

Gaza: Stop the fighting — End the War!

by our Arab Affairs
correspondent

Western leaders are making frantic calls to stay the hand of the Iranians who have vowed to pay Israel back for the assassination in the Iranian capital of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh last month. The USA and three of their European minions, France, Italy and Germany, issued a joint statement calling for restraint while Keir Starmer urged Iran to “refrain” from attacking Israel during a phone call with Iran’s new president.

The veiled threats in the American-sponsored call to the Islamic Republic to “stand down its ongoing threats of a military attack against Israel” and “discussed the serious consequences for regional security should such an attack take place” while expressing their support for the “defence of Israel against Iranian aggression and against attacks by Iran-backed terrorist groups” haven’t swayed the hand of the Iranians, who say they will avenge the Palestinian’s death at a time and place of their own choosing.

The ball is now in the imperialists’ court. The Iranians say that the only thing that would “lower the temperature” in the Middle East, to use Joe Biden’s words,



• PFLP: for a united front against the occupation!

would be a lasting cease-fire and prisoner exchange in Gaza. That can only be delivered by the Americans themselves.

But in Tel Aviv the Israeli leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, still believes he has the American okay to continue his genocidal war in Gaza. This view is not shared by all – even in his own Cabinet. This week he’s again clashed with his own Defence Minister, retired General Yoav Gallant, over the Gaza war. At a private security briefing at the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) on Monday, Gallant, who has

frequently called for a ceasefire agreement with Hamas, dismissed Netanyahu’s talk of “total victory” as “gibberish” and the “beating of war drums”.

Another retired Israeli general has also joined in the chorus accusing Netanyahu of deliberately misleading the public about the Gaza war for his own personal interests. In an op-ed in a leading Israeli paper, *Maariv*, General Yitzhak Brik said that despite being aware that Israel’s military cannot fully root out Hamas during the war, Netanyahu has continued to insist on

marching towards total victory so that he can stay in power.

“Neither the well-being of the people nor the security of the state concerns Netanyahu, but only his personal survival at any cost,” wrote Brik. “The almost year-long conflict has caused us to lose our standing in the world. The state of Israel has become a pariah state, isolated and regarded with disdain, and even our closest friends in Europe are turning their backs on us.”

That’s not surprising. Last weekend the Israelis once again showed their contempt for the Arabs and the most elementary human rights when they bombed a school in the Gaza Strip killing at least 100 Palestinians.

It was not a mistaken attack, a miscalculation or a bad decision, but a coldly calculated military

operation to inflict more terror, if that is still possible, on tens of thousands of people who are barely surviving the visceral hatred of the government led by Benjamin Netanyahu.

In a communiqué, the Israeli forces boast of killing 16 Hamas fighters but said absolutely nothing about the civilians killed, many of them young children and women.

The Western powers, including the USA, churned out the usual platitudes condemning the Israeli atrocity but that’s as far as it goes. The Americans hypocritically said that the bombing showed the need to put an end to the war, without mentioning at all that they are the main suppliers of the arms that the Israelis use to spread death and destruction throughout the Gaza Strip.

FUND

This week’s post bag brought in £700 for our coffers boosted by a generous £300 contribution from a friend in Southall. The August appeal now stands £2,740. The fighting fund now needs just £760 to hit our target by the end of the month.

Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets last week to say no to racism and fascism. Even more will soon be marching again to demand justice for the Palestinian Arabs and call for the end of the British arms trade to Israel.

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INSIDE

UK RIOTING .. PP2,5

GAZA & ISRAEL ..P3,11

SYRIA .. P11

UKRAINE .. PP2,12

BANGLADESH .. P12

THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

A dangerous escalation

The Ukrainian raid into southern Russia last week was clearly monitored and probably even directed by the NATO military advisors embedded in the Ukrainian army. The main target was the Kursk nuclear power station that the Ukrainians hoped to seize and then swap for the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in southern Ukraine that was liberated in 2022. Their secondary objective was to seize Russian land to swap for recent Russian gains in the Kharkov region of northern Ukraine.

Russian resistance has foiled the Ukrainians on both counts. Although the Ukrainians are still entrenched on Russian soil their advance on Kursk has been beaten back, while any hopes for peace talks and a negotiated settlement to end the war have now been dashed as the Kremlin vows to fight to drive all the Ukrainians out of their lands and carry on fighting until Kiev accepts Russia's terms to end the conflict.

Although no one knows exactly why the lame-duck Biden administration sanctioned this Ukrainian sortie it is clearly linked to the American presidential election. The war lobby, the cross-party clique that represents the most venal and aggressive circles within the US ruling class, are always ready to cuff the Russians while Democrat bagmen may believe that a slap in the face to the Russians will boost Kamala Harris's chances in November.

Whatever the motive it's a dangerous game. This sort of escalation brings NATO one step closer to a direct clash with the Russian army – a clash which could easily turn into a nuclear exchange in the heart of Europe.

The aim of the NATO alliance all along has been to force war on the Russian Federation, and now the whole world can see the terrible price that has been paid for a war which could so easily have been avoided.

In the past the Russian Federation did everything possible to avoid a full-scale war in Ukraine. The Kremlin spent eight years supporting the Minsk process plan, involving simple autonomy for the then Donetsk and Lugansk Republics, while Ukraine, with NATO's support, broke ceasefire after ceasefire and thousands of civilians in those republics died in constant Ukrainian attacks. When the Russians intervened to support the anti-fascist resistance and stop the persecution of the Russian-speaking minorities in the Donbas in 2022 they withdrew all their forces around the Ukrainian capital to negotiate a peace deal with the fascist regime, only to be double-crossed at the last moment by the NATO powers who told the Zelensky regime to keep on fighting.

Sir Keir Starmer likes to pose as the equal of the Americans in the NATO alliance but in reality Britain is no better than the rest of the Western European pack that have been forced to accept the model of subservience imposed on Japan by US imperialism after its defeat in 1945.

Dependent on American protection to defend their own global interests, they destroyed the Yugoslav federation and the Libyan Jamahuriya at Washington's behest. They fan the flames of war in Ukraine and the Middle East and prolong the unhappy partition of many countries including Cyprus, Ireland, Kashmir and Korea. Fearful of the second coming of Donald Trump and uncertain of the loyalty of the Harris team, all they can now do is watch as the drama of the race to the White House plays out.

They shall not pass

by New Worker correspondent

On 4th October 1936 the working people of East London, inspired by communists and other left-wing movements, clashed with Sir Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts in Cable Street, Stepney. They were able to halt and force back the fascists. Pogroms in Europe had forced many Jews to flee to London. The fascist legions which had previously been supported by the *Daily Mail* with headlines such as "Hurrah for the Blackshirts" were opposed by the *Daily Worker* with calls for people to come out onto the streets to block the Mosleyites.

Those events of the past century may be remembered as today's right-wing extremists again play the race card to stir up hatred and fear. In violent protests they abused minorities, damaging their property and provoking confrontations with the police. As was the case in the 1930s, local people have turned out, supported by trade unions, left and centre political parties and organisations such as Say No to Racism, to send a clear message of opposition to fascism. Anti-fascist rallies have been held in many large British cities. People gathered in parts of London, Birmingham, Sheffield, Southampton, Newcastle, Liverpool, Bristol and many other places up and down the country.

Mark Rowley, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service said: "We put thousands of officers on the street and I think that the show of unity from communities, together defeated the challenges we have seen."

Three young girls were killed in an horrific stabbing in Southport. A 17-year-old teenager has been charged with their murder. The fascists saw this as an ideal opportunity to begin their campaign of attacks by spreading lies on social media that a Muslim immigrant was involved. In fact the accused is a British-born Christian. The ultra-right are motivated by race hatred. They are generally poorly educated people who consider other races to be inferior. At various times and places they must always have someone to hate, either people

with a different skin colour or culture, gays, or those they consider to be political opponents such as communists or socialists. Behind them are the men in smart suits who are the real promoters of fascism.

Capitalism is in crisis, which is reflected by increasing authoritarian and reactionary trends. Racism and fascism are actively fostered by the ruling class and its supporters when capitalism and imperialism are in trouble. Their strategy aims to divide the working class, to curtail long-term rights and at all costs to prevent socialism. The common characteristics of fascism outlined by R Palme-Dutt in his work *Fascism and Social Revolution* were as follows:

1. To maintain capitalism in the face of revolution.
2. Increase capitalist dictatorship.
3. The destruction of working class movements.
4. To suppress parliamentary democracy.
5. The extension of state monopolistic organisation of finance, industry and commerce.
6. A closer concentration of each imperialist group into a single economic-political unit.
7. The resolution of conflict by means of war.

Racist ideology insists that that some races, their own, are born superior and others inferior. Racism may take the form of discrimination, segregation, prejudice or genocide. It may be imposed by apartheid but is not confined just to the question of colour, as shown by Zionism and Nazism. The ideology was adopted by the capitalist class to justify colonialism. Indigenous peoples were portrayed as lower order human beings in a physical, cultural and moral sense. It is an

established and deliberate practice of imperialism to promote conflict between different ethnic groups and to then divide and rule for their own selfish interest.

The New Communist Party of Britain has repeatedly warned of the dangers of advancing fascism both at home and overseas. In its ultimate form it represents the direct rule of the most reactionary and ruthless sections of the ruling class. Western so-called Democracies have powerful military industrial complexes that control policy, making a parliamentary road to socialism all but impossible. Involvement of the private sector in state administration is having the effect of marginalising the domestic process. As the capitalist crisis deepens and Imperialism becomes more desperate, fascists have been allowed to play a major role in Ukraine. In Britain sinister forces lurk in the wings as the public start to lose faith in the parliamentary process.

In order to distract attention from an appallingly bad record of governance and economic incompetence, successive power holders in Britain, with the full support of the mass media, use the issue of immigration to transfer blame to others. Irrational hatred and fear have been created. Against a background of never-ending austerity, spreading poverty, failing public services and crumbling infrastructure, the extreme right-wing has attempted to harness the discontent to support their hideous agenda. Social issues such as housing shortages have exacerbated tensions, all of which has led to a witch hunt by people seeking someone to blame other than the government whose fault it is. Unthinkingly a few have been drawn into organised, violent thuggery.



• Starmer turns to the police

Workers' Notes

A Modest Reform

by New Worker correspondent

Union leaders, at least those who have not already gone on holiday, welcomed the Government's announcement that it is scrapping the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 which was intended to prevent "essential workers" in the ambulance service, passenger rail, border security and the fire and rescue service from taking effective strike action. A word of caution is in order, however. The Minimum Service Levels (MSL) measure, passed in July last year, was a dead letter from the start.

Deputy prime minister Angela Rayner described it as a "pointless law" and said she was "aiming at 'creating a new partnership between business, trade unions and working people through our New Deal'". But the word 'partnership' in reality means union collaboration with the bosses.

Before the promised repeal in October, Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds had told employers to avoid imposing MSLs on their workforce. He lamented that "these divisive laws haven't resolved a single strike since they were introduced". It would have been more helpful if a Labour Government had actually supported the striking workers at the time, rather than impose a ban on MPs visiting picket lines.

Among those welcoming the scrapping of the measure was the Chartered Institute for Professional Development (CIPD), the trade body for the 'Human Resources' officers we once called personnel managers and who act as the employers' police. Rachel Suff, CIPD's senior policy adviser, said: "When it was first proposed, we expressed concerns this law would not

Around 800 people joined an emergency protest opposite Downing Street on Monday evening in response to the horrific Israeli triple missile strike on a school in Gaza City that killed at least 80 Palestinian civilians. The attack coincided with morning prayers and started a fire.

About 6,000 people were sheltering in Tabeen school, all of whom have already moved several times to different parts of Gaza on the advice of the Israeli forces to avoid military operations. The director of al-Ahli hospital in

enhance employment relations or protect the public and that it could undermine trust between trade unions and employers."

Nicholas Jones, of the Shakespeare Martineau law firm, said "repealing the Act will no doubt be popular with both employers and unions" and added: "The legislation quickly proved unworkable, and was never used in practice. Repealing this poorly thought through piece of law will help to encourage negotiation, mitigate industrial action and minimise the impact future strikes will have on the public." Even the free-market thinktank the Institute of Economic Affairs said it was "a box-ticking exercise".

Clearly it was a measure that was more useless than the earlier anti-trade union laws imposed during the Thatcher and Major years. It is telling that, predictably, no mention has been made of repealing those more damaging laws that were left untouched during the Blair and Brown era.

It therefore looks as though promises to repeal the 2023 Act is merely a way of echoing Bugs Bunny's customary "That's All Folks" message to trade unions and workers. The promised new Employment Rights Bill is unlikely to make any serious dent in the accumulated Tory measures.

Unions were falling over themselves to welcome Starmer's modest concession and to claim credit for it. The Royal



Gaza City, Dr Fadel Naeem, described the situation at the hospital as catastrophic, with

a severe shortage of medical supplies and resources. Al-Ahli hospital is managed

by the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and it is the only Christian hospital in Gaza.

College of Nursing was one, saying: "The government is absolutely right to heed our calls to repeal an act that was harmful to industrial relations and did nothing to advance the cause of high-quality and safe patient care."

The three rail unions welcomed the move. RMT General Secretary Mick Lynch said: "We welcome this move as an opportunity to reset industrial relations in Britain and to move to a position of negotiating just settlements to disputes rather than having trade unions attacked and demonised." ASLEF welcomed "that this vindictive legislation will be repealed". TSSA's General Secretary Maryam Eslamdoust added that "clamping down on a fundamental freedom of working people was vindictive and actually unworkable". It is unclear whether that applies to GMB members presently in dispute with TSSA.

Fran Heathcote, the general secretary of PCS, the main civil service union, hopefully said that the repeal "signals the beginning of a new dawn in labour relations and a significant improvement in workers' rights". We have no great hopes of that.

Sarah Woolley, General Secretary of the Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union, went one step further by demanding the repeal of all anti-union legislation, saying "Unions need the freedom to organise

and advocate without restrictive laws".

Trade union officials, even left-wing ones, are likely to be satisfied with such a modest cosmetic change as any turning the clock back to pre-1979 times would see a rise in unofficial action that would mean extra work.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing industry accounts for about 10 per cent of the workforce or around 2.7 million workers. This has been in almost constant decline since 1979 when the figure was 4.37 million, although the present number marks a slight increase since last year.

The main union in the field is Unite, which has gobbled up many smaller unions such as the National Society of Amalgamated Brass Workers & Metal Mechanics. Despite the B for Boilermakers in GMB having long gone that union still has a presence in manufacturing. Community, the product of a merger between the Iron & Steel Trades Confederation and the National Union of Knitwear, Footwear & Apparel Trades, is still important in the steel sector. The only other purely manufacturing union is the Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union, which is not really in competition with the other three.

The most urgent single matter relating to manufactur-

ing is of course the fate of the South Wales steel plant. That seems to have gone quiet recently, but there are a number of other 'traditional' industrial disputes on the go.

At Ford's, 1,200 office staff at five sites, Dunton, Stratford, Dagenham, Daventry and Halewood, have voted to take action short of striking from next Thursday in a dispute over pay.

In parallel, about 100 Ford managers have been also taking action short of a strike over pay having balloted in early June. The main issue is that Ford's pay offer is only a performance-related merit award, which workers are not guaranteed to receive. Ford refuse to enter into serious negotiations, not even via the conciliation and arbitration service ACAS.

Unite's general secretary Sharon Graham complained that: "Not content with making billions in profits, Ford has decided to try and attack our members' pay out of sheer corporate greed. Performance related payments give no guarantee of an actual pay rise and leave these workers in danger of facing cuts to their wages. They are absolutely right to take industrial action and they have the full support of Unite in doing so."

Ford's 2023 global profits amounted to \$4.3 billion on revenues of \$176 billion, which suggests the biscuit tin

continued on page 4...

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has plenty of spare dosh in it. Alison Spencer-Scragg, Unite's national officer for the industry, said: "Ford signed a collective agreement for these workers last year, but since then has caused widespread anger by completely disregarding it. It is completely unacceptable that Ford is trying to impose a corporate performance model that undervalues this key management group's contribution to the company's success."

On the wages front

Over 50 padded envelope workers at the Jiffy packaging plant in Winsford, Cheshire, rejected a worthless pay offer and walked out last week. The rejected pay offer was only 1.5 per cent, which is, of course, a real-terms pay cut. Unite is seeking an eight per cent pay increase back-dated to the start of April 2024. Unite's members also want an increase in sick pay from eight to 12 weeks alongside the reinstatement of breaks during the working day and changes to bank holiday working practices.

Sharon Graham said that for a company making £6 million profit last year "this is a pathetic pay offer from a packaging company that is making huge profits on the backs of its workforce yet refusing to pay

them a decent wage". The union's regional officer Gary Fairclough added that: "Our members are rightly furious at this insult of a pay offer coupled with terrible sick pay, the removal of break times and a host of other conditions that paints Jiffy as an employer that simply doesn't value its staff or the community in which it's based. It will see the anger of our members first hand on the picket line outside its factory this summer."

In Leicester, 200 workers employed making specialist nuts, bolts, pins, screws and collars for the aerospace and defence industries have announced they are taking strike action after their employer, SPS Technologies in Leicester, offered them a seven per cent two-year rise with a one-off £400 payment.

The all-out indefinite strike starts this week and will affect supplies for Airbus, Rolls-Royce, Avio Aero, Leonardo, GKN and BAE.

While seven per cent sounds not too bad, many of the workers are on the minimum wage in a company ultimately owned by Warren Buffet's Berkshire Hathaway. Despite famously bringing his own lunch to work, Buffet is not short of the odd billion or so, having cash reserves of \$277 billion.

Unite regional officer Lee Purslow noted that: "SPS"

clients will not be happy that their supply chains are facing disruption because the company is refusing to pay its workers properly. Industrial action could still be avoided, but SPS must put forward an offer that is acceptable to our members."

In Hull, Unite secured an 8.4 per cent rise for 300 workers at Siemens Gamesa Renewable Energy (SGRE). The union accused SGRE of using its bonus scheme to suppress wages. In addition, SGRE is in the Humber Freeport Zone, which means it benefits from a range of economic incentives because normal tax and customs rules do not apply.

The workers, who make 108-metre-long wind turbine blades, voted by 93 per cent for a two-year pay deal of 4.5 per cent for 2024 and 3.9 per cent for 2025. This came after a ballot for strike action in July after a 4.5 one-year offer was rejected.

SGRE has paid out £226 million in dividends from £394 million in profits since 2018, so there is plenty left over for those who generate such profits.

Jam Tomorrow?

by New Worker correspondent

Across the Irish Sea in the north of Ireland, at Portadown to be precise, workers at

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the Glen Dimplex plant are starting an indefinite work-to-rule this Friday. Unite members will refuse to work overtime or mentor or train new staff, and they will only work to contractual terms and conditions.

This dispute is not about wages. It's about saving jobs from being outsourced to Lithuania, which will lead to redundancies and the likely closure of the heating equipment plant in County Armagh.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "The workers at Glen Dimplex have been left with no alternative but to take industrial action. The workforce has generated huge profits for Glen Dim-

plex but now management want to cast them aside and offshore production to make even greater profits."

Regional co-ordinating officer George Brash added that: "The work to rule will thwart Management's plans to boost production in the short-term and force workers to train their own replacements. Glen Dimplex must reconsider their plans and instead recognise the invaluable contribution made by this workforce."

This move is part of the Glen Dimplex group's all-Ireland reorganisation plan that will see 300 redundancies by 2026. Some 800 people are presently employed by Glen Dimplex, 400 at Dunleer, Co Louth, with others at its HQ near Dublin Airport and the rest at Newry and Portadown. Management say this is simply consolidating into three sites that will increase the workforce by 20 per cent by 2029 – however, the plan involves transferring work to China as well, so further job losses could be in the pipeline.

The Irish general union SIPTU was not entirely reassured by promises of jam tomorrow. Alan Clark said that: "Glen Dimplex is an Irish company and its operations play an important role in the local communities in which they are based. Any loss of employment will have a detrimental impact not only on the workers directly affected and their families but also the local economy."

20 years ago this week in the New Worker

13th August

IRAQI PARTISANS are fighting the US-led occupation army across the length and breadth of the country following the imperialist offensive against the Shia Mahdi Army that began last week with an attempt to retake the Shia holy city of Najaf.

American troops backed by tanks, helicopter gunships and warplanes are pounding resistance centres in Najaf, Fallujah and the other towns liberated in June in Baghdad, US tanks are trying to enter Sadr City, a

barricaded slum quarter under the control of the resistance.

Guerrillas have stepped up their daily rocket and mortar attacks on the US HQ in the 'Green Zone' compound, and in the British-occupied south the Shia resistance has opened up a new front following the arrest of four of their local leaders.

Stooge premier Alawi re-introduced the death penalty last week while offering a token amnesty for minor offences and closed the Arab al Jazeera TV station's office in Baghdad for a month, claiming that its on the spot reports of the Iraqi revolt were inciting violence.

But the puppet government is in clear disarray, with the Shia element fearful that the backlash from their own community will sweep them all aside while others know their survival depends entirely on US guns.

'Vice president' Ibrahim al Jafari broke ranks to denounce the American assault on Najaf as an "uncivilised" way to rebuild Iraq, stating that he could find no

justification for the deaths of Iraqi civilians. And while all this is going on, the puppet council has issued warrants against two leaders of the Chalabi clan – once the most favoured Iraqi traitors in Washington.

Ahmad Chalabi has been charged with counterfeiting and the offices of his 'Iraqi National Congress' have been closed. His nephew Salem, who headed the kangaroo court set up by the Americans to condemn Saddam Hussein, faces a murder rap. Salem Chalabi was in London when he heard the news and he is wisely refusing to return home.

The Mahdi Army militia is fighting with considerable shrewdness and flexibility, drawing the Americans into various areas and then exhausting them in battle. When the US troops believe they have to a degree gained the upper hand in one location the patriots open up another front elsewhere.

When night falls the Americans come out to fight but in daylight nowhere is safe for them.

What is behind the wave of far-right violence?

by Theo Russell

Serious rioting has taken place in English cities across the country, with scenes more familiar to Belfast: bricks and bottles thrown at police and police vehicles, and a police station wrecked. And the groups involved do in fact have connections and common views with Loyalist organisations in Northern Ireland – the only other part of the UK where major violence broke out.

These disturbances are not the usual localised friction between police and Muslim or poor white communities, they are being co-ordinated by a resurgent right wing populist group led by the maverick Tommy Robinson (real name Stephen Yaxley-Lennon) and still known as the English Defence League (EDL) despite various name changes.

The rioters, apart from attacking the police, targeted mosques and hostels for asylum seekers.

A neo-Nazi group that sprang up during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Patriotic Alternative, are also playing a major role in inciting the violence.

The new Labour prime minister Keir Starmer quickly declared that these riots were crimes and “not protest”.

These events are unprecedented in the history of far-right violence in Britain since 1945. Until recently the EDL seemed to be gradually fading away after a wave of protests against immigration and Muslim influence in the 2005-15, with their eccentric leader Tommy Robinson facing a growing string of various criminal charges.

Robinson now faces arrest after fleeing the country last Monday, the day before he was due to appear at the High Court in London.



Only two days earlier he had led possibly the largest far-right rally in England since Sir Oswald Mosley's Blackshirt movement in the 1930s. Some 25–30,000 of his supporters packed Trafalgar Square in the heart of London waving English and British flags.

The current wave of violence followed the horrific attack on a community centre in Liverpool in which a mentally ill teenager killed three children last Monday. After claims that the attacker was a Muslim terrorist who had arrived on a migrant boat went viral on X and Telegram, the violence began the next day in Southport, near Liverpool, before spreading throughout England.

The EDL supporters and agitators have taken advantage of a totally uncontrolled online environment to stoke lies, rumours, provocations and bigotry.

Ironically, the website that released the fake “Islamic

terrorist” report which triggered the wave of violence, Channel3 Now, is a small American news outlet whose main coverage is of murders and deaths across the USA with contributors in America, Britain, India and Pakistan. It quickly removed the story and issued an apology.

But Elon Musk's X platform (formerly Twitter) stands out as a major instigator of the violence. Since he bought Twitter and created the sinister sounding X, Musk has restored the accounts of Trump and other right-wing populists under the ‘libertarian’ banner much loved in the USA – complete freedom of expression regardless of content.

In the midst of the violence Musk posted a shocking statement that “civil war is inevitable” in Britain. He then recycled accusations by Nigel Farage that the new Labour prime minister Keir Starmer was operating “two-tier policing” – being soft on ethnic minority criminals and “ter-

rorist” (read “Palestinian”) supporters, while cracking down hard on right-wing anti-migrants.

Under Musk's control ‘X’ has become a factory for churning out lies and fake rumours. The 100 top X posts promoting fake conspiracy theories about the Trump assassination attempt reached 215 million people, and only five per cent of these posts underwent a token X “community fact-check”.

It is important to understand that American internet giants almost totally dominate Britain's web space and are massively reshaping our politics and economy.

Other far-right online influencers include the “Europe Invasion” X hashtag #enough-is-enough, and a wave of YouTube videos warning of an Islamist takeover of Britain.

Many other organisations have created the political space for the growth of right-wing extremism. The GB News TV and radio channel,

and online TV channels Talk (previously Talk TV), have stoked the ‘soft’ far-right views that flourished in the Conservative government under Rishi Sunak.

The right-wing populist Unity News Network (UNN) website led by David Clews is linked with the openly fascist Patriotic Alternative, led by anti-Semitic conspiracy theorist and former BNP director of publicity Mark Collett.

Clearly considerable sums of money have gone into these entities, we know some of it from right-wing business millionaires.

There are now widespread calls for online social media platforms to be properly policed considering the role they have played in this crisis. Ofcom, the British regulator for the broadcasting and telecommunications industry, sent an open letter to UK online service providers on 4th August demanding that they “protect their users from videos likely to incite violence or hatred”, warning that after a new Online Safety Act is passed later this year, these services will have three months to stop such videos appearing or act quickly to remove them.

Such calls have been made for many years. but for the last 14 years the Conservative government's business policy has been effectively dictated by lobbyists and wealthy donors representing major business interests, resulting in an online free-for-all.

Limitations of the Far-Right

It is important, however, to realise that despite their ability to create chaos and violence, the far-right organisations are extremely small in size and represent a tiny proportion of the population.

This became clear on 6th

continued on page 6...

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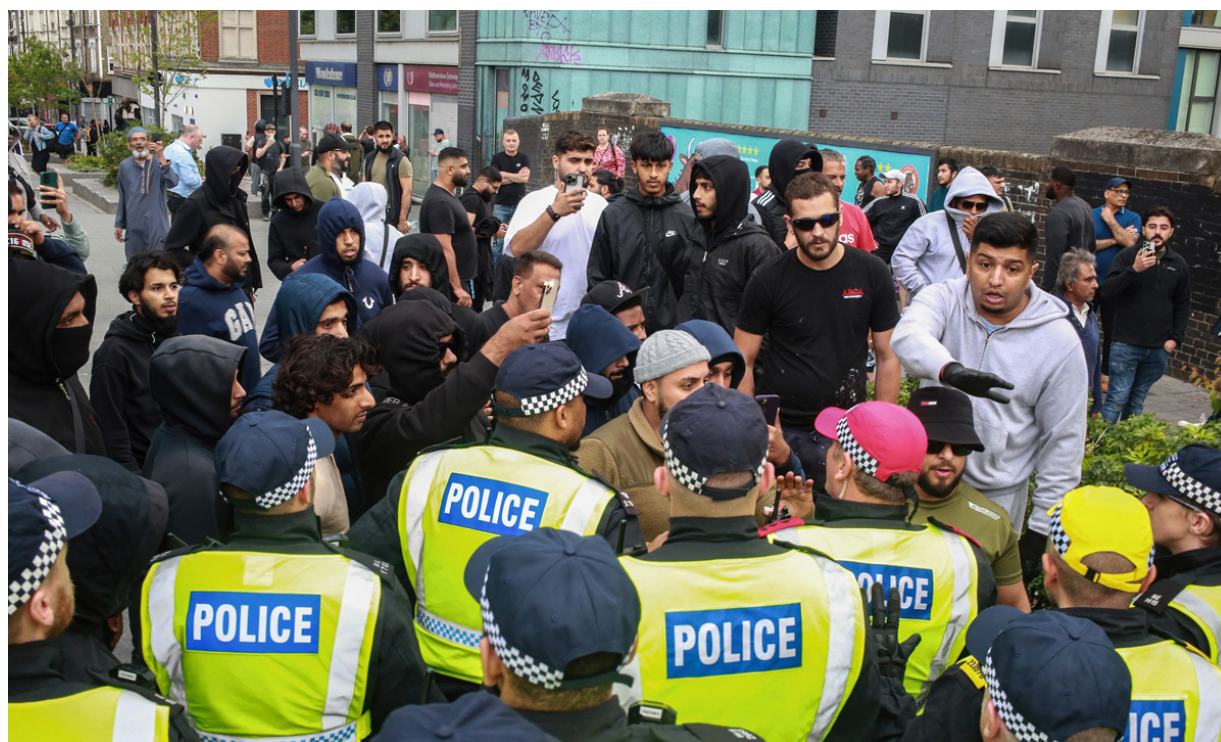
and 7th August when counter protestors came onto the streets across England in huge numbers, dwarfing the EDL protests. Videos show that there were also considerable numbers of younger people clearly ready to use physical force against the rightists. In many places the racists were only saved from a beating by the police keeping the different groups separate to avoid violence getting out of control.

But the causes of the deep class divisions in Britain are far more complex. While the EDL clearly involves actual fascist agitators, it has successfully mobilised a mainly poor white section of the working class.

Many of these supporters insist they are not racist and claim there are a considerable number of ethnic minority EDL supporters. Their main targets are the alleged growing Muslim influence in Britain and illegal immigrants. These are communities that over the last 40–50 years have seen local industries shut down or relocated overseas, and the disappearance of secure, long-term, well-paid jobs which have been replaced by far fewer, very low-paid, short-term and ‘zero-hour’ contracts. In parallel the total number of union members declined, reducing the proportion of working people with at least some class consciousness and political education.

These are areas where local councils cannot cope with local demand for services, particularly housing, with large numbers facing waiting years or even decades for affordable housing, and hundreds of thousands of families in extremely poor quality temporary housing across the country.

These areas also have



• Police hold back anti-fascist protesters.

very high crime levels and are riddled with extremely violent gangs linked to the drug trade.

Professionals such as doctors and dentists are in no hurry to move to such areas, so what practices there are can't cope with the demand. They are also shunned by national retail chains, meaning that local people are dependent on small, expensive shops offering poor quality, unhealthy food, and cheap, unhealthy fried chicken and pizza joints.

Poverty in Britain has reached such shocking levels that it has been the subject of several UN reports. Thirty per cent of UK children are now classed as living in poverty, there are almost two million people suffering undernourishment, and food banks (to which only people on benefits are sent) are quite possibly our fastest growing ‘industry’.

Wages in Britain are so low that over a third (35 per cent) of people who have jobs are also claiming social benefits. But even with top-ups it is common for families to run out of money before payday, with parents going without food for days in order to feed

their children.

Added to all this is the surge in energy costs – a basic necessity for all – caused by the sanctions on Russian oil and gas.

In large parts of Britain schools have to provide breakfast to the children because so many of them get no breakfast at home.

To save on accommodation costs, asylum seekers have been housed in hotels near long-neglected poor communities. One commentator pointed out that many in these areas “can't even dream of staying in a hotel”.

A particularly sore point is that local councils have a duty to house asylum seekers, not only putting a huge strain on their finances, but angering many who can't obtain affordable social housing themselves.

Under the Conservatives hardly any new house building took place, and the perfect conditions were created for landlord and property developer exploiters to flourish.

This explains precisely why the focus of the recent violence was on migrant hotels and hostels in former indus-

trial towns and cities.

The poor working class communities have seen a staggering increase in wealth in the UK for the middle and upper classes in the last 14 years, a Tory party rife with nepotism and corruption, and see the mainstream political and media classes – ‘Westminster’ – as inhabiting a different planet from their own.

Fundamental economic problems

We also need to take into account the fundamental weaknesses of Britain's economy, which is based on a generally low-skilled workforce, a massive lack of infrastructure investment and training, and an overwhelming focus on the service and consumer sector that doesn't actually create anything. This is an economy incapable of anything more than slow or zero growth.

From around 2000 onwards there has been inward migration on an unprecedented scale, which can't be ignored. When the European Union introduced freedom of movement, the

UK (under a Labour government) was the only EU member to approve immediate movement from any EU member state.

At that time the EU had just expanded into Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the Baltics, so the UK became a magnet for workers in countries where wages were 20 or 30 times lower, which were themselves suffering the effects of the collapse of socialism, and there was little social provision or job protection.

A separate wave of migration has been triggered by the devastation of economies in the global south after the collapse of the Soviet Union and some other people's democracies through unequal trade, debt bondage, regime changes and ‘colour revolutions’, wars, sanctions and climate change.

This led to the emergence of a large network of purely criminal people-smuggling gangs, facilitating the mass movement of purely economic migrants from parts of Africa as well as genuine refugees from countries such as Syria and Iraq.

The numbers arriving

on illegal small boat crossings is a very small proportion, but they lie behind the EDL chants of “Stop the Boats”. In the last recorded year 12,800 migrants arrived illegally compared with 685,000 legally.

This legal migration is due to post-Brexit labour shortages, mainly in the NHS and hospital-ity sector.

This very large influx of people is not a problem in itself, but the extreme neo-liberal and austerity policies of the Conservative government meant that instead of providing extra services for them, there were severe cuts to spending on schools, hospitals, local councils, housing, policing and transport.

The British state has also encouraged and in some cases made special provision for asylum seekers from countries (Hong Kong, Afghanistan, Ukraine) where British imperialism was deeply involved in regime change and wars.

It has poured huge resources into reactionary proxies such as Wahabi Muslim extremists in Afghanistan, Syria and Libya, and the Banderite Nazi gangs in Ukraine. These groups in turn carried out a series of horrific terrorist attacks in Britain itself, which were a godsend to the far-right.

In the 2010s major scandals erupted over claims that Muslim gangs organised the sexual exploitation of teenage girls in Rotherham and Rochdale in the north of England. These claims lie behind the EDL chants of “Save Our Children” and “paedo Muslims off our street”.

These claims certainly had some credibility, however research has shown that such exploitation is widespread across England and that,

according to a Home Office report, the offenders “are most commonly White (people)”.

Blame the Russians!

One of the most despicable episodes in this crisis has been the attempt by reactionary elements to blame the riots on hordes of Russian bots and trolls.

This was started by a former security minister, Stephen McPartland, with support from MI6, former BBC journalist asset Paul Mason, and the increasingly rabidly right-wing *Daily Telegraph*, who accused Vladimir Putin of mounting a “disinformation operation” to foment violence in Britain, describing it as “part of the Russian playbook”.

Under the recently defeated Conservative government wild accusations of hacking and political interference by Russia and China reached ever more hysterical levels.

The real reason for these claims is the desperate attempts by the most reactionary, war-mongering elements of the ruling class to uphold Britain’s rapidly declining ‘global role’, who even dream of regaining parts of their old empire, by collaborating with the Americans in wars, sanctions and attempted regime changes around the world.

Let us remember that these imperialist interventions have resulted in the deaths of several million people.

A former head of MI6 claimed in an interview with the *Telegraph* that the Channel3 Now website, which picked up and spread the lies that the Liverpool attacker was a Muslim terrorist and illegal immigrant, was a Russian disinformation outlet.

In fact Channel3

Now’s only Russian connection is that it bought a Russian-language YouTube car rallies channel years ago as a platform. Unfortunately the Channel3 Now story was reposted by RT News and some pro-Russian Telegram channels, but none of this amounts to a genuine disinformation operation, and the Channel3 Now claims turned out to be a desperate ploy that was full of holes.

In fact far from having any Russian connections, the original ‘Muslim terrorist’ lie was a post on X by a woman in the North of England – who had also been temporarily removed by Twitter in 2021 for spreading misinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccines. She has since admitted to creating the post and apologised for the horrific consequences.

The *Daily Telegraph* also claimed recently that Russia and China were working to boost the following of the popular rapper Lowkey, an opponent of Britain’s wars, to manipulate public opinion in Britain in favour of the Palestinians through fake accounts.

But the *Telegraph* forgot to mention that its source for these claims was an agency led by Israeli military veterans, with 40 of its employees being reserves in the Israeli military who were called up to fight in Gaza.

So claims that Russia tried to encourage the riots are actually part of a ‘British playbook’ to justify spending £16.6 billion in military and economic support for Ukraine (official government figures from July 2024), backing Israel’s genocide against the people of Gaza, and its continued participation in the killing of untold numbers of Yemenis – a war which the Western media has almost totally ignored.

The Zionist Hand

One final element in the anti-migrant violence is the role of Israel. Professor David Miller, who was sacked in October 2021 by Bristol University for his comments about Israel (later ruled wrongfully dismissed), said “the recent Islamophobic riots in the UK should be seen as the latest phase of Israel’s war on British Muslims”.

He says: “Tommy Robinson... has been working for Israel since 2009 as part of the so-called ‘counter-jihad’ Islamophobia established by Israel” and is “paid as part of Israel’s Online Influencers Programme in response to Operation Al-Aqsa Storm.”

Miller says that Israel’s “assets and operatives in the British political and media class such as Suella Braverman and Michael Gove” failed to close down pro-Palestinian protests. So “now the State of Israel is weaponising its cannon fodder on the white nationalist far-right, who have greater numbers than either Zionist street thugs or Iranian secularist extremists”.

By 7th August the EDL violence effectively ended with a far bigger mass movement of anti-racists taking to the streets, but also with an extraordinary display of national unity against the right-wing violence. Police chiefs, national newspapers and almost all politicians praised the mobilisation of communities, and it was this, rather than fast-track courts and heavy sentences for the rioters, which led the EDL supporters to give up their

anti-migrant campaign.

The reality is that without the presence of police the EDL rioters would have been met with overwhelming physical force against them.

There are, however, elements attempting to justify the protests, led by Nigel Farage and other Reform party leaders along with some right-wing Conservatives MPs and former ministers alleging “two-tier policing”.

These are exactly the same elements who last autumn accused the police of being hard on right-wing protesters and soft on the allegedly pro-terrorist “hate mobs” Palestine protests. Faced with bullying from Conservative ministers, London’s police chief, Mark Rowley, refused to accept that these protests were violent and staunchly defended their democratic right to peaceful protest. The pro-Israel Zionist counter protests at both national and local Palestine protests failed and in June were effectively abandoned.

At the same time the disgusting campaign alleging a wave of anti-Semitic incidents, including violence, with claims

that large parts of British cities were “no-go areas for Jews”, which was widely amplified across the mass media, faded away. If these claims were true, where is the epidemic of anti-Semitism now?

The truth is that apart from a handful of incidents this “wave” was actually an Israeli-inspired disinformation operation.

The British ruling class has failed to close down the mass pro-Palestinian protest movement (supported by 70 per cent of the population). This, along with the defeat of the anti-migrant protests has revealed the mass strength of progressive, anti-racist forces.

During the latest violence the police response has been almost entirely directed against the far-right. But we also have to recognise that the deepening crisis of capitalism in Britain has created the conditions for mass discontent and alienation. This involves much larger numbers of working people than the small racist groups who took to the streets last week.

These deep-seated problems have created the conditions for far-right groups to flourish, not only in Britain but in Western Europe and the USA, and the far right has temporarily taken advantage of them to stage an attempted uprising.

The weakness of Britain’s economy and the failure to provide decent incomes and basic, affordable services necessary for a civilised life have not gone away, and with a ruling class which has set the financial conditions so that money can’t be found to fix those problems, there is no sign of any real solutions to the problems facing working people in Britain anytime soon.



• Racist mob tries to storm asylum-seekers hotel in Rotherham.

LETTERS

Dear Comrades

John Maryon (New Worker 9th August) [NW:2264, 9 Aug 2024] is absolutely correct to draw attention to the massive achievements of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) or People's Korea.

The DPRK's achievements have been truly phenomenal but are unknown to most workers in the imperialist countries because of the intense anti-DPRK propaganda in the mainstream media that is almost 24/7. Worse, some so-called 'leftists' and 'socialists' often all too readily swallow the propaganda of the mainstream media and repeat it ad-nauseam or downplay or ignore the DPRK's achievements or simply maintain a complete silence on the DPRK.

The successful construction of Juche-based socialism in People's Korea contrasts with the recent riots in the UK that have seen libraries attacked and set on fire, something inconceivable in People's Korea. The DPRK is a society based on single-hearted unity around the Juche idea and the leader and the Party. There is no poverty or alienation in the DPRK. When you visit the DPRK you will see no graffiti, vandalism or begging.

Recently, the north-western border area of the DPRK was affected by flooding but not a single person died. The DPRK government and the Workers Party of Korea under

the leadership of Kim Jong Un made sure assistance was immediately sent to the flood victims and it was announced that they would be accommodated in Pyongyang, the capital of the DPRK. Moreover, although the DPRK was offered aid by other countries Kim Jong Un declared that the DPRK would solve the issues by self-reliance. Other countries, particularly the neo-colonies of imperialism, would be begging for aid.

Let's Defend People's Korea with No Ifs or Buts!
Dermot Hudson
London

Dear Comrades

Labour says that there is no money for things like scrapping the two child benefit cap. And winter fuel payments for pensioners have been on the Chancellor's hit list.

Yet there will be no austerity when it comes to military spending. Starmer says his Government will increase defence expenditure to 2.5 per cent of GDP. This will cost an extra £22 billion per year. To this end he has commissioned a "strategic defence review". This will be led by (Lord) George Robertson.

A Labour right-winger, Robertson entered the House of Commons in 1978. He was Secretary of State for Defence from 1997 to 1999. From 1999 to 2003 he was General Secretary of NATO. He enthusiastically backed the Iraq War saying that Britain had a "moral obligation" to support the American invasion.

He now sits on the board of multinationals such as the Weir Group and Cable & Wireless. And he is a key member of various pro-Washington foundations/thinktanks. Clearly Robertson will back military expansion to the hilt!
Alan Stewart
Wakefield

Dear Comrades

The 15th August is the Independence Day of Bahrain. On this day in 1971 the British withdrew their forces from all areas East of Suez after 150 years of colonialism. Bahrainis often mark the event with aspirations and hope of a better future.

Before the withdrawal they had hoped the country would witness a democratic transformation and an end to decades of the Khalifa dynasty's dictatorship that had been supported by the British. Those aspirations were short-lived. The country plunged into a dark era marked by a lack of political participation, the absence of the rule of law, overcrowded prisons and extreme forms of torture.

Today, Bahrainis are marking the day with new hopes as their struggle continues unabated.

John Hughes
Bahrain Freedom Movement
London

Dear Friends

Last week, the University of St. Andrews disgracefully dismissed its elected Rector, Stella Maris, from the university's governing body and from her position as a trustee after she circulated an email to students calling for an immediate ceasefire and for an end to Israel's genocide and apartheid.

Rector Stella Maris was elected by students to represent their voice independently. Her dismissal is based on an email she circulated to students in November 2023 calling for an immediate ceasefire, which mirrored the Scottish Parliament's position at the time. She has been demonised and suspended for correctly describing Israel's attacks on the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip as genocidal, and for condemning Israel's imposition of a system of

apartheid, illegal military occupation, siege, and collective punishment.

This egregious decision is the latest example of the misuse of university disciplinary processes to unjustly target Palestinians and pro-Palestinian voices at higher education institutions in Britain. It has contributed to a chilling effect on campuses, leading staff and students to self-censor.

By caving in to pressure from pro-Israel groups, the University of St Andrews is helping to shield Israel from accountability. Israel's slaughter of over 40,000 Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip has been accepted as a plausible case of genocide by the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The ICJ has also ruled that Israel's occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip is unlawful, and that Israel's actions violate the international prohibition on racial segregation and apartheid.

This decision not only undermines academic freedom, but it also isolates the university from mainstream legal and human rights consensus. We must push back on attempts to silence solidarity with Palestine. Help us demand the University of St Andrews reverse their discriminatory decision by signing our petition [on our website] and sharing as widely as possible.

Celie
Campaigns Officer
Palestine Solidarity Campaign
London

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

Diary

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

UNTIL SUN 15 SEPT

London School of Economics: A Say in the End of the World: Solidarity and Nuclear Defence in the Cold War. Exhibition, LSE Library, 10 Portugal Street, London, WC2 2HD.

SAT 17 AUG

Stand Up to Racism: Stop the Far Right. Campaign Launch. Earth Theatre, 11-17 Stoke Newington Road, London N16 8BH.

SUN 18 AUG

Potteries Chartist Festival, 11:00-16:00, TUC Midlands, Market Place, Burslem, Stoke on Trent ST6 4AT.

SUN 1 SEPT

Burston Strike School Rally, 10:30-16:00 Church Green, Burston, near Diss, Norfolk IP22.

TUE 3 SEPT-TUE 22 OCT

Marx Memorial Library: Trade Unions, Class and Power. Online eight-week course. Book on MML website.

FRI 6 SEPT-10 OCT

10 TO 4 Productions: *Cable Street: A New Musical*. Southwark Playhouse Elephant, 1 Dante Place, London SE11 4RX.

SAT 7 SEPT

Joseph Arch Day: Barford Warwickshire. Details TBA.

SAT 7 SEPT

Wigan Diggers Festival. 11:30-21:30. Open-air free festival, The Wiend, Wigan WN1.

MON 9 SEPT

Earth Theatre, Rev Munther Isaac of Bethlehem in Conversation about Palestine. 18:00, 11-17 Stoke Newington Rd, London N16 8BH.

THUR 12 SEPT

Marx Memorial Library: That Devil Wilkes. 18:30, In person, MML, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London, EC1R 0DU.

SUN 15 SEPT

Scottish Morning Star Conference, Scottish TUC, 8 Landressy Street, Bridgeton, Glasgow G40 1BP.

SUN 15 SEPT

TUC Midlands: Women chainmakers' festival celebrating the 1910 strike. 11:00-17:30, Mary McArthur Gardens, Cradley Heath B64 5BA.

MON 16 SEPT

Marx Memorial Library:

Online taster session on Marx and Marxism. 19:00-20:00. Details TBA.

WED 18 SEPT

Birkbeck College: Anti-racism and anti-antisemitism seminar. 10:00-18:00, Birkbeck Clow Management Centre, 27 Torrington Square, London WC1E 7JL. Book on Birkbeck website.

WED 18 SEPT

Marx Memorial Library: Michael Roberts on The Long Depression and the Tepid Twenties. 19:00, Online and in person. Book on MML website.

SUN 22 SEPT

Calton Weavers Memorial Committee: Commemoration of 1787 strike, 13:00, Calton Burial Ground, Abercromby Street, Bridgeton, Glasgow G40 2DD.

MON 23 SEPT

Cuba Solidarity Campaign: End the Blockade on Health. 18:00, The Casa, 29 Hope St, Liverpool, L1 9BP.

MON 23 SEPT

Labour Friends of Progressive Latin America: Viva la Solidaridad! Stand with Latin America's Left. 18:30-20:00, Racquet Club Hotel & Ziba Restaurant, 5 Chapel Street, Liverpool L3 9AG. Register on Eventbrite.

TUES 24 SEPT

Socialist History Society: Ariel Hessayon on The World of the Ranters Revisited. Online lecture. 19:00, Register on SHS website.

WED 25 SEPT

Marx Memorial Library: Exhibition launch: People & Protest: Radical Clerkenwell Reinterpreted. 17:00, at Library.

THUR 26 SEPT

Marx Memorial Library: Costas Lapavistas on Contesting the Rise of the Far Right in Europe. 19:00, In person and online. Register on MML website.

THUR 26 SEPT ONWARDS

Townsend Theatre Productions: *Behold Ye Ramblers*. Touring play by Neil Gore. See TTP website for details.

SAT 28 SEPT

Fife Trades Union Council: Commemoration of Fife's International Brigade volunteers. 11:00, memorial stone on Forth Avenue, Kirkcaldy KY2 5PR.

The NCP badge



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Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political
affairs correspondent

Last week’s report that Scotland was on the verge of a refuse workers’ strike was somewhat premature. The SNP Government suddenly found some extra money from behind the sofa, £77.5 million to be exact, that’s paved the way for the suspension of industrial action to allow further negotiations with the three unions to proceed. This means that the streets of 26 of Scotland’s 32 councils are not going to get any worse – at least until the tourists have gone home.

The previous deal was worth 3.2 per cent. The new one is for at least 3.6 with the lowest paid getting a 5.63 per cent increase, or £1,292. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

said the overall increase was 4.27 per cent.

Unite will be recommending the improved offer, with Graham McNab saying: “We believe that the new pay offer is credible. For the first time in years, it will mean all council workers receiving an above inflation increase.” GMB is also recommending acceptance but Unison, while suspending strike action, recommends rejection. Local government GMB official David O’Connor said: “Unison’s view is that it’s still not enough. Council staff have seen the value of their pay reduced by 25 per cent over the past 14 years and any pay deal needs to do more to reverse this.”

Finance and Local Government Secretary Shona Robison warned that the offer would mean cuts elsewhere, saying: “In order to fund the offer, we will have to move money from elsewhere in the budget and reduce funding for other programmes. We are taking on significant, additional financial pressure and have been clear painful choices have had to be made to fund this pay deal.”

Helpful suggestions have been made about how to resolve such funding problems, like curbing the expenses of members of the Scottish parliament such as the SNP member who successfully claimed £1,800 for filling in her income tax returns...

munist Party to promote working-class culture. That was short lived in the Cold War environment – but it was revived in 2002 by the Scottish Socialist Party, a sprig of the old Trotskyist Militant Tendency that operated as a faction inside the Labour Party until it was purged in the 1980s during the Kinnock era.

While the spirit of the People’s Festival lingers on in the Fringe, the main Festival has now spawned a multi-million pound business spread far beyond the small circle of concert halls that it revolved around back in the 1940s.

The official International Festival offers Mozart’s *Marriage of Figaro* and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, much to the annoyance of maudlin nationalists who think it ought to be restricted to traditional Highland dancing and Gaelic weaving songs from South Uist with laments about the Highland clearances for variety.

Much to the displeasure of the Green members of the City Council, part of the traditional festival is the militarist Edinburgh Tattoo on the Castle esplanade. The Greens condemned the RAF’s Red Arrows flypast, which they said would cause “emotional harm” to the worthy citizens in the capital of Scotland. Fortunately, after the flypast took place there was no sudden spike in admissions to the Royal Infirmary.

The accompanying Fringe Festival is, however, not what it used to be. Sadly the days of the aptly named Tory councillor, Moira Knox, are long gone. In the 1980s and ‘90s she would sternly denounce certain risqué fringe shows for containing nudity and peddling “filth”. Promoters of such shows went to great lengths to ensure she was aware of such lewd events as her condemnations greatly boosted ticket sales. Comedian and Fringe veteran Mervyn Stutter described her as “legendary” and said

“her public objections to ‘naughty’ shows always guaranteed big box-office”. Nowadays promoters of such events have to pay people to distribute promotional leaflets, of which more below.

Much to the annoyance of many residents, Edinburgh’s festival attracts massive crowds and only a slightly lesser number of performers. The concept of a “one man show” is often a reference to the number in the audience.

Recent years have seen concerns about landlords buying up flats in Edinburgh and renting them out as short-term holiday lets, annoying neighbours and potential buyers who are getting priced out of the city.

The festival season is a particular bonanza for landlords who can charge a fortune for places for performers and audience to lay their heads. Some residents take themselves on holiday and rent out their properties to audiences and performers for huge sums. Shipping containers, chicken coops and pub basements have all been used as venues for the more eccentric performances such as the complete plays of Shakespeare in 20 minutes, or Icelandic translations of the same, which may go down well with some *Guardian* readers.

The SNP Government is thinking about introducing a tourist tax that would allow councils to tax “overnight stay” hotels. Aimed at raising money it could easily simply kill off the goose that lays the golden eggs. Grumbles about the “toorists” are commonplace but have not become a mass movement similar to that seen in Spain. Many Edinburghers benefit, albeit slightly, from the influx of visitors and it is difficult to see what alternative uses the venues could be put to. As for those who make the Fringe work, their lot is one of long hours for little or no pay beyond free beer and tickets. Several years

ago Unite the Union set up a Fair Fringe Campaign to ensure that the volunteers who do most of the work got a better deal, but that faded away and finally closed down last year. The Fringe claims to create about 7,000 hospitality jobs, mostly for young folk, but these are very temporary ones.

The actors’ union, Equity, has found it necessary to issue warnings to its members about how to avoid getting ripped-off and enduring bad treatment. It warns that large promoters and agencies offer to take shows to Edinburgh and provide costs for venue hire, travel and accommodation, but expect the performer to pay if the show makes a loss. Alternatively, they are bound to provide free future gigs for that promoter for no fee until the shortfall is paid off.

Many publicists are very good at extracting huge fees but less energetic at doing actual publicity.

In May, the *Independent* unearthed job adverts offering people the chance to work for £1.25 per hour for 10-hour days. The London-based company Impressive PR offered a “token payment” of between £200–250 while successful candidates had to provide their own accommodation and laptop. The Fringe Festival estimates that anyone looking to spend the month in the city can expect to pay £2,000–£3,000 on accommodation alone.

This is a clear breach of the law as even young interns are entitled to the minimum wage. The practice of hiring “volunteers” for expenses only is a common way of getting round that law. Equally the laws on rest days are breached.

More seriously, many of the volunteers do physically demanding and dangerous jobs such as dismantling scenery without training or essential safety equipment such as steel capped boots. At least this helps keep the Royal Infirmary busy.

FROM THE NEW COMMUNIST PARTY

The Middle “Class” by Neil Harris. £2 plus 50p p&p (New Worker reprint).
The ruling class, fascism and the State by Neil Harris. £2 plus 50p p&p (New Worker reprint).
The poisoned well (an insight into imperialist intelligence work). £2 plus 50p p&p (New Worker reprint).
Communists and the united front by Neil Harris. £2 plus 50p p&p. (New Worker reprint).
New technology and the need for socialism £2 plus 50p p&p.
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Peoples’s China in perspective £2 plus 50p p&p (New Worker reprint).
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How we got in the State we are by Daphne Liddle. £1 plus 50p p&p (New Worker reprint).
All in the family by Daphne Liddle. £1 plus 50p p&p (New Worker reprint).
Arab nationalism and the communist movement by Andy Brooks. £1 plus 50p p&p (New Worker reprint).
Killing ourselves to live by Daphne Liddle. £1 plus 50p p&p (New Worker reprint).
The first 30 fighting years of the New Communist Party of Britain £2 plus 50p p&p (New Worker reprint).

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

Culture Vultures

The suspension of the refuse collectors’ strike will, however, spare visitors to the Edinburgh Festival this month the sight of overflowing rubbish bins.

The Edinburgh International Festival was set up in 1947 to bring high culture to a traditionally dour city.

In 1951 an alternative ‘Edinburgh People’s Festival’ was founded by folk singers and the local Com-

Chinese ambassador meets Scottish leader

The Chinese ambassador, Zheng Zeguang, met John Swinney, the First Minister of Scotland, in Edinburgh last week. The two sides had an in-depth exchange of views on strengthening exchanges and co-operation between China and Scotland in various fields.

Ambassador Zheng said that Scotland has a unique history and cultural tradition, strong capacity in science, technology and education, and outstanding economic advantages. Over the years, Scotland has maintained close exchanges and co-operation with China, bringing huge benefits to the people of



• John Swinney welcomes Zheng Zeguang

both sides. China has a full-fledged industrial system, a large market and huge growth potential. China's new round of deepening reform across the board will further stimulate social vitality and development momentum, accelerate high-quality development, and bring new opportunities to countries around the world including the UK. China supports its provinces and cities to expand friendly exchanges with Scotland, broaden mutually beneficial co-operation, and create more highlights of co-operation, to better serve the people of both sides.

First Minister Swinney

welcomed Ambassador Zheng to Scotland. He said that Scotland attaches great importance to long-term friendly co-operation with China. China's achievements are well recognised worldwide. China is the largest source of imports and an important export market of Scotland. The Scottish side is willing to enhance mutual beneficial co-operation with Chinese provinces and cities in economy, trade, education, culture, tourism, new energy, medical care and infrastructure development, and welcomes more Chinese entrepreneurs, students and tourists to Scotland.

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in China

by Dong Feng

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) kicked-off a 10-day China tour with a reception at the Residence of the British ambassador in Beijing last week. This is not only an important tour of a major British orchestra to China but also a new demonstration of in-depth cultural exchanges between the two countries.

In her address, the British Ambassador, Caroline Wilson, noted that over the last few months, the embassy has been running a China-themed *UK Music Is More Than Music* campaign.

"The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra has been

actively forging partnerships with Chinese cultural institutions such as the National Centre of Performing Art (NCPA), where they will be performing this week, and the Beijing Poly Cultural Group over a number of years. Those partnerships enhance cultural exchange and make this magical enriching world even more accessible," she said.

Under the guidance of Music Director Vasily Petrenko, the RPO will perform in Beijing, Shanghai, Xiamen, Changsha, Wuhan, Nanjing and Shenzhen.

Petrenko and the orchestra will perform a repertoire comprising of a rich blend of British, Chinese and Russian music, includ-



• Caroline Wilson with Chinese and British guests at the reception

ing works by Benjamin Britten, Tan Dun, Guan Xia, Shostakovich and Rimsky-Korsakov. The tour will also commemorate the 20th anniversary of

Guan Xia's opera *Mulan* with a specially arranged orchestral suite from the opera.

The tour marks the RPO's first visit to China

with its new music director and its first tour of the country since the COVID-19 pandemic.

The RPO is represented by Armstrong International

Music & Arts Enterprises Ltd, an internationally renowned classical music agency and production management company in China.

Wray Armstrong, chairman and CEO of Armstrong International Music & Arts Enterprises Ltd, said this was the first time this level of orchestra has come to the NCPA. "I think that really shows not only the value of the orchestra but the value of the music, that they [RPO] can bring the biggest and the best to the NCPA especially," he said. "We are so pleased that the concerts are sold out. I think it shows that when we bring quality, Chinese people know quality."

Global Times

Pension fund divests from Israeli assets

by Ed Newman

Britain's largest private pension fund has reportedly sold off £80 million in assets linked to Israel as pressure mounts on its members to divest from the occupying regime over its genocidal aggression against the Gaza Strip.

The *Financial Times* reported last week that the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) had "materially" reduced its exposure to Israeli investments in the last six months. The USS started selling down the bond and currency portfolio in March, the report said, citing two people with knowledge of the matter.

"This marks yet another instance in recent months of institutions divesting from Israel's genocidal regime and complicit com-

panies," the pro-Palestine Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement said. It also renewed its call for pressure on

institutions to "divest from Israel's sinking economy. Investing in it is not only unethical and illegal. It's now also reckless."

The USS manages investments totalling £79 billion and has more than 500,000 members, who are largely higher education

sector workers, including lecturers at universities such as Oxford and Cambridge.

Back in May, the University and College Union (UCU) criticised the USS's "shameful" refusal to review investments in companies linked to Israel's crimes in Gaza and urged the pension fund to reconsider its position.

Calls have grown worldwide for divestment from Israeli interests since 7th October 2023, when Israel's brutal Gaza onslaught began. So far, the Israelis have killed at least 39,699 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injured 91,722 others.

Radio Havana Cuba



Syria tells the the USA to get out

by Ilya Tsukanov

Syria's Foreign Ministry has reiterated its call on the USA to end its "blatant violation of [Syria's] sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity", end its support for the separatist Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) militias and "immediately withdraw" its troops.

American ground troops began trickling into Syria in November 2015, two months after Russia kicked off an air campaign targeting foreign-backed terrorists attempting to topple the Syrian government. Washington initially claimed that the deployments were meant to help fight terror. In practice, they have amounted to an illegal occupation.

In a statement provided to the Arab media on Saturday, Damascus slammed Washington for its use of the SDF as a "cheap tool to

implement its anti-Syrian schemes" and accused the predominantly Kurdish militia, which occupies eastern Syria alongside US forces, of carrying out "criminal attacks on local residents in Deir ez-Zor, Hasakah and Qamishli, in addition to other villages in the eastern and north-eastern regions" leading to numerous casualties among civilians, including women and children.

"Military aircraft belonging to the American forces have provided support for the SDF militia by launching multiple raids targeting innocent civilians defending their families, villages and property," the Foreign Ministry added, referring to recent clashes between the SDF and local Arab tribesmen.

The SDF's siege of government-controlled areas in eastern Syria, including places in the cities of Hasakah and Qamishli,

are "inhumane and immoral practices against the people in the eastern and northeastern regions" that include preventing the delivery of food and drinking water and "are aimed at doubling Syrians' suffering and prolonging the war against them".

"Syria calls on the United States to stop these practices, withdraw immediately from Syrian territory, and respect the will of the Syrians, who reject the presence and role of such separatist militias. Syria also stresses the will of its people to liberate their land and preserve their sovereignty, which will be achieved no matter how great the sacrifice, and that the terrorism and crimes of these militias will not weaken their resolve," the statement said.

Longstanding tensions between Damascus and the SDF boiled over this week after the militia im-

posed a siege on government-controlled areas in Syria's north-east, sparking shortages of drinking water, food, medicine and other essentials. Syria's *Al-Watan* [The Nation] newspaper reported that the situation is "catastrophic" and that SDF fighters have blocked Red Crescent water tankers from making their way to the areas under siege, forcing residents to depend on unsafe and unsanitary wells and causing a spate of illness, poisonings and gastrointestinal infections.

Additionally, the SDF has reportedly detained a number of Syrian Army troops at checkpoints, ostensibly in a bid to compel the military to put pressure on local tribesmen who got into a firefight with SDF militiamen backed by US air power in the Deir ez-Zor countryside earlier last week. The tribal militia, dubbed the Arab Tribal

Forces, say that they will continue targeted attacks to free "the Arab land" from the US-backed militia's "occupation". Tensions between locals and the SDF have been on the rise for years amid documented evidence of SDF and US forces' plunder of energy and food resources from the region.

The estimated 900 troops the USA has deployed in Syria guarding major oil and gas fields as well as other strategic sites have come under repeated rocket artillery and drone strikes, with attacks escalating last October after the start of the war between US ally Israel and the Palestinian militia group Hamas in Gaza. An uneasy ceasefire halted strikes this spring, but they resumed in July in the wake of a series of Israeli provocations. Last Saturday, US occupation forces were put on high alert after a ka-

mikaze drone targeted the American Kharab al-Jir air base in Hasakah, causing explosions. A US official confirmed to Reuters late on Saturday that several US and coalition personnel had suffered smoke inhalation, and some personnel were being examined for "traumatic brain injuries" in the wake of the drone attack. No group has claimed responsibility for the strike.

The USA has combined its occupation of areas of eastern Syria – which has robbed the war-torn country of self-sufficiency in energy and food production – with crushing sanctions known as the "Caesar Act", designed to starve the country into submission. The present US strategy was implemented after the failure of the CIA dirty war launched in 2011 to try to oust Syrian President Bashar al Assad.

Sputnik

Ukraine's offensive: Last gasp before inevitable defeat

by Lyuba Lulko

The Ukrainian incursion in the Kursk region of Russia last week was headline news in the media but ultimately the Armed Forces of Ukraine are doomed to lose.

The Ukrainian army's operation in the Kursk region came as a surprise for Russia. Ukraine was competent in conducting it tactically, with quick breakthroughs and deployment of second echelons under the protection of electronic warfare.

Ukrainian soldiers managed to dig in at a number of settlements and it will take the Russian troops some time to annihilate the enemy there, but the Russian Armed Forces have no other option but to create a 'sanitary zone' in the Sumy region.

It looks like Ukraine has decided to enjoy "the last shot of a drug addict" to experience ultimate euphoria. It is obvious, however, that Ukraine will end up defeated. The druggie will OD and die.

The Russian military estimate that the military potential of the Ukrainians stands at four brigades in the Sumy region. They are armed with about 300 armoured vehicles of all types. Two brigades and 160 armoured vehicles of all types are stationed near Kharkov, plus NATO-supplied MLRS rocket artillery systems. The ammunition reserves will be enough for two to three weeks of active offensive operations.

Apparently, Kiev's ultimate goal was to capture the Kursk Nuclear Power



Plant. This breakthrough was stopped. The town of Kurchatov, where the Plant is located, is reliably protected.

At the same time, Kiev wants its forces to seize strong positions as deep into the border area as possible. This will be presented as an achievement for

the issuance of additional Western aid. Ukraine also expected the withdrawal of Russian troops from positions in the Kharkov region and Donbas. Yet, as the *Economist* acknowledged, Russia transferred almost nothing from the vital Donetsk direction of hostilities.

Ukraine will soon have

even more problems than before due to the extended front-line, complicated logistics, wasted resources and absolutely no prospects for advancing deeper into Russia.

There will be no bargaining on Ukraine with the West. The invasion cancels out all peace talks

with Kiev, even though certain political forces in Russia had hoped to freeze the conflict under certain conditions.

Russia won't leave Ukraine's invasion of the Kursk region unanswered. There is every chance that Ukraine will be left without electricity in September.

Ukraine's attacks have also showed that the Russian Armed Forces need to strengthen the western border of the Russian Federation in all directions.

It was reported that Russian troops have broken through the 'Poroshenko line' in the Toretsk direction and entered the area of high-rise buildings of Toretsk (Toretsk is a city in the Bakhmut area of the Donetsk region of the Donbas).

Pravda.ru

Bangladesh: the bigger picture behind the unrest

by Pawan Atri

When Sheikh Hasina ruled the roost in Bangladesh, India was guaranteed one stable border in its East. But with that powerful leader now gone, New Delhi's concerns appear to have escalated in the region. Sputnik India tries to find out what was behind the Bangladeshi PM's exit.

An American plot was behind Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's overthrow and the entire operation was pretty well planned, strategic affairs experts have told Sputnik India.

"Definitely, there was

a US plot behind Hasina's ousting from power," says Shantanu Mukharji, a former member of India's elite Special Protection Group (SPG), who oversaw security for four Indian Prime Ministers, including Rajiv Gandhi.

With the ground reality in Bangladesh taking a 360-degree turn, particularly after President Mohammed Shahabuddin ordered the release of former Prime Minister and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader Khaleda Zia, the security analyst suggested that New Delhi would have to make quick diplomatic overtures to the new government in Dhaka to

ensure peace on its frontier regions adjoining the Muslim-majority nation.

"If the BNP forms the government, India should reach out to them diplomatically and otherwise. We can't be always pro-Awami League or pro-Hasina," Mukharji stressed.

Notably, unlike Hasina's Awami League, Zia and her BNP don't have a good track-record concerning relations with India. Earlier this year, for example, the BNP's exiled acting chairman Tarique Rahman was found spreading anti-India propaganda on social media ahead of national polls in Bangladesh.

At the same time, the Biden administration had threatened the then Hasina-led government with economic sanctions if the polls were not free and fair. The excuse, however, was seemingly to regain lost influence in the area.

Yet, leading a secular government that Islamists detested, Hasina gave Bangladesh rapid economic growth, says international relations commentator Brahma Chellaney. But powerful external forces, including Biden, were aligned against the ousted premier.

"In the name of seeking to help restore democratic governance, the USA has had cosy ties with every mil-

itary or military-backed regime in Bangladesh," he elaborated after Bangladesh military chief Waker-Uz-Zaman announced the formation of an interim government in the violence-hit nation.

Nonetheless, Bangladesh's main opposition political movement, the BNP, which allegedly propped up the anti-Hasina protests, has a history of association with the American deep state, according to Aadi Achint, the founder of popular Def Talks geopolitics website.

"The BNP has historical connections with the so-called American deep

state where people chosen specifically for certain tasks will be made to sit in certain positions to ensure that the continuity of American interest remains in this area," says Achint. And he says that the two sides (the American deep state and the BNP-Jamaat) were maintaining contact even during this time of crisis.

"This was very clearly elucidated by Sheikh Hasina's removal, withdrawal or escape from Bangladesh, which tells you that it was not a crack [spur of the moment] operation, rather it was pretty well planned," Achint concluded.

Sputnik India