives but found nothing. Experts believe the explosives were inside the concrete blocks.

The signal to trigger the device was probably transmitted through electrical wires. During the celebrations, special electronic devices jamming radio signals were working to prevent terrorist attacks. The terrorist could have been in the stadium because another explosive device was put in the stands after the explosion took place.

Under the Chechen constitution, Chechen Prime Minister Sergei Abramov becomes interim Head of the Republic until the new presidential elections take place.

Russian President Vladimir Putin met Abramov to give him his full support and told him the tragedy in Grozny should not affect the lives of Chechen people.

Nikolai Kovalev, the former head of Russian state security, the FSB, said he could not "comprehend how the bomb could be set in the place having the public event". Kovalev said the examination of the site of public events is basic police work and after such an examination, the area should be guarded 24 hours a

day.

The issue of fresh presidential elections has not yet been discussed at an official level, possibly because the last campaign in Chechnya was conducted under the absolute domination of Kadyrov.

The Kremlin did not allow any serious competitor to challenge Akhmed Kadyrov in the presidential campaign. Heavy reliance on Kadyrov's personality probably was the main weakness of Russian plans to stabilise the Caucasian republic that has been wracked by separatist violence for over a decade.

The Kremlin mistakenly put the burden of the responsibility for the situation in Chechnya on Kadyrov. The loyalty of Kadyrov cost much, including control over money supply. The Kremlin had no other options. The initial plan to stabilise the situation in Chechnya failed.

Akhmad Kadyrov was unable to unite all of Chechens, although such a task is hardly possible in a country divided into tribal clans.

China's new journey into space

On 25th April China launched the Shenzhou-18 spaceship that will send three taikonauts to the orbiting Tiangong space station for a six-month mission.

The spaceship, atop a Long March-2F carrier rocket, blasted off at 20:59 Beijing Time from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in north-west China.

About 10 minutes after the launch, the Shenzhou-18 spaceship separated from the rocket and entered its designated orbit. The crew members are in good shape and the launch is a "complete success," the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) announced.

While in orbit, the Shenzhou-18 spaceship is scheduled to make a fast, automated rendezvous and docking with the space station combination. The Shenzhou-18 crew will rotate with the Shenzhou-17 crew in orbit.

The Shenzhou-18 crew members are Ye Guangfu, Li Cong and Li Guangsu, with Ye as the mission commander.

The Shenzhou-18 mission marks Ye's second journey into space, following his previous role as a crew member during the Shenzhou-13 mission from October 2021 to April 2022. Li Cong and Li Guangsu, who belong to the third group of Chinese astronauts, are both embarking on their first-ever space adventure.

The crew will utilise the scientific experiment cabinets and extravehicular payloads to carry out more than 90 experiments in the fields of basic physics in microgravity, space material science, space life science, space medicine and space technology, said Lin Xiqiang, the deputy director of the CMSA.

A unique task for the three pilots-turned taikonauts is to create an "aquarium" and raise



fish in zero gravity.

They will create a simplified version of an aquatic ecosystem using zebrafish and algae to study how the space environment affects their growth and system balance.

The "aquarium" is 1.25 litres in volume and can accommodate four small fish. But if the experiment succeeds, it will be a significant breakthrough to cultivate vertebrates in China's space program. Not only will the taikonauts find joy in the space "aquarium," but it may also pave the way for their future counterparts to enjoy nutritious fish from their own in-orbit harvests.

"The next step in our research involves conducting experiments on fruit flies and mice," said Cang Huaixing, a chief researcher

for the space station's scientific experiments, at the Technology and Engineering Centre for Space Utilisation under the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Taikonauts in orbit will also be involved in an experiment of cultivating plants. The purpose is to analyse the changes in the function and gene expression of plant stem cells in a microgravity environment. According to scientists, this research will provide theoretical support for designing crops that can adapt to outer space conditions.

More than 100 Arabidopsis seeds will be grown and nurtured in space for approximately four weeks. The crew aboard the space station will freeze them at minus 80 degrees Celsius in real-time and bring them back

to Earth for further analysis and research.

In addition to the two experiments related to fish and plants, the crew will also conduct molecular research on the co-origin of proteins and nucleic acids, as well as the origin of codons. Furthermore, they will test a newly developed spacecraft coating material.

Besides, they will complete tasks including installation of protection reinforcement devices against space debris, and installation and retrieval of extravehicular payloads and platform equipment.

The on-site audience include a navy officer, role models from ethnic minority areas, as well as pupils from Jishishan, a county in northwest China's Gansu province, which was struck by

a 6.2-magnitude earthquake last December.

Ma Yingbo, a primary school student from Jishishan, said he "jumped up with excitement" when he learned that he would have the opportunity to witness the launch.

Since arriving at the launch centre, he has been actively participating in various space science courses. He said he was particularly captivated by the fascinating story of the rocket launch. In his eyes, rockets serve as a bridge connecting Earth and the space, making ancient myths no longer distant legends.

"When I grow up, I want to become a taikonaut, too. I will explore the vast universe just like them," he penned in his diary.

The frequent exposure given to the taikonauts at the space station has attracted more attention from the public, and China's manned space programme has become more closely connected with the ordinary people.

China's first taikonaut Yang Liwei, who is the deputy chief designer of the country's manned space programme, said that "it is no longer a technical obstacle for ordinary people to venture into space".

The reason why only professional taikonauts are currently flying is that there are many tasks that require their expertise during the space station's construction and operation, Yang explained.

He said that with the progress of the entire space project, in the foreseeable future, ordinary people, following a brief period of training while maintaining an optimal physical condition, will have the opportunity to venture into space "to gaze upon our magnificent Earth home from outer space and marvel at the vastness of the universe"

Xinhua

Youth rebellion illuminates the wretchedness of capitalism

by Vijay Prashad

It was inevitable that global North governments' full-throated support for Israel's genocide against Palestinians would result in furious retribution from their citizenry.

That this retribution began in the USA is also not a surprise, given the ongoing cycle of protests that, since October 2023, have contested the American government's blank cheque to the Israeli government. The American bankrolling of Israel's extermination campaign against Palestinians includes over 100 weapons shipments to Israel since 7th October and billions of dollars of aid.

For a long time now, young people in the USA – as in other countries of the global North – have felt the demise of promise from their society. Permanent precarious work awaits them, even those with higher degrees, and a more precious hold on morality has developed within them due to their own experiments to become better humans in the world.

Cruelties of austerity and of patriarchal norms have forced them to turn against their ruling classes. They want something better than what decaying capitalism offers. The assault against Palestinians has spurred a rupture. How much further these young people will go is yet to be seen.

Across the USA, students have built encampments on over 100 university campuses, including the country's most prestigious institutions,



• Palestinian demonstration outside Columbia University in New York.

such as Columbia, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford, Emory, Washington University in St. Louis, Vanderbilt, and Yale.

At these encampments, students sing and study, pray and discuss. Many of these universities have invested their vast endowments in funds that are entangled with the weapons industry and Israeli companies, with the total endowments at American institutions of higher education reaching roughly \$840 billion.

Seeing their ever-growing tuition payments go towards institutions that are complicit in and profiting from this genocide is far too much for these students. Hence their determination to resist with their bodies.

Democracy is corroded when basic civil actions such as this are met with the full force of the state's repressive apparatus. College administrators and local urban authorities have sent in heavily armed police to use any means necessary to remove the encampments, further reinforced by placing snipers on campus

rooftops at many universities.

Scenes of sensitive students and faculty members being ripped away from their campuses, tasered, brutalised, and arrested by police in riot gear are scattered across social media. But rather than demoralise the youth, these violent measures have simply sparked the creation of new encampments at colleges not only in the USA, but in countries as far afield as Australia, Canada, France, Italy, and Britain.

Excuses such as the tents being a fire hazard might stiffen the resolve of the administrators, but they make no sense to the students, the faculty members who came out to defend them, or concerned people around the world.

The images of this violence are reminiscent of the photographs of the massacres against American students protesting against the Vietnam War and of police dogs being unleashed on young Black children during the civil rights movement.

This is not the first time that young people, particularly college

students, have tried to impose clarity upon a world encrusted by compromises. In the USA, earlier generations fought to get their colleges to divest from apartheid South Africa and from the ugly American-driven wars in South-east Asia and Central America.

In 1968, young people from France to India, from the USA to Japan, erupted in anger at the imperialist wars in Algeria, Palestine, and Vietnam, their eyes firmly set on Paris, Tel Aviv, and Washington for their murderous culture.

Their attitude was captured by the Pakistani poet Habib Jalib, who sang at Lahore's Mochi Gate "Kyun darate ho zindan ki divar se" (Why do you scare me with the prison's gate?), and then, "Zulm ki baat ko jahl ki raat ko, main nahin manta main nahin jaanta" (Oppression's words, ignorance's night, I refuse to acknowledge, I refuse to accept).

Since we are in May, it might be valuable to recall the brave young people of China who took to the streets on 4th May 1919 to condemn the humiliations forced

upon the Chinese people during the Paris Peace Conference (which resulted in the Treaty of Versailles).

During the conference, the imperialist powers decided to give Japan a large part of Shandong province, which Germany had seized from China in 1898. In this transfer of power, Chinese youth saw the weakness of China's republic, which had been set up in 1911. Over 4,000 students from 13 universities in Beijing took to the streets under a banner that read: "Strive for sovereignty externally, eliminate national traitors internally".

They were angry both at the imperialist powers and their own 60-member delegation to the Paris conference, led by minister of foreign affairs Lu Zhengxiang. Liang Qichao, a member of the delegation, was so frustrated with the treaty that he sent a bulletin back to China on 2nd May, which was published and spurred on the Chinese students.

The student protests put pressure on the Chinese government to dismiss pro-Japanese officials such as Cao Rulin, Zhang Zongxiang, and Lu Zongyu. On 28th June the Chinese delegation in Paris refused to sign the treaty.

The actions of the Chinese students were powerful and far-reaching, with their May Fourth Movement not only protesting at the Treaty of Versailles but unfolding a broader critique of the rot in China's elite republican culture. The students wanted more, their patriotism finding

shelter in currents of left-wing thought such as anarchism but more profoundly in Marxism.

Just two years later, several of the important young intellectuals who were shaped by this uprising, such as Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu, and Mao Zedong, founded the Communist Party of China in 1921. Women leaders founded organisations that brought millions of women into political and intellectual life, later becoming core elements of the Communist Party.

For instance, Cheng Junying founded the Beijing Women's Academic Federation; Xu Zonghan established the Shanghai Women's Federation; Guo Longzhen, Liu Qingyang, Deng Yingchao, and Zhang Ruoming created the Tianjin Women's Patriotic Comrades Association; and Ding Ling became one of the leading storytellers of China's countryside.

Thirty years after the May Fourth Movement, many of these men and women displaced their rotten political system and established the People's Republic of China.

Who knows where the refusals of students in the global North today will go? The students' refusal to acknowledge the excuses of their ruling class and accept its policies are dug deeper into their soil than their tents. The police can arrest them, brutalise them, and displace their encampments, but this will only make radicalisation harder to disrupt.

In the midst of the white heat of the May Fourth Movement, the

poet Zhu Ziqing (1898–1948) wrote the poem *Brightness*. His words rush from 1919 to our own time, from one generation of students to another:

*“In the deep and stormy night,
Ahead lies a barren wilderness.
Once past the barren wilderness,
There lies the path of the*

*people.
Ah! In the darkness,
countless paths,
How should I tread correctly?
God! Quickly give me some light,*

*Let me run forward!
God quickly replies, Light?
I have none to find for you.
You want light?
You must create it yourself!”
That is what young*

people are doing: They are creating this light, and, even as many of their elders try to dim it, the brightness of their souls continues to illuminate the wretchedness of our

system – at its heart the ugliness of Israel’s war – and the promise of humanity.

People’s World
(USA)

Class nature of violence against the students

by Monica Moorehead

The student uprising that began at Columbia University in New York on 17th April has evolved into a global phenomenon, reaching even Antarctica.

What sparked this movement, a real Intifada that takes the form of Gaza Solidarity Encampments, is the ongoing horrific genocide in Gaza by the American-backed Israeli apartheid regime that began in October. This genocide, which has played out on all forms of social media, has claimed over 35,000 lives and over 78,000 injured Palestinians according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza.

At one point, students established over 100 encampments on college campuses throughout the USA. The protesters demand the college administrations divest from Israeli companies and Israeli-linked companies, especially those with ties to industries making weapons that have massacred Palestinians, including over 15,000 children. The protesters demand a permanent end to the genocide.

While these encampments have used peaceful tactics, the organisers have sent a clear message that they would not be silent. They condemn their college management and the

Joe Biden administration for their complicity with genocide.

These students tell the world that they are exercising their right to free speech and the freedom of assembly, outlined in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights, ratified by Congress in December 1791. They proclaim that their encampments will remain intact until their demands are met, no matter how long it takes.

Brutal police, local and state, armed to the teeth with batons, pepper spray, flash-bang grenades, zip ties and rubber bullets, have violated these basic bourgeois democratic rights at many of these encampments. Police have even drawn guns against unarmed young people.

At the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), police were either absent or just stood by as armed pro-Israel forces attacked these encampments with fireworks, lead pipes and chemical sprays and carried out other acts of terror, causing many injuries. Pro-Palestinian protesters had their COVID masks and keffiyehs ripped off to make them more vulnerable to right-wing attacks. Muslim students have had their hijabs removed while being arrested, a violation of their religious rights. The police, with the support of these reactionary



• Protest camp at Fordham University in New York.

college administrators, have turned these peaceful encampments into virtual war zones.

The real perpetrators of violence

College administrators, echoing the Biden administration, have pushed the utterly false narrative that the encampments are anti-Semitic and an affront to Jewish students. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, many anti-Zionist Jewish students have participated in the encampments to say that the genocide in Gaza will not be carried out in their name.

This false claim of anti-Semitism provides a cover for the Biden

administration to continue its support for a brutal regime, which, since its founding in 1948, has embodied naked ethnic cleansing, mass displacement and overt anti-Arab racism. This regime claims that its right to self-defence justifies its destruction of Gaza and the deliberate starvation of Gazans. Let’s be clear: A state that uses an occupying force to subjugate an entire Indigenous population has no right to exist, much less the right to slaughter others.

Consider the situation of the Indigenous nations in the Americas when Christopher Columbus first arrived in the hemisphere in 1492. The settlers from Europe systematically stole their land. Didn’t Indigenous

peoples have the right to resist by any means necessary?

Didn’t the African people enslaved in the Western Hemisphere since 1619 have the right to resist violent enslavement? And didn’t the people of South Africa, also victims of white settler apartheid, have the right to resist their violent oppressors?

The pretext college administrations use to order police raids is that the encampments allegedly pose a danger to Jewish students. In reality, the police raids are the real violence, and a danger to all who oppose Zionism and its imperialist apologists, such as the American ruling class.

Why are these student encampments, whose tactics are peaceful, being attacked with such ferocious brutality? These encampments call the very existence of Israel into question, and Israel has become the number one world social pariah. And as much as they expose Israeli crimes, the student encampments have an anti-imperialist focus within the belly of the beast – American imperialism.

In his famous *State and Revolution* the Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin defines the role of the state – that is, the armed bodies of men and women, which maintain the rule of one class over another.

In American capitalist society, the state protects the domination of the billionaire ruling class over the interests of the multinational working class, which also includes students.

Today the students are challenging American support for Israel. Since Israel is a key link in imperialist domination worldwide, the American ruling class order their state apparatus to use violent force against them as soon as the masses raise their heads when their unjust rule is challenged.

There can be no justification for the police to invade campuses like storm troopers to disrupt and terrorise students demanding divestment, the end of genocide and the liberation of the Palestinian people. Just as any resistance by the Palestinian people is a right, so is the resistance by the students to defend themselves from a state that does not represent their interests.

Right now there is a demand for cops off campuses. One day in the not too distant future, as class consciousness continues to grow, this demand will evolve to abolish the police and to abolish capitalism, the system that fuels so much repression and all forms of bigotry. The working class has every right to become the grave-diggers of their oppressors.

Workers World (USA)

LETTERS

Dear Comrades

Today we can witness the manifest failure of the capitalist system in crisis. It is the working class that is forced to carry the burdens of its failures with falling incomes, austerity, inflation and a growing recession. The imperialists, faced with irreconcilable contradictions, have no strategy to halt that decline. Their wars, threats and sanctions only make matters worse. This is in sharp contrast to the economic and social progress in the socialist countries. Each one faces different challenges on their chosen road as they struggle to build their economies and cast aside the chains of western hegemony. Decades of harsh economic sanctions, a collapse of tourism during the COVID-19 epidemic and high energy costs have combined to cause difficulties in Cuba. With a little help from their friends and a commitment to socialism, however, they will overcome. Free from the financial turmoil, greed and corruption that beset capitalist countries, all the socialist nations have ambitious plans for their future.

Socialism, as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) first president Kim Il Sung pointed out, is a new historical system that emerged as a progressive force with the Russian revolution in 1917. The world's first workers' state collapsed due to revisionism that led to corruption and betrayal. Central planning was abandoned along with socialist

principles and ideological education. A dramatic contrast can be seen if we examine the achievements of the DPRK, a proper socialist state that remains true to Marxism. Starting from scratch with hardly any buildings left standing – 408,000 bombs were dropped on Pyongyang alone – the people's democracy has developed into a modern socialist state. It is time for workers in the West to look beyond the lies and constant propaganda of the mass media at this small north-eastern Asian nation that has demonstrated the achievements and durability of its road to socialism.

The baking of bricks and tiles, the sawing of timber, digging deep foundations and the mixing of cement. The designs of the architect, the skill of the decorator and the installation of essential services. All these tasks are carried out by the labour of workers in constructing new homes. An important new public asset is thus created by the workers themselves. So it makes perfect sense that in the DPRK homes are given free-of-charge to the workers who created the wealth. The vulgar idea of paying rent to a fat capitalist does not apply in socialist Korea. And not an overheated housing market in sight. The lifetime burden of a commitment to paying off the mortgage to own an asset that the government may then take to pay extortionate care home fees does not apply in the DPRK. This in my book is real socialism in operation.

No wonder that the servile and alarmed bourgeois media froth at the mouth and become hysterical as they make desperate attempts to paint a bleak picture of the DPRK. They have up till now succeeded in pulling the wool over many eyes. A poorly educated young man without a job or any ambition and

without a home of his own and with very little money said at least he was lucky that he did not live in north Korea. In the DPRK he would have received a good education, have work and self-respect with the opportunity to achieve his entire potential and enjoy a full and rewarding life. Defend the DPRK. Join the Korean Friendship Association and help spread the truth.

John Maryon
Suffolk

Dear Comrades

The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine announced the martyrdom of comrade Talal Abu Zarifa, a member of its political bureau, this week. He was the senior national leader and a member of the National Authority for the Resistance Factions in the Gaza Strip.

Enemy aircraft targeted him in a cowardly assassination, while he was carrying out his struggle missions, stationed in Gaza City, at the head of the Democratic Front organisations and its military wing, the 'Forces of the Martyr Omar Al-Qasim'.

The Israeli Broadcasting Corporation had announced from Tel Aviv in a news story that the occupation forces had acknowledged their responsibility for the assassination of Commander Talal Abu Zarifa, describing him as one of the organisers of the return marches and breaking the siege in the Gaza Strip.

He joined the Democratic Front when he was a student and assumed his leadership duties in the Palestinian Democratic Youth Union (PDYU) in the Gaza Strip, and in the College of Science in Algeria, where he continued his education.

He returned to Gaza, assumed a leadership role in the Democratic Front organisations, and assumed

many struggle responsibilities.

He was elected for several terms as a member of the Political Bureau of the Democratic Front, most recently in the Eighth General National Congress, which concluded its work last April.

The Israeli enemy assassinated him in a cowardly raid that targeted his headquarters in the Al-Sabra neighbourhood, south of Gaza, at dawn on Monday 13th May 2024. He was martyred immediately, and comrade Mahmoud Hamami, one of the leaders of the 'Forces of the Martyr Omar Al-Qasim' (the military wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine), was martyred alongside him.

The martyr was born in the large city of Abasan in the Gaza Strip in 1960. He was stationed with Gaza City from the first moment of the 'Al-Aqsa Flood' war at the head of the organisations of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Fouad Baker
Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)

Dear Comrades

Students of Trinity College Dublin ended their encampment on the college grounds last week, the mass, radical, direct action in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. This encampment had clear demands for the College to take institutional responsibility, divest from Israeli companies, end academic ties with Israeli institutions, and support Palestinian students and scholars. The College accepted all demands.

The action of Trinity students was well organised, well targeted, and showed good understanding of the operations of

continued on page 9...

Diary

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

UNTIL SUN 26 MAY

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

UNTIL MON 30 SEPT

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

SAT 18 MAY

Palestine Solidarity Campaign: 76th Anniversary of Nakba. March from BBC, Portland Street, London W1A 1AA for rally at Parliament Square SW1.

SAT 18 MAY

Free Julian Assange Campaign: Protest 13:30, HMP Belmarsh, Western Way, London SE18 16:00–18:00, Eros statue, Piccadilly Circus, London SW1. Also: Wed 22 May: 15:00–17:00 Australian High Commission, Australia House, Strand, London WC2B 4LA.

WED 22 MAY

North London Peaceniks: Fundraiser for Gaza. 18:30–19:30, Arthouse Crouch End, London N8 9BT. Jewish Women's group showing Farah Nabulsi's film *The Present* for Medical Aid for Palestine.

SAT 25 MAY

Korean Friendship Association; Report back from DPRK 14:00–17:00, and lecture on Juche. Chadswell Centre, Harrison Street, London, WC1H 8LD.

SAT 25 MAY

Care4Calais Scotland: Fundraising concert. 20:00–21:30, RCCG King of Glory, 77 Craightinny Road, Edinburgh EH7 6QJ. Tickets £10 at www.tinyurl.com/care4concert

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 1 JUNE

Socialist History Society: John Merrick on Raphael Samuel and People's History. 14:00 after AGM. In person Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU. Book on SHS website.

SUN 2 JUNE

CND: Meet survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Friends House, 173 Euston

Road, London, NW1 2BJ. Details TBC.

THUR 6 JUNE

Marx Memorial Library: Energy & A Just Transition. Online panel with trade unionists. 19:00. Book on MML website.

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.

SAT 8 JUN

Stop the War Coalition: War, peace and Palestine – trade union issues. Conference. 10:30–16:30, Resource for London, 356 Holloway Road, London N7.

WED 12 JUN

RMT: 17th Garden Party for Cuba. 18:30, Maritime House, Old Town, Clapham, London, SW4 0JW. Tickets £20 from bit.ly/RMTCuba24

SAT 15 JUN

Marx Memorial Library: Book Launch: Paul Preston *Perfidious Albion: Britain & the Spanish Civil*. 15:00 in person at MML and online. Book on MML website.

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.

SAT 29 JUN

TUC Women Chainmakers' Festival. 11:00–16:00, Mary Macarthur Gardens, Lower High Street, Cradley Heath, B64 5AB.

SAT 29 JUN

National Demonstration Against Deportations to Rwanda. London Details TBA.

SAT 6 JUL

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

SAT 13 JULY

Durham Miners Gala: Durham Racecourse, Durham DH1 3BN.

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

...continued from page 8

capitalist university institutions. It built upon continuous organising work of the student union and the BDS Society, as well as strong support and solidarity from other groups in Dublin and across Ireland. The students were supported by all trade unions organising College staff, an important milestone in Student Union organisers hard work in establishing solidarity between students and staff. In the light of potential industrial action coming later this year, acts of solidarity and victories in collective bargaining like this one become even more important.

The success of Trinity College students action reflects mature understanding of institutional complicity with imperialism and colonialism, capitalist interests, and the power of institutions. Furthermore, it reflects the power of collectives, broad front united by joint struggle and clear understanding of it. The victory of the encampment is giving inspiration and practical ideas to organisations and institutions in Ireland and the world on the path towards full boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS). It is a part of the global struggle against imperialism, militarism and war, for a free world and a free Palestine in it.

Communist Party of Ireland
Dublin

The NCP badge



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Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

John Swinney, our new First Minister, is back in the saddle and though he may have always dreamt of a come-back he may not be relishing the circumstances of his current elevation. When Humza Yousaf dumped the Greens he set the stage for his own departure leaving his successor with a minority government that will have to rely on the whims of the opposition, or at least some of them, to get anything through Holyrood in future.

Ditching his party-bruiser image Swinney's swapped his trade-

mark SNP lapel badge for a Scottish Saltire and called for called for greater cross-party cooperation in the Scottish parliament and he's vowed to put the demand for independence back of the agenda under his watch. But he'll need to do more than that to keep the wolves at bay.

All the backstabbing, double-dealing and faction fighting within the SNP has, at least for the moment, subsided. When the dust settled and the new First Minister was installed John Swinney announced a new Cabinet which bore more than a passing resemblance to the old one. He had earlier promised a slimmed down team. He actually raised the number of Cabinet rank ministers from 10 to 11.

In fact the only real change was the appointment of Kate Forbes as Deputy First Minister to "bring the party together". She now covers the economy and Gaelic – a language she's fluent in – but neither will take up too much of her time. Scottish Gaelic is a minority issue said to be spoken by just over one per cent of the population. Responsibility for the economy is effectively a non-job as most responsibilities are reserved to Westminster. Introducing the "Green Freeports" is all she has to do in that field.

Her real task is to be Swinney's number two – much to the dismay of the Greens opposed to the socially conservative views of her fundamentalist Free Church of Scotland. There were a few other changes further down the ministerial food-chain. The role of Minister for Independence has been abolished and the holder given the job of Minister for Parliamentary

Business to keep him quiet. Its work, which largely involved cutting and pasting bits of the SNP's 2014 Referendum manifesto into new policy documents, will be continued by Angus Robertson, the Constitutional Affairs Secretary.

Needless to say nationalists in the rival Alba camp are up in arms about losing that post. Alba Party General Secretary Chris McEleny said: "Humza Yousaf created the role of Minister for independence so that it looked like his Government was taking action on independence," adding "we are currently at a constitutional logjam. John Swinney has said his independence strategy is the same as Humza Yousaf's – a strategy that the SNP's longest serving MP Peter Wishart labelled 'a total mess'."

The Bright Future

Swinney's in-tray is a full one. Some of the problems he has to sort out were those created by himself as Education or Finance Minister. Others were created by his colleagues. Whatever he does about the controversial Gender Recognition Act is going to annoy some sections of the party. A related issue is the Conversion Practices Bill which proposes to make it a criminal offence to attempt to "change or suppress" a person's gender identity. This is controversial where it affects children and parts of this have been rubbished by the Cass Report.

Some nats want to see it abandoned altogether so the SNP can dump unpopular gender issues, but the Greens and a small but noisy SNP

faction won't let them. However Swinney seems to accept there is no way round the Supreme Court's verdict that the UK government acted lawfully in blocking the Gender Recognition Act.

Another of his predecessor's measures that is causing unwanted grief is the plan to impose juryless trials in rape trials. This is strongly opposed by lawyers of all hues, but is supported by Sturgeon loyalists, including those charities which depend on SNP funding for their existence.

Mindful of the needs of the well-to-do Swinney has been muttering that the mild increase in the higher rates of income tax will not be repeated. It is noticeable that the business lobbyists are becoming more vocal in their public demands to be allowed to keep more of their loot than they ever were when Madame Sturgeon and Humza Yousaf were in charge. They can expect a sympathetic ear. In 2008 Swinney even wanted to privatise MacBrayne's ferries.

It remains to be seen whether Swinney will retain the SNP's present distaste for the development of the North Sea oil and

gas industries. A new energy strategy is due. Returning to the former policy of seeing oil as the essential foundation of an independent Scotland and permitting new developments could save SNP votes in the north east, but again at the cost of annoying the Greens and some in the SNP.

On the housing question the Housing (Scotland) Bill, which was to bring in rent controls is being openly opposed by landlords and house builders who say it discourages construction and thus raises rents. Swinney is sympathetic to this view.

Despite abolishing the Minister for Independence post and avoiding talking about it in his accession speech Swinney claimed the next day that Scotland could be independent in five years, a remark that brought derision from friend and foe alike. Once again he cited Brexit as being one "of those major strategic factors that are doing severe economic and social damage to Scotland" as a reason for independence and moaned about not having the power to have another Referendum. Needless to say he offered no way round it...

THE NEW WORKER

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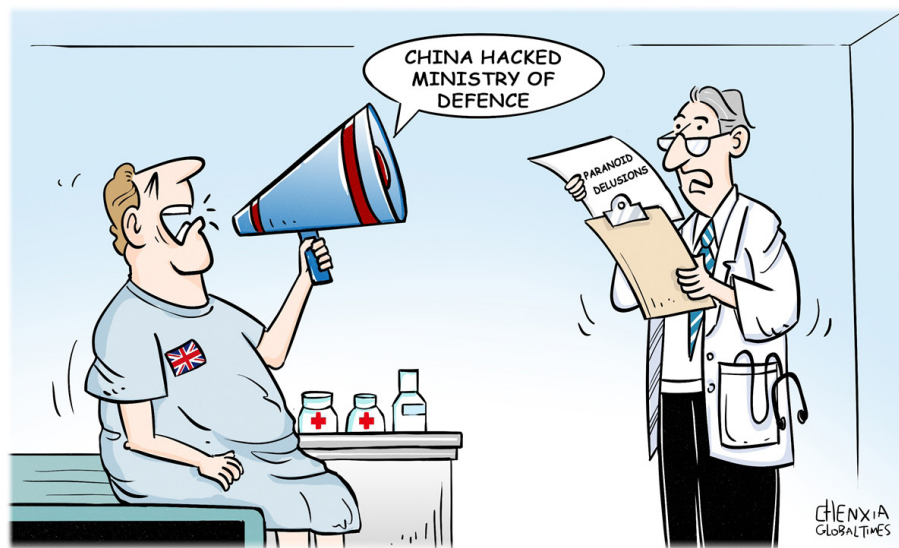
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More anti-Chinese spy hysteria

China's central government and the local authorities in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) have dismissed the arrest of three men on espionage charges as a "malicious fabrication" and "unwarranted accusations".

Three men have been charged with "assisting Hong Kong's intelligence service in Britain" under the UK's 2023 National Security Act. Among the three accused is an office manager at the Hong Kong Economic & Trade Office (ETO) in London. The duty of the ETO is to maintain close liaison with interlocutors in local government, businesses, thinktanks and various other sectors.

A Beijing-based expert, who requested to remain anonymous, said that while there is no such a thing as "Hong Kong's intelligence service in Britain", the UK certainly did have a notorious Special Branch within the Hong Kong Police Force before the city's return to the motherland.



This branch's primary role was to gather intelligence on the Chinese mainland and the neighbouring Portuguese colony of Macau.

The expert noted that since China introduced the National Security Law for Hong Kong in 2020, Britain has spared no effort in slandering the law, despite the fact that the UK has no sovereignty, jurisdiction or right of supervision over Hong Kong. Nonetheless, under its own National Security Act, which the

UK government says is to protect the country from "the threat of hostile activity from states targeting the UK's democracy, economy and values," the UK is now extending its black hand to China. Such actions are blatant double standards.

The UK's latest accusation of spies linked to Hong Kong follows the recent trend in Europe regarding alleged "Chinese spies." A few days ago, the British media reported that about 270,000 military

payroll records have been exposed to Chinese hackers in a breach at a third-party contractor. Last month in Germany, three German citizens were arrested under suspicion of arranging to transfer information about sensitive technology to China.

In the collective Western smearing of China, the UK seems to be the most vocal and active participant. However, its groundless accusations of so-called Chinese es-

pionage are evolving in a clumsy and absurd direction. It seems that any doctor examining the UK's symptoms of persecutory delusion can only conclude with a diagnosis of intense paranoia.

Actually, the one who is obsessed with espionage and infiltration is not China, but the UK itself. Early this year, China's Ministry of State Security disclosed a case in which MI6, the UK's secret intelligence service, used foreign personnel from "a third country" to engage in espionage activities against China. One of the reasons that the UK is so sensitive about China's "espionage" is that it is measuring others' corn by its own bushel.

Li Guanjie, a research fellow with the Shanghai Academy of Global Governance and Area Studies under the Shanghai International Studies University, says that the fundamental reason for the UK's anxiety and unease toward China is because "the East is rising and the West is declining."

"China has developed rapidly, not in a way that the West desires. Meanwhile, China sticks to its political position, ideology and thinking. Therefore, the West feels threatened and resorts to a propaganda campaign against China," says Li.

Li noted that the UK's political manipulation is undermining China-UK relations which are already undergoing tests and difficulties.

It is pitiful seeing the UK seeking the limelight on the world stage by smearing China, especially at a time when post-Brexit Britain is struggling to cope with recession and its fading presence in the diplomatic arena. To resolve these difficulties the UK should look at its own problems rather than finding fault with China. The question is, does the UK's political atmosphere limit its ability to steer it in the right direction?

Global Times

Mastering Mandarin in school

The UK hosted regional finals for a global Chinese language competition here Thursday, with contestants from schools across the country proving their prowess in the language.

Students from 37 secondary schools across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland competed in the regional finals of the 17th "Chinese Bridge" Chinese Proficiency Competition for Foreign Secondary School Students.

Altogether 17 students won prizes in the individual competition category while six teams were awarded prizes in the group category.

Nathan Evans, a contestant from Pinner High School, said that he found Chinese culture interesting and he would never have learned about the culture if he hadn't chosen to learn the language.

"Our class usually focuses on the language itself, but we do often delve into the culture behind it," said the ninth grader who has been learning Chinese since year seven. At his school, Chinese is compulsory for students in grades seven and eight.

Evans was among the 47 individual contestants who showcased their Chinese language proficiency through presentations,

impromptu speeches, and Q&A sessions, covering a wide range of topics from campus life and new technologies to Chinese characters and tourist attractions in China.

"Learning Chinese offers students valuable advantages for their future as the language will give them more opportunities in work and can enhance their communication and

collaboration skills," said Liu Jiayu, a Chinese teacher at Pinner High School.

In the group competition, about 60 students from 15 teams presented self-created videos of Chi-

nese skits. The winning projects include stories featuring the Year of the Dragon and renowned Chinese heroine Mulan.

Jin Wei, one of the judges for the competition, said they were "extremely impressed" by the "brilliant job" done by all contestants and hoped they would persist in their journeys of learning Chinese.

The competition was jointly organised by the UK Chinese Bridge Club and Chinese Proficiency Test UK committee. In March, about 250 students from 60 schools across the UK took part in the preliminary rounds of the competition.

Xinhua



An historic victory for the Vietnamese people

All over the world, the 70th anniversary of the battle of Dien Bien Phu was celebrated on 7th May. Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam witnessed one of the greatest battles of the 20th Century. Beginning on 13th March 1954, the 55-day siege of the French fortified garrison in a valley in the north-western part in the Vietnam near the Laos border became an epic battle between the Communist-led People's Army (Vietminh) and the French colonial forces.

After one and a half months of bitter fighting, the fortified camp fell to the Vietminh soldiers on 7th May. The French troops under General de Castries surrendered. Dien Bien Phu marked the death throes of French colonialism in Vietnam. A small colonised nation took on the might of the French empire and defeated it decisively. The reverberations of this battle

sounded all over the world.

General Vo Nguyen Giap, the legendary commander-in-chief of the People's Army led the troops in the battle. Giap described the historic victory in the following words: "The Dien Bien Phu victory shook the globe, resounding even in remote areas where people still lived in slavery, waking them up and bringing them confidence to rise up".

In August 1945, under the leadership of the Communist Party, the national liberation movement had succeeded in setting up the first revolutionary government in the North. In the post-war period, the French returned and waged war to crush the Vietminh and recapture its colony. The victory in Dien Bien Phu resulted in the Geneva conference recognising the setting up of a government under the leadership of



Ho Chi Minh in North Vietnam.

The French had built up its fortified base in Dien Bien Phu hoping to draw the Vietminh into a set-piece battle and annihilate them. The People's Army took up

the challenge. Under the leadership of Giap, meticulous preparations were made for the siege of the French garrison. The French had augmented their troops to 16,000 by March 1954. Giap deployed 50,000

regular Vietminh troops and guerillas to surround the base. In a feat of human endurance, thousands of people worked to haul the artillery guns up the forests and mountainsides from where the French garrison came under attack. Hundreds of kilometres of trenches and tunnels were built by the people to reinforce the siege.

Giap, writing about the significance of the People's Army, pointed out that "Our army is a people's army, the army of the toiling people, essentially of the workers and peasants led by the party of the working class". Such an army was an expression of the will of the entire Vietnamese people for national liberation and hence proved invincible.

Dien Bien Phu marked the end of the first phase of the protracted struggle of the Vietnamese people led by the Communist Party for national libera-

tion. It was the same army and the people who continued their struggle against American imperialism when it directly intervened to prop up a puppet regime in South Vietnam. It took another 21 years of arduous and death-defying struggles to liberate the whole country and reunify South and North Vietnam.

That historic movement arrived on 30th April 1975. This year the Vietnamese people celebrated both the 70th anniversary of the battle of Dien Bien Phu and the 49th anniversary of the liberation of the south. It was a joyous moment for the Vietnamese people and the Communist Party. We join all the progressive forces around the world to greet the Vietnamese people and the Vietnam Communist Party on this historic occasion.

*People's Democracy
(India)*

More American lies

by Guillermo Alvarado

What a surprise! The United States government, led by President Joe Biden, assures us that genocide is not being committed in the Gaza Strip despite all evidence of an extermination programme planned and executed by Israel.

The statements were made by the National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, who also in-

sisted that the responsibility for peace in the area fall on the Islamist group Hamas, which is like blaming the mouse for the cat wanting to hunt.

However, as I said a few lines ago, there is no surprise because these are statements from representatives of a country that was born, grew and strengthened thanks to openly genocidal behaviour.

When there was no nation with that name, in fact, when the con-

tinent we inhabit today was not called America, numerous people lived in the great plains of the north in harmony with nature and relative peace among themselves, with culture, religion, well-defined language and customs, until the violent irruption of the Europeans who split this history in two.

To take away their main wealth, their land, they were subjected to extermination programmes and even today, several centu-

ries later, they are second-class citizens. Biden and many members of his administration are descendants of those who perpetrated that cruel genocide.

But that was only the beginning because, since the owners of these lands needed labour to work it and extract all its riches, a practice previously unknown here arrived in this part of the world, slavery, on whose blood enormous fortunes were built.

It is still under dis-

cussion whether slave exploitation is equated to genocide, but it is clear that both cause the same damage, the same degradation in large human groups,

By the way, the elimination of slavery was not a magnanimous act at all, but rather the confirmation of an irrefutable economic principle: it was much cheaper to convert them into workers with poverty wages and for them to obtain the minimum for their sustenance, clothing and

housing..

Proof of this was that blacks were only made legally and socially equal to whites in 1964, a century and a year after the abolition of slavery was decreed in the United States.

What is so strange, then, that the Biden government says that there is no genocide in the Gaza Strip? Nothing, absolutely nothing.

Radio Havana Cuba

Chinese leader Xi remembers bomb victims in Belgrade

by Jörg Kronauer

China's President Xi Jinping landed in the Serbian capital of Belgrade last week to mark the 25th anniversary of the American bombing of Beijing's embassy in what was then the capital of Yugoslavia. "We must not forget that NATO brazenly bombed the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia 25 years ago" Xi said, in an article in the Serbian daily *Politika*, stressing that the Chinese people would "never allow historical tragedies to happen again". The Americans have officially claimed that the attack, in which three Chinese died and 20 others were injured, was an "accident".



• Warm welcome for Xi in Belgrade.

While Xi particularly wants to promote economic relations with Serbia – and then on the third and final stop of his current European tour, with Hungary – he had previously

advocated an international peace conference to end the war in Ukraine in his talks with French President Emmanuel Macron and European Union Commission President Ursula von der

Leyen in Paris. This conference must, however, be recognised equally by Kiev and Moscow, Xi emphasised, distancing himself from the planned meeting in Switzerland in June that excludes

Russia. Macron and von der Leyen once again tried to get Xi to publicly distance himself from Vladimir Putin and thus drive a wedge between Beijing and Moscow. But

they were unsuccessful.

As expected, there was a dispute over the booming Chinese exports of electric cars, solar panels and other climate change products, which the European Union accuses China of deliberately overproducing. Von der Leyen said that the EU would "defend our economy" in the fight against Chinese competition and, if necessary, take "tough decisions" such as imposing punitive tariffs.

Macron put it in a more conciliatory tone, saying that the aim was to "develop balanced relations with China". After the meeting in Paris on Tuesday, he invited Xi on a short trip to the Col du Tourmalet mountain pass in the Pyrenees – a gesture intended to reaffirm the desire for co-operation.

Junge Welt

Russians advance into northern Ukraine

The ongoing Russian offensive in the Kharkov region is bringing new results every day. Russian troops crossed the northern Ukrainian border several days ago and they are continuing their successful assault towards Kharkov, the provincial capital and the second largest city in Ukraine. The Russians have taken the strategic village of Lukyantsi and Russian assault units are approaching the town of Liptsy – the control of which will pave the

way for a further advance to the west on a wide front while the retreating Ukrainians are attempting to build a defence line in the town to slow down the pace of the Russian offensive.

At the same time Russian forces are advancing in the semi-encircled town of Volchansk, which is one of the main Ukrainian strongholds on the first line of their defence in the region. The Volchansk oil extraction plant, located on the western bank of the Volchya River, has been turned into a Ukrainian

stronghold in the town.

Now fighting has begun for the control of the local aggregate plant. Ukrainian troops are fighting fiercely to hold their positions in the industrial complex.

Amid the ongoing advance in these two main directions in the Kharkov region, Russian forces are rapidly expanding their zone of control in the countryside. They have taken control of several dozen square kilometres in the area of Neskuchnoe, straightening the front along the Ukrainian border.

Officials in Kiev are trying to stave off panic

on the streets by claiming that the Ukrainian military command is transferring prepared reinforcements to the area of the Russian breakthrough. But according to Ukrainian monitoring sources, the reserve units have simply been drawn from other combat zones thus weakening the Ukrainian defence along the entire front.

Not all units agree with Kiev's decision. According to some reports the notorious 3rd Azov assault brigade refused to fulfil the order of the Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Sirsky. Earlier, this unit had refused to fight

to the death for Avdeyevka.

New Russian victories in Kharkov have provoked dissent within the Ukrainian command. The head of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Defence Ministry of Ukraine publicly blamed the Commander-in-Chief for yet another defeat. Meanwhile, Ukrainian servicemen are still looking for the imaginary billion-dollar heavily fortified line of defence along the border that Zelensky bragged about months ago.

At the same time, the

Ukrainian authorities have started the evacuation of the civilian population from the town of Belopolye and the villages located near the Russian frontier in the Sumy region used by the Ukrainian artillery to shell Russian border villages in the Kursk region.

Kiev's actions confirm that the Ukrainian military command is threatened by the possibility of another Russian offensive in the Sumy region while the main Russian forces prepared for a breakthrough on the northern front have yet to enter the fray.

Southfront