

# Russian general killed in terror attack in Moscow

by our Eastern European  
affairs correspondent

The general in charge of Russia's nuclear, biological and chemical protection forces was murdered by Ukrainian agents in Moscow this week. General Igor Kirillov and one of his aides were killed by a bomb planted in a scooter outside his apartment building in the Russian capital that was detonated as he left for work. Russian security have arrested the man responsible for the attack that the Ukrainians have now admitted to carrying out. Russia's FSB security service say the terrorist, a citizen of the former Soviet republic of Uzbekistan, was promised a \$100,000 reward and relocation to the EU.

The terror attack was lauded in the Western media. Kirillov was "a legitimate target" said the *New York Times*, citing a Ukrainian intelligence officer, while CNN, The *Independent* and other media outlets churned out similar reports.

This was a stark illustration of how the West divides terrorists into two groups, "ours" and "others", Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told reporters. "The reaction coming from the West, primarily from



• Igor Kirillov

non-mainstream individuals and media outlets, is the best proof of the fact that the West is increasingly dividing terrorists into its friends, who are allowed to do whatever they want, and some unspecified foes. However, the perpetrators and masterminds must be identified and held accountable. We will definitely try to make sure that the work that Lieutenant-General Igor Kirillov dedicated his life to goes on and is a success," he said.

In London, Downing Street tastelessly endorsed the Ukrainian assassination. "Clearly we are not going to mourn the death of an individual who has propagated an illegal invasion and imposed suffering and death on the Ukrainian people," Sir Keir Starmer's official spokesman said when asked about the attack.

Donald Trump's new envoy was, however, more circumspect. Keith Kellogg, the US president-elect's special envoy to Ukraine and Russia, told the media that he didn't think the

murder would affect possible future peace talks "but I would say this, there are rules for warfare, and there are certain things you just kinda don't do". Killing generals in their home-towns and not on the battlefields is "not a smart thing to do".

It is believed that General Kirillov was targeted because he was an expert on the hazards posed by weapons of mass destruction. Kirillov commanded the military branch responsible for protecting troops and civilians from chemical and biological weapons, and from the radioactive fallout of a nuclear strike or 'dirty bomb' attack. He was also

in charge of military investigations into numerous high-profile cases directly and indirectly involving Russia.

He delivered over 40 briefings about the findings made by

specialists under his command since being appointed in 2017. He also regularly offered his expert opinion to Russian officials and the media. His work came as allegations of chemical weapons use became an increasingly frequent tool in Western foreign policy over the past decade. At regular briefings, Kirillov presented evidence against the USA, its NATO allies and the Zelensky regime of operating bio-labs, plotting false flag attacks with the use of toxic substances, and plans to create a "dirty bomb".

Kirillov spent years "exposing the crimes of the Anglo-Americans" Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said, commenting on his death. "He worked without fear. Did not hide behind anyone's back. Walked with his visor up. For the motherland and the truth."

## FUND

The fighting fund jumped this week with donations that came to £1,626, including £1,000 in from Richmond & Kingston comrades in memory of Harry Danvers and Peter Geddes, £100 from a comrade in north Wales and a hundred more from another in Suffolk as well as £26 from a supporter in Dagenham.

The December appeal now stands at £2,454. We need £1,046 to hit our target and we've got until the end of the month to do it.

The fighting fund helps keep our communist press going. Every month we try to raise the £3,500 needed to hit our target and guarantee the continuation of the only communist weekly in Britain.

Your contribution, big or small, counts. All donations help keep our presses rolling. Please send your donation to: New Worker Fund, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the 'New Worker'.

To save a stamp you can also use your credit or debit card to send contributions here:

<http://newworker.org/ncpcentral/fightingfund.html>

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The *New Worker* will soon be taking its traditional fortnightly winter break.

The last issue of the Old Year will be published on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December.

The first issue of the New Year will come out on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> January.

## Seasons Greetings to all our Readers!

# THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

## Peace on Earth...

...and mercy mild. God and sinners reconciled. Or so we're told at this time of the year. But though it's supposed to be the season of goodwill we won't see much of it in this sceptred isle, the heartland of imperialism. The great and the good will make their annual obeisance to the Prince of Peace, whom they claim to worship, while ignoring his teachings for the rest of the year. They rejoice at regime change in Syria while turning a blind eye to the sectarian violence that is now sweeping the country. They fuel the proxy war against Russia in Ukraine while ignoring the Zionists' genocidal war against the Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Celebrating the winter solstice goes back to hallowed antiquity. Stone Age hunter-gatherers whose lives revolved around the seasons appeased the gods to ensure the return of spring. The Romans called it Saturnalia – when masters served their slaves in orgies of feasting and drinking in a festival in which all the rules of society could temporarily be broken.

Though some of these traditions linger on in today's orgy of consumer delight we are still supposedly celebrating the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the man who told his followers that it was "easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God". But do any of the rich, or his latter-day apostles, believe it?

The Pharisees churn out the usual platitudes about the "poor and needy" while ignoring the words of their Master who drove the money-changers out of the Temple and told his followers to "go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven". Meanwhile the Archbishop of Canterbury resigns after a report revealed that he failed to act on allegations of boys being flogged by a man closely linked to the Anglican hierarchy while the Archbishop of York comes under similar fire for not taking action against another pervert within the Church of England.

The Starmer government pleads poverty to justify means-testing the pensioners' winter fuel benefit. It won't pay compensation to the three million or so women born in the 1950s who were not properly informed about the state pension age increase. But it can find plenty to fuel the proxy war against Russia and pay for Trident and the rest of our so-called nuclear "deterrent".

But there are reasons to be cheerful. The Starmer government is deeply unpopular and the Tories are split over the Faragist challenge. Though Starmer has driven Jeremy Corbyn and most of his supporters out of the Labour Party, the former Labour leader is back in Parliament leading the Independent Alliance on the opposition benches. A new fight-back against austerity has begun and London is rocked on a monthly basis by hundreds of thousands of protesters demanding justice for the Palestinians and an end to the genocide in Gaza.

The ruling class maintains that capitalism is the only game in town. And it is – but only for themselves. Capitalism, in the final analysis, is simply a system designed to perpetuate the rule of the landowners, industrialists and capitalists to ensure that a tiny handful of parasites can live the lives of Roman emperors off the backs of the millions upon millions of working people. There is only one solution to the capitalist crisis and that is socialism. Let's make that our resolution for the New Year. Speed the day!

## Western eyes on Syria

**The so-called transition period in Syria is a pretext for Western countries that need time to establish working relations with the country's new authorities, says Peter Ford, a former British ambassador to Syria and a Middle East expert.**

"All talk of 'transition' is a smoke screen to create a window of one or two years in which the Western powers can develop an open master-client relationship with people who yesterday were Al-Qaeda and ISIS. For Western powers, the optics of doing business with gangs and warlords designated as terrorist groups present a problem. This can be got round, however, by pretending to have a 'transition'," Ford said.

The militants of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) are trying to establish in Damascus an authority similar to the "salvation government" it had created in Idlib to cover its rule, he added.

"This is akin to the administration Hamas installed in Gaza, although Hamas, of course, were elected," he said.

A true transition process would require the participation of many groups, Ford continued.

"If we were going to talk seriously about 'transition', it would be necessary to include groups like the Kurds (who want autonomy), the Druze (who just want to be left alone), the Eastern tribes (who want the proceeds from oil wealth), and, of course, supporters of the Assad regime, including the Baath Party, left

behind just as Baathists were left behind in Iraq after the overthrow of the Saddam Hussein government by NATO forces in 2003.

The armed opposition coming to power in Syria will have significant consequences for the Middle East, with Lebanon and Palestine facing the greatest risks.

"The regional consequences are severe. First and most urgently, Lebanon is now threatened by a pincer movement of the Syrian jihadis and their Israeli allies, both hoping to seize on a moment of weakness for [Hezbollah], previously brought to its knees by Israel and now handicapped by losing its lifeline to Iran via Syria."

Israel and the new Syrian authorities are capable of reaching a peace agreement, he added.

"The jihadi groups are more than ready to ally with Israel (like the Gulf states) for the purpose of fighting their common enemies [Hezbollah] and Iran. The Palestinian cause has been dealt what may be a final death blow. It now has not a single Arab state champion. The way is now clear for Israel to finish its work of creating Greater Israel."

Armed opposition that has captured power in Syria will try to suppress Kurds that will be left without the support from the USA after the ouster of President Bashar Assad.

"The clear intention of the jihadis is to carry out the orders of their Turkish controllers and neutralise the Kurds by destroying the so-called Syrian Democratic

Forces (SDF) militia. The US forces in the Kurdish areas are unlikely to protect their Kurdish clients because now, [when Assad] has gone, they do not need them," Ford said.

The Kurdish groups' aim was to stop the Syrian government from rehabilitating economically after the war "by assuming control over Syria's oil and grain resources located in the Northeast" he continued, adding that such measures are no longer necessary.

The Syrian opposition may attempt to stabilise relations with Washington, but it "may not go as smoothly" as they think, Ford said. "The USA will probably realise quite soon that they no longer need the jihadis now [that] their work of toppling Assad is done. The jihadis will be forced to beg to get sanctions lifted."

At the same time, under the opposition's authority, Syria may become more united despite the fact that it has "not been united for many years".

"With Israel occupying the Golan, the USA through their Kurdish proxies controlling the Northeast, Turkey occupying border areas, the jihadi opposition occupying the province of Idlib, shared government control with ex-jihadis under Russian monitoring in the South, and the USA occupying the Al Tanf border enclave and ISIS parts of the Syrian desert. In a sense, the country is more likely now to be united with jihadi rule everywhere except the Golan."

*Sputnik*





## Workers' Notes

### The Staggering State of the Unions

by New Worker correspondent

**In contrast to the parliamentary scene, it was an uneventful year for union elections. The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) had an election for their General Secretary, the first since 2001. This event inspired just 2,632 or 12.3 per cent of the union's 21,150 strong membership to cast a vote that saw a long-standing NUJ full time official, Laura Davison, defeat her challenger 1976-644.**

The University College Union (UCU) also had an election, which saw the incumbent, Jo Brady, return on a minority vote on a 15 per cent turnout. In the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) a contest to re-elect or otherwise the incumbent General Secretary is underway.

At shop-workers' union USDAW, the elections to their NEC were even less exciting. The turnout in the five contested regional contests ranged from a low of 3.5 per cent to 4.6 in the Midlands. In some regions the victors were unopposed and in others, in the absence of nominations, posts remained vacant.

This low turnout by union members is reflected in low union membership. The Department of Business and Trade's annual Labour Force Survey revealed that trade unions only represented 22.4 per cent of the workforce in late October 2023. Even this dire figure is a rise from 22.2 for the previous year. This low figure conceals the unhappy fact that in the private sector union density is a mere 12.3 per cent compared with 49.2 in the public sector. Even the latter, healthier figure still

**As the end of the year draws near we look back at some of the highs and lows of trade union struggles with a particular focus on those which have involved workers who are not noted for union militancy or who have been struggling to obtain basic trade union rights. Their struggles are likely to be more common in an age when consultant surgeons and outsourced cleaners alike take to the picket lines.**

represents a long-term decline.

In all there are 6.4 million trade unionists in the UK, out of a workforce of 30 million. In 1980 there were 13 million in unions.

Another tragic sign of the weakness of the labour movement is that in October the TUC put their distinctive 1950s modernist Congress House up for sale. The TUC claims that essential refurbishment will cost around an unfeasible £20 million.

It is difficult to see who will buy the purpose-built offices. It is a grade II listed building that includes two important sculptures: Sir Jacob Epstein's 1957 sculpture of a mother carrying her dead son, a striking anti-war monument, and the bronze Spirit of Brotherhood showing a strong man helping a weak one. Not something an international bank would appreciate. Forty jobs, largely of catering workers, are at risk from the TUC's planned move.

Given its location, the TUC could clearly do more to exploit the building rather than simply throw in the towel, even if that meant hiring its soul for corporate AGMs in its grand conference room.

### Unions at War

There were a number of industrial disputes where strikers took on bosses who were in fact trade unions, resulting in the curious site of pickets outside union offices.

The Transport Salaried Staff Association (TSSA) has been involved in a bitter dispute with general union GMB, which represents the union's employees who claimed the new leadership were behaving as badly as the old one. Later the UCU found its annual conference curtailed by a walk-out

by employees belonging to Unite taking well-timed strike action that continued into last week.

In October, the National Education Union (NEU) found its own London HQ picketed by its employees belonging to Unite over allegations of bullying and overwork. Finally, early this month the boot was on the other foot when Unite faced strike action by employees belonging to GMB who complained of bullying in a small department of the union that just happens to be run by the husband of the General Secretary.

All these disputes have more to them than normal industrial disputes. In particular, the latter dispute has much to do with internal faction fighting and investigations into the union's lavish new over-budget HQ, conference centre and hotel in Birmingham promoted by the previous leadership including a defeated rival for the top job.

### First Time Strikers

On a more positive note, a number of hitherto unorganised or newly militant workers were taking unaccustomed action.

In February, a group of genuine white-collar workers in a nationalised industry who regularly work unsocial hours at the weekend secured a seven per cent pay rise aided by their union, Unite. The lucky workers were Anglican clergy who secured the rise on the first occasion that the Church of England (CofE) entered into formal pay talks with a union, in this case the Church of England Clergy & Employee Advocates (CEECA), which is part of Unite's broad-

er Faith Workers' Branch.

Unite's faith workers' branch claims a membership of 3,112 of which 2,181 are Anglicans, and 1,950 of these are clergy, a figure which represents about 10 per cent of the active clergy.

Clerics are not natural trade unionist material. The Faith Workers Branch was set up by the then Manufacturing, Science and Finance (MSF) union in 1994 when traditionalist clergy were fearful for their jobs if they did not accept the then novelty of women priests. However, it is good to see trade unionism making some progress in unlikely fields. In May, the CofE's Leicester diocese signed the first recognition agreement with CEECA.

In May, the British Airline Pilots' Association (BALPA) threatened strike action at budget airline EasyJet after pilots rejected a pay offer that would have brought experienced pilots who presently earn £164,000 a year up to £190,000 in October and nearly to £200,000 next April. EasyJet can easily afford such salaries having recorded a £602 million profit late last month.

The grand premises of the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) on London's Strand was another unexpected strike venue when the small street union, the Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain (IWGB), took part in a strike that saw Fellows of the Society call off events last September. The strike, for higher wages, came at a time when the senior management team boosted their collective salaries from £359,000 to £976,000 (170 per cent). Despite having £32 million in reserves Management refused to award more than a 2.5 per cent rise while workers are seeking a £2,800

flat rate increase. The RSA fired an IWGB member for organising the hitherto non-union Society and criticising Management, for which it was roundly denounced at an Employment Tribunal.

Another of the more unusual industrial actions was that undertaken by yoga instructors employed by Colchester Council, who haven't had a pay rise since 2015. It took an 86 per cent ballot for strike action for the council to increase its offer to £26 per session.

Vets are not normally at the forefront of the class struggle but in south Wales the British Veterinary Union (BVU), which is part of Unite, took action after its members voted by 93 per cent for strike action in protest at "poverty wages" whilst bosses increased charges for pet owners.

This action was taken against VetPartners, a private equity firm, which responded to the strike by closing four of the sites affected by it. VetPartners has been gobbling up individual and merged practices after the Blair Government allowed non-vets to own practices.

Other first-time strikers were journalists at *Nature*, the 155-year-old weekly, owned by Springer Nature, which is Britain's leading general scientific periodical. The strike came after seven months of talks between the NUJ and Springer via ACAS finally broke down after members rejected a 5.8 per cent pay offer. Springer claim this is above inflation, but it clearly does not make up for a long-term fall in the real value of their salaries.

Liverpool has often been the scene of many dramatic strikes. In 1911 it saw a vio-

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lent general strike involving the city's transport workers. In 1919 it had a police strike which was so effective that the police were banned from striking. The last major dock strike in Britain took place in the city in the 1990s. In 2024 it fell to the more genteel workers at the city's museums to continue that tradition. Liverpool's museums were closed for weeks when out of 200 government departments, it was one of the few where workers did not receive a £1,500 cost-of-living payment that workers at many other similar bodies have received.

## A Narrow Defeat

Although ultimately unsuccessful, a brave attempt was to organise workers at the Coventry warehouse (or rather "fulfilment centre") belonging to the notoriously anti-union predatory retailer Amazon.

This followed a year of short strikes and sit-ins amounting to 37 days at the Coventry site for a minimum £15 hourly rate after workers rejected an offer of a 50p per hour rise after Amazon's on-line business rapidly expanded during the pandemic. This itself was a risky undertaking as Amazon had closed a neigh-

bouring warehouse when workers started getting uppity.

GMB secured a ruling from the Central Arbitration Committee (CAC), which is the court for such matters, in favour of GMB's application for a union recognition vote at the warehouse. GMB needed 40 per cent of the workforce to vote in favour of recognition.

After an eight-week campaign GMB was narrowly defeated in July by 50.5 to 49.5 per cent on an 86.2 per cent turnout of the 2,600 workers. Given the hostile opposition this must count as something of an honourable heroic defeat, given the overwhelming hostility of bosses who did everything except the traditional American method of sending in goon squads to beat up union organisers to prevent unions getting a foot in the door.

Amazon won using a number of dirty tricks. More than 1,000 new workers were drafted in to dilute the vote by saying too few workers were involved in the ballot. One of these was an undercover journalist who reported that most of the recruits had no work to do and simply stood around the shop floor. Anti-union indoctrination classes were compulsory. QR codes decorated the walls that would send an automatic message to GMB cancelling their membership.

Amazon also moved in

a large number of managers who spoke the same languages as the largely migrant workforce to convince them of the evils of trade unionism.

Unite had more luck securing recognition at the Royal College of Occupational Therapists and cycling charity Sustrans, who are presumably more gentle in their conduct of industrial relations.

## Precarious Work for All

Fire-and-Rehire disputes rumbled on throughout the year. One that had an unusually tuneful picket line was that of the members of the Musicians' Union (MU) and Equity at the English National Opera, who went on strike when bosses declared their intention to sack them and re-employ some for only six months of the year and leaving others even worse off having to rely on ad-hoc freelance work.

Precarious work is common in the entertainment business. Shortly before that dispute the MU advised would-be musicians that steady employment could be sought in an area of the music business where it cannot organise: the British armed forces. An MU survey found that the average member earns just £20,000 per year, the same as a decade ago,

which means a very real fall.

While there were many strikes in bus and railway companies up and down the country we must not forget that neglected group of transport workers, the maintenance workers at the London Cable Car run by Doppelmayr Cable Car (DCC) who threatened to close the one-kilometre route crossing the Thames between Docklands and Greenwich. The mere threat of strike action was enough to force DCC to stop cancelling annual leave at short notice and withdrawing taxis for workers after finishing late shifts.

## No Crumbs for the Workers

The posh City of London legal firm of Devonshires, who specialise in ambulance chasing or more politely put "no-win no-fee" medical negligence cases, was the scene of an important dispute when an Ecuadorian cleaner was sacked for stealing a left-over tuna sandwich costing £1.50 from Tesco.

After she was sacked her employer, Total Clean, refused her appeal. Her street union, the United Voices of the World (UVW), mounted a picket and the dumping of 100 cans of tuna and 300 sandwiches in the foyer of Devonshires. De-

spite the theatrical aspects of the protest this case highlights the plight of countless migrant workers in Britain.

UVW reports cases of people being sacked for rolling their eyes during conversations and ignoring a "wet floor" sign. These are not actions by jobsworths but part of a strategy to terrorise workers into unconditional obedience.

The sacked cleaner was actually an administrator in the human resources department of a large corporation in Madrid that went bankrupt forcing her to come to Britain and work removing bin-sacks. It was noted that her employer was deemed one of the more reputable outsourcing companies. From the evidence put to an Employment Tribunal the real reason for her sacking was that she queried improper deductions from co-workers' salaries.

Another group of precarious workers, fast food delivery drivers, have formed their own independent union, Delivery Jobs UK (DJUK). They recently took strike action against the likes of Just Eat, Uber Eats and Deliveroo in pursuit of a minimum £5 fee per delivery.

A TUC report showed that such zero-hour contracts and precarious work are becoming increasingly the norm and not just temporary situations for young workers.

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

**17<sup>th</sup> December 2004**

**THE IRAQI resistance offensive is rolling over relentlessly against the US-led occupation army throughout Iraq. Fierce fighting continues in Fallujah, the city the Americans said they'd take within a week, as guerrillas emerge from the ruins to take on the marines in the streets.**

*Jubilant Fallujan partisans are claiming victory after three days of street battles this week. Plumes of smoke cover parts of the city and US warplanes are bombing suspected resistance strongholds in the heart of the*

*town.*

*A Mujahideen spokesman claimed that 350 Americans had been killed and 47 captured and that 82 partisans had lost their lives in the counterattacks that have penned the Americans down in part of the city.*

*The Americans are pouring in more reinforcements in readiness for the sham elections in six weeks' time. Whether they take place is another matter. Calls for a boycott are growing as Fuad al Rawi, a member of the Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), explained: "The security situation is still deteriorating and that is a convincing reason to postpone elections. The IIP and more than 70 political parties, organisations and groups have called for postponing the polls for the sake of the Iraqi national interest."*

*"The IIP and the parties have also called for national reconciliation before carrying out an election," he told the press. "Since it is the first time we are experiencing a democratic process, the IIP hopes elections would be carried out under fair, just and transparent*

*circumstances.*

*That clearly is not going to happen. Anglo-American imperialism is only interested in a charade to rubber-stamp their hand-picked stooges who currently call themselves the "interim government".*

*The Americans are trying to boost their prestige at home and abroad with much publicised visits by the puppets to Western leaders, including Bush and Blair. And the first act at home has been to start the show-trials of former members of Saddam Hussein's government currently held in US hands.*

*Their lawyer is objecting to the authority of the court appointed by the puppet regime, arguing that only an international court would be appropriate. He said that one of the prisoners, former vice president Taha Yassin Ramadan, had been offered a place on the puppet council if he agreed to testify against Saddam Hussein but he refused. Some of the senior Baathist prisoners have begun a hunger-strike to protest at the conditions in which they are held.*



# Nkrumah's successors win Ghana's elections

by Dennis Laumann

**The National Democratic Congress' (NDC) candidate, former president John Mahama, resolutely defeated Mahamudu Bawumia, Akufo-Addo's vice president, of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in the Ghana elections last week. Bawumia has conceded that Mahama had won "decisively" and "the people have voted for change".**

The Electoral Commission of Ghana announced that Mahama won 56.6 per cent of votes, while Bawumia secured only 41.6 per cent of the total. Mahama's margin of victory was the largest in 24 years, and voter turnout in the mostly peaceful elections was 60.9 per cent.

The NDC also routed the NPP in parliamentary elections, likely securing a two-thirds majority, though results are still being tabulated in several constituencies.

Mahama served a previous term as Ghana's leader when he won the 2012 elections. He is the first former Ghanaian president to return to power after an unsuccessful re-election bid.

Mahama's running mate, Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang, will be the first woman vice president in Ghana's history. A well-respected academic, Opoku-Agyemang was a Minister of Education in Mahama's first term as well as Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Coast, one of the nation's leading higher education institutions. Mahama and Opoku-Agyemang will be sworn into office on 7<sup>th</sup> January.

This was the first election in which the presidential candidates of both major parties hailed from northern Ghana. Historically, the predominately Muslim North has been economically and politically



marginalised while southern Ghana continues to possess most of Ghana's economic wealth and political power.

Though Mahama is a Christian, Bawumia would have been Ghana's first Muslim president if he had prevailed. Bawumia was also the first non-Akan presidential candidate of the NPP, which garners support mostly from the Akan ethnic groups, in-

cluding the Asante, who inhabit much of southern Ghana.

By contrast, the NDC has always selected presidential candidates that represent different ethnic groups from across Ghana – namely the Ewe, the Akan Fante and the Gonja – and the party attracts voters nationwide. In fact, Mahama won 13 of Ghana's 16 regions in the elections.

Western observers and

mainstream media often claim there are no major ideological differences between the NDC and the NPP, but their programmes are rooted in radically opposed political traditions.

The NPP traces its origins to the elite, Western-educated African professionals who sought to reform, rather than end, the British colonial system during the height of

African anti-colonial struggles in the 1950s. They even petitioned their colonisers to postpone independence when it became clear a mass-based, anti-colonial movement, the Convention People's Party (CPP), would take power.

The CPP was co-founded by the renowned socialist and Pan-Africanist leader Kwame Nkrumah, who organised farmers, workers, market women and students in the struggle for independence.

In 1957, the Gold Coast, as it was then known, became the first colony in sub-Saharan Africa to win back its independence. The new nation was named after the ancient West African empire of Ghana, and Nkrumah became its first prime minister, and later president.

The forbearers of the NPP opposed the CPP's programmes of rapid infrastructural and industrial development and assistance to liberation movements across the African continent. In 1966, with the support of the CIA, those reactionaries overthrew Nkrumah, ushering in a period of political chaos and economic decline.

Ghana's 'lost decade' ended thanks to the 31<sup>st</sup> December Revolution in 1981, under the leadership of Flight-Lieut Jerry Rawlings, who resurrected the socialist and Pan-Africanist policies of Nkrumah. After a transitional period of revolutionary rule, the Fourth Republic was established in 1992, democratic elections were held, and Rawlings, as the NDC's presidential candidate, was voted into power and served two terms.

Since then, the NDC and the NPP have governed the nation for 16 years each. A version of the CPP still exists, but it is a small and inconsequential party, as most Nkrumaists support the democratic socialist NDC.

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• NDC on the campaign trail.



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Though Western governments and media outlets initially hailed Akufo-Addo when he took power in 2016 – partly because he promoted the ahistoric and neo-liberal argument that Africans themselves were to blame for the continent's problems – his two terms as president have been characterised by widespread corruption, economic collapse and political arrogance.

Under Akufo-Addo's administration, the number of Ghanaians living in extreme poverty has continuously risen while hundreds of millions of dollars have been wasted on vanity projects, such as a controversial, uncompleted Christian cathedral in the capital of Accra.

Last month, Akufo-Addo unveiled a ridiculous statue of himself in the western city of Sekondi. According to reports, local residents toppled the statue following last Saturday's elections.

Mahama is a Soviet-educated historian who published a critically acclaimed autobiography, *My First Coup d'Etat: Memories from the Lost Decades of Africa*, in 2012. The coup referred to in the title was the right-wing overthrow of Nkrumah, a catastrophic event that awakened the young Mahama's political consciousness. His father, who was an official in Nkrumah's administration, was jailed for a year by the coup-makers.

In July 2012, Mahama, then the nation's vice president, abruptly

assumed the presidency when the immensely popular president, John Atta Mills, unexpectedly died. Addressing parliament at his rushed swearing-in ceremony, Mahama stated: "I'm personally devastated, I've lost a father, I've lost a friend, I've lost a mentor and a senior comrade. Ghana is united in grief at this time for our departed president."

After completing the remaining months of Mills' presidential term, Mahama won the December 2012 elections and served one term before conceding to Akufo-Addo in the 2016 polls.

Ghanaians are now looking to Mahama and the NDC to again stabilise the economy, create jobs, build infrastructure, reduce the cost of

living, and end the infamous, illegal, small-scale mining of gold – known as 'galmasey' – that has polluted forests and water bodies in the country. A comprehensive plan of action, titled "Mahama's First 120 Days Social Contract with the People of Ghana" has been issued by the NDC to 're-set' Ghana.

Despite being Africa's top producer of gold and the world's second largest exporter of cocoa, as well as possessing large reserves of oil, meeting the expectations of Ghanaian voters will be challenging.

In the existing capitalist global economy, the prices of commodities and terms of trade are not determined by producers in the underdeveloped world but by western markets. Many

African countries such as Ghana are burdened by inordinate debt payments for loans issued by western financial institutions.

As Nkrumah argued in his classic book, *Neo-Colonialism: The Highest Stage of Imperialism*, African nations achieved political independence, but they remain economically dominated and exploited by their former colonisers.

Domestically, Ghana is suffering its worst economic crisis in decades thanks to the stealing, mismanagement, and ineptitude of the outgoing NPP government.

In his acceptance speech Mahama declared: "This mandate represents a call to action. These last eight years have witnessed some of the darkest pe-

riods in our governance, leaving scars on our national psyche. The journey ahead will not be easy, but we are determined to reset this nation and bring it back on track as the Black Star of Africa."

The incumbent party's defeat in Ghana continues a trend across Africa this year, as opposition parties have also prevailed in elections in Botswana, Mauritius, Senegal and Somaliland. The exception is Namibia, where Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, the candidate of the ruling socialist South-West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), won elections earlier this month. She made history, too, as the first woman president of the southern African nation.

*People's World (USA)*

# The struggle in France

by G Dunkel

**On 4<sup>th</sup> December France's parliamentary government failed to win a no-confidence vote, forcing Prime Minister Michel Barnier to resign. President Emmanuel Macron remains in office.**

Given France's long history of struggle and class consciousness and its quirky election system, progressives have a voice in the lower house of the French parliament, the National Assembly, which must approve the government's proposed budget.

Under the constitution of the Fifth Republic, in force since 1958, the government can cause the budget to be

adopted by invoking Article 49.3, even though the National Assembly votes against it. But the

government then has to survive a no-confidence vote to remain in office.

When the govern-

ment used Article 49.3 on 4<sup>th</sup> December, it lost the no-confidence vote 321 to 256. The soft fas-

cist party, the National Rally (NR) led by Marine Le Pen, joined the centre-left New Popular

Front (Nouveau Front Populaire) in the vote. This result was the first time since 1962 the government had lost a confidence vote, although Article 49.3 had been invoked dozens of times.

When the NR came in first in the vote for the European Commission in June, Macron called a snap national election for parliament. If various 'left' parties remained divided, Macron's Renaissance Party might have captured the votes of the soft 'left' parties such as the Socialists, and together they could freeze out the National Rally from leading parliament.

Instead, last July the 'left' parties in parliament – which in France include the Socialists, the Greens, the Com-



• French workers demand more pay!

munist Party, the New Anti-capitalist Party and France Unbowed (La France Insoumise), the last one assuming the most militant stance of any major party in France, and a number of smaller parties – created the New Popular Front. This coalition co-operated in a large majority of France's 577 parliamentary election districts, where it ran a single candidate to confront the right wing.

This coalition, the NPF, was the leading vote getter, though it did not win a majority of seats. Le Pen's National Rally came in second and Macron's party, Renaissance, a distant third. Now, Macron cannot call a new vote for the National Assembly until July 2025 as he called that vote in June of 2024 and must wait a year.

Meanwhile Marine Le Pen, who has run for president of France three times and is the most prominent member of the NR, along with 26 members of the NR leadership went on trial for fraud on 30<sup>th</sup> September. While the verdict won't be announced until the end of March, it is ex-

pected to be 'guilty', which would make her ineligible to run for public office for five years.

Gabriel Attal, a member of Renaissance, was the politician serving as prime minister at the time of the snap election last summer. Since his party, Renaissance, lost the election, he resigned. Macron kept him on as a caretaker until he could work out a deal with Michel Barnier, a member of a smaller right-wing party called the Republicans, to become the next prime minister.

According to French political tradition, Macron should have offered the position of prime minister to a member of the NPF, since it had gotten the most votes. Instead, he offered it to Barnier, from the right wing.

During the elaborate ceremony marking the re-opening of the Notre-Dame Cathedral, which had been severely damaged in a 2019 fire, Donald Trump was seated on the left side of President Macron; Macron's spouse was seated on Macron's right next to Jill Biden representing the current US admin-

istration at the event. The multi-billionaire Elon Musk could be seen among the dignitaries.

## On the streets

Farmers and unions in France have kept up their struggles during these political manoeuvres. The union confederations CGT and Force Ouvrière held a national one-day strike for higher wages on 12<sup>th</sup> December.

Farmers all over France have taken their tractors, trucks and other agricultural vehicles onto the streets and highways leading to major French cities. They form 'rolling blockades', lining-up a group of tractors, which have the right to use public roads, going together slowly down the road while traffic bunches up behind them.

Once the police started to force the farmers to pull their tractors to the road side, they started towing loads of manure that would spill out onto the road and disrupt traffic.

There were 85 farmer

demonstrations all over France on 18<sup>th</sup> November, according to the Young Farmers' Association. They were protesting against low prices for what they produce, proposed reductions in state subsidies for farmers' diesel fuel and a new free trade agreement between the EU and Mercosur, the common market in South America.

Another tactic farmers use is to build a cinder block wall in front of the central government's office building in a city to symbolise the government's separation from peoples' needs. They then pile manure in front of the wall to make it harder to break it down.

The teachers' unions held a one-day strike on 5<sup>th</sup> December, shutting down two-thirds of the day care centres, primary and secondary schools across France. They are demanding higher salaries and are furious that the new budget will dock them up to three days of sick pay every time they need to take it.

The rail unions are opposing France's national railway (SNCF) plan to privatise its

freight service, saying that this task can be handled by private trucks, which will cause much more air pollution and take away 5,000 union jobs. The rail unions held a one-day strike of the SNCF's passenger service on 21<sup>st</sup> November.

The CGT is holding roving demonstrations inside department stores whose management have scheduled to close, claiming they are not profitable enough.

## France's role in Africa

The domestic turmoil in France makes it difficult for the French capitalist rulers to respond to their international losses, particularly in Africa's Sahel, the area south of the Sahara Desert in Africa.

In addition to Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger ending their military alliance with France, Senegal – a small but culturally influential country – is also breaking its ties with French imperialism.

Senegal's President Bassirou Diomaye Faye

announced on 1<sup>st</sup> December that the French occupation soldiers who had stayed in Senegal since its independence in 1960 have been told to leave.

As of 2023 some 3.5 million immigrants born in Africa lived in France, out of a total of 68 million inhabitants. There isn't a specific, large-scale 'Sahelian community' readily identifiable in France. Due to the colonial history of France in the Sahel region, however, there is a strong diaspora network existing within the Sahelian communities connecting individuals to their home countries and providing support both in France and in Africa.

How this will affect US imperialism is unclear. Paris and Washington compete but are also allies against the people of the Global South. France's removal from its African bases – just a small one in Cameroon and a fairly large one in Djibouti on the Red Sea remain – is a major setback for French imperialism.

*Workers World (USA)*

# Africa can help Security Council

by Roberto Morejón

**If Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's announcement that two African countries will join the Security Council as permanent members comes true, it would be a fair step towards the long-awaited and long-delayed reform of the UN's top body.**

During a visit to

South Africa, Guterres said that this admission would take place before the end of his mandate.

Both the Secretary-General and the leaders and governments of the so-called black continent have called for this presence on the UN Security Council as a way of partially redressing an injustice.

The Global South considers the absence of permanent members from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and developing

countries from Asia to be unfair.

They should be part of the relevant decisions to be taken by the UN Security Council, which is currently composed of 15 members, five of which have a permanent seat and veto power and the rest are added on a rotating basis.

There is an urgent need to seek a more balanced composition of the body in order to redress the under-representation of nations from the Global South, which

make up a large part of the UN membership.

Both Africa and other countries are lobbying the UN for a truly transparent, democratic and representative composition of the Security Council.

This cannot be the case as long as the continent lacks integration, a scenario that has been dragging on since the end of the Second World War, when a large part of African states remained under colonialism and lacked a voice in inter-

national affairs.

In essence, the question of the admission of two African countries as permanent members of the Security Council is linked to the long-standing demands of many speakers for the democratisation of this world forum.

Not a few governments have called for an end to the Council's interference in matters outside its competence, particularly those falling within the mandate of the General Assembly.

An as yet undecided reform of the UN Security Council should enable it to fulfil its essential responsibility to maintain peace and security on the planet.

A comprehensive and far-reaching reform, including an analysis of the veto power, remains to be seen in the context of global changes, but at least the inclusion of two African countries in permanent seats should be seen as a positive step.

*Radio Havana Cuba*



## LETTERS

### Dear Comrades

Journalism has long been regarded as the fourth estate, shedding light on the suffering of peoples and giving a voice to the voiceless. While many journalists have documented the brutality of the genocide committed by the Israeli occupation army against the Palestinian people in Gaza, and the horrific war crimes perpetrated in Lebanon, they have often become targets themselves. Israeli occupation forces have killed dozens of journalists – not only since 7<sup>th</sup> October but long before that. We remember Shireen Abu Akleh, whose coffin was even attacked by Israeli forces, seeking vengeance against her even in death.

Amid international silence and the absence of real measures to hold the Israeli occupation accountable for the assassination of journalists – armed only with the truth and their cameras – the *New York Times* sent one of its photographers not to reveal the truth of the suffering or the cruelty of the Israeli occupation, but to distort the facts and support the Israeli occupation army in its war on Gaza.

While the Palestinian resistance defended its land during the Israeli invasion of Gaza, the forces of Martyr Omar Qassem – the military wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine – engaged Israeli forces in Beit Lahia. They eliminated several Israeli soldiers, seized

their weapons and belongings, and discovered among them a Brazilian journalist, Tyler Porter Hicks, a photographer for the *New York Times*. Hicks was found actively fighting against the Palestinian people to occupy their land and assisting Israel in its campaign of genocide.

On 10<sup>th</sup> December 2024, Abu Khaled, the spokesperson for the Martyr Omar Qassem Forces, issued a military statement announcing the success of this operation. He confirmed that the Brazilian journalist had joined the Israeli occupation forces and participated in hostilities against the Palestinian people. The group also published Hicks's expired passport, issued in 2012 and valid until 2017.

Hicks had entered Gaza using the same passport, previously capturing images of the Baker family during the 2014 massacre on Gaza's beach, where four family members, including children, were killed by Israeli forces. On 16<sup>th</sup> July 2014, he published an article in the *New York Times* about this tragedy.

Tyler Porter Hicks was not a journalist but a war criminal hiding behind the immunity granted to American journalists. He deceived the Palestinian people into believing he was documenting the truth, but in reality, he was transmitting intelligence to the Israeli enemy.

In light of this scandal, the *New York Times* must clarify whether Hicks's involvement in the Israeli occupation's crimes was officially sanctioned by the newspaper or a personal initiative. If it was personal and the newspaper was aware of his ties to the Israeli army, why was he retained in his position?

The *New York Times*

silence on this incident and its apparent attempt to cover up this crime against journalism raises serious questions about its role – not just in Gaza but wherever national liberation movements opposing the Zionist entity are found.

The International Federation of Journalists must take immediate action. A journalist wearing a Palestinian keffiyeh is accused of bias and punished as if committing a crime, often dismissed arbitrarily. What, then, of a journalist who actively participates in hostilities and becomes complicit in genocide?

**Fouad Baker**  
**Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine**

### Dear Comrades

For centuries the imperialist powers had been able to dominate the entire world. The Great October Revolution marked a turning point with the creation of the world's first workers' state. As it built socialism at home, the Soviet Union also played a significant role in assisting emerging nations with steps to help end colonialism on all the continents. Today imperialism is in deep crisis, unable to overcome its inherent capitalist contradictions, reflected in recession, failing public services and growing poverty among the workers who are forced to carry the burdens of its failure.

The ruling classes are starting to panic. Imperialism's foreign policy is now just as cruel and barbaric as in the heyday of colonialism, with regime change being a corner stone of its efforts to plunder, dominate and enslave the rest of humanity. In its propaganda it always claims to occupy the high moral ground.

In reality it is evil and brutal while pretending not to hear the screams of its victims. From Syria to Ukraine, and Iraq to Libya, it has destroyed cities and cultures, devastated economies and ruined the lives of millions.

The collective voice of the Global South, BRICS, along with China's Belt & Road, Initiative, shows that the world has had enough and is no longer prepared to be threatened, bullied and told what to do. The emergence of a powerful new Russian Federation that is able and willing to stop imperialism in its tracks has changed the balance of power. China's and Russia's Strategic Alliance Partnership provides a formidable counterbalance to the US-led global order.

There appear to be many in the USA who dream of destroying People's China – but they have left it too late. China's military ability to combat American aggression grows by the day, while its progress in science and technology is enabling it to resist trade wars and illegal sanctions. While the imperialists double down on one debacle after another the rest of the world is moving forward. An advance that includes increasing trade, consensus politics, sustainable development, boosting tourism and economic co-operation. The time is now ripe for change in the West.

Many people tell me that they know something is wrong but there is nothing that can be done about it. My message is 'Yes There Is'. Capitalism has had its day. Join a trade union and stand up and fight by becoming a member of the New Communist Party or other progressive bodies. Switch off the TV and

continued on page 9...

## Diary

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

#### UNTIL 30 DEC

People's History Museum: Banner Exhibition, Left Bank, Spinningfields, Manchester M3 3ER.

#### UNTIL APRIL 2025

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

#### UNTIL 15 JULY

Tate Britain: *Artists Against Fascism and War*. Exhibition at Millbank, London SW1P 4RG.

#### UNTIL 25 JUL

Working Class Movement Library: Collectors, The Cameraman, The Poets and the Pits: Miners' Strike 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Exhibition. Afternoons.

#### SAT 11 JAN

International Ukraine Anti-Fascist Solidarity: No More British Weapons for Ukraine. Protest 14:00, 21 High St, Birmingham B4 7SL (Outside Nationwide Building Society, near the Bull statue beside the Shopping Centre).

#### TUE 14 JAN

Marx Memorial Library: Introducing Marx & Marxism. 19:00-20:00, online event. Register on MML website.

#### WEDs 15 JAN–26 FEB

Working Class Movement Library: Trade Union History Course. In person: WCML, 51 Crescent, Salford M5 4WX. Book on WCML website.

#### WED 15 JAN

Socialist History Public Believe Nothing Until It Is Officially Denied: Claud Cockburn and the invention of Guerrilla Journalism. 19:00, Zoom meeting. Register on SHS website.

#### THUR 16 JAN

Marx Memorial Library: John Foster on the 1926 General Strike. 19:00, Online event. Register on MML website.

#### SAT 18 JAN

Palestine Solidarity Campaign: End the genocide in Gaza. National demonstration Assemble 12:00, BBC, Portland Place, London W1A 1AA.

#### SAT 25 JAN

Lakenheath Alliance for Peace: Vigil protesting against US nuclear weapons in Britain 12:00–14:00, RAF

Lakenheath, Brandon Road, Lakenheath, Brandon, Suffolk IP27 9PS.

#### SAT 25 JAN

Scottish CND: Burns Peace Poetry Fundraiser. 15:00–17:00, Quaker Meeting House, 38 Elmbank Crescent, Glasgow G2 4PS. Book on CND website.

#### SAT 1 FEB

Palestine Solidarity Campaign: Annual General Meeting. 09:30–16:30, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1 4RL.

#### SAT 1 FEB

Stand Up to Racism: Stop the Far Right: Oppose Tommy Robinson supporters. Demonstration, Central London. Details TBA.

#### SAT 8 FEB

Cuba Solidarity Campaign: Latin America Conference. 10:00, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BB. Details and tickets at latinamericaconference.co.uk

#### MON 14 APRIL–FRI 25 APRIL

Lakenheath Alliance for Peace: Camp protesting against US nuclear weapons returning to Britain. RAF Lakenheath, Brandon Road, Lakenheath, Brandon, Suffolk IP27 9PS.

#### WED 12 FEB

Socialist History Society: Sheila Rowbotham on Writing about my Life. 19:00, Zoom meeting. Register on SHS website.

#### THUR 20 FEB

Marx Memorial Library: Steve Silver on Anti-Fascism in the 1930s/40s. 19:00, Online event. Register on MML website.

#### WED 5 MAR

Socialist History Society: Laleh Khalili on Imperial Politics in the Indian Ocean. 19:00, Zoom meeting. Register on SHS website.

#### THUR 6 MAR

Marx Memorial Library: Rachel Holmes on Eleanor Marx on Clerkenwell Green. 18:00, in person. MML 37a Clerkenwell Green, London, EC1R 0DU. Book on MML website.

#### THUR 20 MAR

Marx Memorial Library: Mary Davis the Ford Dagenham Women's strike. 19:00, Online event. Book on MML website.

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

start thinking for yourself. Read and discuss the real news in the *New Worker*. A united working class prepared to throw off its chains would be unstoppable. A new and better type of society is possible as in People's China, the Democratic Republic of Korea and the other socialist countries, but they must stand up and fight for it. Let's make 2025 a Happy New Year!

**John Maryon**  
Suffolk

**Dear Comrades**

Timothy Bancroft-Hinchey's article [NW:2280, 29 Nov2024] regarding Crassus and Biden made for truly interesting reading.

I'd like, if I may, to add somewhat more about Marcus Lucinius Crassus, a Roman general and triumvir surnamed Dives. He joined Sulla in the struggle with the Marian or popular party in 83 BC, and in the proscriptions that followed of those deemed enemies of the republic made himself the richest man in Rome by purchasing at nominal prices the confiscated estates of the proscribed. He held the balance between Caesar and Pompey by allying himself first with one and then with the other, and in 60 BC the three formed the so-called First Triumvirate. In 56 BC the agreement was renewed, and in 55 BC the province of Syria was assigned to Crassus for five years. Desirous of the military 'glory' of his fellow Triumvirs, Crassus embarked on an unprovoked expedition against the Parthians; but he was enticed into the deserts of Mesopotamia, and on retiring into Syria was defeated at Carrhae on 8<sup>th</sup> June 53 BC. He was captured and killed, his head being sent to Orodes I, the Parthian monarch.

**A McKerl**  
Fife

# Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

**2024 was not only the silver jubilee for devolution, which saw the election of the first Scottish parliament in 1999, but also the year in which two First Ministers departed the scene. One departed for the Holyrood back benches as a result of an internal coup in Edinburgh. The other later departed to his eternal reward at a conference in Macedonia.**

Humza Yousaf's departure in April soon after he celebrated a year in office came after he tore up the Bute House Agreement that had given two Green MSPs their first taste of ministerial limousines. Though this decision had a mixed reception within the SNP, many were simply fed up with the obsessive Green concern with putting men in female prisons and the mess they made of the recycling and the free bikes for children schemes.

Unsurprisingly the Greens were not pleased at being put in the recycling bin and said they would no longer support the minority SNP bloc in the Scottish parliament, an announcement which seemed to come as a shock to Yousaf so he announced his resignation rather than face a no confidence vote

he was certain to lose.

Partly because nobody was keen on taking the job the SNP avoided another bitterly contested election and anointed a previous leader and long-term deputy, John Swinney, to lead them into a General Election defeat.

Alex Salmond's sudden death brought mixed reactions. It was noticeable that the tributes from Unionists were more fulsome than those from the SNP, which he had led more successfully than his successors. The true feelings in his former party were likely to be relief that Salmond's court action against them for malfeasance in the case that saw him acquitted of all charges of sexual assault would now end. There are suggestions however, that this case could continue from beyond the grave.

The SNP was not the only party to change leader: the Tories replaced incumbent Douglas Ross, who faced outrage from party members when he made a last-minute decision to stand for Westminster again, displacing an incumbent MP after having promised to focus on Holyrood.

Their new leader is Russell Findlay, a List MSP for West Scotland. His work as a crime reporter included an investigation into Glasgow gangs that led to one of their number turning up on his doorstep to throw acid in his face. His succession in September did not bring much joy

to the Tories – subsequent by-elections saw the Tories continue to leak votes to Reform.

Needless to say the centrepiece of 2024 was the General Election, which saw the SNP start off with 43 seats (down from 48 in 2019) and emerge with nine. The SNP lost two seats to the Liberal Democrats, the rest to Labour, although they did manage to unseat a Tory thanks to the Faragist intervention. In all the Tories had five, the Lib-Dems six and Labour 37, the latter figure a considerable increase on the solitary seat won in 2019.

In terms of the popular vote the SNP was down by a third and the Tories half, and Labour almost doubled its vote from an historically low level. Of the unsuccessful parties the Greens rose to 3.8 per cent. Alba came nowhere and lost its two MPs, who had previously defected. The highest vote for an avowedly left party was 1.5 per cent won by a TUSC candidate, while Reform's largely paper candidates secured seven. Later local government by-elections were equally bad for the SNP and saw a huge increase in votes for Reform UK.

It remains to be seen if the nationalist cause will recover. Support for independence remains high in opinion polls, but the same polls tell us it is not a priority on the street these days.

To the annoyance of

friend and foe, Operation Branchform, the police investigation into the missing £600,000 of SNP members' money, rumbles on and on without anyone making a court appearance or being cleared for that matter. As funds dry up the SNP have been forced to "streamline" their HQ staff from 26 to 16, which is not the best sort of preparation for the Holyrood elections.

2024 was also the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 2014 Independence referendum. This was celebrated by a Hope Over Fear rally in Glasgow's George Square. Alex Salmond's Alba Party urged "all of our members to grab their flags and head to Glasgow to show their support for the cause" and they did. But only a few hundred supporters turned up. The SNP themselves did little to mark the occasion as it would only remind people just what a failure they have been in increasing support for independence...

## Beyond Holyrood

Across the country some unresolved sagas continued unabated.

The long delayed dualling of A9 road to the Highlands has made little progress despite the departure of the Greens, but lots of money has been spent on plans and an archaeological site on the route.

There was mixed news on the ferries front. In March, the nation rejoiced at the news that a ferry had been built on time and to budget. The bad news was that this ship was built in a Turkish yard while in the course of the year the two famous Port Glasgow ferries suffered at least four further delays (it is difficult to keep track). At least both have made it into the water only six years late and four times over budget, so some of the existing worn-out fleet that keep breaking down have a chance of

being replaced.

2024 saw the death, or near-death, of several SNP dreams.

The Gender Recognition Reform Act was buried while plans to introduce juryless trials for serious sexual assault cases were abandoned in the face of a united front of the legal profession.

Plans to introduce a misnamed "National Care Service", which is actually a blueprint for privatisation, have been stalled thanks to union opposition and even from normally loyal SNP councillors who objected to a central government power grab.

One earlier measure that made it on to the statute book in 2024 was the Hate Crime and Public Order Act, which saw over 8,000 complaints in the first week, mostly by people making trivial complaints to test the ill-thought measure.

Local councils, including those run by the SNP, are increasingly at war with their Edinburgh overlords, largely over the council-tax freeze, which the SNP announced suddenly in their October 2023 conference to keep delegates happy.

In the recent Budget, this was equally suddenly abandoned, but with a warning to councillors they should not regard this as a green light for big rises. We can expect more of the same in 2025. If the SNP cannot get a majority for its Budget the possibility of a Holyrood election cannot be ruled out.

### In Memory of Comrades

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# Stop the war in Gaza!

by New Worker correspondent

NCP leader Andy Brooks joined other activists from International Ukraine Anti-Fascist Solidarity (IUAFS) who were making the connection between the wars waged by NATO imperialism in Gaza and Ukraine at a Palestinian rally in Parliament Square last weekend.

Throughout Europe tens of thousands of



other protesters were also on the street condemning the ongoing Israeli aggression in the Gaza Strip.

Thousands participated in demonstrations in Paris, Berlin, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Oslo, Utrecht, Milan, Aarhus and Geneva. And in London in support of the Palestinian people, and to demand a ceasefire and the entry of humanitarian aid into the besieged Palestinian enclave.

## Sinn Féin: reunification “a marathon, not a sprint”

by Theo Russell

**Sinn Féin MPs Pat Cullen and Chris Hazzard briefed their London supporters on the party's future last Monday at a meeting in the House of Commons in Westminster, discussing the disappointing election results in the Irish Republic last month and prospects for ending the island's partition.**

Sinn Féin has fought four elections this year – two in the north of Ireland, a general election in the Republic, and European elections – an experience which Hazzard described as “very busy and stressful”. Sinn Féin is now the leading party in the North, with Michelle O'Neill the First Minister of the devolved Northern Ireland Assembly.

On the border question Hazzard said: “All the parties in the Republic say they expect to see a united Ireland in the next 10 years, but Fianna Fail and Fine Gael (who have run the Republic since 1945) are in no hurry to deliver this.”

Mary Lou McDonald, Sinn Féin's leader in the Republic, has had talks about reunification with Labour and the Social Democrats, who have 22 seats in the Dail between them.

Hazzard said Sinn Féin is “working well with the Labour Party left and other independent TDs, and we know that many Fianna Fail's grass-roots members are unhappy with their leadership's refusal to talk to Sinn Féin”.

Sinn Féin's current policy on ending partition is based on discussion and dialogue to



• Chris Hazzard MP addressing the meeting.

ensure that all parties, above all the Northern Unionists, feel included. Hazzard described it as “a marathon, not a sprint”.

He added that if the partition of Ireland ends “the North will automatically become part of the European Union, and there have already been some polls in the North in favour of reunification”.

In the 2020 Irish

election Sinn Féin went from 23 to 37 seats – one seat below the winner, Fianna Fail – and may well have taken first place had it stood more candidates.

This was a totally unexpected success that shook the reactionary political establishment in the Republic, but in the November election Sinn Féin failed to follow through, gaining only two seats.

Hazzard put the party's loss of 100,000 working class votes down to its policies on immigration and transgender rights. “In the working class areas of Dublin our vote didn't desert to other parties, they just didn't turn out for us.”

He pointed to the example of the Scottish National Party's alienation of many of its voters because they saw the focus on transgender issues as irrelevant. “We need to understand working class views on transgender issues, and we didn't appreciate the level of anger in working class communities over the handling of migrants.”

Since Brexit very large numbers of asylum seekers have entered the Irish Republic through the open border with the North, with an enormous impact on a country of

only 5.4 million people.

Hazzard said: “Our government failed to put any system in place to deal with asylum seekers who were sent into poor working class areas.

And people saw that they were being accommodated while nothing was done to help the many homeless Irish people in Dublin.

“The ruling parties used the issue to create a wedge in the working class in the same way as Farage has done in England, but in the election Sinn Féin took the far-right head on and they made no gains, they didn't even come close.”

As so many times in its history, Sinn Féin is looking to move on from its setbacks in the Republic by learning the lessons and understanding the needs of working class people.



# Lula turns on Venezuela

by Alvaro Cuesta

What's going on here? What we see through the political rift caused by Brazil and its absurd veto against Venezuela in BRICS is the gross political regression of a figure who, despite some reservations and hesitations, was long regarded as a major force for Latin American and Caribbean unity. Lula defeated Jair Bolsonaro, the far-right Brazilian leader, in the 2022 election. But something has cracked, leaving us with a rift that the right is now celebrating.

Is this the Bolsonarisation of Lula? We won't be shocked by betrayals or defections, as we've already seen plenty and have swallowed their poison laced with media nectar to the point of nausea. After all, they are essential ingredients in the cocktail of historical betrayals that have cost blood, exploitation and tears to many brother nations. Where do we even start with the inventory of betrayals? Is Lula one of these cases? Was it really necessary to wait for the Venezuelan government to arrive at the BRICS summit to inform them there of the brutal geopolitical decision to veto their integration? Who are the accomplices in this fourth-rate trick? Who wins and who loses?

This debate isn't about socialism. BRICS is a bloc of states that, in rough numbers, involves about 42 per cent of the world's population, which is estimated to cover about 30 per cent of the territory and represent 23 percent of global GDP. It accounts for roughly 18 per cent



• Mass support for Maduro in Caracas.

of international trade. It has a nascent Development Bank, which could serve as a counterweight to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In this context, Venezuela's delayed entry into BRICS is by no means a defeat; it's simply a delay that does more harm to the bloc because the political, economic and moral stature of the Venezuelan people is a necessary strength for emerging multipolarity. What hasn't been understood about the historical, political, strategic and geopolitical importance of Venezuela?

That Bolsonarised veto from Lula has already had repercussions in every sense. Even if it were just a senile tantrum caused by the frustration of the 'tribe's elder' who, in an interventionist way, demanded "the records" from a sovereign government and was met with a ruling from the Supreme Court, even if the tantrum were a form of revenge for his obvious political humiliation, it would still be a disgrace out of place, out of time and out of history. It would be a tremendous

embarrassment, widespread in its absurdity. Especially because it opens a 'Lula rift' that he himself will be unable to repair.

Of course, we aren't talking about socialism. There are no procedural data that provide reasons for such a veto. There were no lack of reasons or proposals. The host of the summit, Vladimir Putin, took the time to congratulate Nicolás Maduro on his electoral victory and held official meetings that, by simply being scheduled, constitute mutual recognition and a willingness to work together. What part of this did the Brazilian diplomacy not understand? What part of the global reality and the issues of the South does BRICS still need to grasp to veto Brazil's veto themselves?

In a very measured statement, the Venezuelan foreign ministry stated that with this veto, they are "reproducing the hatred, exclusion and intolerance promoted from Western power centres to prevent, for now, the homeland of Bolívar from joining this organisation". It

is "an action that constitutes an aggression against Venezuela and a hostile gesture that adds to the criminal policy of sanctions imposed against a brave and revolutionary people. No trick or manoeuvre conceived against Venezuela will stop the course of history." It could have been much more aggressive and called out the right-wing operations throughout the South.

And now we're left with a complex world and an immediate future filled with irrational war and destruction of ecosystems. We face the rapid depletion of water, oil and oxygen. We're looking at the multiplication of hunger, unemployment, and the insane dispossession of land and cultures. We're left with the American imperialist hate rolling around in its electoral mess, filled with filthy rhetoric and unbridled intellectual misery. We're faced with political uncertainty caused by both the right and the left. What we have on the table is 'the mother of all battles', which is the class struggle, with a working class desperate

to find political direction amid the bourgeois ideological sewer. And what about the unity of the forces in the South?

We're left with all the historical injustices against indigenous peoples around the globe. We carry the wounds of thousands of struggles that sought ways to strengthen and finally succeed. We remember the thousand betrayals by the countless scoundrels who exploited grass roots movements to elevate themselves and then acted like rats (sorry to the rats) scurry-

ing away with what they stole to their bureaucratic and official burrows. Will we find you there, Lula?

Many who believed in you and defended you even during your worst moments in prison are asking that right now.

If there were any possibility for redemption, even against all odds, Lula would need to return to the grass-roots and consult them about the unwavering respect for the democratic will of our peoples who have fought for centuries to secure their freedom and sovereignty. No more arrogant interference, no matter how many gerontological arguments are thrown around. Lula should publicly apologise to BRICS for delaying Venezuela's entrance into an economic, political and cultural bloc that needs it 'like air'. Lula should speak to the peoples of the south, show some shame and remorse, ask forgiveness from the Venezuelan people, and immediately work to lift his Bolsonaro-style veto, because that's not how you treat your brothers. And then we can keep debating.

Telesur

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# Israel closes Dublin embassy

by Ed Newman

**The Zionists have closed their Dublin embassy. Israeli foreign minister Gideon Sa'ar said that "the extreme anti-Israel policies of the Irish government" were the reason behind the decision. "Ireland has crossed every red line in its relations with Israel." But Irish Foreign Minister Micheal Martin says demanding accountability for the ongoing Israeli campaign of genocide in Gaza and respect for international law cannot be seen as "hostile acts towards Israel".**

Speaking to reporters ahead of an EU foreign

ministers meeting in Brussels, Martin defended his country's stance on the developments in the Middle East following Israel's decision to close its embassy in Ireland for what the regime claimed was "extreme anti-Israel policy".

"Ireland stands by the approach it has taken, which has been motivated, as I have said, towards full accountability for what is happening in Gaza and for respect for international humanitarian law and human rights."

The top Irish diplomat emphasised that his country has consistently called for an immediate ceasefire, the release of all captives, and a surge of humanitar-

ian aid in war-torn Gaza. "Recalling that recognising a state of Palestine, which we did with Norway and Spain, and which other countries have done, is not a hostile act, and should not be seen as a hostile act," he added.

Martin affirmed Dublin's support for the utilisation of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC) where there can be international accountability for war crimes in any part of the world, including in Gaza. "I find it very difficult to comprehend how those acts could be described as hostile acts. They are not hostile acts."

Last week, Ireland offi-

cially joined South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the ICJ following government approval and called on the court to "broaden its interpretation" of what constitutes genocide.

Martin noted that there has been huge anger on the streets of Europe over the killing of innocent Palestinian people by Israel in Gaza since 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023. "What's happening in northern Gaza at the moment, for example, in my view, is beyond any moral compass," he said.

He emphasised that Israel should open up Gaza to the international community and allow the media to bear witness to the ongoing events. "I have no doubt if

that happened, that the world would be shocked in terms of the level of destruction that has occurred there." Martin further noted that Ireland, Spain and Norway, have taken "a lot of hostility" from Israel for their decision to recognise the Palestinian state.

Irish Prime Minister Simon Harris said on Monday that the closure of the Israeli embassy in Dublin was an Israeli ploy to distract from its own actions against the Palestinians.

Ireland will not have its views silenced, Harris told reporters. He added that Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's

actions against innocent lives in Gaza and in the West Bank is the "diplomacy of distraction", which is "utterly despicable and should be condemned".

"We shouldn't allow anything to distract from what is happening," Harris stressed, saying Ireland will continue to "shine a spotlight" on the ongoing events in the Middle East.

The Irish prime minister expressed regret over Israel's embassy closure and said Ireland will continue to talk and engage with those who we might "vehemently disagree with".

*Radio Havana Cuba*

# New bonds of friendship between Cuba and China

by María Josefina Arce

**Cuba and China are not stopping in their search for new areas of co-operation in education and science, pillars of the fruitful exchange that both countries have maintained for decades in various fields.**

The year 2024 has been a year of intense work on this path, in which there have been numerous meetings between the authorities of both nations and the signing of various agreements to further strengthen a profitable bilateral co-operation.

Recently, several memorandums of understanding were signed in the Chinese capital, Beijing, opening up new opportunities in education and scientific research.

Currently, there are

more than 67 framework agreements between the University of Havana and higher education centres in the Asian giant.

At the end of September, the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Joint Commission for Scientific and Technological Co-operation was held in Havana, a mechanism that, according to the author-

ities of both nations, has allowed for increasingly broad results and tangible benefits for the economic development and life of both peoples.

The meeting identified ways to strengthen public health emergency response capabilities. In the latter area, the existing bilateral co-operation proved its

effectiveness during the COVID-19 pandemic. In China, Cuban biotechnology products were used to treat people infected with the new coronavirus.

Now the focus is also on nanotechnology, which is advancing in the world and is being used in medicine, environmental sanitation and food production.

In this regard, Cuba's Minister of Science, Technology and the Environment, Eduardo Martínez, expressed the importance for the Caribbean nation of close co-operation in the application of technology to food production, given all the obstacles posed by the hostile policies of the USA.

Since 1990, the Joint Commission in the Scientific Area has been established, which in all these years has contributed to the development of joint projects in biotechnology and the pharmaceutical industry, technology transfer and the production and commercialisation of medicines and equipment.

China has about 10 laboratories for scientific development that are part of the Silk Road Initiative. Two of these centres were established with Cuban support.

Cuba and China are working together for a better future for their citizens, united by strong ties of friendship and solidarity that have allowed for fruitful co-operation in many areas.

*Radio Havana Cuba*

